

Abortion in the Philippines

Part 1:

A teen-aged girl gets pregnant from rape. A poor woman, bleeding from an abortion, collapses after being shunned by several hospitals.

Despite legal and cultural prohibitions, over half a million women in the Philippines resort to abortion each year. These women do so under pain of being maligned, ostracized and physically harmed to the point of losing their lives. Why do so many assume so much risk? How much value does Philippine society put on women's lives? How should society respond, especially the health sector, which holds itself to healing all?

These issues are explained in this film which is based on the real-life stories of four women: a teenager, a poor single mother, an ailing pregnant woman, and a young struggling doctor. It captures their circumstances, their reasons, how they sought and had abortions, how they were treated by health personnel, and the tragic deaths of two. Thoughtful and challenging commentaries are provided by Prof. Elizabeth Aguilin-Pangalangan, a professor of the UP College of Law; Dr. Junice L. D. Melgar, Executive Director of Likhaan (which researched the stories); Dr. "Nilda", an Obstetrician-Gynecologist who cared for two of the women; Prof. Mary Racelis, a professor of the Ateneo Department of Sociology and Anthropology; and Dr. Alberto Romualdez Jr., former Secretary of the Department of Health.

Agaw-Buhay (Fighting for Life) literally describes the tragic struggle of two women in the film. However, it also describes the life-threat of unsafe abortion to over 1,500 women who daily face risks due to what they deem as "desperate reasons." Finally, Agaw-Buhay is a plea for a sober and objective re-weighing by society of abortion and the true worth of women's lives.

CREDITS

PRODUCER: Likhaan Center for Women's Health, with assistance from the Guttmacher Institute • EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS: Nowell Cuanang and Joseph Conrad Rubio • DIRECTOR: Rember Gelera • WRITTEN BY: Nowell Cuanang • ASSOCIATE PRODUCER: Cris Sto. Domingo • EDITORS: Ryan Guilas and Rico Salvan • PRODUCTION DESIGNER: Fritz Silorio • CAMERAMEN: Disney Carreon and Joe Carlo Morales • ASSISTANT CAMERAMAN: Jam Morales • TALENT COORDINATOR: Corazon Buenaventura • VOICE TALENT: Toni Pua • PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS: Andy del Rosario and Christine del Rosario
RESEARCH: Jocelyn C. Pacete and Shiela N. Conde
Filipino language with English subtitles
*** Family planning and reproductive health saves lives! ***

Part 2:

A severely-ill woman dies while doctors debate on whether or not to give her an abortion. A young doctor was raped and dies from an illegal and unsafe abortion.

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