

ISSUES OF SAFE ABORTIONS IN MALAYSIA

Reproductive Rights and Choice

Editors

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**UNIVERSITY
OF MALAYA**

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PROJECT REPORTS

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FOREWORD

This publication is a significant contribution towards ensuring access to safe abortion in Malaysia.

The three studies contained herein are important insights into the perceptions, understanding and attitudes prevalent in society and the health system, which may create barriers for particularly poor, young and otherwise marginalized women who need access to these services.

The choice of the target group surveyed within each study has been both strategic and important in furthering the understanding of where the bottlenecks in service provision are located. The first study looks at prevailing knowledge and perceptions of medical students on abortion, the second on doctors' knowledge and attitudes, and the final one reviews the real life experiences of women who have undergone pregnancy termination. These studies are critical to understanding the challenges and formulating effective responses towards ensuring that the needs of women are met.

Unsafe abortion in Malaysia accounts for 1 in 5 maternal deaths over the period 1995 – 2006¹. While data on the prevalence of abortions in Malaysia is not available, the contribution that unsafe abortions make to maternal deaths is significant both globally and nationally, and warrants serious attention in the face of last-mile issues in reducing the maternal mortality ratio towards achieving the Millennium Development Goal 5 target before 2015.

UNFPA commends the team of researchers involved in all three studies for their commitment, insight and strategic approach towards obtaining evidence on an area of research that is often neglected, namely human attitudes and perceptions, and the ways in which these influence the quality of services received by women across the country.

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