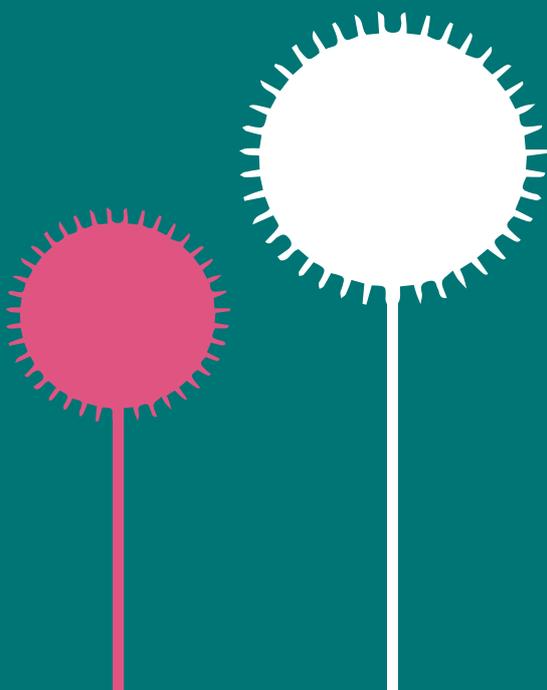


Radio Production Guide: Abortion



Fact Sheet Abortion

Defining abortion

- **Abortion:** the removal of an embryo or fetus from the uterus in order to end a pregnancy. Abortion is also referred to as termination of pregnancy (*Dictionary.com*)
- **Trimester:** A full-term pregnancy is typically 40 weeks, and can range from 37-42 weeks. It's divided into three trimesters. Each trimester lasts between 12 and 14 weeks, or about three months
- **In South Africa, safe and legal abortions** are available up to 20 weeks of pregnancy and performed by a registered professional nurse or doctor in a designated facility, such as a clinic (*Gov.za*)
- **"Backstreet" abortions** are unsafe and illegal procedures performed by people without training or professional qualifications in undesignated facilities, which may lead to serious health complications, including severe bleeding, infections, permanent infertility, and even death (*MarieStopes.org.za*)
- **Self-induced abortions** are abortions performed by the pregnant woman herself or with the help of other, non-medical assistance (*Obstetrics and Gynecology*)

What is the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act?

- The Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act is the law governing abortion in South Africa that protects women's right to get safe, confidential abortions from registered health professionals at designated facilities
- The law restricts procedures at 20 weeks of pregnancy, except in some cases where there is a threat to the woman's health, in which case the procedure must be performed by a doctor.
- The act recognises that the right to decide whether or not to have children is fundamental to women's physical, psychological and social health.
- Under the act, doctors and nurses need to be registered with the Healthcare Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) and have special training to provide safe abortion services.
- The Department of Health has to approve clinics to provide abortion services for them to be a 'designated facility'
- The Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act states that a women can have an abortion at any age (*MarieStopes.org.za*)
- Since the legalisation of abortion in 1996, the number of unsafe abortion-related deaths has decreased by as much as 90%
- The Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act has had no impact on decreasing the rate of illegal abortions taking place in South Africa

(*ngopulse.org*)

"You should never be denied abortion services because of your age. If you're young, health providers may advise you to chat to a trusted adult (a parent, aunt or teacher) and ask someone to accompany you to the centre for your appointment, but this is not required."

(*MarieStopes.org.za*)

"Abortion is a personal choice that is protected by law in South Africa, and is a perfectly acceptable and confidential option for any woman facing an unplanned pregnancy."

(*MarieStopes.org.za*)

Fact Sheet Abortion

A closer look at "backstreet" abortions

- Despite the fact that safe and legal abortions are protected by law, illegal backstreet abortions needlessly injure and kill South African women and girls every year
- The dangers of illegal abortions:
 - **Immediate complications** may include severe bleeding, uterine perforation, tearing of the cervix, severe damage to the genitals and abdomen, internal infection of the abdomen and blood poisoning
 - **Medium term complications** may range from reproductive tract infections and pelvic inflammatory disease to chronic pain.
 - **Late complications** may include a slightly increased risk of infertility and ectopic pregnancy, miscarriage or premature delivery in following pregnancies
 - Aside from other serious dangers, the most common result of illegal abortions is *ineffectiveness*, when the illegal provider gives medication that makes the women sick briefly only to discover she is still pregnant
- The term "backstreet" can be misleading because today many unsafe, illegal providers may appear somewhat legitimate because of slick marketing ads and flashy websites

(*MarieStopes.org.za*)

Why do women seek abortions from illegal providers?

A study in 2005 looked at women's reasons for going to illegal providers, which included not knowing where to access safe abortions, stigma from their communities, judgemental healthcare staff and concerns over confidentiality and cost.

(*ngopulse.org*)

Misinformation

- Many women and girls are not informed of their rights concerning abortion
- Street marketing plays a role in promoting illegal providers. Women see walls and lamp posts plastered with advertisements claiming to offer 'safe', 'pain-free', 'quick' and 'cheap' abortions. The large volume of this advertising in public spaces such as taxi ranks and shopping centres make many women believe they are accessing a legitimate service

(*ngopulse.org*)

(*Unsafe Abortion in South Africa: A Preventable Pandemic*)

Stigma

- Despite abortions being legal in South Africa, in certain communities, there is still a great deal of stigma around abortion.
- 2 out of 3 women who have abortions are afraid about facing stigma if people find out they had an abortion

(*University of Chicago*)

Fear of judgement

- Many women believe they will be treated differently by their friends, family and even by healthcare workers if their terminations are revealed
- Self-induced or illegal abortion procedures are often seen as a way to keep it secret

(*MarieStopes.org.za*)

Why do women seek abortions from illegal providers?

Lack of access

- While free abortions are guaranteed at public hospitals and clinics designated by the government to offer the service, in 2013 less than half the designated facilities offered the procedure
- Scheduling a visit to the clinic can be difficult when working or in school
- Traveling to clinics can be an expensive taxi ride away—for some South Africans, those taxi fares add up to a week's wages

(In South Africa, A Liberal Abortion Law Doesn't Guarantee Access)

Remember your sexual and reproductive rights!

Sexual rights are human rights that relate to sexuality. Reproductive rights relate to a person's fertility, ability to reproduce, reproductive health and family planning.

These rights support you and all people to freely explore and express their sexuality in safe, informed and pleasurable ways.

For example, the Child Act in South Africa protects the rights of children from the age of 12 years old to get contraception, HIV treatment and have an abortion without the parents knowing.

Your sexual rights include:

- The right to equality
- The right to participation in decision-making
- The right to life and to be free from harm
- The right to privacy
- The right to personal freedom and to be recognized as an individual before the law
- The right to think and express oneself freely
- The right to health
- The right to know and learn
- The right to choose whether or not to marry or have children
- The right to have your rights upheld

(Exclaim! IPPF)

"Backstreet abortions are easily prevented if more women are informed of their rights."

(Marie Stopes' Safe Abortion Guide)

Get the facts! Bust the myth!

Myth

"The morning-after pill is the abortion pill."

Fact

The morning-after pill is NOT the same as an abortion procedure. The morning-after pill is emergency contraception taken up to 5 days after having unprotected sex. The morning-after pill is used to PREVENT a pregnancy before it begins.

(Marie Stopes: Emergency Contraception)

"Getting an abortion causes infertility."

FALSE - Safe, legal abortions performed by qualified practitioners are very rarely associated with any future risk to fertility. Most women return to their pre-pregnancy fertility immediately following the abortion procedure. Illegal abortions have a higher chance of infertility, as well as other health risks.

(SAHealth.sa.gov)

"You can't have more than one abortion."

You can safely have more than one legal abortion. Even if you have had an abortion in the past, you continue to have the right to choose whether abortion is right for you.

(Marie Stopes)

"Abortion is seen as a form of contraception."

Legal abortion is safe and used by women when the use of contraception fails or other factors that make using contraception difficult. The majority of women experiencing unplanned pregnancy are using some form of contraception, yet we know that:

- no form of contraception is 100% effective, including sterilisation
- all 'modern' methods of contraception have some associated risks/side effects
- finding suitable contraception is very difficult for some women
- sexual behaviour is not always consensual or predictable

(SAHealth.gov.sa)

"Women seeking unsafe abortions are often doing so out of misinformation and desperation, and we should be careful not to stigmatise them further. The criminals are the people providing surgeries and unregulated medications in undesignated environments – not the women themselves."

(Andrea Thompson, Marie Stopes South Africa)

The facts: Did you know?

Globally...

- The annual rate of abortion, estimated at 35 abortions per 1,000 women between 15–44 years old in 2010–2014, has declined slightly, from 40 per 1,000 in 1990–1994. (*Guttmacher Institute*)
- 25% of pregnancies ended in abortion in 2010–2014. (*Guttmacher Institute*)
- 25 million unsafe abortions (45% of all abortions) occurred every year between 2010 and 2014 (*WHO*)

Prioritising comprehensive abortion and postabortion care



(*Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists*)

A history of abortion in South Africa

- In 1974, South Africa passed the Abortion and Sterilisations Act, which provided abortion only under the most exceptional circumstances. For example, a woman could qualify for an abortion if two state psychiatrists would testify that she was suicidal.
- South Africa's strict abortion law during Apartheid did not stop women from getting abortions.
- Affluent women went to private gynecologists for abortions or travelled abroad for the procedure.
- Women, who did not have the luxury of such options available to them, visited "soap injectors", where soap was syringed into their uterus to initiate an abortion. They would then go to a public health facility.
- Medical Research Council (MRC) research suggests that in the final years of Apartheid, over 400 black women died every year from illegal abortions.
- The Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act was passed entitling South African women of any age to a free abortion at a public facility.
- Despite the law, women's access to abortion is limited for many reasons, including lack of information concerning rights and time constraints of a legal abortion (up to week 20), lack of abortion services, abortion-related stigma and massive public advertising of illegal providers.
- In 2013, less than 40% of designated abortion services were available, according to the NGO *Ipas*.

(*Daily Maverick*)

In South Africa

- Despite abortions being legal, access to legal abortions is still low.
- About half of all abortions in South Africa are illegal—although accurate figures are difficult to obtain, because few people admit to having illegal abortions. (*Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists*)
- According to the South African Medical Research Council, in 2010 49% of abortions undergone by young people between the ages of 13 and 19 took place outside a hospital or clinic and were therefore likely to be unsafe (*ngopulse.org*)
- In a study, 34 out of 194 women reported an unsuccessful attempt to self-induce abortion during the current pregnancy before going to a facility for second-trimester abortion. A readily available herbal product was most commonly used; other methods included taking tablets bought from unlicensed providers and using other herbal remedies. (*South African Medical Journal*)
- Most abortion centres will insist on providing pre- and post-abortion counselling, and the woman can legally demand it, but it is not a legal requirement that abortion centres provide it.

"Lots of women have abortions; women of all races, religions, and sexual orientations and women of a wide range of ages, education and income."

(*Exhaleprovoice.org*)

Where to access legal abortion

- ★ To access a free, legal abortion, visit a local clinic to confirm the pregnancy, receive counselling, make an appointment and get a referral letter to be given to a facility where the procedure can be performed.
- ★ FEM is an SMS platform that refers women to safe and legal abortion service providers in their area, quickly and privately. Text 'Fem' to 30816 via SMS, and receive a referral SMS to a legal and safe health facility in your area.
- ★ Marie Stopes has 14 centres across South Africa. To make an appointment for a safe abortion book online or call: 0800 11 77 85. *BMM Reproductive Health Centre* <http://www.bmmhealth.co.za/>
- ★ LifeLine offers counselling to expectant mothers and those wondering whether abortion is an option. (0861 322 322; Lifelinesa.co.za)
- ★ #SizaMap is an interactive map of public facilities in South Africa that provide termination of pregnancy services. (*Bhekisisa*)

What to expect: Legal abortions

Abortion (up to 20 weeks) is your legal right. When accessing a legal abortion provider you should expect to be treated in a confidential environment by qualified doctors and nurses endorsed by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA). The abortion procedure will be carried out safely and without judgement, and supported by counselling and post-abortion care. (*MarieStopes.org.za*)

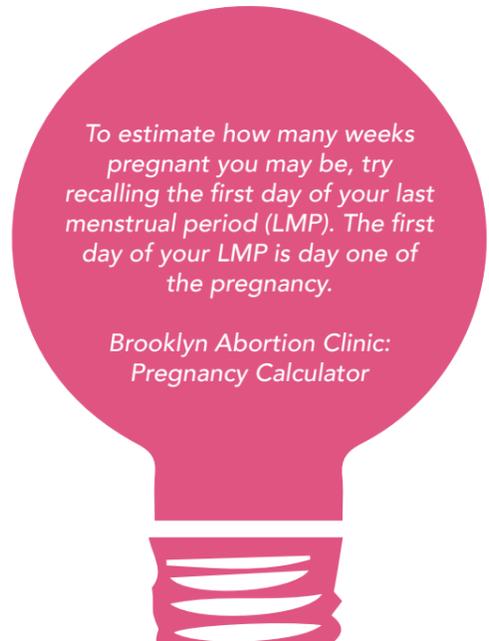
In South Africa there are two abortion methods available:

- Medication abortion involves taking medicine to end a pregnancy
- Surgical abortion is a procedure that uses medical instruments in the vagina and uterus to remove the pregnancy

Take a look at this chart to understand the differences between the two procedures and what you can expect from either one.

Medication abortions	Surgical abortions
Can be used from 4 weeks after last period	May not be available before 6 weeks from last period
For a pregnancy of less than 9 weeks	For a pregnancy of more than 7 weeks
Resembles to natural miscarriage	Involves inserting a tube into the uterus to remove contents
Abortion process lasts one to two days	The operating procedure is completed within 10 to 15 minutes
Women can expect to be at the centre for 2 hours on one day but only 10 to 20 minutes on return visit	Women can expect to be having two clinic visits and be at the health facility for up to five hours on the day of operation procedure
The abortion usually happens at home and support is required	The abortion operation happens in a health facility. Overnight support is advised after anaesthetic. A support person is welcome to attend with you
May be painful for 2 to 3 hours or more after taking the medication	May be mildly painful afterwards when the uterus contracts
Longer period of bleeding up to several weeks	Shorter period of bleeding
Anaesthesia is not needed. Pain medication will be provided for you	Pain medication, light sedation and anaesthesia required for the procedure
Severe complications are rare	Sever complications are rare

(SAHealth.sa.gov)



Illegal abortion providers prey on women's lack of knowledge for their financial gain. Don't be fooled! BE AWARE IF..

- ★ The provider is offering abortions at 20 weeks, outside of a designated hospital. Laws in South Africa restrict procedures at 20 weeks, except in some cases where there is a threat to the woman's health. In these cases, the procedure must be done by a registered doctor
- ★ They only have a mobile number and offer to meet you on a street corner
- ★ They do not perform physical examinations, take a medical history or provide a test/scan to confirm the stage of the pregnancy
- ★ They do not follow basic infection prevention, such as wearing latex gloves, having running water and clean linen and having separate bins for medical waste disposal
- ★ Do not provide all your unplanned pregnancy options and offer counselling
- ★ Do not offer follow up appointments and contact information in case of problems or questions

If you have purchased "abortion pills" from someone who is not a designated provider do NOT consume the medication. Visit a public or private clinic for safe, legal abortion services.

If you are already in the process of an abortion from a non-designated provider, go to your nearest hospital for treatment.

(Marie Stopes' Safe Abortion Guide)

Report illegal abortion practitioners

Report someone anonymously to the authorities by telling your doctor or nurse, or giving the details of the practitioner to the police. You can also report someone directly to the Department of Health on 012 395 8000 or 021 466 7260

Resources

- ★ *Tshidego's story: Unsafe Abortion*
- ★ *Access to Safe and Legal Abortions in SA!*
- ★ *Abortion: 4 Women Share Their Stories*
- ★ **Continue your research!**
- ★ *Illegal Abortion: Facts That Will Shock South Africans*
- ★ *Why are young women still having illegal abortions?*

Preparing for the show

Different ways to talk about abortion

- ★ **The facts about abortion**
- ★ **Women and girls' rights to safe and confidential abortion**
- ★ **Debunking the myths about abortion**
- ★ **The dangers of backstreet abortions**

Choose an angle

The dangers of backstreet abortions

Different ways to talk about: The dangers of backstreet abortions

- ★ **What are the facts about backstreet abortion in South Africa?**
- ★ **What is the history of backstreet abortions in South Africa?**
- ★ **Why do girls and women choose backstreet abortions?**
- ★ **What challenges might a young person encounter in your community when trying to access an abortion?**
- ★ **How can we discourage and stop backstreet abortions?**

FORMATS

Vox Pop

Vox Pop aim: To get many opinions from many people on one topic.

Who do you talk to: Anybody from the community

Vox Pop question: What is a backstreet abortion?

- OR -

Why do girls and women choose backstreet abortions when there are safe, legal abortion options?

Audio commentary

Audio commentary aim: To get people's opinion about a topic that they care deeply about.

Who do you talk to: Ask a young person in the community, without exposing their identity, to explain what they would do if they decided to get an abortion.

Audio profile

Audio profile aim: To get a first person account of someone's experience, passion and journey. Audio profiles often aim to inspire.

Who do you talk to: A woman in the community who can talk about her experience getting an abortion.

Questions to ask to get the person thinking before they record their profile:

- ★ How did you know that getting an abortion was the right choice for you at the time?
- ★ Were you aware of your rights to a safe and confidential abortion?
- ★ Were you able to find support among family or friends?
- ★ How did you go about finding an abortion provider?
- ★ Did you encounter challenges in trying to access abortion services in your community? If so, what were some challenges you faced?
- ★ What are ways to support young women accessing safe, legal abortion services?

FORMATS

Audio profile

Who do you talk to: OR Talk to a healthcare worker who provides safe legal abortions at a designated facility.

Questions to ask to get the person thinking before they record their profile:

- ★ How does your facility ensure that the rights and confidentiality of young people are respected when accessing abortion services?
- ★ Does your facility offer pre-counselling and post-counselling for young women that want to have an abortion?
- ★ What are some of the challenges you encounter as a healthcare worker that provides abortion services?

PSA

The aim of a Public Service Announcement or PSA: To create public awareness / to spread a message.

Example of a PSA:

1.

Voice 1: Andile, I'm pregnant and my parents are going to kill me if they find out! I want to get rid of this without anyone knowing.

Voice 2: Eish, Busi, it's ok. We'll go to the clinic together and figure out what to do.

Voice 1: So the nurse can tell my mom and the whole neighborhood?! No, thanks.

Voice 2: Listen, I hear you. But you've got the right to privacy - and if you choose to keep it quiet, the nurse is legally obligated to NOT tell your mom or the neighborhood.

Slogan: By law, any health appointments and requests must be kept confidential by the professionals you speak to. You have a right to privacy and legal and safe abortion services.

2.

Voice 1: I'm too young for all the responsibility of having a baby.

Voice 2: I've got two kids, and they're enough for me.

Voice 3: I'm in school, I've got exams and it's not a good time for me to be pregnant.

Voice 4: My contraceptive method failed, and a pregnancy is not part of the plan.

Voice 5: I was raped and I don't want to keep the pregnancy.

Voice 6: I just don't want to be pregnant.

Slogan: No matter your age, education, income, race, religion or sexual orientation, your reason for ending your unwanted pregnancy is legitimate. You have the right to a safe and legal abortion.

How to present your show

Use your produced radio formats, your research and the suggested questions to write your own script.

Please note there are also interview questions in the sample show



[INTRO:]
 Host 1: It's just gone [TIME] and you're just in time for the [NAME OF SHOW] on [RADIO STATION]. My name is [NAME].
 Host 2: And my name is [NAME], and today's show is all about abortions! Yes, my friends, you heard it. We'll be breaking the silence around the right to access legal and safe abortions in South Africa!
 Host 1: That's right, we'll be talking about why it's so important that young people have access to information and legal and safe abortion services, as well as the knowledge of our rights so we can make informed decisions about our health. 'Cause get this - even though South Africa has one of the most progressive abortion laws in the world, about half of the abortions here are illegal and unsafe!
 Host 2: Today, we'll be focusing on the dangers of backstreet abortions. Young women and girls needlessly suffer severe health complications and very sadly, even death from backstreet abortions. We need the information to start open and honest conversations about how to access safe and legal health services when we need them.
 Host 1: Let's hear more on what people think about backstreet abortions.

[PRESENT WHO IS BEING INTERVIEWED]
[PLAY THE INTERVIEW]

- Suggested questions for your interview with someone who knows about the reality of safe and legal abortions, as well as backstreet illegal abortions (local doctors and nurses, activists)
- What is an abortion?
 - What is the Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act? What does the act do?
 - What is a backstreet abortion?
 - What are the dangers of backstreet abortions?
 - Why do people choose backstreet abortions?
 - How do young people recognise illegal, unsafe abortion providers?
 - What are ways to make abortions more accessible to people?
 - What advice would you give young people who choose to have an abortion?

[OUTRO:]
 Host 1: Today, we've learnt why it's important for young people to be aware of their right to access legal, safe and confidential abortions! It's been such a wake up call to realise how much misinformation, stigma, fear of judgement and lack of access put young people into dangerous situations.
 Host 2: Yes, it may be a tricky conversation to get started, but it's also an amazing opportunity to learn how to make informed decisions about our bodies.
 Host 1: Next week on [DAY] at [TIME] we'll be talking all about [NEXT WEEK'S SHOW TOPIC]. Until then, it's bye from us!

Show outline

General intro
Intro to vox pop
Vox pop
Outro vox pop
Music transition
Intro audio commentary
Audio comentary
Outro audio commentary
Music transition & jingle
Intro interview (and/or intro audio profile)
Interview (and/or audio profile)
Outro interview (and/or outro audio profile)
Music transition & jingle
PSA
General outro
Music/End



Presentation tips
 You must always introduce your show and radio formats. Then once you've played your formats, have a concluding statement for each one. Don't forget a final conclusion for the very end of the show. Use links (facts, tips, did you knows, music) to glue it all together.

Ethics and consent

This is a sensitive topic, so make sure you inform your interviewees properly and get their full consent.

