



2021

GLOBAL SAFE ABORTION DIALOGUE

KEY HIGHLIGHTS & PRIORITIES

Thank you to the many groups for bringing this conversation together



BACKGROUND

The third Global Safe Abortion Dialogue was a gathering of frontline activists, service providers, implementing partners, policy makers, funders and other stakeholders from across the world who came together to share their strategies and perspectives on how best to strengthen national and global movements for safe abortion. The Dialogue took place virtually from April 15-29th 2021, organised by AmplifyChange, Ipas, MSI Reproductive Choices, Sida, and Trust for Indigenous Culture and Health.

MORE INCLUSIVE THAN EVER BEFORE

Over
2
weeks

we held
41
sessions

with
650+
attendees

from
250
organisations

representing
50+
countries

We are at a critical juncture in ensuring the right to safe abortion. Much progress has been made by working together over the last four years and the Global Gag Rule has been repealed. But we have met significant challenges with the COVID-19 pandemic, shifts in funding for comprehensive abortion care programmes and the continuous push-back on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and gender equality.

The Dialogue expanded its participation from previous events and invited activists, donors, governments, researchers, international development actors, and UN bodies to revisit and revise the Common Agenda, outlining priorities for the future of the abortion rights movement and reflecting the diversity of its actors and the wide range of needs. The meeting combined Linking x Learning events facilitated by national and regional activists from Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin and Central America, with a Policy Dialogue to encourage greater co-ordination and collaboration amongst stakeholders and decision-makers from across the international abortion policy community. The Linking and Learning sessions comprised of a week of focused panels on specific countries, that offered deeper learning on lessons learned and new developments in expansion of abortion care. Throughout the Policy dialogue, leaders from government, UN and civil society demonstrated a high level of commitment to expanding access to safe abortion and working more collaboratively to advance reproductive rights for all persons.

KEY OUTCOMES

- Brought together diverse voices from across the abortion rights spectrum
- Increased dialogue between civil society, donors and other key players in the abortion rights movement
- Recalibrated priorities for a more resilient future for movement building, advocacy and delivery of quality care.
- Highlighted the importance of safe abortion to the SDGs, COVID recovery and wider development agendas and the need for integration within forthcoming international initiatives such as the GEF and G7 girls education commitments.

We need to work at all levels to eradicate discrimination and stigma connected to abortion. We cannot talk about safe abortion without talking about gender or women's financial empowerment.

Euphrasie N'tchin Coulibaly

Ipas Youth and Community Engagement Associate

LINKING X LEARNING: KEY MESSAGES

The Dialogue hosted **28 webinar sessions** led by movements from across Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Europe.



The key priorities raised included:

- Despite progress, abortion continues to be stigmatised and opposition is well funded and organised. Stigma happens at all levels – from women and girls isolated within communities to the failure of abortion to be integrated in training of health workers, planning and delivery of health systems.
- Prioritise SRHR, particularly safe abortion: donor support needs to be maintained and strengthened and domestic financing must be advocated for and mobilised.
- Flexible funding is needed directly to grassroots civil society organisations to enable them to better respond to changing contexts and emerging opportunities.
- Self-care, task-sharing and demedicalisation are opening new pathways for women to access an abortion when and how they need it. But many providers and women themselves need the confidence and reassurance of appropriate legal and regulatory frameworks.
- Laws and policies matter - we must stay focused on removing legal restrictions on abortion as they continue to be a key determinant of access to abortion rights.
- Increase collaboration and exchange across countries to improve best practices and share strategies.
- Civil society champions for SRHR are more competent and more diverse than ever before. Civil society needs support to push for change at all levels, community to government. Funding is essential to support civil society strengthening.
- Enhance collaboration across sectors – community, governmental, civil society, medical, and others – as a crucial tool in furthering abortion rights and access.

POLICY DIALOGUE: OUR KEY PRIORITIES MOVING FORWARD

Over 100 representatives from a range of organisations took part in a policy dialogue that established the following 8 priorities for the international abortion rights community. In addition to the 8 cross-cutting priorities, specific and actionable priorities under each Common Agenda segment were identified that will lay the ground for a joint road map going forward.

The 8 priorities established were:

- 1. Intersectional and inclusive movements from the local to the international**
Work towards strengthening, funding and supporting an ecosystem where an intergenerational, intersectional and inclusive (grassroots, people who have had abortions etc) safe abortion movement effectively connects with broader civil/human rights and health movements.
- 2. Responsive funding**
Additional, flexible and long-term funding focused on OECD DAC recipient countries without forgetting “middle-income” countries.
- 3. Person-centered quality abortion care**
Establish a comprehensive range of pathways to access care, including after 12 weeks, by maximising choice for users and opportunities for self-managed abortion, pharmacy provision, demedicalisation and task-sharing for providers.
- 4. More and greater co-ordination**
Improve donor collaboration on commodity procurement, improve market coordination, UHC and/or health system integration and civil society coordination. Ensure that abortion is mainstreamed in all SRHR, health and human rights programmes.
- 5. Support risk, creatively**
Support more innovative commodity distribution options, rethink funding strategies and fund raising efforts for both self-managed abortion and the funding and support of vibrant informal grassroots movements.
- 6. Advocacy and accountability**
Enhance accountability at national level and strengthen existing regional and international frameworks and legal mechanisms. Improve availability of data on abortion and shifting power in research. Support a comprehensive approach to advocacy strategies, building movements at all levels and engaging with the spectrum of laws, policies and regulations that limit access.
- 7. Countering Opposition**
Develop and support a strategic approach to organised opposition and harmful conservative norms, by taking a broader and more long-term view of opposition groups (e.g. anti-gender, anti-democracy or anti-human rights groups, deploying a range of tactics and linking across countries).
- 8. Abortion in humanitarian settings, & adaptation for resilience & preparedness**
Optimise practice from lessons learned from all settings, including crisis settings and from COVID-19 pandemic. Harmonize and create synergies across the humanitarian, peace and development nexus.

COMMON AGENDA FOR SAFE ABORTION: THE 8 ESSENTIALS

The Safe Abortion Dialogue was designed around a framework based on 8 pillars of a well-functioning abortion ecosystem.

This year our updated framework incorporated self-managed abortion and funding to the framework, so expanding the pillars from 6 to 8.



First, we have to address the underlying inequalities and inequities in our health policies that put so many women and girls at risk. Achieving universal health coverage built on a foundation of primary health care must include access to contraception and safe abortion care, to the full extent of the law, as well other services for sexual and reproductive health.

Second, we can only address these issues through partnership and cooperation between governments, civil society and non-state actors.

Third, we have to learn the lessons of this pandemic so that we can address the weakness in our health systems that result in women and girls losing access to essential health services during emergencies.



Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

Director General World Health Organization at the Global Safe Abortion Dialogue Closing Event

LEARNINGS

Learnings from the Global Safe Abortion Dialogues will feed into regional conversations, namely, the Latin America Safe Abortion Dialogue in June and the ongoing virtual Asia Safe Abortion Dialogue. It will also serve as the basis for a dedicated conversation between funders immediately after the dialogues, to review, discuss and align for more effective and appropriate support to the movement as well as dedicated high-level advocacy. Recommendations will also be integrated into the deliberations at the Generation Equality Forum taking place in Paris in June. A comprehensive report of the meeting, including a summary from the funder circle will be available to participants and on request. For more information about the Global Safe Abortion Dialogues, please contact Amplify Change at alex.lemay@amplifychange.org.