

## **The abortion issue**

Abortion remains one of the most controversial issues still being debated in this 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is because, at the heart of the abortion dispute, lies controversy about the very definition of life and, unless consensus is reached about the very way we define human life and what defines a person, no one abortion policy will ever be agreed upon by everyone.

Abortion is a way to end pregnancy and there are three ways it can be done – with medication, vacuum aspiration or through surgery. Medication is used only in the first few weeks after pregnancy. After this period, abortion has to be performed by aspiration or surgically. The most common methods are suction aspiration, where the abortionist uses a very powerful suction pipe to suck out the foetus from the womb and curettage, where the abortionist uses a loop-shaped steel knife to scrape the foetus out of the womb. Drugs and saline solution can also be given to the mother or introduced into the womb to induce premature labour and delivery of a dead baby.

There are many reasons why a woman might choose to have an abortion. She may not be ready to become a parent or cannot afford a baby or already has all the children she wants. She might not want anyone to know she had had sex or is pregnant. There are also cases where her husband, partner or parent forces her to have an abortion. Alternatively, it is possible that she, or the foetus, has a health problem and the pregnancy endangers her life. A minority of women who choose abortion have been victims of rape or incest and find themselves psychologically and emotionally unable to take care of the resulting baby.

Those who advocate abortion claim that it enables women to control their lives, pursue their dreams and ultimately improve their socio-economic status. They view unplanned children as the cause of missed chances in education and career opportunities and defend abortion as a ‘woman’s right’. For those advocates, abortion has come to represent an important political symbol of the emancipated woman’s right to control her own body. On the other side of the controversy, are pro-life activists who argue that the right to life is the most basic and important right that we have and what grows in the womb after conception is indeed human life that commands respect. They argue that the right of a woman to control her own body cannot override the fundamental right to life that the unborn child has and that abortion counts as a crime. Nowadays, abortion has been liberalized in almost all developed countries and, while the pace of abortion law reform has slowed, the overall movement is still in the direction of liberalization.

Whether legal or not, every year millions of individual women round the world – of all cultural, religious and economic backgrounds – seek an abortion when they cannot carry a pregnancy to term. History has proved that laws do not stop abortion.