

Not Yet Rain

There is an African proverb that reads, “Thunder is Not Yet Rain.” In Ethiopia, the liberalization of an abortion law in 2006 marked tremendous promise for improving women’s reproductive healthcare and reducing death and injury from unsafe abortion, however, changing the law was just the first step – the sound of thunder. Women in Ethiopia continue to wait for rain: unsafe abortion still accounts for approximately 32 percent of maternal mortality in Ethiopia.

Ipas, with the support of the Overbrook Foundation and other donors, is pursuing a long-range goal to build an effective constituency for U.S. foreign aid policies that support safe abortion as a matter of human rights. To that end, Ipas has partnered with Emmy-nominated independent filmmaker Lisa Russell to produce ***Not Yet Rain***, a documentary about unsafe abortion in Ethiopia using the voices of women who have faced the challenge of finding safe care. We are using the documentary and the accompanying tools found on our website www.notyetrain.org to create community conversations around critical issues in women’s reproductive health and rights.

Russell traveled to Ethiopia in 2008 and recorded interviews with women, men, community leaders and health care providers in the capitol of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, and in the rural town of Zeway. Through their stories, we see the important role that safe abortion care plays in the overall health of women and their families. The film is available for free download at www.notyetrain.org. Ipas is encouraging partners around the country to offer public screenings of the video, and is initiating a viral campaign to distribute the film electronically to increase awareness about unsafe abortion.

U.S. policies have not adequately addressed the public health tragedy of unsafe abortion nor have they recognized the linkages between abortion and human rights. A major goal for this film is to increase the dialog about unsafe abortion within the U.S. and clearly establish a link between human rights and reproductive health policies. Ipas has initiated a publicity campaign to make partner organizations and people who are interested in reproductive health and human rights aware of the film, and to encourage public screenings. Ipas offers an event guide, free copies of the DVD and a discussion guide, and fact sheets about unsafe abortion to help with public screenings.

Not Yet Rain profiles two young women, Tigist (20-years-old) and Belynash (19) who both became pregnant following rapes. While working in a tea room, Tigist was raped by a man whose marriage proposal she had refused. She chose to end the pregnancy that resulted from the rape because she was unable to emotionally or financially support a child. An evaluation at a local health center determines that to receive a safe abortion, Tigist must travel to a regional hospital – a very complicated proposition in the rural area where she lives. Belynash also became pregnant as a result of rape.



Tigist standing outside the clinic

Together, she and her friend Tigist seek safe abortion care. Like Tigist, Belynash must also travel to a regional hospital, the only place where health-care workers have the training and tools needed to provide them with safe care.

The film chronicles Tigist's and Belynash's visits with health-care professionals, and captures their thoughts and emotions as they negotiate the decisionmaking and logistics of having an abortion in Ethiopia. Interviews with health-care professionals, advocates, traditional healers, and people affected by unsafe abortion provide a very complex and emotional picture about gender, poverty, and human rights and how the three converge with the issue of abortion.



Belynash and Tigist: "We just want to be happy."

"The power of the film," said Elizabeth Maguire, Ipas president and CEO, "is that it shows what a difference safe abortion care makes in a woman's life. We *know* how to address unsafe abortion. The solutions are available and affordable."

Worldwide, unsafe abortion claims nearly 67,000 women's lives each year, but the religious and political controversy surrounding abortion has kept this major public health issue relatively hidden. ***Not Yet Rain*** breaks through the rhetoric, addressing unsafe abortion both from a public health perspective *and* a woman's perspective.

Ipas is working with the Ministry of Health in Ethiopia to improve comprehensive reproductive health services. This includes training and equipping health-care providers at all levels — especially at the community level — in providing safe legal induced abortion, treatment of the complications of unsafe abortion and provision of contraception to reduce repeat abortions.

Lisa Russell, the director of ***Not Yet Rain***, is a documentary filmmaker with a background in international health. She has made a career of using film to advocate for greater public attention to global health. Russell brings the experiences of her subjects to the fore to tell their own stories, bringing emotional depth to challenging issues.

"We hope viewers will watch the film, share it with their friends, post it on their blogs or Web sites and support organizations like Ipas that work to end needless deaths and injuries from unsafe abortion," said Maguire. "We think that after seeing this film, viewers will agree that no woman should have to die because she lacks access to safe reproductive choices."

