

My reality

TALES OF AFRIKAN YOUNG WOMEN
WHO CHOSE ABORTION



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We want to acknowledge all women and girls in all their diversities who use their personal experiences to change the narratives of the importance of accessing safe abortions in Kenya. Special thanks to all the bold and fierce feminists who shared their stories to help influence positive public discourse on access to safe Abortion in Kenya and beyond. Our hearts are full of joy and inspiration because you have shown exemplary courage in your feminist journeys. We see you and acknowledge the beauty of your unique stories.

No woman can call herself free who does not control her own body. It's important to remember that the ultimate decision of whether or not to have an abortion is deeply personal and should be made with the guidance and support of trusted healthcare professionals, friends, and family. Ultimately, the goal should be to ensure that all individuals have access to accurate information and the resources they need to make an informed decision that is best for them and their circumstances. The Zamara Foundation upholds the powerful voices of these amazing young women who are shaping the world's future towards the emancipation of women and girls one story at a time as they share their lived realities to expose the challenges of women and girls who seek safe abortion services and information in Kenya.

We are grateful to all staff namely Ms. Nancy Barasa, Ms. Lucy Kombe who have dedicated their time to collecting the stories. Acknowledging Ms. Esther Wambui our Executive Director for editing and providing guidance through this process and for ensuring these diverse realities of young women are captured and amplified in our work at Zamara Foundation. We are also thankful to all partners who support our work to ensure that the SRHR of all women and girls across the globe are fulfilled.

We hope these stories will inspire, motivate and challenge young women and girls to fully uphold and embody their power of choice and their right to bodily autonomy and integrity.



FOREWORD

Ever since women and girls and gender expansive persons became self-aware, they found ways to document and share their experiences. Stories are undoubtedly one of the oldest tools of human progress and remain one of our greatest weapons. Nothing is more powerful than the personal story of spotlighting the urgent needs of women and girls in Kenya regarding their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). This is because every story is as unique as the girl or woman at the center of that story. Despite a world that boasts of unimaginable milestones in medical research and healthcare solutions, billions of women and girls in the world still find themselves in the precarious position of having to choose between life and death simply because they are sexual beings.

This anthology opens a window into nine experiences of young Kenyan women as they contemplated, made a choice, and attempted to terminate pregnancies in a society determined to shun, stigmatize and demonize those who even “think” about such a decision. As they share their stories and parts of their lives, the nine young women paint vulnerable but vivid pictures of the complexity of the decision, the complexity of the environment in which this decision is made even though access to legal, and therefore safe, abortions means that people can have agency and authority over their own bodies.

Some of the abortion stories are long while others are brief, yet the brevity of a story in no way represents the simplicity of the experiences of the women and girls who lived it. Some stories are still unfolding, and some details are still too emotional to relive. Others are old stories still living in fresh memories with new and urgent lessons to teach us. The only real fact remains that abortion is a moral choice. It is an ethical choice. It is one’s personal choice. There are no good abortions; there are no bad abortions; there is only the abortion a person needs.

No single story could sufficiently capture the real tragedy of existing as a girl or woman in Kenya and what it takes to access basic sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) information and services. This anthology is therefore a mere drop in the ocean of women’s experiences in Kenya and Africa. But it is a pivotal drop because each story is a rare glimpse into the complexity of what it means to be a girl or woman daily confronting intersecting barriers, disadvantages and forms of discrimination in the realisation of SRHR.

Young women are not homogeneous. They are diverse in their experiences and complex in their compounding vulnerabilities. This includes but is not limited to women and adolescent girls living in informal settlements, female sex workers, and lesbian gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ+) womn. Our goal is to amplify these diverse voices in our work and do our bit in untangling some of these complex webs.

I invite you to read these stories and enter these precious worlds with curiosity and compassion. These are not just mere recollections but hopeful reconstructions of a better future. Don’t just read the lines, read between the lines.

These are not just stories about change in those who tell them but stories that will change the reader. I encourage the reader to approach these stories as an invitation and a challenge to do better and be better, yes demand for better, when it comes to turning the dream of safe and legal abortion into an accessible “norm” for women and girls in all their diversities in Kenya and Africa.

***Esther Wambui,
Founding Executive Director,
Zamara Foundation.***





Abortion stigma: An emotional experience for me

Rose (29 years old)

I like to consider myself a feminist, lover of life and freedom, great conversations and music. I was raised by a single dad, and I grew up admiring him. My dad was my idol. The last thing I ever imagined myself doing was disappointing my father. But as I grew into those turbulent adolescent years, disappointing dad became a real fear. In 2016, I fell for a boy and soon I found myself in a 'relationship'. I was young and new to this high of being in love. Yet despite the intense feelings, I was always keen to be careful. Protection was non-negotiable. I wanted to be responsible. After all, my dad did not raise me to 'fool' around... or so I thought.

At first, I didn't think much of it. As was the routine, I would go to work in the Central Business District from 8am to 4pm then head over to the campus in the evening for my classes. I remember the day as vivid as day. I got to work and started feeling nauseous when I stepped into the elevator. This had never happened before and my first instinct was to get checked at the nearest clinic. A blood test revealed that I was 3 weeks pregnant. I couldn't believe it. A wave of emotions engulfed me. I was scared, terrified to say the least. Yet, strangely, there was that hint of joy because deep down I had always wanted to be a mother. I was committed not to hide it.

My father was the first person I called and told the news. He was livid. I shared my predicament with a relative that I lived with and, to my surprise they suggested an abortion. As they explained where I could go for the procedure, a torrent of thoughts rushed through my mind: "I can't do this! It's terrible! I'll be barren if it doesn't go well!" And the big question, "What if I never have kids again because of this one moment life changing

decision?" My Dad flew in the next day. There was no discussion, he could barely look at me. I was ashamed and heartbroken, tormented by regret and guilt. My relative recommended that I go to Marie Stopes, and that's where I went – the Eastleigh Clinic. I went with my then best friend. It was the hardest decision I've ever had to make on my life. As I lay there in the clinic and they started the procedure, I remember the young man next to me holding my hand and I broke down. I am still not sure was more painful, the physical procedure or the emotional toll that accompanied it.

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Marie Stopes was a safe space for me. I was lucky enough to have had my abortion done there, and even luckier to have a relative who had the right information at the right time. I cannot say the same for the thousands of young women out there. Even though it was safely done, the emotional torture that followed was harder than I could have expected; the stigma from being sidelined by my family has been the worst pain of all. In their eyes, I was the biggest sinner.

My name is Rose, and this is my story.

2

Ignorance is anything but bliss

Josephine (22 years old)

I was raised in a very strict family. My parents are very religious and have brought up my siblings and I in the same Christian values and beliefs that they hold close to their hearts. It is therefore not surprising that stories of boy-girl relationships and sex were a taboo in my family. Tales of intimacy and love were not the stuff of dinner table conversation. Dare to bring up the topic and you would earn yourself a beating that you'll never forget over.

My parents saw no reason to give us proper advice on safe sex, love and life, because this was unnecessary if you do not expect your children to think about, let alone discuss, sex. Abortion was an abomination; a straight ticket to hell. I got pregnant while in college. I was a third year Medicine student at a renowned university.

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That was the wrong time and place to get pregnant or even think about it, given the demands of my coursework and the fact that I was still a fulltime student. I approached my sister, painfully told her about my situation and sought her advice.

We both agreed that keeping the pregnancy was not an option, for more reasons than we could count. Unfortunately, we were children of the same father and mother and neither of us knew where to start in looking for a legal and professional abortion service. We had heard rumors though, about the widely known method of drinking undiluted quencher accompanied by lots of paracetamol. This is what I did. The next thing I remember is waking up at the hospital.

My sister told me that I had started complaining of abdominal pains and passed out. She gave me first aid but was afraid when she saw blood stains on my clothes. She called my aunt and they rushed me to the hospital. I had lost lots of blood and my abortion was incomplete, so the doctors administered post abortion services and nursed me back to health. I now believe, despite my upbringing, that having enough, honest, and early advise on sex and relationships is the best path to good and wise decision making on when, how and with whom to have sex or be in a relationship with.

Had I known aspects of good decision making, assertiveness and safe sex, I would have not have gone through what I went through. This experienced that put my life in great danger also influenced my present commitment to encouraging conversations about age-appropriate sex education and safe sex.

My name is Josephine, and this is my story.



SAFE ABORTION

TEENAGE PREGNANCY RATE IN KENYA IS 15%

2% WERE UNSAFE ABORTIONS

1 IN 7 GIRLS AGED
15-19 ARE EITHER
PREGNANT OR HAVE
ALREADY HAD A
CHILD

14% OF WOMEN AGED
15-49 HAD AN ABORTION
IN THEIR LIFETIME

THE PROPORTION
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THE KENYA DEMOGRAPHIC AND HEALTH SURVEY (KDHS) 2022 FOUND THAT THE TEENAGE PREGNANCY RATE IN KENYA IS 15%. THIS MEANS THAT ABOUT 1 IN 7 GIRLS AGED 15-19 ARE EITHER PREGNANT OR HAVE ALREADY HAD A CHILD. THE KDHS 2022 FOUND THAT 14% OF WOMEN AGED 15-49 HAD AN ABORTION IN THEIR LIFETIME. OF THESE, 2% WERE UNSAFE ABORTIONS. THE KDHS 2022 ALSO FOUND THAT THE PROPORTION OF UNSAFE ABORTIONS IS HIGHER AMONG URBAN WOMEN (3%) AND WOMEN IN RURAL AREAS (3%).



My Four choices

Clarence Atieno (27 years old)

I am a 27-year-old lady and a mother of 2 kids. I was born and raised in Mathare. I got married when I was 19, immediately after high school. My husband is now 32 years old. God blessed us with two kids in 2016 and 2019. At the time we had stable jobs, until 2020 when a coronavirus pandemic struck our country and the world, and we lost our jobs. I vividly recall August that same year and how life was so tough and unbearable to us. That's when I decided to sell my body for money so that my family could survive. My husband didn't know about this job that I was doing. It was during this time that I got pregnant with one of my clients.

I had no option but to terminate it before my partner found out about it. I went to the person who performs abortions, explained everything to them and begged them to help me because I did not have enough money to do it. The man agreed to help on the condition that, that after the abortion, I will give him my body for one week. Four months later I found myself pregnant again. I didn't know whose it was but I had to lie to my partner that it was his. He wasn't happy about that because he didn't have a job to sustain us. We had a long dialogue about it and decided to terminate it; but I wasn't sure about that because I had not fully recovered from the previous abortion which was just recent.

However, when I looked at my circumstances, our financial situation, and the fact that the man responsible was unknown, I had no option but to terminate it. Then early this year, I got pregnant again and had a third abortion. After this, I went to the hospital for family planning services.

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As advised, I waited for my period before going back to the clinic. However, when I went back, the queue was too long and I decided to return home without the services. On my way home I entered a certain local chemist and got the 3-month family planning injection. At the time, I did not know, and had no way of knowing, that the physician there was not qualified for that work.

Two months later, I realized that I was pregnant. I went to my husband and we both agreed, again, that we did not wish to have another child given our financial situation. It was our choice and my choice to go for yet another abortion. But his relatives condemned me alone for the decision. They insulted me and stigmatized me, asking: "how can a married woman terminate a pregnancy?"

I didn't care because it was our choice and nobody, not even those criticizing and blaming me, was helping us raise our children during this tough time.

My name is Clarence Atieno, and this is my story.



4

Safe Abortion: An expensive affair

Barnice (24 years old?)

I got pregnant the first time I ever had sex. I was 16, and I had just finished high school. At the time I was not aware of any method of contraception except for safe days, which I used and failed terribly. I didn't know there were other factors that affect the effectiveness of safe days. Two weeks after engaging in sex, I started having nausea and mild cramping. This was unusual because I had already received my menses for the month. I googled my symptoms and it came out as early signs of pregnancy. I borrowed Sh100 from a friend and bought a testing kit that, to my shock, confirmed my suspicions of having conceived. I shared my situation with a former highschool friend, as well as the desire to terminate the pregnancy since there was no way I was ready to keep it.

My friend was reluctant to tell me where I could get abortion services because she feared I might die from the procedure and she didn't want to be blamed for it. Her sister however felt my need and directed me to a local abortion provider known in the community. At the time I did not know that the doctor was a quack, neither did I know that there was such a thing as a quack provider. I went to the dispensary in the evening to avoid being seen by my neighbours.

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I negotiated the price, and he agreed to carry out the whole procedure for Sh2,500, a great bargain compared to other clinics that charged Sh5,000. Obviously, having just come out of high school, unemployed and from a poor background, I couldn't afford the charges but I really needed the service. So, I agreed to have sex with the doctor in order to settle my debt and get the procedure done and over with. This decision torments me to date, and I am never comfortable even having sex with my partner because the memory keeps recurring in my brain. Anyway, the man inserted two pills in my vagina and told me to go home and wait.

At around midnight I started experiencing severe pain in my lower abdomen, followed by heavy clotted blood discharge. I was afraid to sleep or even close my eyes. I thought I was going to die. I could hear a child's voice crying in my head. I could feel the doctor touching me. I could feel my child dying. Honestly, I just wanted to die.

My name is Barnice, and this is story.



5

Abortion in a time of Coronavirus

Yvonne (29 years old)

“Abortion is a taboo,” that is what most people in my community told me when I shared my doubts about keeping my pregnancy . This conversation was also difficult to bring up, it was so forbidden to talk about terminating pregnancy that we constantly used code names to refer to the procedure. In the last five months, my partner and I have been arguing constantly about my decision to get an abortion, especially because it was during the coronavirus pandemic.

It happened in April 2020, during the Covid-19 pandemic. My partner was one of the people who got fired during this period, sending both us into a financial turmoil. I was then two months pregnant and could barely afford three meals a day. I feared for my family, we were financially strained and the thought of bringing a child into our life at the time was overwhelming. I started sinking into depression.

“I was two months pregnant and could barely afford three meals a day.”

I started working as a house help for a family of seven kids. They didn't know about my condition and the workload was too heavy. I started cramping after a few weeks. I had difficulties accessing clinics during the pandemic so I couldn't seek any medical attention. My employer didn't give me an advance and after missing work for two weeks they fired me and hired someone else. This worsened my depression. The cramping and depression carried on for one more week, so I went to a private clinic and asked the doctor to help me terminate the pregnancy.

I didn't tell her that it was because of poverty and I was unsure of bringing another child to a world where I am yet to be financially stable or even able to cater for my other child.

My name is Yvonne, and this is my story.



THE 2020 ABORTION NEEDS ASSESSMENT IN KENYA, CONDUCTED BY THE AFRICAN POPULATION AND HEALTH RESEARCH CENTER (APHRC) FOUND THAT AN ESTIMATED 112,000 ABORTIONS OCCUR IN KENYA EACH YEAR, OF WHICH 84,000 ARE UNSAFE. THE STUDY ALSO FOUND THAT THE MAJORITY OF ABORTIONS ARE SOUGHT BY YOUNG WOMEN, AND THAT THE MOST COMMON REASONS FOR ABORTION ARE UNINTENDED PREGNANCY AND ECONOMIC HARDSHIP. THIS BECOMES EXTREMELY DIFFICULT FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS SEEKING SAFE ABORTION SERVICES AMIDST ECONOMIC HARDSHIP ESPECIALLY WITH HOW EXPENSIVE IT IS TO ACCESS SAFE ABORTION SERVICES.

SAFE ABORTION



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I bravely tackled my toughest experience alone

Mercy Waweru (24 years old)


Five years ago, I had a boyfriend whom I loved so much. He was the love of my life. Every time I was with him, I felt the universe stop. I was indeed loved by him. My entire existence was for him and I knew that one day I will marry him. At only 19 years, I realized that I was pregnant. I had been having sex for quite some time and I was sure I would never get pregnant because my boyfriend's pull out game was the bomb. In August 2019, I missed my period for a month and knew something was in my tiny womb. So, I went and did a test at a local pharmacy. And it was positive.

I was very confused because this was a time when I had no idea what shape or form my life was going to take. I felt shattered, tattered, my heart tore into pieces. There were two things I was sure about: I would not keep the pregnancy, and I was not going to tell my parents. This secret was to die for, but only my boyfriend deserved to know. Justifying an abortion was going to be difficult, so I decided to lie to the healthcare provider that I had been raped. I told her that I was in school and people came into my room and they raped me.

“Justifying an abortion was going to be difficult, so I decided to lie to the healthcare provider that I had been raped. I told her that I was in school and people came into my room and they raped me.**”**

The health care provider did not help me. Instead, she just referred me to a nearby pharmacy, but I didn't even go there because it would have risked more people finding out that I was pregnant. I revealed to my boyfriend that I was pregnant on his birthday. I had bought him some nice sneakers as his birthday gift and took them to his house as I broke the news of my womb and the results of our escapades and bedroom shenanigans.

Nigga could not believe it. He was dead broke and had nothing on him. But one thing I respect him for is the fact that he let me choose what to do with my own womb. He said “I chose to love you cause I trust your judgement. I am allowing you to make this choice because its how I am showing my love to you.” Ooh can someone tell me why I am not married to this man now? Damn!



He could also be saying these things from a point of poverty, but who knows... I firmly told him that I was not going to keep the pregnancy. I knew that keeping this pregnancy would change the whole trajectory of my life. Although I would grow some ass from the baby fat, it would make me very bitter and sad that I will not be able to complete my studies or everything that I had envisioned for myself.

I took Sh5,000 from the money meant to pay for my school fees and asked my boyfriend to get the rest because Marie Stopes was at that time slapping us with a bill of 15k, with no room for bargaining. At Marie Stopes, I paid for every step of the interventions and it was not peanuts. I almost payed for oxygen I breathed in that facility. It became so expensive that even the 10K I had managed to raise between me and my boyfriend wasn't enough.

As the doctor was doing my scan as I lay my troubled head on the bed, he asked me how much money I had left because I just looked stressed and he knew that their hospital bill was no joke for an adolescent like myself. I told him I only had 5k even though I had 6k left. I needed the extra cash to at least buy some fruits for my pregnant self back home. He suggested to sell me the Abortion pills at 5k instead of going through with the medical abortion since I was only 8 weeks pregnant and the pills would do just fine. I gladly obliged and keenly listened to the instructions.

"I'll give you two tablets. You're going to take one immediately you get home and the other one you're going to put beneath your your lips just under your tongue and this will help terminate the pregnancy," the doctor said. He then gave me his number and told me to call him in case anything goes wrong.

I got home and took the pills as instructed. This is the most pain I have experienced. I could not sit straight or even walk properly and had to pretend before my mum and dad that I was okay so they don't suspect what was actually going on. I was in very dire pain mahn! Any chance I got to be alone, I lay flat on the ground and cried my eyes out with my pillow in my mouth so I don't make a sound. It was a very difficult time in my life and I did it alone.

The bleeding was so heavy, felt the huge lumps of tissue come out of my vagina like chunks of red meat for two days straight. The 1k I had saved at the hospital came in handy in helping me buy very thick sanitary towels. It was very traumatizing. I was in so much pain and had to fake it through it all.

I decided to never speak to the love of my life ever again because he let me walk this terrific journey alone. I also had to drop out of school because they kept sending me away for school fees as my debt had piled up. I talked to my parents and asked to stop schooling until I could afford to pay for it myself and that is how I dropped out of campus. But I am hopeful that I will go back soon.

My name is Mercy Waweru, and this is my story.

7

A high school graduation party that I will never forget

Bridgithah (24 years old)

I was 18 at the time. Fresh from highschool. I vividly remember the day because I had just received my KCSE results and I was beyond elated. My friends and I decided to organize a small party to celebrate our achievements. I had my eyes on one of the boys who came to the party. I had not had sex before and I was eager to experience what it is that makes people hold sex in very high regard.

A few drinks later and I threw all caution was thrown out of the window. Fast forward a few hours later, we had sex and it was consensual and I enjoyed it. The next day I went to a pharmacy and bought P2 and I knew everything would be alright. To my dismay, three weeks later I realized that I was pregnant. I knew what I had to do. I told the boy that I was pregnant and we both agreed to procure an abortion. I went to Marie Stopes to ask about the charges and they insisted that they wanted to do a MVA (Manual Vacuum Aspiration), but the price was way too high at about Sh12,000.

At that time both of us were unemployed and did not have that money. So I decided that I'll do it my own way. I remembered a set book that we had read in high school, *The River And The Source*. One of the characters in the book had taken malaria tablets and a spontaneous miscarriage happened. So I went and bought malaria tablets and waited for the foetus to be expelled. That did not turn out as I had expected. I called the boy and he said he had a friend who could get me abortion pills. At that time I was so desperate. A day later he came with pills and told me that I had to insert them in my vagina. I googled and confirmed that not all abortion pills can be taken orally. I took the pills. Later I started bleeding, profusely.

The pain was something else, I could literally feel my insides being torn apart. We went to a clinic and I was told that the pills I had taken were not abortion pills. We had been conned! At that point I was losing my mind, because why was everything failing? We were then referred to someone who could get us the abortion pills and the price was fair. We both borrowed soft loans and I got the pills and they were effective. I still don't know what those 'fake pills' had done to me. So later after the abortion was a success I went to a gynaecologist and she helped me. Later I had regrets about procuring an abortion. No one really tells you how to handle the guilt of procuring an abortion, and the secrecy only makes it worse.

No one really tells you how to handle the guilt of procuring an abortion, and the secrecy only makes it worse. To this day I still feel guilty, I have never fully healed from that.

To this day I still feel guilty, I have never fully healed from that. But that guilt became my spark to advocate for abortion and provide support to people feeling the same way. I still believe I'll fully heal by helping others, and that makes me sleep at night.

My name is Bridgithah, and this is my story.

8

Returning to school with renewed vigor after overcoming a week of discomfort

Patricia Atieno (20 years old)

I am a 20-year-old university student. I have recently completed my first year of study. While at school, unfortunately, I got pregnant. This came as a shock to me because I thought that I had everything under control.

Being a student, I had no source of income and neither did my boyfriend who is also a student. We both entirely depended on our parents for our survival at school. We would have really loved to keep the pregnancy but this would cause more harm to us and the baby because of the expenses that came with fending for the needs of the baby.

We were already struggling to even have a proper meal at school and having a baby would make matters worse. Furthermore, having a baby would force me to take a break from my studies and this would deter me from thriving and reaching my timely goals. In a nutshell having the baby would disrupt my entire life. We opted for abortion.

My boyfriend and I combined efforts towards getting the money for a safe abortion. Our college is located in the rural areas, and abortion was considered a taboo, so we faced a lot of criticism and discrimination in most of the places we visited in search of the service. The service providers were mean and very hostile.

My boyfriend and I finally decided to do the abortion through pills after advice from a lady that we knew. She prescribed some pills to me. I was very skeptical given the stories that I had heard about abortion gone wrong, but then I did not have a choice, did I? I took the pills that were prescribed with the hope that I won't die.

I was very skeptical given the stories that I had heard about abortion gone wrong, but then I did not have a choice, did I?

I had severe cramp pains that made it hard for me to move around even in my house. It was very hard for me to even attend classes physically. I was bedridden for some time.

One night the pain got intense that I had to call the lady who had prescribed the drugs to my house. She told me to do away with some pills that she had recommended since they were the ones that caused the pain.

After a week I was back on my feet. I was feeling better and was even able to attend my lectures normally. I am now alright and am having my periods normally.

My name is Patricia Atieno, and this is my story.



Divided in love: My best course of action

Maurine (24 years old)

I was 21 years old when I discovered I was pregnant. From the moment I got the results from the doctor, I knew I wasn't ready. I was not emotionally, physically or financially ready to be a mother. I panicked but I am glad I had a good best friend who gave me hope when she told me there are always options if you don't want to keep the pregnancy. I had very little knowledge about abortion. All I knew was that a former classmate had died after an abortion. It didn't help that all my life I had been taught that abortion was a crime and it kills, and anyone who aborts will never be able to conceive again. But I had already made up my mind to terminate it because I was not ready for it.

I told my then boyfriend about it and the decision to terminate. But he was very against it, and told me that if I chose abortion, he would not be part of it. This was very stressful because because I really needed his financial support. I was still a student and I could not afford to go to Marie Stopes hospital. When he backed out, I was on my own and had to use the little cash I had to sort myself out. My best friend explained to me that she had already procured two abortions before and she was still alive and healthy, this gave me a little hope and decided to follow her lead. She took me to this small clinic in Kahawa for the procedure, but I was so scared and negative thoughts kept running in my head because it didn't look like a real hospital.

“My best friend explained to me that she had already procured two abortions before and she was still alive and healthy, this gave me a little hope and decided to follow her lead.”

It got worse when I went in to see the doctor. The room was very smelly and creepy, the equipments were not clean. Scared for my life, I panicked and got out. Luckily, my best friend knew of another doctor in town where we decided to go the next day. He was charging Sh5,000 for the services, while the previous one was charging Sh3,000. I remember seeing so many young girls in line waiting for their turn, and this gave me a little hope and courage because I was not alone. In the waiting room, girls kept going in and coming out crying because of the pain. I became so uncomfortable and worried. The fear in their faces gave me anxiety, and I kept asking myself if I was ready to die. It didn't help that the girl ahead of me in line went in and came out unconscious 20 minutes later, bleeding heavily.

They had to rush her to another hospital because she was unresponsive. I decided at the last minute not to do it because I was too scared and the fear pushed me to keep the pregnancy.

It was a rollercoaster of emotions for 9 months as I kept wishing for a miscarriage, since this was the only circumstance under which I could go to any government hospital for affordable services. But the pregnancy reached term.

When the delivery day arrived, I had terrible complications that almost took my life. I had to go through a C-Section. The baby died 3 days later. I was kind of relieved, but still felt like I could have avoided all the trauma if I had gotten safe abortion services much earlier on. This ordeal really messed me up mentally. I started sinking into depression, blaming myself for not wanting the baby in the first place. I felt like I wasn't myself every time I looked in the mirror and saw the scar.

I ended up attempting suicide two times but luckily it didn't go through. After the traumatizing experience, I started looking for information on sexual and reproductive health and this made me connect with different people who had gone through the same struggles as mine, and some even worse.

Even though I have healed and keep healing, I am still sad that getting safe abortion services is still a big challenge in Kenya, and so many young girls and women are losing their lives in the hands of quacks.

My name is Maurine, and this is my story.



OUR MANIFESTOS/AFFIRMATION

Zamara is where we can dare to dream.

Where we feel seen. And heard. And loved. And cared for.

Zamara is a place where we leave enriched. But also a place we enrich.

A space of mutual respect – one that acknowledges what we come with.

A place that gathers us all, that builds solidarity.

A place that reminds us of our power, our strength, especially when we come together.

Zamara is where those at the margins are centered.

Zamara is where we become, and unbecome.

Zamara is where we can be



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