



BEYOND THE CHAOS, A NEW WORLD IS EMERGING

Making Sense of the Trump
Administration's Impact on
Reproductive Rights and Gender
Equality

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**Beyond the Chaos,
A New World is Emerging:**
*Making Sense of
the Trump Administration's
Impact on Reproductive Rights
and Gender Equality*

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for Sexual and Reproductive Rights.*

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EPF is a network of members of parliaments from across Europe who are committed to protecting the sexual and reproductive health of the world's most vulnerable people, both at home and overseas.

We believe that women should always have the right to decide upon the number of children they wish to have, and should never be denied the education or other means to achieve this that they are entitled to.

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INTRODUCTION

17 February 2025

The inauguration of President Trump to his second term on January 20 was swiftly followed by an unprecedented wave of Executive Orders (EOs) and policy shifts that have significantly altered the landscape of gender equality, human rights, and democracy, both within the United States and globally. While some changes were anticipated—such as the reinstatement of the Global Gag Rule¹ and the withdrawal from the World Health Organization (WHO)²—others, like the dismantling of USAID, were unexpected.³

These shifts are compounded by outlandish statements and declarations of trade wars with allies making it difficult to discern which actions are genuine policy shifts versus temporary political theatrics. Yet, as dramatic as these developments are, as of mid-February 2025, we have likely not seen the full extent of this transformation. The current climate of upheaval and the gratuitous cruelty are deliberate, designed to demoralize and create confusion, aligning with Steve Bannon's strategy of "flooding the zone"⁴ and Naomi Klein's concept of "shock therapy,"⁵ used previously in post-invasion Iraq. The muted response from traditional US allies underscores the extent of the uncertainty. We should not underestimate the scale of what is happening in the United States, nor its impact on the rest of the world.

Already, this Trump Administration in a few weeks has demonstrated that it has broken with many of the traditions of previous Republican administrations and is charting a new, unprecedented course. This moment requires an urgent and strategic response. The Trump Administration is not merely reshaping policy; it is constructing a new global order that will redefine sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), gender equality, and human rights. However, to build this new reality, the previous order must first be dismantled. There are many hints as to what this future course could look like. We can categorize this transformation into three distinct phases: destruction, consolidation, and creation. Understanding this will help us navigate the maelstrom of disruptive actions designed to blind us to their long-term goals.



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¹ The Global Gag Rule blocks global health assistance to non-US organizations using their own, non-US funds to provide information, referrals or services for legal abortion or to advocate for access to abortion services in their own countries.
See: <https://globalgagrule.org/>.

² The White House, Withdrawing The United States From The World Health Organization Executive Order, January 20, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/withdrawing-the-united-states-from-the-worldhealth-organization/>.

³ CNN, Trump's rapid dismantling of USAID leaves workers around world concerned for safety and futures, 6 February 2025, <https://edition.cnn.com/2025/02/06/politics/usa-id-workers-uncertainty-safety/index.html>.

⁴ The Guardian, How Musk and Trump are flooding the zone, 11 February 2025, <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2025/feb/11/musk-trump-doge-ice-google-seo-spotify>.

⁵ Naomi Klein, The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism, 2007, <https://tsd.naomiklein.org/shock-doctrine.html>.

PHASE 1

DESTRUCTION

Retreat from international development, global health, public education, democracy, and human rights

The destruction phase began immediately, with EOs targeting foundational institutions. Key areas under attack include “gender ideology,” Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs, public education, foreign aid, evidence-based medicine, and democratic institutions. The newly created Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), led by Elon Musk, has spearheaded efforts to dismantle USAID, freeze payments for global health initiatives, and halt salaries for humanitarian projects. Within the UN system, many UN agencies have received “stop-work” orders on the current USAID grants they have been implementing. The defunding of UNFPA through the Kemp-Kasten amendment⁶ is imminent.

The immediate consequences are dire. USAID—the world’s largest development agency, with a \$70 billion annual budget⁷—has effectively ceased operations. UN agencies and NGOs reliant on USAID funding, such as United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)⁸, International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)⁹, and Marie Stopes International (MSI)¹⁰, face existential threats. With USAID accounting for 30% of donated

contraceptives worldwide, the global supply chain for family planning is compromised.¹¹ Within weeks, millions around the world will lose access to contraception, maternal health medicines, and HIV treatments. Governments that depended on USAID in-kind support now struggle to compensate for the sudden supplies gap. Within the US, plans to dismantle the Department of Education¹² lay the groundwork for an aggressive shift toward faith-based private education and home-schooling.¹³ Simultaneously, freezing the funding for democracy-monitoring institutions like the National Endowment for Democracy (NED)¹⁴ weakens resistance to authoritarian overreach.

The conclusion from the first phase is clear: under the Trump Administration, the United States is retreating from its commitments to international development, global health, public education, and the promotion of democracy and human rights both domestically and globally. This shift is not merely a temporary policy adjustment but a deliberate and systematic dismantling of governmental infrastructure, suggesting a **long-term reconfiguration of the country’s engagement** in these domains.

⁶ KFF, UNFPA Funding & Kemp-Kasten: An Explainer, 30 September 2022, <https://www.kff.org/global-health-policy/fact-sheet/unfpa-funding-kemp-kasten-an-explainer/>.

⁷ Pew Research Center, What the data says about US foreign aid, 6 February 2025, <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2025/02/06/what-the-data-says-about-us-foreign-aid/>.

⁸ UN News, US funding pause leaves millions ‘in jeopardy’, insist UN humanitarians, 4 February 2025, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/02/1159746>

⁹ IPPF, IPPF, ILGA World, and Amnesty International: Fighting Back Against Trump Administration’s Anti-Rights Agenda, Joint statement from IPPF, ILGA World and Amnesty International, 30 January 2025, <https://www.ippf.org/news/ippf-ilga-world-and-amnesty-international-fighting-back-against-trump-administrations-anti>.

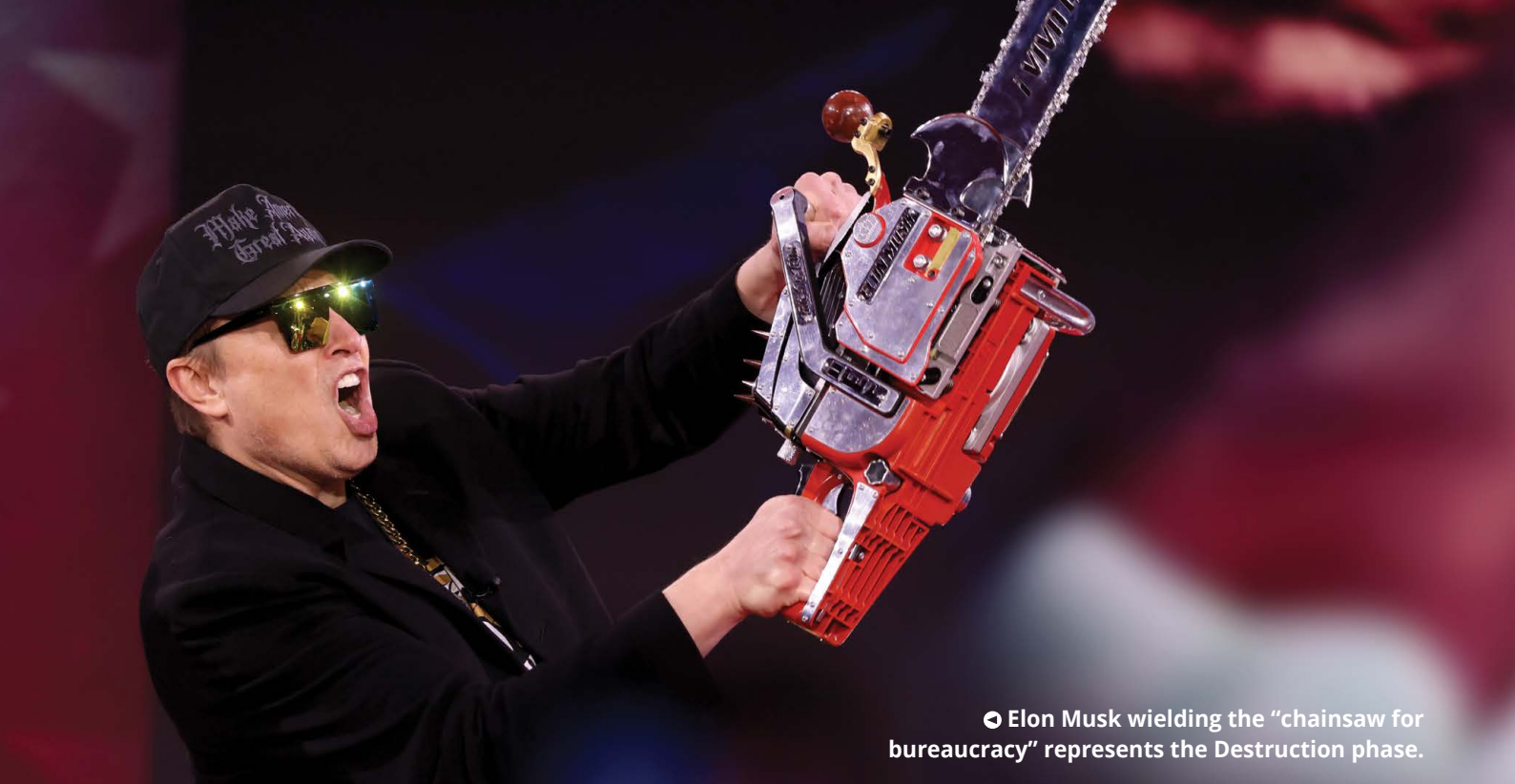
¹⁰ MSI Reproductive Choices, MSI’s ‘unequivocal’ message to Donald Trump: we will never sign the global gag rule, 25 January 2025, <https://www.msichoices.org/latest/press-release-msis-unequivocal-message-to-donald-trump-we-will-never-sign-the-global-gag-rule/>.

¹¹ According to reports from SRHR CSOs, February 2025.

¹² PBS, Trump’s vision for dismantling the Department of Education, 12 February 2025, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/trumps-vision-for-dismantling-the-department-of-education>.

¹³ Forbes, Rise Of Homeschooling Is Making A Transformative Impact On Education, 2 May 2024, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/sarahhernholm/2024/04/30/rise-of-homeschooling-and-its-transformative-impact-on-education/>.

¹⁴ The Wire China, DOGE’s Latest Target is Seen as a Gift to the CCP, 12 February 2025, <https://www.thewirechina.com/2025/02/12/doges-latest-target-is-seen-as-a-gift-to-the-ccp/>.



🔗 Elon Musk wielding the “chainsaw for bureaucracy” represents the Destruction phase.

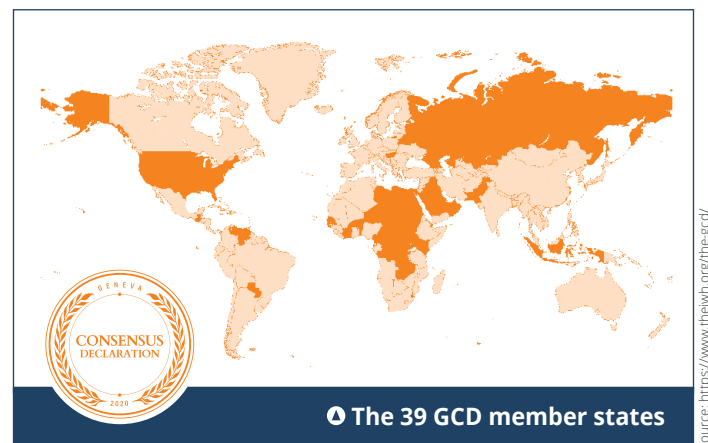
Photo: Gage Skidmore, licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/>). Source: Wikimedia Commons

PHASE 2 CONSOLIDATION

Anti-gender diplomacy, priority for religious freedom and demographic nationalism

Following destruction, the administration will seek to consolidate its ideological framework on the global stage. A cornerstone of this effort is the US’s re-entry¹⁵ into the **Geneva Consensus Declaration (GCD)**¹⁶, which asserts there is no international right to abortion. Originally a Trump/Pence-era initiative sustained during the Biden Administration by Hungary¹⁷, the GCD provides a platform for an alliance of anti-gender and anti-rights actors. The administration’s strategy will likely involve:

- **Anti-gender diplomacy:** US diplomats are aggressively pushing for “gender ideology” and DEI exclusions at international agencies, with Secretary of State Marco Rubio leading efforts to reshape foreign policy around “family values” and “pro-life” principles. This has already included taking aggressive positions at the board of UNICEF and UN Women demanding that DEI and “gender ideology” be expunged from country programmes crafted with the sovereign governments of UN member states.¹⁸ In its withdrawal from the WHO, the US indicated that it would consider re-joining if the WHO signed the GCD.



Source: <https://www.theiwh.org/the-gcd/>

🔗 The 39 GCD member states

¹⁵ State Department, United States Renewed Membership in the Geneva Consensus Declaration on Promoting Women’s Health and Strengthening the Family, 24 January 2025, <https://www.state.gov/united-states-renewed-membership-in-the-geneva-consensus-declaration-on-promoting-womens-health-and-strengthening-the-family/>.

¹⁶ The Geneva Consensus Declaration, <https://www.theiwh.org/the-gcd/>.

¹⁷ MTI-Hungary Today, US Re-Accession to International Declaration a Potential Opportunity for Hungary, 21 January 2025, <https://hungarytoday.hu/us-re-accession-to-international-declaration-a-potential-opportunity-for-hungary/#:~:text=The%20Geneva%20Consensus%20Declaration%20was,from%20all%20over%20the%20world.>

¹⁸ Reuters, US targets diversity, equity, inclusion at United Nations, 14 February 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/sustainability/society-equity/us-targets-diversity-equity-inclusion-united-nations-2025-02-14/>.

- **Religious freedom as a weapon:** Vice President JD Vance, a hardline Catholic convert, has signalled a renewed commitment to religious liberty,¹⁹ framed as a human right superior to other human rights, such as health care or non-discrimination. The newly established White House Faith Office²⁰ will likely provide legitimacy to efforts aiming to elevate religious exemptions above reproductive rights and LGBTQ+ protections.²¹
- **Demographic nationalism:** Demography, and specifically the ideal of demographic growth, is likely to be championed by Elon Musk who is concerned about the so-called “population collapse”²² and is the reported financial backer

of XY Worldwide²³, an initiative of former Hungarian President Katalin Novák, supported by Italian Premier Georgia Meloni.²⁴ This approach to demography seeks promote “pro-natalist” policies favouring selective population growth to avoid reliance on immigration, and discourage behaviours considered detrimental to demographic growth, including access to contraception or abortion, women’s empowerment and LGBTQI equality.²⁵ Trump has already signed an EO facilitating white South African migration to the US²⁶, a move aligned with this demographic vision.

The implications for SRHR advocates are severe. Multilateral spaces may become battlegrounds, requiring strategic engagement to determine which institutions remain viable for progress. The withdrawal of the USA from the WHO and United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC)²⁷ suggests that these spaces may remain open to progressive initiatives, while a different approach needs to be considered for multi-lateral spaces where the US is present. Greater US obstruction can be anticipated at the upcoming UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in March and the UN Commission on Population and Development (CPD) in April, with GCD leveraged to erode established gender rights frameworks. US interference in key UN appointments, including the UNFPA Executive Director in 2025 and the UN Secretary-General in 2026, is another looming challenge.

As the Trump Administration unleashes a diplomatic onslaught against human rights, it is possible that it will find willing allies among the thirty-plus signatory states to the GCD. Vice President J.D. Vance’s speech at the Munich Security Conference on February 14, 2025, chastising European allies and making extensive reference to anti-gender speaking points was a turning point in US diplomacy, demonstrating that the US geo-political realignment is proceeding quickly.²⁸



Photo: Unsplash

➊ **Multilateral spaces such as the United Nations may become battlegrounds.**

¹⁹ Deseret, Here’s what Vice President JD Vance just told believers about Trump’s religious freedom plans, 5 February 2025, <https://www.deseret.com/fair/2025/02/05/vice-president-vance-trump-religious-freedom-irf-summit/>.

²⁰ The White House, Establishment of The White House Faith Office, Executive Order, 7 February 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/establishment-of-the-white-house-faith-office/>.

²¹ Report of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief: note / by the Secretariat Shaheed, Ahmed; UN. Human Rights Council. Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, 2018, <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/1629601?ln=en&v=pdf>.

²² Elon Musk thinks the population will collapse. Demographers say it’s not happening | CNN, August 2022, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/search/research-news/17030/>.

²³ XY Worldwide, <https://www.xyworldwide.org/>.

²⁴ The Hungarian Conservative, Elon Musk Potential Sponsor Behind Former President Novák’s New Organization, 26 September 2024, <https://www.hungarianconservative.com/articles/current/elon-musk-katalin-novak-xy-worldwide-georgia-meloni-demographic-challenges-birthrate/>.

²⁵ Politico, Hungary’s baby-making summit dominated by paranoia, not policy, 21 September 2023, <https://www.politico.eu/article/hungarys-baby-making-summit-dominated-by-paranoia-not-policy/>.

²⁶ The White House, Addressing Egregious Actions of The Republic of South Africa, Executive Order, 7 February 2025 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/addressing-egregious-actions-of-the-republic-of-south-africa/>.

²⁷ The White House, Withdrawing the United States from and Ending Funding to Certain United Nations Organizations and Reviewing United States Support to all International Organizations Executive Order, 4 February 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/withdrawing-the-united-states-from-and-ending-funding-to-certain-united-nations-organizations-and-reviewing-united-states-support-to-all-international-organizations/>.

²⁸ Munich Security Conference, Speech by J.D. Vance, J.D. Vance (Vice President, United States of America) talking about “The US in the World”. 14 February 2025, <https://securityconference.org/en/medialibrary/asset/the-speech-of-jd-vance-20250214-1817/>.

PHASE 3 CREATION

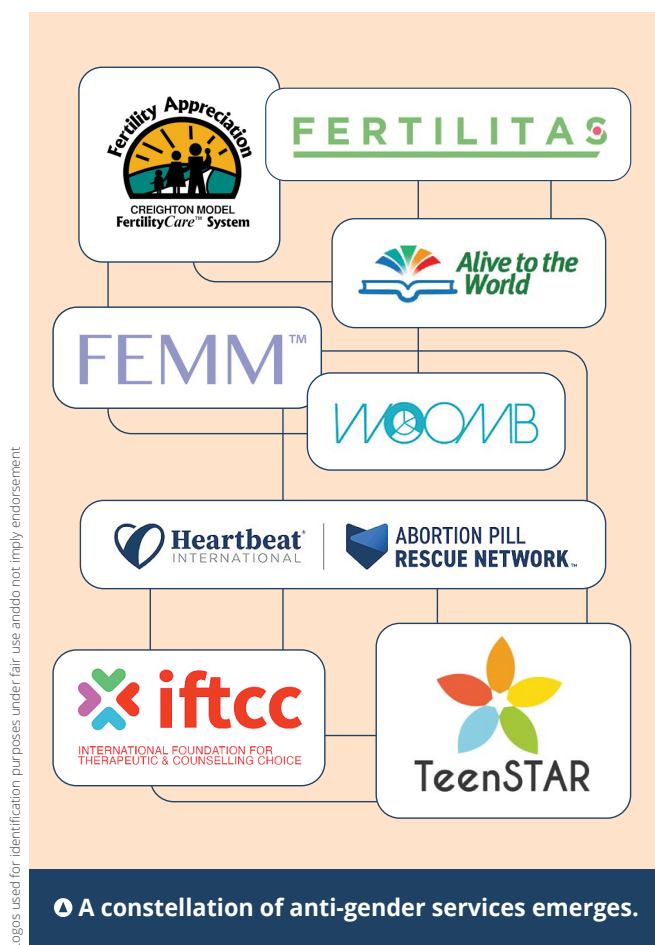
An Alternative global framework

The Trump Administration's eclectic coalition of Christian nationalists, tech bros, billionaires, and far-right ideologues is not solely focused on destruction; they are actively working to construct an alternative global framework. Reports indicate that USAID could be dramatically downsized, from its current workforce of 13,000 to approximately 300 employees²⁹, drastically reducing its operational capacity. This shift suggests continued, albeit limited, engagement in global development, likely through partnerships with ideologically aligned non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Given the financial hardship imposed by the abrupt loss of USAID funding, many nations may be compelled to accept conditions tied to the resumption of US aid, including adherence to the GCD and EOs on gender ideology and DEI. A prime mechanism for implementing these policies is *Protego Health: Women's Optimal Health Framework* (WOHF)³⁰, a 70-page technical document developed by the authors of the GCD, the Institute for Women's Health, promoting a restrictive vision of women's health that excludes abortion, contraception, and comprehensive sexuality education.³¹ *Protego* promises to deliver on genuine women's health, while rejecting foreign ideology and guaranteeing the preservation of sovereignty. This is where "anti-gender services" gain traction.

In recent years, anti-gender actors have moved beyond merely opposing SRHR to actively developing and implementing alternative services designed to replace evidence-based reproductive health programs. These "anti-gender services" include: natural family planning replacing modern contraception; "abortion reversal" therapies promoted over safe abortion services; crisis pregnancy centres masquerading as healthcare providers; abstinence-only education repackaged as "youth empowerment" and comprehensive sexuality education.

A constellation of branded anti-gender services has emerged, including Teen Star³² for abstinence education, the FEMM app³³ for natural family planning, and the Human Dignity Curriculum³⁴ for youth empowerment. These programs, once confined to fringe movements, have gained legitimacy, and are now being integrated into education curricula in Argentina³⁵ and Hungary.³⁶ If US foreign aid becomes conditional on adopting these alternatives, financially vulnerable nations may have little choice but to comply.



²⁹ DEVEX, USAID's workforce to be slashed to just 294 staff, 6 February 2025, <https://www.devex.com/news/usaids-workforce-to-be-slashed-to-just-294-staff-109313>.

³⁰ The Institute for Women's Health, *Protego Health: The Women's Optimal Health Framework*, 2025, <https://www.theiwh.org/the-womens-optimal-health-framework-2024/>.

³¹ IPAS, *PROTEGO: Operationalizing the Geneva Consensus Declaration*, 2024, <https://www.ipas.org/resource/protego-operationalizing-the-geneva-consensus-declaration/>.

³² Teen Star: <https://www.teenstar.org/>.

³³ FEMM App: <https://femmhealth.org/femm-app/>.

³⁴ Human Dignity Curriculum: <https://humandignitycurriculum.org/>.

³⁵ La notice web, De la ESI a la abstinencia: el gobierno abre la puerta a ONG con raíces conservadoras, 17 December 2024, <https://www.lanoticiaweb.com.ar/de-la-esi-a-la-abstinencia-el-gobierno-abre-la-puerta-a-ong-con-raices-conservadoras/>.

³⁶ Implementation Of The Teenstar Methodology In Hungary, Final research study by Csilla M. Dulácska, PhD, Júlia Martos, November 2020 Budapest, Hungary <https://ergo-net.hu/files/34/d3/34d3d6d33dba06e4ba56d44b7f94e08e.pdf>.

The implications of this shift are profound:

1. Erosion of SRHR services: The withdrawal of USAID funding weakens established sexual and reproductive health and rights programs, potentially endangering the lives of millions around the world. Organisations which provide SRHR programmes will be specifically weakened because of the funding loss, which may cause long-term damage to the worldwide contraceptive supply and distribution chain.

2. Normalization of anti-gender services: Alternative anti-gender services threaten decades of progress in social norms and behaviour change and place millions at risk of poor health. These could be rolled out on a large scale, filling the gap of evidence-based public health interventions in SRHR.

3. Extension of the Global Gag Rule: If governments adopt and implement *Protego* and the related anti-gender services, the result may be akin to the imposition of the Global Gag Rule (GGR) at the level of States. In this scenario, only

the approaches outlined in *Protego* and the GCD would be permissible within the country to maintain eligibility for USAID funding. Consequently, this would severely restrict the ability of UN agencies, NGOs, and development partners to support evidence-based SRHR interventions, further entrenching anti-gender policies, diminishing access to comprehensive reproductive health services and possibly resulting in geo-political re-alignment.

These alternative services are not confined to the international arena; they are also being advanced domestically in the United States. Historically, Republican administrations have promoted similar initiatives³⁷, and the current administration is poised to expand them further. The Heritage Foundation's Project 2025 references policies aimed at promoting natural family planning, alternatives to abortion, and abstinence-until-marriage programs.³⁸ Additionally, legislative proposals either currently under consideration or potentially in the near future in the US Congress include: the SAVE Act, which could lead to widespread voter disenfranchisement, disproportionately affecting women³⁹; the Comstock Act, effectively instituting a federal abortion ban⁴⁰; as well as provisions for large-scale privatization of education⁴¹, further eroding public education infrastructure, creating a massive market for privatized alternative anti-gender services.

Taken together, these policies suggest the large-scale institutionalization of anti-gender alternatives, representing a rollback of SRHR, human rights, and gender equality by several decades. Beyond reproductive rights, these shifts raise significant concerns regarding the state of democracy and the rule of law in the United States. As Anne Applebaum outlines in *Autocracy Inc.*,⁴² these trends align the US with a global bloc of authoritarian states, including the Russian Federation and other illiberal regimes such as Hungary.⁴³



³⁷ National Coalition Against Censorship, Timeline of Abstinence-Only Education in US Classrooms, <https://ncac.org/resource/timeline-of-abstinence-only-education-in-u-s-classrooms>.

³⁸ The Heritage Foundation, Project 2025, for references to Natural Family Planning, see pages 455, 484 and 491; for references to Crisis Pregnancy Centers, see pages 38, 471 and 484; for references to abstinence education, see pages: 476, 477, see: <https://www.project2025.org/>.

³⁹ Newsweek, Married Women Could Be Stopped From Voting Under SAVE Act, 11 February 2025, <https://www.newsweek.com/married-women-stopped-voting-save-act-2029325>.

⁴⁰ American Civil Liberties Union, Anti-Abortion Extremists Want to Use the 150-Year-Old Comstock Act to Ban Abortion Nationwide, 30 May 2024, <https://www.aclu.org/news/reproductive-freedom/anti-abortion-extremists-want-to-use-the-150-year-old-comstock-act-to-ban-abortion-nationwide>.

⁴¹ 19thnews, Republicans want to kill the Dept. of Ed and privatize education. Billionaires are helping them. 9 July 2024, <https://19thnews.org/2024/07/republicans-trump-project-2025-abolish-department-of-education/>.

⁴² Anne Applebaum *Autocracy, Inc.*, The Dictators Who Want to Run the World, Doubleday, 2024

⁴³ Global Project Against Hate and Extremism (GPAHE), Trump's Executive Power Grab Mirrors that of Other Authoritarians He Has Praised, 7 February 2025, <https://globalextrmism.org/post/trumps-executive-power-grab/>.

STRATEGIC RESPONSE

A FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION

Safeguarding decades of progress in SRHR and countering the precarious state of democratic institutions

Given the current geopolitical realities, urgent and coordinated action is required to mitigate immediate harm and build long-term resilience against emerging threats. A dual-pronged approach—addressing both short-term crises and sustained challenges—is essential to safeguarding decades of progress in SRHR and countering the precarious state of democratic institutions, particularly in the United States.

In the immediate short term, development partners must allocate emergency funding to address the worsening health crisis resulting from the withdrawal of the world's largest development agency. Particular attention should be given to supporting sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) services, as well as the UN agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) responsible for their delivery. These entities have been disproportionately affected by funding reductions imposed by the Trump Administration, necessitating targeted financial assistance to sustain essential healthcare services.

In the medium to long-term, a comprehensive strategic response can be structured around five key areas of intervention:

1. DISCOVER

- **Conduct** intelligence gathering to identify and map countries most susceptible to USAID withdrawal, enabling proactive interventions against ideologically driven policy shifts imposed by the United States.
- **Undertake** a rigorous, evidence-based analysis of *Protego* to expose its pseudoscientific foundations and counteract its implementation through empirical research and advocacy.

2. DISARM

- **Engage** with countries vulnerable to US ideological influence, highlighting the long-term public health and national development risks associated with *Protego* and similar anti-gender policies.
- **Examine** and **apply** lessons from nations that have successfully resisted SRHR and democratic backsliding, such as Poland.
- Systematically **monitor** and **analyse** the activities of European and global organizations aligned with Trumpist ideologies, including Make Europe Great Again (MEGA)⁴⁴ and *Patriots for Europe*⁴⁵, to pre-emptively neutralize their influence.

3. DISLOCATE

- **Forge** strategic alliances to counter authoritarian tendencies within the United States and mitigate their global ramifications.
- **Develop** measures to counteract US-led efforts to consolidate GCD-aligned states as influential actors in international governance.

4. DEMONETIZE

- **Ensure** that international development funds are not inadvertently channelled into anti-gender initiatives by conducting thorough financial audits.
- **Redirect** resources toward evidence-based SRHR programs that uphold human rights and gender equality.

5. DEFEND

- **Strengthen** multilateral institutions through coordinated advocacy efforts to safeguard the integrity of the United Nations system against US-led anti-gender interventions.
- **Preserve** and **reinforce** the global human rights framework, ensuring continued commitment to gender equality and democratic governance.

⁴⁴ European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), ECR Party to Host Conference on Fundamental Values and Europe's Future, 29 January 2025, <https://ecrparty.eu/2025/01/27/ecr-party-to-host-conference-on-fundamental-values-and-europes-future-29-january-2025/>.

⁴⁵ Reuters, Orban, Le Pen hail Trump at far-right 'Patriots' summit in Madrid, 8 February 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/orban-le-pen-hail-trump-far-right-patriots-summit-madrid-2025-02-08/>.

CONCLUSION

The global landscape for gender equality and human rights is entering uncharted territory. While the scale of change is unprecedented, a clear understanding of the phases of destruction, consolidation, and creation enables a strategic and proactive response. This moment calls for vigilance, resilience, and unwavering commitment to the fundamental principles of human dignity, equality, and rights. The path forward demands not only resistance but also a concerted effort to reinforce democratic norms and uphold the progress achieved over decades in SRHR and human rights.

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