



ABORTION IN ETHIOPIA—FAST FACTS

In Ethiopia, one in seven women die from pregnancy-related causes, and unsafe abortion causes more than half of the 20,000 maternal deaths that occur annually. For much of Ethiopia's modern history, safe abortion services were unavailable. In fact, abortion was only allowed when it physically put the woman's life at risk. Motivated by the growing death toll from unsafe abortion and other related causes, advocates, providers and policymakers sought legal reform. In 2004, the Ethiopian Parliament voted to approve a new, progressive law. Though the new Criminal Code of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia maintains the legal prohibition of abortion, it stipulates that **abortion is allowed by law** in the following conditions:

- when the pregnancy results from rape or incest;
- when continuance of the pregnancy endangers the health or life of the woman or the fetus;
- in cases of fetal abnormalities;
- for women with physical or mental disabilities;
- for minors who are physically or psychologically unprepared to raise a child;
- in the case of grave and imminent danger that can be averted only through immediate pregnancy termination.

The revised law establishes that poverty and other social factors may be grounds for reducing the criminal penalty for abortion and that in cases of rape or incest, no proof is required beyond the woman's statement that it has occurred. By allowing abortion for minors who are unprepared to raise a child, the law also marks a significant change for Ethiopia, where adolescents make up more than 45 percent of those seeking abortions.

Ethiopia's law reform has increased women's access to safe abortion services, which means fewer maternal deaths and injuries. Ipas Ethiopia, in collaboration with the Ethiopian Ministry of Health, continues to develop new training models for providers and work to expand comprehensive, safe options to terminate and prevent unintended pregnancies.