

# Let's Talk About Abortion: Using Communications to Increase Access to Safe and Legal Care

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US | India | Brazil | China | Kenya | South Africa | UK

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# Who we are

Global Health Strategies is a communications and advocacy consultancy. We work to:

**Raise awareness** of global health and development challenges

**Build consensus** around innovative solutions

**Promote leadership** and action



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# Abortion is common, inevitable and a health issue

- **Abortion is common**

- Globally, 25% of all pregnancies end in abortion

- **Restricting access to legal care does not prevent abortions**

- Abortion rates are similar in countries where abortion is legal and illegal

- **Abortion is a global health issue**

- There are ~25 million unsafe abortions a year; 8-11% of maternal mortality
- 97% of unsafe abortions occur in developing countries



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# Media shapes how we think and act

- Despite the facts, abortion remains stigmatized, controversial and siloed
- Lack of attention is not the issue
- The portrayal of abortion in the media impacts cultural, personal and political beliefs



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# Our approach

- Analyze how the media is covering the issue, and what needs to change – hooks, spokespeople, bylines
- Believe that there are always important stories not being told
- Equip journalists and editors to cover the issue in new ways



# What's wrong with this picture?



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# Language can reinforce stigma

- **Mother vs. woman**

[The Atlantic](#): “...they might declare that the procedure should be banned... unless the mother's health is threatened”

- **Baby vs. embryo/fetus**

[Newsweek](#): “Anti-Abortion Representative Wants His Mistress to Abort Their Baby”

- **Dangerous/harmful despite the evidence**



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# Skewed framing and limited voices tell a partial story

- **Framing:** Abortion covered as a political issue, not a health issue
- **Spokespeople:** Prevalence of (male) voices; very few first person accounts from women and providers
- **Champions:** Small circle of voices championing safe, legal abortion
- Coverage can drive inaccurate understanding of public opinion





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# We believe you can change the narrative

- Build a corps of interested, educated journalists
  - Cultivate journalist/editor relationships, develop trainings and guides
- Pitch/write pieces that broaden the frame
  - Highlight public health impact, create alternative hooks, drive on-going attention
- Elevate new voices
  - Involve women, providers, activists (including from other issue areas)
- Work with media to get critical information out
- Utilize social and other forms of media



Questions? Comments?

**Thank you**