

Women First Digital: An eHealth platform providing reproductive health solutions

The digital revolution is transforming how more than 4.5 billion people access sexual and reproductive health care and information. The increasing use of technology provides a unique opportunity to reach vulnerable populations that are excluded from traditional healthcare systems or burdened by geographic barriers, high costs, and stigma. Women and young people increasingly turn to the internet as the first touch-point for information, including guidance about reproductive health and abortion information.

Women First Digital (WFD) is an eHealth social enterprise that leverages the power of this digital revolution by reaching women directly on their handheld devices. By leveraging digital technology, WFD makes sexual and reproductive health more universally accessible and equitable with practical and easy-to-understand information, including for self-care. In addition, we foster online communities where users can share information, obtain online counseling or referrals, and determine pathways to services and products.

WFD enhances the overall health and well-being of women and youth by connecting them to the information, products, and services they seek, effectively bridging social health inequities. Our comprehensive digital



WFD envisions a world where all women have access to sexual and reproductive health services that are safe, reliable, and tailored.

toolkit and data-driven approaches ensure content evolves to meet the needs of core audiences, while our open-source software and interoperability promote strategic partnerships and expand reach.

Our platforms include consumer-facing, innovative websites, new technologies like artificially intelligent chatbots and community-driven forums, as well as a targeted on-the-ground presence in select countries. Together, we minimize barriers, improve reach, and strengthen women's decision-making power.

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To date, we have had more than 13 million site sessions with users from over 180 countries. We have reached over 55 million users on social media.

Websites that inform and empower



[HowToUseAbortionPill.org \(HowToUse\)](https://HowToUseAbortionPill.org)

HowToUse offers stepwise, simple instructions for safe management of abortion with pills in 26 languages. Often the primary resource for women seeking accurate reproductive health information in their local language, HowToUse guidance for self-managed abortions is available for pregnancies up to 11 weeks, and is delineated by each stage of the abortion process (before, how to, and after). HowToUse provides support for women seeking medical abortion care with mifepristone and misoprostol, or misoprostol only. HowToUse also has [42 country profiles](#) that specify the legal parameters for abortion access, types of abortion support available, brands and costs of pills (with images), providers who can perform abortions, and local resources such as hotlines or clinics.

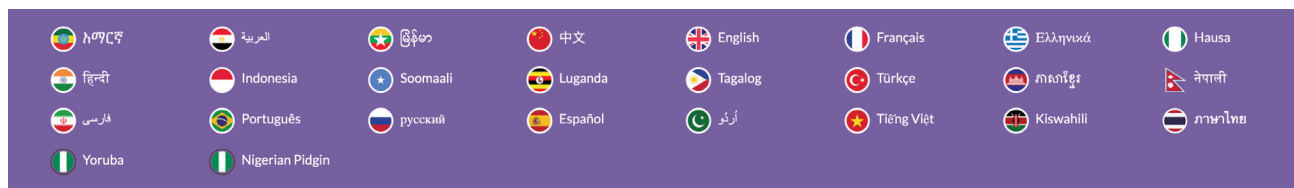
Recognizing that provider knowledge and bias are often barriers to quality care,



WFD's websites inform users and providers about abortion with pills and self-care procedures.

HowToUse offers multilingual [online courses](#) for pharmacists, medical students and humanitarian aid workers. HowToUse is building an accredited eLearning center on Moodle, an open-source learning platform, where providers can receive certification upon completion of these courses.

In early 2020, HowToUse introduced the first ever abortion virtual assistant, aptly named 'Ally,' on its website. This English-language chatbot provides customized information and automated prompts to women, whether women seek general information about medication abortion or country-specific support. Ally has already had over 25,000 conversations with users, often providing localized abortion resources, like what brand of pills to request from a provider in-country. Plans are underway to add French and Hindi bots.



Abortion information is available in 26 languages, with more to come.

Tech note: Built on Jekyll, HowToUse has an easy-to-use static interface and a customizable design. This makes it well suited to search engine indexing, allowing women to easily find the information they need online. In countries where abortion access is restricted, HowToUse is promoted under the alias of pinkshoes.org. HowToUse also uses Accelerated Mobile Pages (AMP), a stripped-down version of its regular web pages that allows for rapid loading. This has been particularly useful in reaching women living in areas where internet speeds are slow or data costs are restrictive. Data security is a top priority; all websites are GDPR-compliant.



safe2choose.org

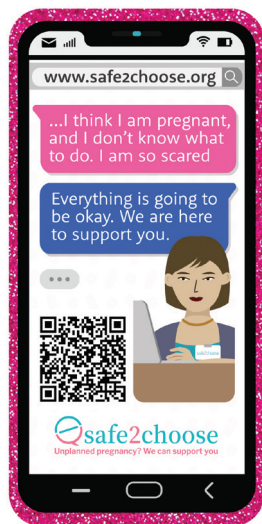
is a pioneer in offering real-time counseling support to women through live chat and email. Backed by a team of medically-trained experts (predominantly women), safe2choose counselors provide free, multilingual support for an abortion that is safe and confidential. Counselors follow-up to assess quality of service and information provision.

Counseling is provided in 11 different languages and includes detailed explanations about local resources and services, including available products, trustworthy providers, and pro-choice

partner organizations. Counselors maintain a growing referral database of global reproductive health and abortion providers on highly-encrypted software that allows storage of sensitive information.

Women can access information for a self-managed abortion or how to access care from a provider. safe2choose offers guidance on abortion with pills, popular pill brands in each country, explanations of vacuum aspiration abortions, testimonials of women who have had an abortion with support from safe2choose, and a host of abortion FAQs. All this is available to women in seven languages (more languages are planned).

Tech note: safe2choose is built on WordPress, which provides a simple and search-engine friendly interface. This platform is also highly customizable and flexible; WFD leverages plug-ins such as Zendesk for its chat feature. Data security is also top priority; safe2choose's email counseling interface has been specially designed for safe2choose's needs and ensures complete encryption. The interface creates individual counseling profiles for each user and provides notifications for follow-up, automated check-ins, and text translations that can be customized by counselors.



FindMyMethod.org offers comprehensive, multilingual and jargon-free contraceptive information to help women address common questions and concerns that may

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impede uptake and continued use. Available in seven languages with side-by-side filters and comparison tools for different contraceptive methods, FindMyMethod helps women navigate their contraceptive options based on their preferences and lifestyle. Launched in partnership with [Bedsider.org](https://bedsider.org), FindMyMethod's content is youth-friendly and non-judgmental.

WFD knows that women trust and support other women. FindMyMethod crowd sources ideas and advice through an [interactive forum](#) where women can engage and support other women in finding the contraceptive method that best suits their needs. By creating chat rooms in multiple languages centered around contraceptive methods and countries, this stand-alone platform serves as an online community for referrals, contraceptive and service reviews, and experience-sharing.

Tech Note: The FindMyMethod Forum is built on Discourse, an open source software specifically designed to bolster internet discussions. With a simple interface that encourages community dialogue and positive discussions (through rewards), Discourse encourages civil discussions. Users can easily register on Discourse through social media or email accounts, allowing them to participate in community chats.

Digital marketing and communications

Social media offers an important and complementary channel through which WFD reaches women with information. Available



FindMyMethod uses a sex-positive approach to discuss contraception, sex and pleasure.

in multiple languages across a range of platforms, WFD social media pages have a total following of 260,000 and a reach of 55 million. WFD's growing fanbase and reach is testament to its fresh, fun, and creative content that covers sexuality and pleasure. WFD also leverages local voices to direct traffic to the website, including influencers, activists, bloggers, and media. WFD's social media uses an inbound marketing strategy which also targets women who may need WFD's support in the future.

In addition to social media and local voices, WFD prioritizes Search Engine Page Rankings (SERPs) in its digital marketing strategy. WFD invests in paid ads that generate pay-per-clicks (PPCs) for Google, for example. WFD's search engine optimization (SEO) strategies ensures content features optimal keywords,

backlinks, meta-descriptions, and tags on each webpage to help more women find reproductive health resources. WFD also uses Google Search Console and SEO monitoring tools to analyze user behaviors and keywords they use to find information online.

WFD also leverages well-established and localized WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger groups in many countries in Africa and Asia, so women can access information on its websites, get answers to frequently asked questions on reproductive health, and receive referrals.

Linking the virtual space to on-the-ground partnerships

Though WFD works primarily in the digital space, offline initiatives are critical and strategic. WFD recognizes that while internet penetration rates are increasing across the world, there are still large portions of the population that do not have access to the internet, including vulnerable women and youth. These groups



WFD conducts offline activities in universities and youth centers to increase awareness of abortion with pills.

still need safe abortion and reproductive health information.

To address this information gap and reduce unmet need, WFD in-country teams support offline marketing and outreach by strengthening relationships with on-the-ground organizations, provider networks, women and youth action groups, and university associations. WFD disseminates simplified and localized educational and informational material such as posters, pamphlets, and pregnancy wheels. WFD also undertakes briefing events where attendees are introduced to each platform and taken through the medical abortion protocols.

WFD builds partnerships internationally, working with a wide range of well-established organizations and partners who seek to leverage WFD's reach and work in the safe abortion and contraceptive digital space.

Results

From 2015-2020, WFD hosted an estimated **13 million sessions** with users who visit our websites to obtain information, referrals, and support. WFD uses Google Analytics for real-time tracking of site visits, demographic trends, and sources of traffic acquisition.

Counseling and referrals. WFD has linked over 41,000 individuals to additional reproductive health services, products or resources; and provided direct counseling to over 29,000 women.

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Demographic trends. Users from over 180 different countries have visited WFD websites. Over 90% of users access WFD websites through their mobile devices. For HowToUse and safe2choose, the majority of users are female, but both draw in significant male populations. FindMyMethod is an almost even split between men and women visiting the website for information. The 25-34 age demographic is the biggest category of visitors, followed by the 18-24 age category. Google Analytics does not report on data for minors, but anecdotal

evidence suggests that visitors under 18 also frequently visit WFD's websites.

Contact

If you have any questions about Women First Digital, please contact us at info@womenfirstdigital.org. Learn more about Women First Digital, what we do, and where we work by visiting us online at www.womenfirstdigital.org. You can also get periodic updates by following us on LinkedIn.

WFD Women First Digital

 safe2choose
safe2choose.org

 how to use
abortion pill
howtouseabortionpill.org

 find my method
findmymethod.org



TOP 10 SAFE2CHOOSE COUNTRIES

COUNTRIES	SESSIONS
1. India	1,753,900
2. Brazil	1,569,111
3. Mexico	996,415
4. United States	599,099
5. Nigeria	273,108
6. Argentina	227,315
7. Colombia	198,008
8. Peru	170,136
9. Kenya	136,956
10. Ghana	127,837

TOP 10 HOW TO USE COUNTRIES

COUNTRIES	SESSIONS
1. India	1,053,887
2. Iran	600,731
3. Nigeria	276,846
4. Tanzania	202,638
5. Kenya	164,387
6. United States	145,437
7. Philippines	121,117
8. Ghana	116,713
9. Brazil	88,396
10. South Africa	72,805

TOP 10 FIND MY METHOD COUNTRIES

COUNTRIES	SESSIONS
1. India	43,046
2. Nigeria	15,844
3. Kenya	13,550
4. Philippines	10,323
5. South Africa	8,858
6. Ghana	7,975
7. Pakistan	6,599
8. France	4,583
9. United States	3,837
10. Mexico	1,772

The map above shows that users from over 180 countries have visited our websites. The Top 10 countries to visit each website to date are listed.

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