



CSMMUA STATEMENT ON THE REINSTATEMENT OF THE GLOBAL GAG RULE (GGR)

RELEASED ON 30TH JANUARY 2025

The Coalition to Stop Maternal Mortality due to Unsafe Abortion (CSMMUA) strongly condemns the reinstatement and expansion of the Global Gag Rule (GGR) by President Donald Trump. This policy, officially known as "Protecting Life in Global Health Assistance" will disrupt essential health service delivery in some of the world's most vulnerable regions, reversing progress made in advancing health care access and human rights over the years.






The GGR, has a long history of undermining global health initiatives and violating fundamental human rights, including the rights to health, life, equality, non-discrimination, privacy, information, and freedom of expression. The policy also undermines the rights of women and girls, adding to their existing multiple vulnerabilities and ultimately affecting the realisation of their rights. While unsafe abortions remain a major public health problem that is contributing to high rates of maternal mortality in many countries, the GGR prohibits foreign NGOs receiving U.S. global health funding from providing abortion-related services or advocating for abortion law reform with far-reaching and devastating consequences in low- and middle-income countries such as Uganda.

According to the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, 2003 (Maputo Protocol), state parties are obliged to take appropriate measures to: protect the reproductive rights of women including by authorising medical abortion in cases of sexual assault, rape, incest, and where the continued pregnancy endangers the mental and physical health of the mother or the life of the mother or the foetus. Unfortunately, the GGR reinstatement falls short of these obligations by exacerbating maternal mortality rates, denying women access to safe abortion services including post abortion care and further deepens the social and economic inequalities. For instance, Uganda already records a high maternal mortality ratio of 189 deaths per 100,000 live births, with unsafe abortions and related infections among the top five contributors. The GGR amplifies these challenges by restricting life-saving services. In this way, it does not only perpetuate gender-based discrimination but also undermines reproductive autonomy and violates international human rights standards.

The policy further intensifies fear among healthcare providers, leading to the denial of essential services like contraception and emergency care to women and girls in need. Uganda's Ministry of Health annual maternal and Perinatal Deaths Surveillance Report 2022/2023 highlights that a significant number of teenage mothers die due to complications following unsafe abortions, while observing that in the previous financial year, 7,000 teenagers sought post-abortion care. CEHURD's retrospective study on teenage pregnancy and unsafe abortions in three high burden districts of Kamuli, Mayuge and Wakiso (2023) found that 46% of women who sought post-abortion care services were adolescents. The provision of post abortion counselling, education and family planning services should be offered promptly to help avoid repeat abortions. Unsafe abortions continue to deprive adolescents and women the opportunity to interact with the mainstream health care stream which must offer them with a range of services beyond abortion related health care including life saving disease prevention information.

The loss of funding for sexual and reproductive health services, disrupts referral networks and limits advocacy efforts against unsafe abortion, endangering countless lives. Denying access to abortion services does not eliminate the demand but instead pushes women towards unsafe procedures, contributing to tens of thousands of maternal deaths annually.

We are calling upon government and development partners to join efforts for:

-  Increased domestic health funding to reduce dependency on foreign aid tied to conditions that have negative impact on public health, such as the Global Gag Rule.
-  Advocacy for the repeal of the Global gag rule, which is proved through documented evidence to impact on the lives of vulnerable communities including women and girls.
-  Engagement of international institutions that can mobilise the power of collective activism to hold global powers accountable for retrogressive decisions made, including the re-instatement of the GGR.
-  Joint collaboration between Governments and civil society to safeguard sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) for vulnerable populations.
-  Continuous monitoring and reporting about the impact of the GGR on communities, NGOs and Government programs.

CSMMUA is committed to continue advocating for health equity, human rights, and the dignity of every individual, regardless of their socio-economic status. The fight against the GGR must continue until the unjust policy is abolished.