

INTERNATIONAL SAFE ABORTION DAY 2020, 28 SEPTEMBER: **SOCIAL MEDIA REPORT**



INTERNATIONAL
CAMPAIGN
FOR WOMEN'S
RIGHT TO SAFE
ABORTION

Introduction

This year social media platforms saw a lot of activity for International Safe Abortion Day. A range of activities on abortion access, rights and activism were hosted including over 10 Twitter Chats, a number of Facebook and Instagram Lives, many fact-based campaigns, and finally photo actions showing solidarity where people were not able to gather in public due to ongoing covid-19 measures. The hashtag for this year's theme was [#IManageMyAbortion](#) which was widely used alongside a number of hashtags including the [#InternationalSafeAbortionDay](#), [#SafeAbortionDay](#), [#MedicalAbortionNow](#) and [#28sept](#). Our two best performing Twitter posts in the lead up to 28 September gained over 14.5K impressions. On 28 September alone, our Twitter account gained 35.2K impressions (number of times content is seen by users).



28 September Campaign assets as used on social media

Overall, on Instagram, there was a marked increase in engagement with officially branded 28 September posts using our toolkit visuals. That seems to have promoted the abortion facts series which included the colour palette and illustrations from the official 28 September visuals.

Political engagement and advocacy

In the lead up to 28 September, ICWRSa encouraged safe abortion advocates and supporters to take part in a 14-day action called '[@ your government](#)', which called for tweets to be directed at decision-makers demanding abortion reform. Accounts with large networks such as SRJC, Hidden Pockets, Medical Students for Choice, the Rwanda NGO forum on HIV/Aids, Alliance for Choice Derry, AAC West, IPPF European Network, Mama Network, Age Network and Naya Kenya shared and engaged with the '@ your government' action. Alliance for Choice incorporated it into their 'Virtual March for Choice' and [#CareAtHome](#) activities. This encouraged followers to tailor their demands to local circumstances.

This activity complemented other similar activities, as many groups, organisations and individuals were taking similar actions on Twitter– writing to their representatives about local issues such as [buffer zones around clinics](#), [abortion pill access](#) and the [decriminalisation of abortion](#). Together, these actions spread awareness about current, local struggles for safe abortion access and empowered supporters to address decision-makers directly. We hope that these actions also raised the profile of safe abortion access among representatives, health ministers and other decision-makers.



[Many public figures](#) recognised 28 September via their social media accounts this year it ranged from UN and EU representatives to national ministers. The statements affirm that safe abortion is a human rights issue and essential healthcare and highlighted public health concerns of unsafe abortion globally. As with every year, we see a greater number of public figures and political representatives acknowledging International Safe Abortion Day, 28 September - it was great to see such open statements from public figures on Twitter, in light of the anti-abortion stances in key advocacy spaces.



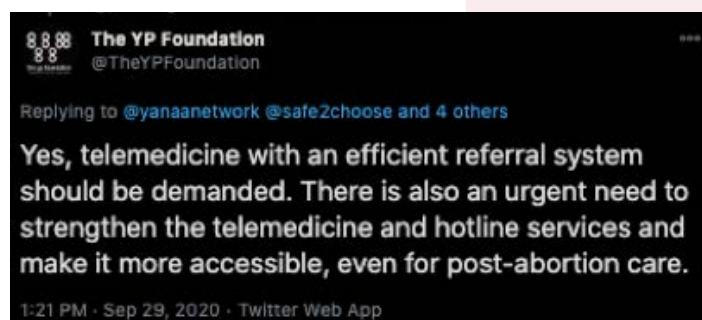
Twitter chats

This year, Twitter chats were a popular alternative to in-person panel discussions, as COVID-19 restrictions remained in place in many countries. Around 28 September, over 10 members of the Campaign's network hosted Twitter chats and many more members and supporters participated. This opened many discussions up to more global participation and made events more accessible in many ways. Around the 28th, the density of Twitter chats acted as a sort of 'Twitter storm', filling the timeline with a wealth of information about self-managed abortion, telemedicine, abortion with pills and access to abortion in the context of COVID-19.

The **International Campaign Twitter Chat** focused on self-managed abortion and invited participants to talk about their regional or national contexts and their own work. Notable tweets include [one from ARROW](#) which links abortion access and rights with other social justice causes, as well as [a comment from Safe2Choose](#) about decentralisation safe abortion services and returning power to the community. In this Twitter Chat, the 28 September working group partner organisations shared relevant resources to provide the wider audience for further reading as it relates to the questions/answers, for instance, this [ARROW tweet](#) and this [YANAA tweet](#).



The **YANAA Twitter chat** had over 10,804 impressions across all tweets from YANAA's Twitter account concerning the YANAA Twitter chat, along with over 500 real-time engagements including link clicks, clicks on photos and gifs, profile clicks, likes, retweets and replies. The most prominent form of engagement was retweeting. Participating organisations included She Decides, ARROW and the YP Foundation. Notable responses to the Twitter Chat include a [tweet by ARROW](#) using a link to stats to advocate for the safety of self-managed abortion with pills, see below. Additionally, the YP Foundation made an [important point](#) about more access to abortion hotlines, for post-abortion care as well as to access abortions in the first place, see below.



In line with this year's theme, several Twitter chats included questions on safe abortion access in the context of COVID-19. [These discussions](#) showed us how the pandemic has exacerbated and highlighted the need for telemedicine and abortion with pills. Many ended up [discussing how to use this moment](#) to build lasting advances in safe abortion access, beyond COVID-19. Another recurring theme was [inequality of access](#) and the fact that provision for abortion in the law does not necessarily mean access to safe abortion for all in practice.

Some of the stand-out Twitter chats asked questions with a specific focus – for instance, the [WGNRR and SAIGE chat](#) focused on South-to-South knowledge-sharing and the [YANAA chat](#) which centred youth perspectives. These activities distinguished themselves from others by catering to their networks' interests and concerns.

The [Youth Coalition's Twitter chat](#), with a panel including representatives from Women on Web, ASAP, Morras Help Morras and a midwife, is another great example. This chat replicated a panel discussion format, including an open 'Q&A' session at the end, and the participants engaged with each other as in a live panel. It was a multilingual Twitter chat, where three of the participants wrote their responses in Spanish and the hosts quote tweeted translations into English.

This year's Twitter chats brought a growing and diverse range of people together. The Twitter chat format provided a productive forum for discussion as it invited activists, advocates and service providers to share their expertise and encouraged conversation between participants in a way that one-way Twitter actions do not. Another great thing about Twitter chats is that responses remain available online as a resource for anyone looking for it and the general public can learn from it without necessarily taking part.

Fact-based campaigns via Twitter, Instagram and Facebook

This was the most popular activity among Campaign members and generally a very popular activity, particularly on Instagram. We saw a range of approaches to this action, from myth-busting posts and infographics to interactive Q & A sessions through the question box feature on Instagram Stories.

Our 24-hour abortion fact series included our most engaged with Instagram posts. The abortion fact posts have made a total of 2,096 impressions and they consistently had an engagement rate above 15%, compared to our average engagement rate of 3%. The three gallery posts have been re-shared on Instagram by a total of 203 accounts. The abortion facts on Instagram Stories reached up to 70 accounts. Our [best-performing abortion facts post](#) stated that 'It's not just cis women and girls who have abortions...'. Given the current climate of violent transphobia and trans-exclusionary 'feminism', it is vitally important that we use the heightened platform of 28 September to promote language and policy which includes and advocates for gender non-conforming people and trans folks.



Many groups and organisations took similar Instagram actions over the 28 September period. Many posts aimed to [normalise abortion](#) and demonstrate how common they are in reality. Many more [reminded us](#) that restrictive legislation on abortion does not reduce the number of abortions happening, it only increases the barriers to safe abortion. As we might expect with this year's theme, a lot of the posts [focused on](#) how safe and reliable abortion with pills, telemedicine and self-managed abortion are, provided the right information and accessible aftercare. Among these, the ones which used a facts-focused format put pro-choice voices in control of the narrative in a way that a myth-busting frame would not. When there is already so much misinformation circulating about SMA and abortion with pills, it is best to cut through with facts.



One stand-out example comes from the Marea Verde coalition in Mexico, who shared an Instagram series of [32 reasons](#) why abortion should be decriminalised in Mexico, one for every state. These statements were based on robust medical evidence, a social justice and human rights approach, and personal experiences of those trying to access safe abortion. Their graphics were also eye-catching and unified.



By and large, the fact-sharing activities were aimed at general followers, the facts were pitched at those without in-depth knowledge of abortion procedures, laws or the realities of safe abortion access and Q & A activities widened the scope for learning further. This kind of outreach and awareness-raising activity is an important part of 28 September and Instagram is a helpful platform for it. The positive engagement with these activities was meaningful and important knowledge was shared with a wide audience. One stand-out example of follower engagement was the [Safe2Choose abortion fact series](#) on Twitter, where each statement was accompanied with the contact details for online counsellors.

Testimonies/ abortion experiences

As a complement to the fact-sharing activities, it was important to see lived experiences uplifted in testimony-sharing activities. [Personal abortion stories](#) gave followers an insight into the realities behind abortion legislation. Platforming peoples' lived experiences of abortion shows the diversity of barriers to safe abortion access and helps to dismantle abortion stigma. It was important to capitalise on the moment of 28 September for this vital work. This was a necessary reminder that the fight for safe abortion goes beyond the legality of abortion and that it must fit into a broader struggle for reproductive justice.



The SAIGE X YANAA Postcards series was made up of 19 posts over 2 weeks, posted as a collaborative action with SAIGE on the [ARROW's Instagram account](#). We heard testimony from people who had struggled to access safe abortion because of [financial barriers](#), [stigma](#), and [limits to health services during COVID-19](#) as well as the [damaging impact of restrictive legislation](#). The postcard format is useful as it facilitates sharing real-life stories while ensuring anonymity.

A recurring theme across testimony-sharing actions was the innovative ways people access safe abortion, with a particular focus on the vital services provided by abortion hotlines and the possibilities of safe abortion with pills and telemedicine. Asia Safe Abortion Project (ASAP) shared [Instagram posts](#) with portraits of youth champions with quotes discussing self-managed abortion. IPAS México also shared [testimonies](#) from 31 women who have had a self-managed abortion at home. You can access the full article on their blog, [here](#).

This year's 28 September 'testimony' content spoke to the general public about stigma and barriers to safe abortion and, at the same time, reminded activists, legal experts and advocates that lived experiences must be respected as much as researched-based data in our work. The posts were pitched at an accessible level of knowledge and the centring of 'real voices' made these activities particularly relatable.

Instagram Lives and IGTV

Instagram lives, much like the many webinars that took place this year, were an opportunity to hear from legal experts, activists, artists, service providers and more. This is a great way to make links globally and locally and create a space for real conversations. This was more important than ever this year, as COVID-19 meant that many groups could not host in-person events.

The **YANAA Videos from India series** focused on self-managed abortion and abortion access during COVID-19 in India. They presented a range of experiences and diverse barriers to accessing safe abortion. The interviews were posted as IGTV videos and shared in YANAA's Instagram Stories. Altogether, the [4 videos](#) were viewed by 863 users and the Stories sharing the videos had a completion rate of 84-100%, which is significantly higher than other stories from the same period. Ragini Bordolo's about abortion access and stigma as a barrier in Assam received the most views out of the series. It is also worth noting that the interviewees in this series spoke different languages and subtitling was seamlessly included, providing a blueprint for wider participation in similar activities in the future.



As with the abortion facts/ myth-busting activities, the Live format was a great opportunity for outreach. We saw that 28 September activities which were hosted on Instagram live broke down the barriers between speakers and audience, and offered a chance for interaction with a wide audience. Live Streams engaged a well-meaning and curious audience, forging new local and global connections with allies and followers. A stand-out example of audience participation came from the Youth Coalition's [collaboration](#) with Women on Web, which focussed on self-managed abortion, taking questions from their followers through the question box function on Instagram.

The Instagram takeover format, whereby one account shares their platform with an organisation or individual, was particularly successful and hopefully led to new meaningful connections with allies. The [YANAA Instagram takeovers](#) were a great opportunity for young activists and advocates to connect with the Network's followers directly and the [crossover](#) between Safe2Choose and Undomesticated Podcast was a wonderful example of meaningful collaboration.

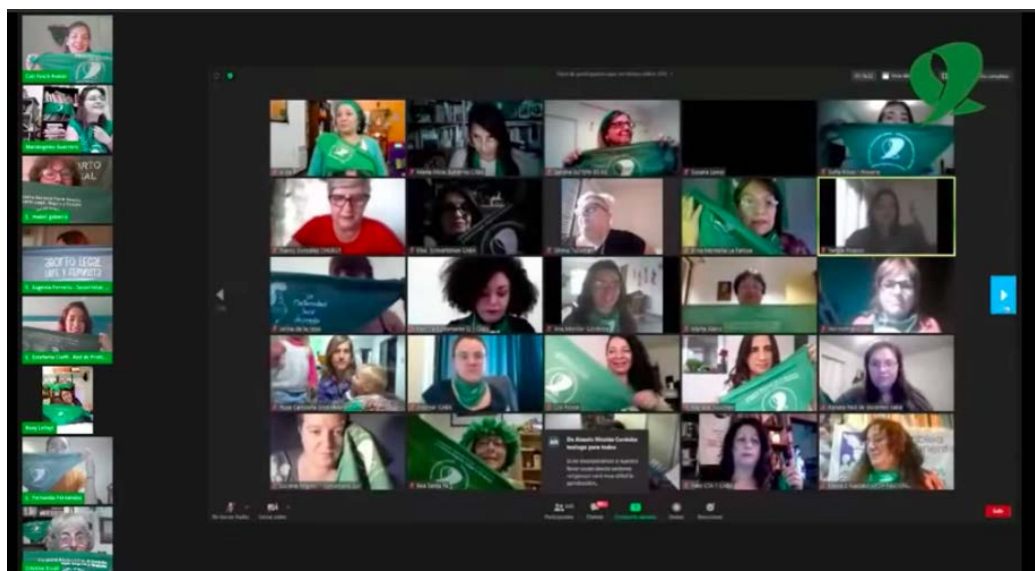
Photo actions

As COVID-19 restrictions stopped many of us from gathering in-person, online photo actions restored some sense of togetherness on and around 28 September. For many, it was not possible to take to the streets in the same way as previous years, but we still made placards, found our green bandanas and pro-choice chants and took to social media. The solidarity photo actions that took place across the world were an important, galvanizing part of this year's actions. The recurring themes, as expressed on homemade placards, pro-choice t-shirts and in the captions accompanying the photos, were mostly aligned with perennial demands ('free, safe, legal', 'abortion is essential' and 'my body, my rights', etc.). We also saw [people engaging with this year's theme](#), demanding access to self-managed abortion at home, abortion with pills and tele-medicine, and adapting their placards and captions to local issues.



One particularly innovative photo action was CLADEM's [Instagram filter](#) with the words "Yo estoy por el aborto legal, seguro y gratuito en LAC" ("I support legal, safe and free abortion in Latin America and the Caribbean"). CLADEM invited their network to take selfies and videos using the filter and share them on their stories.

Photo actions were organised in places with a strong tradition of gathering in protests on 28 September. In Argentina, La Campaña Nacional por el Derecho al Aborto Legal, Seguro y Gratuito organised a '[Pañuelazo Virtual](#)' (an online demonstration with the iconic green bandanas) over many social media channels but primarily on Zoom, Facebook and Youtube with participants all over Latin America and the Caribbean and the world. Hundreds of people took part, accompanied by speeches and music. Similarly, organisers of the annual Irish 'March for Choice' adapted well to COVID-19 restrictions and organised a stellar series of events for a '[Virtual March for Choice](#)'. This included an action encouraging followers to post photos with 'Care at home' and 'I manage my abortion' placards. You can read more about the Virtual March for Choice [here](#).



Participatory photo actions generally aim to flood social media timelines with key demands, while also bringing followers and allies together. This makes them a great tool for outreach and awareness-raising as well as strengthening the bonds within the global and local movement. When photos are combined with demands directly to decision-makers, they can be an impactful campaigning tool. Alliance for Choice and the Abortion Rights Campaign across the island of Ireland did a great job of this by linking the International Campaign for Women's Right to Safe Abortion's '@ Your Government' campaign with their 'Care at Home' photo action, inviting their followers to [send demands](#) directly to Robin Swann MLA (Health Minister for Northern Ireland) and other representatives.

