



# INSIGHTS FOR REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS

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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 REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS



National and global reproductive rights organizations play a key role in building resilient, intersectional movements. However, grassroots activists and direct service providers sometimes feel disconnected from them. For the entire ecosystem to succeed in a political and social climate that can be hostile to their goals, these organizations must act as connectors, not gatekeepers—amplifying grassroots voices, aligning around shared narratives, and investing in sustained, national and regional solidarity.

## **NATIONAL AND GLOBAL ACTORS ARE OFTEN PERCEIVED AS DISCONNECTED FROM LOCAL, GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES, WHICH CAN DIVERT ATTENTION FROM WORK BEING DONE AT THIS LEVEL.**

While national and global reproductive health, rights, and justice organizations play a pivotal role in fostering solidarity, conducting advocacy, and supporting strategic alignment, they can pull focus—as well as funding—from local advocacy, movement building, accompaniment, community support, and service delivery. Hierarchies and inequalities between local groups and national and global actors have created tension among stakeholders who should be working together towards the same goals. Participants described national and global organizations as being disconnected from them, often stating that they do not have contact with and feel unsupported by them. As a result, the voices and stories of those at the margins are excluded from the national narrative and the forefront of the movement, undermining the potential of high-profile advocacy platforms to drive change.

## **ACTIVISTS AND GRASSROOTS ORGANIZERS WANT MORE REGULAR AND INTENTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR CROSS-LEVEL AND CROSS-BORDER COLLABORATION.**

National and global organizations often operate at a distance from grassroots efforts, limiting opportunities for shared strategies, pooled resources, and cohesive narratives. Participants expressed a strong desire for collaboration but noted a lack of resources and connections to make it possible. One participant from Argentina, for example, described how Catholics for the Right to Decide funded a pivotal 2005 convening of provincial coalitions in Córdoba, which catalyzed the abortion rights movement by enabling activists from across the country to participate. With their funding, visibility, and reach, national and global organizations are well-positioned to foster cross-level and cross-border collaboration—bringing together activists, legal experts, and service providers to share strategies, strengthen coalitions, and build solidarity.

## **NATIONAL AND GLOBAL ADVOCACY EFFORTS CAN LACK COHESION AND MISS OPPORTUNITIES TO CREATE HOLISTIC, DESTIGMATIZING NARRATIVE FRAMEWORKS TO REORIENT PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF ABORTION.**

Competing narrative frameworks—human rights, reproductive justice, bodily autonomy, public health, and criminal legal—often create confusion among the public and division within movements. While coalition work has led to some convergence around bodily autonomy as a human right, distinctions persist that fragment collective efforts. A shared, transborder narrative has strong potential to destigmatize abortion and build public support. In Colombia, for instance, abortion is framed positively as enabling people to shape their life plans, protect their health, and exercise bodily autonomy. National and global reproductive health organizations are well-positioned to advance such cohesive narratives across countries, while recognizing where unique political, social, and cultural conditions call for regional variation.



## RESOURCE FLOWS DISPROPORTIONATELY FAVOR LARGE NATIONAL OR INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AT THE EXPENSE OF COMMUNITY-BASED, GRASSROOTS GROUPS CLOSEST TO THE ISSUES.

For a movement to be effective and sustained, resources need to be directed to the frontlines. Local and state organizations that have deep community ties and direct service organizations with expertise in reproductive health should be prioritized. Participants highlighted the importance of long-term support for established organizations, including practical support organizations, such as abortion funds and acompañamientos. They contrasted this with the typical practice of shifting resources to new initiatives or concentrating them in national-level advocacy organizations.

*"In the US, this tension is holding us back: we need to drastically shift the priorities of our movement away from this grand investment in (national-level) policy advocacy that leads to these splintered campaigns that actually end up going nowhere because they're more for brand recognition and donor dollars than the actual end goal. We need to invest first in abortion funds and direct service work and then let those organizations be the guide, be the leads, the folks that are called to the table for the hearings."*

*-Texas, Direct Service Provider*

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS

**Develop meaningful and sustainable channels of communication and support for community-based organizations.** National and global reproductive rights organizations must find better ways to support and connect with the activists, legal advocates, and direct service providers who work closest to communities. By developing meaningful and sustainable channels of communication, offering timely financial and physical resources, and concretely addressing the needs of local movements, these organizations can strengthen the foundation and sustainability of the abortion movement.

**Establish and sustain opportunities for both national and transnational grassroots organizations to gather and share learnings, develop strategies, and build relationships.** Grassroots organizations are looking to national and international organizations to drive cross-border collaboration. National and global reproductive rights organizations should use their resources to ensure intersectional collaboration and empowerment, convene regular forums and strategy sessions for the exchange of ideas, facilitate the development of long-term movement strategies across regions and stakeholders, and enhance non-extractive collaborative practices.

**Support participatory processes that develop and adopt inclusive narrative frameworks that resonate across cultural and legal contexts.** National and global organizations should leverage their platforms to build a stronger, more cohesive cross-border movement. It should be grounded in reproductive justice and bodily autonomy, while leaving room for diverse cultural, political, and legal contexts. They should also educate allies and the public, using messaging that avoids stigmatization and confusing legal language, and centers lived experiences and community-based efforts.

**Redirect resources to grassroots and direct service organizations that are closest to community needs.** National and global reproductive rights organizations can drive a new funding model that prioritizes local, community-based work and creates long-term opportunities for strategic growth and sustainability. These organizations should use their platforms to amplify local voices and stakeholders, rather than exclusively their own brands, to serve the movement as a whole better.

