

Battles to Save Lives

This WIA issue on ABORTION BATTLES is not a collection of articles on the debates between the anti-abortion and pro-choice positions. It will not resolve the tensions these two polarised positions have created. Nor will it convert the staunch anti-abortionist to a pro 'woman's' life supporter.

Rather it is a collection of articles on the battles being waged by individuals, organisations, and civil societies from around the world for legal and affordable access to safe and empowering abortion services for women when and where they choose it.

It brings to the forefront the feminist gains and growth in the advocacy for safe abortion and in providing the services that save women's lives and their families. Such are revealed in the articles on: Amnesty International's perseverance for a progressive abortion position; the legal recognition and state-supported safe abortion services achieved by countries like Vietnam, Nepal, and Mexico as described by Do Thi Hong Nga, Melissa Upreti, and Laura Miranda respectively; and the continued commitment and creativity of groups such as the Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW), Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights (WGNRR), Centre for Reproductive Rights (CRR), and Women on Waves, in their unyielding work to position safe abortion as a core concern of feminist movements and development agendas.

It also confronts the struggles and uncompromising resistance of local groups and social movements against repressive religious institutions as told by academics Michael Tan and Lalaine Viado; against dogmatic governments and rigid cultural practices as shared by activist Reihanna Mobideen; and against imposed nuclear family structures through the one 'preferably male' child policy of China, as conveyed by feminist writer Nina Somera. Equally important to collective experiences are the personal stories, dilemmas, and ambivalence of individual women who undergo abortions, narrated by journalist and reproductive rights advocate Rina Jimenez David and feminist film maker Kyung Soon.

This issue also features stories about the unfinished business for reproductive justice. Countries such as the United States and Colombia highlight the challenges in implementing laws that allow abortion and supposedly protect women who choose to access such services. Marlene Gerber Fried and Monica Roa talk about the social stigma placed on women who choose to have abortions, the legal restrictions they face, as well as the relentless threats and violent attacks on reproductive rights and abortion service providers.

This WIA issue offers a snapshot of abortion battles waged against feminist positions and battles waged by feminist positions.

It is with pride and utmost appreciation that WIA recognises its guest editor Dr. Junice Demeterio-Melgar and her LIKHAAN team, for providing the political framing of this issue and for the linkages to individuals and networks, several of whom are featured as contributors in this issue. This issue on abortion is a first for WIA, a first for Isis International – we draw our strength to produce it from our network of friends and organisations, all of whom have in one way or another contributed not just to this publication, but to the actual and steadfast advocacy and direct service for safe abortion globally.



Tesa de Vela
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