



CENTER FOR HEALTH AND GENDER EQUITY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NGOs CALL ON OBAMA TO MEET WITH REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH PROVIDERS IN AFRICA AND SEE FIRST-HAND DAMAGING IMPACT OF U.S. POLITICAL BARRIERS TO SAFE ABORTION

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE) and more than 70 U.S. and international NGOs [wrote to President Obama](#) today calling on him to visit with reproductive health providers during his upcoming trip to Africa and see first-hand the damaging impact that U.S. political barriers have for women trying to access safe abortion services.

The letter is part of a [larger effort](#) by human rights, women’s rights, and peace and security organizations, and [faith leaders](#) to secure [executive action](#) on the Helms amendment – a decades old provision that prohibits the U.S. from paying for abortion overseas as a method of family planning but does not prohibit support in the cases of rape, incest, or life endangerment. Despite this distinction, the Helms amendment has been applied as a [complete ban](#).

“President Obama and his administration have made landmark strides in the advancement of human rights in the U.S. and around the world,” said CHANGE President Serra Sippel. “We are calling on him to demonstrate that same commitment to justice for women and girls globally.”

“U.S. policy should promote women’s health and lives, not turn them away from care when they need it most. During your upcoming travel to Kenya and Ethiopia, we request that you meet with the U.S. government’s partners who are implementing health and gender-based violence programs on the ground, their in-country civil society counterparts, and the women they serve,” stated the letter.

In June, CHANGE and the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC) hosted a [faith-leaders’ summit](#) at St. John’s Episcopal Church, across the street from the White House, calling on Obama to ensure access to safe abortion for women and girls raped in conflict.

At that event, [Jaqueline Mutere](#), founder of Grace Agenda, a Nairobi-based organization that helps survivors access post-rape care, shared her own story of surviving rape. Mutere was raped during the outbreak of violence following the 2007 elections in Kenya. Mutere became pregnant as a result of the rape and tried three times to access a safe abortion but was unable to do so. Her experience inspired her to found Grace Agenda.

“As President Obama and the American people support conflict intervention programs globally, let him act now with compassion to enable women in post-rape situations to access holistic post-rape care which includes access to safe abortion,” said Mutere. “Access to safe abortion is as critical to the peace process as conflict resolution.

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