

## Freedom Starts With Her: An Advocacy Primer

When the U.S. Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade* in 2022, it didn't just change the law—it changed lives.

More than 20 states have banned or severely restricted abortion, while the administration has made deep cuts to U.S. foreign aid, shuttering clinics and stripping millions abroad of essential sexual and reproductive health care, including access to birth control, menstrual health services and protections from sexual violence.

These aren't isolated crises. They are part of the same fight: a coordinated, well-funded assault on reproductive freedom that spans continents. What happens in Dallas ripples to Nairobi. What happens in Washington echoes in Dhaka. And when women and girls are denied the right to decide, the costs are measured in lost education, deepened poverty, and communities left unstable.

That is why we say: **Freedom Starts With Her.**

It starts with a girl in Tanzania who dreams of teaching, a mother in Nepal building her business, a teenager in Texas determined to graduate. Their circumstances differ, but their struggle is the same—the fight for dignity, agency, and opportunity.

**This campaign is our call to action:** to stand with women and girls everywhere, defend their right to make decisions about their bodies and futures, and build a world where freedom is not the exception, but the standard.

**We invite you to join us.** This primer will give you the grounding, facts, and tools you need to raise your voice, spark conversations, and take action for change.



## What's at Stake

Around the world, the rollback of reproductive rights is rewriting lives against the will of women and girls. U.S. funding cuts alone threaten to deny 50 million women and girls access to contraception—forcing teenagers out of school, costing women their jobs, and putting mothers' lives at risk. Every day, more than 800 women die from preventable causes related to pregnancy and childbirth, a toll made worse by policies that restrict basic care.

These attacks don't happen in isolation. More than 230 million women and girls have undergone female genital mutilation or cutting, and 12 million girls are married before 18 each year—many pulled from school and pushed into adult responsibilities too soon. The crisis is not confined to distant villages. In the United States, women are driving hundreds of miles, even risking criminal penalties, just to access care. **The result is the same everywhere: lost potential, weakened communities, and futures cut short.**





# The U.S. Role in Reproductive Health: Power, Progress, and Setbacks

For decades, the United States played a central role in advancing global sexual and reproductive health and rights. In the 1960s and 1970s, leaders across party lines recognized that family planning and reproductive health were not only about health interventions, but a driver of stability, prosperity, and human rights. This bipartisan commitment expanded access to contraception, strengthened health systems, and became a cornerstone of U.S. foreign assistance, elevating the U.S. as the largest bilateral donor to family planning/reproductive health assistance.

**That leadership mattered. Between 1990 and 2020, global maternal mortality was cut nearly in half, in large part because of sustained international investment.** Millions of women gained access to reliable birth control, education, and health services that allowed them to make choices about their futures. The United States' engagement sent a powerful message: that reproductive freedom is not optional, but essential.

Yet the same influence that once expanded opportunity has also, at times, caused harm. Alongside decades of progress, U.S. policies and movements have enforced restrictions, like the Global Gag Rule, and perpetuated misinformation and stigma that undermine decades of global progress, including slashing \$600 million in reproductive health foreign assistance to partner countries and UN agencies.

From the spread of misinformation by U.S. anti-rights groups targeting rural communities across Africa and Asia, to baseless attacks questioning the FDA's credibility and the safety of abortion pills, to the mischaracterization of birth control and IUDs as abortion-inducing, to denying young people the right to learn about their bodies and their reproductive health—the assaults on truth, access, and dignity are multiplying. And it jeopardizes decades of progress.



## Solutions Worth Fighting For

Her dignity, her body, and her future are more than political bargaining chips. Women and girls deserve bodily autonomy and control over their futures.

- When a girl has access to menstrual health supplies, she has the freedom to stay in school.
- When a woman has access to contraception, she has the freedom to decide if and when to become pregnant.
- When a young person learns about their body and their rights, they have the freedom to resist harmful practices.

And when we raise our voices together—**Freedom Starts With Her.**

What's more, every dollar invested in comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights—including family planning, maternal health, and reproductive justice—yields about four dollars in health and economic returns.. The returns are measured in lives saved, opportunities created, and communities strengthened.





By standing with her and joining our movement, you'll gain access to the tools and resources you need to:

**FIGHT FOR BETTER LAWS.** Push Congress to pass legislation like the Global Health, Empowerment, and Rights Act (H.R.764, S.280); the Saving Lives and Taxpayer Dollars Act (H.R.4516, S.2252); and the Reproductive Rights are Human Rights Act (H.R. 4888, S.2671). These can serve as the antidote to bad policies that erode rights and freedoms.

**HOLD LEADERS ACCOUNTABLE.** Call out—and call in—elected officials who vote to block funding for reproductive health care at home or abroad. Our representatives need to hear that we, who are their constituents, expect them to defend freedom, not restrict it.

**MOBILIZE LOCALLY.** Mobilize in your local community to share information, exchange ideas, and stay informed.

**CHANGE THE NARRATIVE.** Counter misinformation by speaking up—on social media, in letters to the editor, or in conversations with friends and family. Stories move hearts, and facts change minds.

**STAND IN SOLIDARITY.** Join global days of action, sign petitions, and share messages from women and youth leaders around the world. Show that their fight is our fight, and that together we are louder, stronger, and unstoppable.

**SUPPORT ADVOCATES ABROAD.** Donate to local organizations and movements—here in the U.S. and in over 35 countries—that are fighting every day to protect reproductive rights and expand access to care. Your gift fuels our courage and impact.



## Take Action Today

Freedom Starts With Her and you have a role to play. Here are actions you can take today:

**SIGN ON.** Use the power of the pen to make your voice heard! Key legislation to protect women and girls, like the Reproductive Rights are Human Rights Act and the Global Health, Empowerment, and Rights Act, will be introduced to Congress. Sign up here and you'll be provided with updates on the bills and able to add your name to letters sent directly to lawmakers urging Congress to pass laws like these that enforce reproductive freedom for all.

**GET INFORMED.** Be the first to get updates on our forthcoming [Learning Lab](#) series that kicks off in 2026 designed for new champions. Learn the issues, build advocacy skills from the strategies our partners abroad have pioneered, and be inspired to act locally. In the meantime, access our [resource page](#) to learn about the issues to kick-start your advocacy journey.

**SPEAK OUT.** Get the Freedom Starts With Her advocacy toolkit (coming soon) with everything you need: questions to ask your members of Congress, templates for op-eds and letters, scripts for phone calls, and ideas for organizing community conversations on campus or with friends.

**SHOW YOUR SOLIDARITY.** Send a postcard to show your solidarity with leaders like Christina in Malawi, Monica in Kenya, or Guillermina in Mexico—and donate \$100 to receive a Freedom Starts With Her tote bag to amplify your support.

**FUEL THE GLOBAL MOVEMENT.** Contribute \$25 to fund the bold work of advocates across 36 countries. As you fight for freedoms at home, your gift ensures that activists abroad can speak truth to power and claim the same rights.

When women and girls are free to decide, they thrive not just as mothers or daughters, but as leaders, innovators, and visionaries. And when they thrive, communities and nations prosper.

Her future is worth defending. Her freedom is worth fighting for.

Join us. Raise your voice. Stand with her.  
Visit [freedomstartswithher.org](https://freedomstartswithher.org).

