

Case WGNRR – Challenges Global Gag Rule for Advocates

This session focused on the challenges the GGR rule poses for advocates, and how it amplifies risks & threats they face in their work. WGNRR's approach is that it's always possible to do advocacy and campaigns, even in restrictive settings; furthermore, in light of rising conservatism & regressive trends (like the GGR), it's all the more vital to continue these efforts, emphasize resistance, and strengthen CSOs' ability to do work at local level (and their ability to seize advocacy opportunities as they arise).

We discussed alternative forms of advocacy, campaigning, and framing, to help support advocates to get and/or "keep their foot in the door," in regards to advocacy for SRHR in restrictive settings.

- WGNRR gave the example of recent September 28 campaigning activities in the Philippines, where with the Pinsan network we did a creative "Step Into Our Shoes" artistic installation in a public hospital, as well as launched videos of Filipinos reading first-hand accounts of unsafe abortion and being denied post-abortion care, both of which got very receptive feedback
- one strategy discussed by participants:
 - using alternate wording, e.g. instead of advocating for "abortion" per se, advocating for treatment of miscarriages (with the end objective being the same: affording women safe measures to terminate or end pregnancies)
 - some questions/discussion regarding the pros/cons of adapting wording this way; e.g. do we need to fight for specific language, if through alternative language we still reach the end/goal that we want? (general agreement was that this question is best answered in each specific context)
- also discussed how when the GGR has been imposed/re-imposed, the immediate reaction from our community is to protect service provision.
 - Contrasted with the opposition: whenever the GGR has been repealed, what the opposition does is funnel their efforts & funds towards supporting think tanks (to regroup/strengthen/advance their agenda)
 - What we need to do is not only protect services, but advance advocacy, in order to not just be reactive in GGR times, but proactive. Part of what this would require is getting more data on how restrictions like the GGR have an impact on SRHR advocacy, & the risks/threats advocates because of their work (we have data on how the GGR impacts on service provision, but not really of its impact on advocacy)
- also discussed how we need to evolve our angle/approach in response to that of antis'
 - reclaim the language they try to co-opt (e.g. like "family"); using existing data where possible
- also discussed the need to find ways to support & strengthen young people as advocates, particularly in restrictive settings, in order to be able to advance SRHR advocacy agendas