

Factsheet

THE MAZE WOMEN FACE Campaign

Why now

- This **November 5th** marks one year since Donald Trump's election, a moment to reflect on its global impact.
- Trump's policies and budget cuts on global health funding are worsening the unsafe abortion crisis, cutting off vital funding for care and support.
- A **groundbreaking new study** exposes the human realities behind the global data, revealing how unsafe abortion continues to endanger women's lives in West and Central Africa—where sexual violence and unsafe abortion intersect but are rarely studied together.

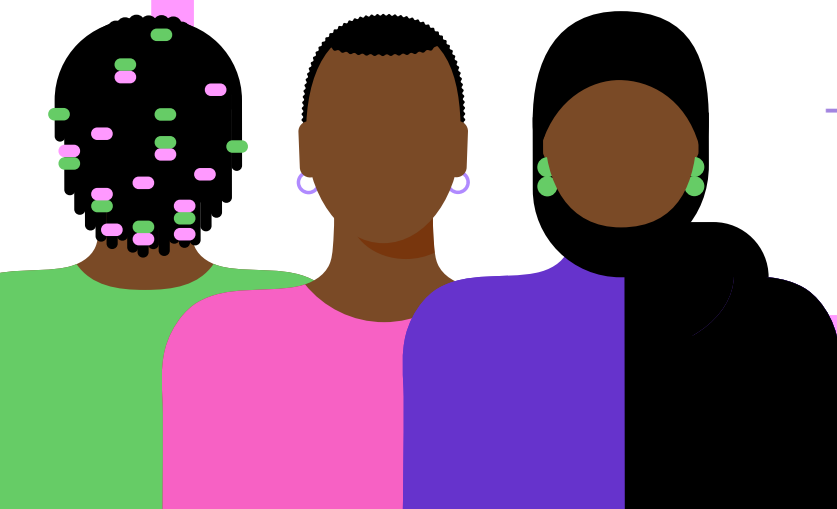
Every 9 seconds,
an unsafe abortion
puts a woman's
life at risk in West
and Central Africa.

The crisis in numbers

- Unsafe abortion **kills 40 women every day** in sub-Saharan Africa.
- **3.4 million women in West and Central Africa** undergo unsafe abortions annually, facing some of the world's highest risks.
- Trump's funding cuts could leave **48 million women without contraception**, causing **17 million unintended pregnancies** and thousands of preventable deaths every year.
- **25 million unsafe abortions** take place globally every year, leading to over **20,000 preventable deaths**.

The human impact

- The research, drawing on the unique contributions of young in-country researchers, puts lived experience at the centre, showing how **stigma, restrictive laws and health system barriers drive women to unsafe methods**.
- For survivors of rape or incest, the stakes are even higher: forced motherhood, unsafe abortions, lifelong health impacts – and in too many cases, preventable death.



Testimonies from women affected

Unsafe abortion remains a major public health and rights issue in West and Central Africa. These testimonies illustrate the risks women face when they lack access to safe, legal, and stigma-free abortion care.

Afoussa became pregnant in the context of a violent relationship involving abuse and assault. With no financial means and her family's disapproval – since she could not present the father – she ended the pregnancy at four months using pills bought at the market. This caused severe complications, including heavy bleeding. Afoussa survived and says the experience “cost her dearly” and wishes she had known about Benin's abortion law earlier, as she might have accessed safer care. Today she wants to learn more about abortion in hospitals and use her experience to help other women.

Afoussa, 23, Benin

Laure, a nursing student, became pregnant while unmarried. Her boyfriend helped her search for a traditional abortion method. When she took it she quickly experienced severe stomach pain and heavy bleeding. She was taken to a health centre and then to hospital, where a nurse reacted angrily to her. Laure says she chose not to continue the pregnancy because her parents would have stopped paying for her education. Grateful to have survived and remain healthy, she reflects that the abortion risked her future fertility. She is still with her boyfriend and aspires to become a midwife.

Laure, 19, Togo

Chantal became pregnant at 18 after being raped by her uncle. With little support from her family and no knowledge of her rights, she was determined to end the pregnancy, even attempting to do so herself with dangerous methods. Her mother eventually stopped her, and she went on to give birth to a daughter who later died in infancy. Chantal says she did not report the abuse because she did not know what rape or incest were, and feared both the high costs of seeking care and the stigma she would face. Looking back, she reflects that without information, support, or protection, she felt trapped with no safe options.

Chantal, 37, Cameroon

More information:

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