

MY Sexual and Reproductive Health and Right (SRHR) Realities



Short Publication

Regional Solidarity Statement

September 28, 2025 – International Safe Abortion Day

Theme: “Safe Abortion is Life-saving Healthcare”

We, advocates, survivors, youth, providers, feminists, and allies from Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, and across East Africa, gathered in Dar-es-Salaam and virtually, affirm our shared commitment to reproductive justice. Today we unite under one conviction: safe abortion is life-saving healthcare and a fundamental human right.

Across our region, restrictive laws, stigma, and weak policy implementation deny women, girls, and gender-diverse people the care they need and deserve. These barriers cost lives, compound trauma, and undermine dignity. While our governments have signed on to regional and international human rights frameworks such as the Maputo Protocol and CEDAW, the promise of these commitments remains unrealized.

Article 14(2)(c) of the Maputo Protocol explicitly calls for the protection of women’s reproductive rights, including access to safe abortion under specific conditions, while Article 12 of CEDAW obligates States to eliminate discrimination in healthcare and ensure women’s access to appropriate services. Yet, despite these binding provisions, implementation remains weak and inconsistent across the region.

In Tanzania, the recent dismissal of a landmark petition challenging colonial-era abortion restrictions represents both a setback and a turning point, and compounds the suffering of survivors of sexual violence who are denied safe services should they fall pregnant as a result of assault

Today we stand together to:

1. Defend the Promise of health, dignity, and justice for all by supporting the ongoing appeal in Tanzania.
2. Bridge law and lived realities by amplifying the voices and experiences of women, girls, and gender-diverse people navigating unsafe abortion and restrictive laws.
3. Mobilize youth voices and creative expression as powerful drivers of advocacy and stigma reduction.
4. Strengthen cross-border solidarity to ensure that our struggles and victories are shared across Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, and beyond.
5. Hold governments accountable to align national laws and policies with their commitments under the Maputo Protocol, CEDAW, and other human rights instruments.

We call on policymakers, health systems, and justice actors to act with urgency: to recognize that safe abortion saves lives; to protect the rights of survivors of sexual violence; and to ensure access to timely, affordable, stigma-free abortion care for all who need it.

We pledge, as movements and communities, to continue organizing, documenting, and amplifying to ensure that reproductive justice is not postponed, denied, or abandoned.

Our message is clear: Safe abortion is healthcare. Safe abortion is dignity. Safe abortion is justice. Together, we will #DefendThePromise.



Scars Unseen

your mother through her treatments, and chase survival in every corner of the day. Sacrifice is a body that remembers even when the world looks away.

And still, I do not regret. Regret doesn't live here. What lives here is pain, yes, but also truth. I chose what I chose with love, even if that love was betrayed. I endured, and I continue to endure. No one can erase that, no matter how much they try to disregard me.

The hardest part is the silence that follows. When everyone else moves on, but you remain with the memory of what was given up. Life keeps asking for more strength, more patience, more survival while inside you are still bleeding. There is no applause for it, no recognition, no safe place to collapse. Yet I am still here. Breathing. Carrying it all.

I am not invisible. I am not to be minimized or forgotten. My story may not be wrapped in neat language, but it is mine. It is a testament to the quiet storms I have weathered, the love that demanded more than it gave, the sacrifices that carved scars I will carry forever.

Some choices split you open, leaving marks no one else can see. I made one of those choices. It was not simple, not soft, not something you get to package neatly as a lesson or a story with a bow. It was blood and silence, sacrifice carved into the body, into the heart. I did it not for myself but for someone tied to me by blood. I thought they would understand the weight I carried. They didn't.

I gave up more than I ever thought I could, believing it would protect them, believing it would provide. What I lost is not something I can ever reclaim, and yet what I received in return was not gratitude but dismissal. They disregarded what I had done, as though it were dust swept under the rug. They treated me not like the one who had given, but as if my giving meant nothing at all. That cut deeper than anything, the realization that love could demand so much and return so little.

The world likes to paint sacrifice as noble. They call it strength, as though it glows golden. But sacrifice is not golden. It is red, raw, and unrelenting. It is bleeding behind closed doors. It is crying so quietly that the walls don't echo it back. It is screaming without sound, carrying an emptiness in your chest while your hands still cook, clean, care for children, hold

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This is not an apology. This is not regret. This is my truth, spoken raw and unsoftened: I gave, I hurt, I survived. And that survival is mine to own unapologetically.

THE DAY SILENCE BROKE ME, AND MADE ME BRAVE

Malindi is beautiful ukipita barabarani unasikia sauti za watoto wakicheza, unahisi harufu ya bahari. But behind that beauty, silence hides pain. I know, because I carried someone's pain as if it was my own. Someone I loved found themselves pregnant when they were not ready. That day changed both of us forever.

At first, I thought it was just news. But then I saw how fear swallowed her whole. The way she looked at me eyes heavy, voice broken "What will I do?" I had no answer. Mimi mwenyewe nilihisi kama dunia imenizunguka, but I knew one thing I could not leave her alone.

Stigma came faster than solutions. "Shame, sin, mistake." Those were the words around us. Church sermons, neighbors' whispers, even family. Yet no one saw her shaking hands, or heard her cry in the night. No one asked, "Do you want this pregnancy? Do you want another future?" I watched her shrink under a weight she didn't deserve.

Helping her find a safe abortion felt like walking in darkness, scared but determined. Clinics were there, yes, but money was not. Fear was plenty. I held her hand the whole way. When the procedure was over, she looked at me, weak but lighter, and whispered: "Thank you for not letting me drown." That whisper has never left me.

I realized then abortion is not about death. It is about life. Her life. Our lives. Her dreams that would have been buried alive. Our right to breathe without shame. Reproductive justice is not charity it is survival, it is dignity, it is freedom.

Sometimes I still hear the ocean waves at night and remember that season. It hurts, but it also makes me fierce. Because I saw what silence does. Silence kills. Stigma kills. Lack of access kills. And I refuse to let my community drown in that silence.

So today I speak. Unapologetic. Abortion gave my loved one back her future, and it gave me a voice that will not bend. My story is not about regret. It is about courage. It is about breaking chains that have kept girls quiet for too long.

Hii ni sauti yangu. Raw, real, Malindi born. I carry it with pride, because our bodies are not battlefields for shame. They are vessels of choice, and choice is justice. And if you feel uncomfortable reading this good. Because comfort never changed anything.





Relief, Guilt, and Resilience

I was twenty years old, in my second year of campus, when the world shut down. The COVID-19 pandemic had closed schools, and I was living with my sister. Life already felt uncertain, but then my period, always on time and predictable, was suddenly late. A week passed, then more. I tried to push down the fear, but eventually I bought a pregnancy test. Two pink lines appeared, and in that moment my whole body went cold.

The fear was not just about being pregnant. It was about what it meant for my future, my family, and my dreams. I kept thinking, I have disappointed everyone. I had always told myself, if I ever get pregnant before I am ready, I will have an abortion. Saying it was one thing. Facing it was another. The decision was heavy, lonelier than I expected, and more complicated than people like to admit.

Through whispers in the neighborhood, I heard about a woman who had once had an abortion and

might know where to find help. Desperation gave me courage. I approached her, and she agreed to connect me to someone who could get the pills. As campus students, my boyfriend and I had little money, so I leaned on friends who supported me quietly, and together we managed to raise what was needed.

The instructions were clear: some pills under the tongue, others inserted vaginally. I was scared but determined. I did it alone, waiting for the cramps to come. My body shivered with chills, and then the bleeding began. I remember the flood of relief, not because it was easy, but because I could breathe again. I was no longer trapped in a future I was not ready for.

What no one prepared me for was the guilt. Not from within, but from the world around me. Society's stigma hit harder than the cramps. The voices that say abortion is murder, that girls who choose it are reckless, that we do not deserve to decide for

ourselves, stayed with me. They made me question myself long after my body had healed.

But here is what I learned: abortion is not a reckless act. It is a decision rooted in survival, agency, and self-preservation. Young people like me should not have to whisper, struggle for money, or risk stigma just to access safe abortion care. Reproductive justice means more than legality. It means dignity, safety, and support for our choices.

My resilience looked like finding courage in crisis, making the decision I knew was right for me, and reclaiming my future. Today, I refuse to let shame tell my story. My abortion does not make me less worthy. It makes me one of millions whose voices remind the world that choice is power, and every person deserves it.

Through this story, I reclaim my abortion



My SRH Reality: The Day the School Bell Stopped Ringing

Hi, My Name Is Frank. My journey into advocating for reproductive justice and access to safe abortion was not shaped by statistics or campaigns, but by the painful story of my own sister, Salome.

Salome was one of the brightest girls I have ever known. She always came first in every exam, and everyone believed she was destined for a bright future. But life changed after the death of our father. She was taken to live with our uncle, and what seemed like an opportunity soon turned into a heavy burden.

The school near his home was far two hours away on foot. On top of that, Salome was the only girl in the household, so she was responsible for all the house chores before and after school. Every day, she woke up before dawn to clean, fetch water, and cook before making her long walk to school. Tired and drained, she struggled, but she kept pushing because she wanted to achieve her dreams.

During this time, a boy named Juma saw her struggle. He began offering her bus

fare so she could reach school on time. What seemed like a small act of kindness later turned into something else. Months passed, and changes in Salome's body became noticeable. My uncle's wife began to suspect pregnancy. When asked, Salome denied it out of fear and shame. Eventually, she could not hide anymore: her appetite changed, her feet swelled, and she missed school more often.

One day, my elder sister informed me that Salome was three months pregnant. At that time, I was only 19, and my elder sister was 25. Together, we tried our best to support Salome's decision she wanted an abortion so she could continue her education. But we had no convincing power in the family. My uncle's wife threatened to expose us to relatives if we sought an abortion, saying it would be like "killing a baby." We were trapped by fear, stigma, and lack of options.

Then came the day when nurses were invited to her school for routine pregnancy tests. Instead of facing the shame, Salome ran away. That was her last day at school. She was only in Form Two. Her dreams of becoming the best student, of completing her studies, and of breaking cycles of poverty ended in that moment.

Today, Salome is a young mother, living with no parents and no education. Her story is not just hers it is the story of many girls across Tanzania and East Africa. Girls whose futures are cut short because safe abortion is treated as a taboo instead of a right.

Salome's story fuels my journey. I speak out because I know firsthand what it means when young people are denied their reproductive rights. I advocate because I believe no girl should be forced to give up her education, her dreams, or her future simply because she lacked access to safe abortion.

Monica Patrick Story

I am a feminist, social activist based in a rural area in the Simiyu region, working with girls and young women in the intersection of Health (SRHR and Mental health), Education, Economic empowerment, and cross-cutting on gender-based violence. A founder of WOMEN AND YOUTH MOVEMENT (WOYOMO)

My journey with unsafe abortion began when I was just eighteen, growing up in a rural community in Simiyu, Tanzania. In my community, there is little to no information about our bodies or sexual and reproductive health. Girls grow up surrounded by stigma, judgment, and shame, with no safe space to ask questions or seek support. Being a girl felt like walking through life as prey, like a gazelle in an open field always watched, always hunted, yet with nowhere to run.

When I discovered I was pregnant, my world shattered. I wasn't ready to be a mother, and I wasn't ready to give up on my dreams. The man responsible and I decided to end the pregnancy, but fear consumed me. What if I bled too much? What if my family found out? What if I died? These questions circled my mind constantly. Nights were the worst; I cried into my pillow, trembling with fear, shame, and despair. My mind felt heavy, my heart trapped in a cage of anxiety, and I wondered how I would survive this alone.

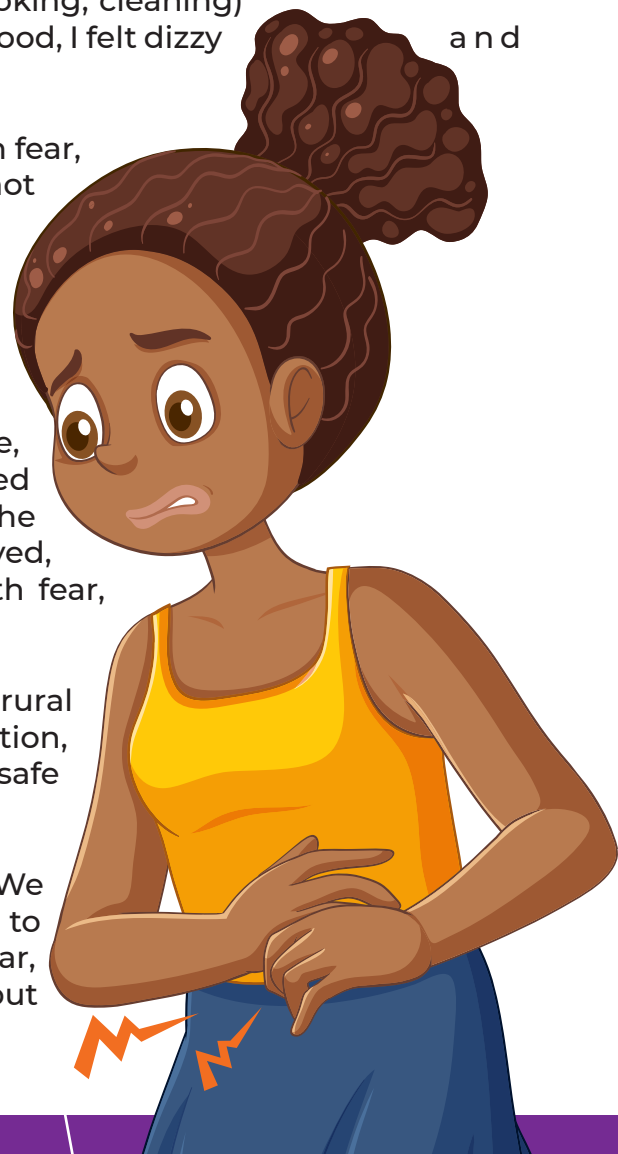
When the pills finally came, I held them in shaking hands, too terrified to use them. I hid them, crying quietly, unable to breathe through the panic that filled me. Later, desperate for any solution, I drank bitter herbs I had heard about on the streets, praying that no one would notice. Nothing worked. That night, I finally used the pills as instructed, and the pain came in waves. But I had to hide it all (smiling, cooking, cleaning) while my body ached and my mind raced. I lost a lot of blood, I felt dizzy and weak, and my body refused to feel safe in its own skin.

The days after were the hardest. I was overwhelmed with fear, shame, and guilt. I could not speak to anyone. I could not share my pain or my questions. My mind felt heavy with depression; I struggled to focus, to eat, to sleep. Every little ache made me panic. Every sound reminded me of the secrecy I had to maintain. I felt isolated, trapped in a body and a situation I had no control over.

Even after the pregnancy ended, my body did not feel safe, and my mind carried the scars. I constantly questioned whether I had done the right thing, haunted by the knowledge that what I went through was unsafe. I survived, but the emotional toll lingered, shaping every day with fear, anxiety, and sorrow.

This is not only my story. It is the story of countless girls in rural communities like mine, where silence replaces education, stigma replaces support, and unsafe options replace safe healthcare.

I share my story now because girls deserve better. We deserve safety, dignity, and care. We deserve the right to make informed decisions about our bodies without fear, without shame, without risking our lives. I survived, but survival should never be the only option.





Turning Point

Transforming Everyday