Conscientious Commitment

Expanding Provision to Safe Abortion by Empowering Local Activists
What is Conscientious Commitment?

- “Conscientious commitment, the reverse of conscientious objection, inspires healthcare providers to overcome barriers to delivery of reproductive services to protect and advance women's health.” (Bernard Dickens and Rebecca Cook, 2011)

- The barriers can include: illegality, legal risk, stigma, refusals by other doctors, other obstacles.

- Not just healthcare providers, but community workers, counsellors, activists, and advocates – anyone involved in helping women access safe abortion, including self-managed abortion.
An international group of activists, trained counselors, and non-profit organizations and foundations conscientiously committed to helping women exercise reproductive choice.

We bridge the gap between reproductive rights advocacy efforts and service provision.

We focus on activism, locally and globally – to reduce stigma, increase safety and availability of reproductive health choices, push back against restrictive laws, etc.

We are collaborative, participatory, and feminist. We work with local orgs to advance access and knowledge, and to share resources.

We equip activists and organizations to guide women through self-managed abortion (SMA) in countries where it’s illegal.
Changing the Paradigm

- Self-managed abortion can occur safely regardless of legal restrictions and availability of clinician or clinic.
- It is *subversive* – challenging traditional assumptions about service delivery, definition of “provider”, and power dynamics around abortion care.
- Task shifting – from doctors to community health workers, activists/advocates, and women themselves (they “provide” their own abortion).

- Community-based, decentralized, safe, effective, empowering abortion care.
- Abortion done via helplines – Tele-health / M-health – or over email, with on-the-ground support from local NGOs.
MAMA Network

“Mobilizing Activists for Medical Abortion”

Operates in at least eight African countries to expand community access to information and provide reproductive health training about misoprostol use and SMA.

- Collaboration of sub-Saharan NGOs and activist groups with WHW
- Strengthens grassroots leadership and builds capacity
- Facilitates networks of local and regional support to share learning and strategies
- Evaluates and improves ways to disseminate info on SMA
African Hotlines

Malawi and Kenya
Aunty Jane hotline

Nigeria
Ms Rosy hotline
Latin America

- WHW collaborates with activists throughout the region, with a focus on Central America, Brazil, and Chile. We:
  - Help local collectives launch and maintain new safe abortion hotlines
  - Train activists in counseling skills and medical abortion
  - Support access to safe abortion via campaigns and awareness actions led by local activists
In Chile, the “Misoprostol for All” campaign (miso pa’todas) used radio spots and street actions to promote information about the local safe abortion hotline and misoprostol use.

Colectivo de Lesbianas y Feministas Linea Aborto Libre:

“Together we have promoted the #Misopa'todas campaign to allow access to independent use and safe abortion with Misoprostol ... We are very happy to share our political and concrete actions... based on rebellion and love among women.”
Honduras

In a highly restrictive and stigmatizing context, Honduran groups used creative strategies such as forums and artistic performances to open debate and fight stigma around abortion.
Training Workshops: Medical & Security

- **Security trainings:** 154 activists attended multi-day security trainings in target countries.

- **Medical trainings:**
  - Venezuela – Over 50 new activists trained on contraception and medical abortion protocols
  - Honduras – 15 activists trained on medical abortion
  - Dominican Republic – 21 activists trained on medical abortion
  - Chile – More than 40 activists trained on medical abortion
Juridical Guide for Brazil

Aims to help activists and community workers by:

- Developing and increasing security practices
- Implementing self-care protocols
- Providing medical, legal, and security trainings
- Supporting local activities and campaigns
- Sharing knowledge around self-managed abortion
To help women being criminalized for SMA or miscarriage.

WHW, in collaboration with local organizations and activists, conducted 7 sessions of online training for 35 feminist lawyers from Latin America (2018).

Goals:
- Build network of lawyers to help women
- Provide women with info, accompaniment, support
- Decrease risk of prosecution
Conclusion

Self-managed abortion is safe and effective

Let’s:
- De-medicalize abortion
- Put pills in women’s hands
- Task shift to the community
- Handle legal risks and defend criminalized women (and providers)

Let’s conscientiously commit to saving women’s lives!