



The Airlie Declaration on Safe Legal Abortion

We believe in a world where every woman and girl has the right to make decisions about her body, her health and her future. True gender equality cannot be achieved without access to safe, legal abortion.

Yet this vision is still far from reality, due in part to continued restrictions on safe, legal abortion in much of the world. Criminalizing abortion does not eliminate abortion; it puts women's lives and health at risk. The consequences are dire:

- In the last two decades, roughly 1 million women and girls have died and more than 100 million have suffered injuries—many of them lifelong—due to complications from unsafe abortion.
- Close to half of those who die from unsafe abortion are younger than 25.
- Many women and girls are forced to carry pregnancies to term against their will.
- Women and health-care professionals are subject to heavy penalties, including imprisonment, for seeking or providing abortion.
- Punitive and stigmatizing attitudes persist, exacerbated by some religious groups that exert undue pressure on governments to restrict women's reproductive rights.
- Access to safe abortion is unequal, with young, poor and marginalized women exposed to the greatest risks.
- Health systems spend inordinate amounts each year to manage wholly preventable injuries, and economies suffer from diminished economic participation by women and girls.

These intolerable conditions violate women's fundamental human rights.

We welcome important evidence of progress as indicated by liberalization of laws and policies in a number of countries; increased policy and financial support at global, regional, and national levels; increased use of effective contraceptive methods; improved technologies for safe abortion; and declining deaths and injuries in most countries. However, we must build on this progress and accelerate our efforts as we define our priorities for the next two decades.

We therefore call on governments and policymakers to:

- **Repeal laws that criminalize abortion and remove barriers on women's and girls' access to safe abortion services.**
- **Release all women and girls and health-care professionals who are incarcerated as a result of punitive abortion laws.**
- **Make safe, legal abortion universally available, accessible and affordable for all women and girls.**
- **Invest in effective preventive measures** including comprehensive sexuality education, elimination of gender discrimination and sexual violence, and full access to all modern contraceptive methods.
- **Ensure that government and donor priorities for the post-2015 global development framework incorporate safe, legal and accessible abortion** as an integral component of gender equality and comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights.

As leaders in global health, human rights, government and policymaking from diverse countries and cultures, **we pledge individually and collectively to mobilize our knowledge, resources and networks toward achieving these goals.** We call on the global community to join us in holding governments, global institutions and donors accountable for respecting women's rights to make choices when faced with unwanted pregnancies, and to fulfill their obligations to women.

We are united in saving women's lives through access to safe legal abortion.

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