

VITAL INSIGHTS FOR DONORS

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VOICES TO INSPIRE

The abortion rights landscape has been evolving across the United States and Latin America for decades. In Latin America, the Marea Verde ("Green Wave") movement that originated in Argentina rapidly spread across the region, catalyzing policy change for women's autonomy, which led to the legalization of abortion in Argentina (2021), Colombia (2022), and several Mexican states. In the United States, the fall of *Roe v. Wade* in 2022 triggered a wave of state-level restrictions and renewed anti-abortion policy advocacy. Since then, reproductive rights movements and advocates have responded with legal challenges, ballot initiatives, and reform effort, which have met both progress and resistance.

The VITAL project identified key factors shaping abortion policy across the Americas and fostered cross-border learning among advocates, practitioners, activists, and policymakers. Through 45 key informant interviews and three focus groups in Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, and the United States, we explored what enables or hinders successful abortion rights advocacy, how and why movements collaborate, and how they have responded to policy challenges in their respective contexts. The findings from VITAL highlight actionable lessons and strategies that can inform practical, context-specific, and collaborative approaches to advancing abortion rights and access across the region.



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KEY ISSUES FOR DONORS

Donors' choices about how much to invest, where to invest, and for how long can determine whether movements thrive or falter. In the United States and Latin America, reproductive justice movements depend on sustained funding to build momentum and defend gains. Yet, too often, resources are limited, overly restricted, inconsistent, and/or distributed inequitably, leaving activists and leaders without the support they need to meet evolving challenges.

THE SPORADIC AND COMPETITIVE NATURE OF THE CURRENT FUNDING LANDSCAPE FOR ABORTION RIGHTS CREATES TENSION AND FOSTERS SILOES RATHER THAN SOLIDARITY AND COLLABORATION.

Building strong, unified grassroots mobilization requires sustained investment in education, community empowerment, access, and localized support. For reproductive justice organizations, this often creates heavy reliance on—and competition for—limited funding and resources. Key informants in both Latin America and the United States stressed the challenges of the current abortion rights funding landscape, noting that organizations are competing for the same small pots of money, which creates tension between local organizations working in overlapping communities, and between grassroots and national organizations. Participants highlighted that philanthropic funding was more often allocated to large national advocacy organizations than to grassroots and direct service organizations, which were more closely connected to communities and their needs. Key informants in Latin America noted that a culture of individual giving does not exist in their contexts to the same extent or volume as in the United States, creating even greater competition for a limited philanthropic funding pool.

Participants also spoke about the instability and reactivity of the fundraising landscape, which often centers around precipitating events, such as a court ruling, an election cycle, or the high-profile death of an abortion-seeker. In these cases, organizations may experience a short-term increase in individual giving and philanthropy, followed by a decline as news cycles and public attention shift or legislation creates uncertainty among donors. These giving patterns create insecurity for organizations, requiring them to invest only in meeting urgent needs, rather than in long-term strategies.

FUNDING MECHANISMS OFTEN DO NOT SUPPORT COALITION WORK, MAKING IT DIFFICULT FOR ORGANIZATIONS TO ALLOCATE RESOURCES TO BUILDING ALLIANCES AND ENGAGING IN LONG-TERM STRATEGIC PLANNING.



"Because right now it's harder to collaborate. When you have very individualistic goals they are driven by grants...I have to do this thing because this foundation told me I have to do it...I don't have time to build with my peers towards our shared vision for Georgia because I got to do this thing or I'm going to have to give the money back or I'm not going to get the money again."

- Georgia, Grassroots Activist



Abortion rights movements in Latin America and the United States rely on coalitions to build and strengthen their movements. Activists and movement leaders emphasized their desire to work collectively—to gather, share ideas, and form relationships. However, the current funding environment, which promotes a scarcity mindset due to short-term and/or restricted grants, offers little incentive to share funding streams or carry out activities outside of the most pressing issues. In the absence of coalitions, abortion rights and broader reproductive justice movements remain siloed and unable to make offensive moves, develop and carry out long-term, comprehensive strategies, or adapt when the needs of the movement and their communities change.



DONORS RARELY FUND INTERSECTIONAL MOVEMENT BUILDING, DESPITE ACTIVISTS EMPHASIZING ITS IMPORTANCE.

The fight for reproductive justice and abortion rights is deeply intertwined with other social justice causes, including immigration rights, civil rights, gender and racial equity, disability rights, economic justice, and bodily autonomy. The most relevant intersecting interests can differ by context and change over time. However, recognizing the importance of addressing these intersecting interests as part of reproductive justice enables these movements to leverage existing networks, foster collaboration, and build broader coalitions to mobilize stronger, more diverse, and resilient movements for a unified front.

Individuals in the reproductive justice movement increasingly recognize the need for a more intersectional approach to movement building to create a stronger foundation for effective mobilization. Within movements, it acknowledges the distinct struggles communities face in seeking reproductive justice and ensures their voices are heard and elevated. Between movements, it recognizes the interconnected nature of social justice issues and leverages opportunities for coalition-building and collective action.



"[We need to] avoid fragmentation. I think that is fundamental, we are not going to be able to [do this] in solitude. I think that is also one of the lessons learned."

*- Argentina,
Grassroots Activist*

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DONORS



Redirect investment flows to better support movement building, community-based grassroots organizations, and direct service organizations. Participants recognized that community trust, engagement, and support are the foundation of strong, sustainable grassroots movements, which have historically driven political and social change. Reducing competition for funds, offering long-term, unrestricted funding, and allowing organizations to remain agile in shifting contexts creates the supportive environment needed to advance abortion rights and effectively serve communities

Support collaborative and intersectional coalition building. Activists and advocates across the Americas spoke extensively about their desire to gather, share lessons learned, and build coalitions within and beyond their own communities. However, limited funding makes it difficult for organizations to collaborate and strengthen the movement. Donors should support collaborative activities—such as coalitions, conferences, roundtables, and community events—across the reproductive justice movement and between allied social movements.

Offer flexible funding so organizations can be nimble in their long- and short-term spending. As the abortion rights landscape evolves in Latin America and the United States, so do the priorities of grassroots advocates, direct service organizations, and the communities they serve. Flexible or unrestricted funding allows movement leaders and service providers to navigate their unique social, political, and cultural contexts, seize emergent policy windows, and adapt as needed to protect and expand abortion access.

