

Reframing the Conversation

How a rights-based, audience-centred communications approach helped normalise conversations around safe abortion, creating a replicable model for digital advocacy on sensitive issues.



Digital platforms have become one of the primary ways people seek health information, particularly younger audiences who increasingly turn to social media for answers, advice, and support. They are also spaces where public understanding is shaped, and social norms are reinforced or challenged. For issues surrounded by stigma or misinformation, digital platforms are therefore not simply a means of disseminating information; it can influence how an issue itself is understood and discussed. While they provide an opportunity to reach people where they are, creating safe spaces for dialogue, connecting them to trusted information, and enabling reach to large and diverse audiences, they also amplify misinformation, reinforce harmful stereotypes, and expose sensitive topics to backlash and restrictive content moderation.

Safe abortion exemplifies this challenge. Despite being a recognised component of healthcare and protected under India's legal framework, abortion continues to be surrounded by stigma, myths, and misinformation that often prevent people from accessing accurate information and appropriate care. Improving access therefore requires more than policy change and service availability. It also requires creating an enabling information environment where people can access trusted information, engage with the subject without fear or judgement, and make informed decisions.

Recognising that conversations about safe abortion were increasingly taking place online, the **Pratigya Campaign for Gender Equality and Safe Abortion**^[1]—a national coalition working to advance access to safe abortion in India—implemented a structured digital advocacy strategy. Rather than using social media primarily as a dissemination channel, the campaign positioned digital platforms as spaces for narrative change, public engagement, and access to trusted information. The strategy aimed to normalise conversations around safe abortion, reduce stigma, improve access to trusted information, and foster a more informed, supportive, and empathetic online environment. In doing so, it demonstrated how digital advocacy can be used to effectively communicate sensitive public health issues at scale.

This case study examines that approach and the evidence generated through its implementation. It focuses on what changed when abortion was communicated differently, how that approach was put into practice, what the intervention achieved, and what it suggests for strategic digital advocacy on abortion and other sensitive public health issues.

[1] To know more about the coalition, visit <https://pratigyacampaign.org/>

The innovation at the centre of Pratigya's digital advocacy strategy was not simply the use of social media, new formats or creative content - how abortion is communicated influences how it is understood. It was a deliberate shift in the starting point of communication about abortion: rather than beginning with stigma, controversy or the need to persuade audiences that abortion is acceptable, Pratigya started from the premise that abortion is healthcare and a recognised reproductive right. Communication was therefore designed to help people understand abortion, navigate their options, access reliable information and support others—without first asking them to accept abortion as legitimate.

This resulted in three interconnected shifts in how abortion was communicated.

Reframing the conversation: from defence to understanding

For decades, abortion advocacy has largely focused on challenging stigma and defending abortion against moral, legal, and social opposition. While this approach has played an important role in advancing legal literacy and awareness, it has often required communications to begin by acknowledging abortion as controversial before explaining why it should be accepted. The campaign deliberately shifted away from communications that began by defending abortion against stigma or controversy. This assumption was never presented as a point of debate; instead, it became the foundation of all communication.



This fundamentally shifted the conversation from defence to understanding, communicating from a position of legitimacy. Pratigya moved abortion away from the language of controversy and towards the language of healthcare, information, and support. In doing so, it sought to normalise abortion as part of routine reproductive healthcare rather than an exceptional moral or political issue.

Table 1: The Communication Shift

Traditional Communications Approach	Pratigya Campaign's Digital Advocacy Strategy
Defend abortion <i>"Abortion is controversial—but it shouldn't be"</i>	Normalise abortion <i>"Abortion is healthcare. Let's talk about it like healthcare"</i>
Position abortion within a pro-choice/pro-life debate <i>"Is abortion right or wrong?"</i>	Move the conversation from positions to people <i>"How can people access safe abortion, make informed decisions, and receive the support they need?"</i>
Respond to stigma <i>"Let's address the stigma around abortion."</i>	Bypass stigma <i>"Let's focus on what people need to know and do."</i>
Focus on morality, legality, and rights debates. <i>"Should abortion be allowed?"</i>	Focus on healthcare, access, support & lived experiences <i>"How can people access safe abortion and support those who need it?"</i>
Convince audiences that abortion is acceptable <i>"Here's why abortion is okay..."</i>	Assume abortion is legitimate and equip audiences with information <i>"Here's what you need to know to make informed decisions."</i>
Explain why abortion is a right and a choice <i>"Why abortion is your right."</i>	Help people exercise that right and choice safely and confidently <i>"Here's how to exercise your rights safely, confidently, and with the right support."</i>

Putting People at the Centre

The second shift was from communicating about abortion to communicating around what audiences need and how they engage with information. At the heart of Pratigya's digital advocacy strategy was a simple principle: effective communication begins with understanding the audience. Content was designed around how people seek and consume information in digital spaces, particularly young audiences who increasingly turn to social media for health information. Complex medical and legal concepts were translated into simple, accessible formats—including reels, carousels, myth-busting posts, explainers and everyday situations.

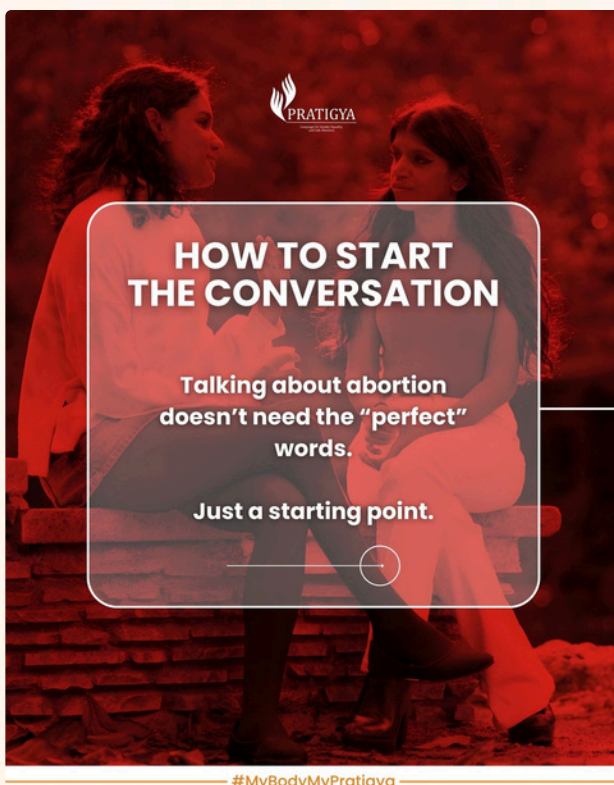
To make the content more engaging and culturally relevant, the campaign thoughtfully incorporated popular culture, humour, memes, and trending digital formats. However, these elements were used with care and intention—not to make light of abortion, but to make conversations more approachable while preserving the seriousness, empathy, and dignity the issue deserves. Popular culture became a tool to reduce distance and encourage engagement, without trivialising the experiences of those seeking abortion care.

Many people engage with abortion as partners, friends, siblings, or family members looking for reliable information to support someone they care about. Content therefore addressed the broader ecosystem of support, helping audiences understand not only how to access safe abortion, but also how to support others with accurate information, empathy, and informed guidance. This approach made abortion easier for wider audiences to engage with, even when they were not themselves seeking services.

Educating without reinforcing stigma

Education was treated as a way to make abortion practical and navigable, rather than as an opportunity to debate its acceptability. Content addressed legal rights, the medical procedure, myths, provider information and service pathways through clear, evidence-based communication that responded to the questions audiences were already asking.

By treating abortion as a routine healthcare issue rather than an exceptional moral debate, the campaign shifted communication from persuasion to practical support, making it easier for audiences to understand, discuss, and navigate safe abortion with confidence. This distinction was central to the strategy: the campaign sought to reduce stigma not by repeatedly talking about stigma, but by making abortion easier to understand, discuss and navigate as a healthcare issue.





Gestation Limit

The number of weeks into pregnancy until which **abortion** is **legally** allowed.
Think of it as the law's "**deadline**" — not for choice, but for **permission**.

In India:
Up to 20 weeks for most cases.
Up to 24 weeks for survivors of rape, minors, and cases of fetal anomaly.

Why it matters:
Because biology doesn't always follow bureaucracy.
And safe abortion should depend on healthcare — not just a number on a calendar.

Know the term. Know your right.

The messaging approach was operationalised through an always-on, multi-platform digital engagement model, rather than a series of isolated awareness campaigns.

An always-on model, anchored by campaign moments

Pratigya maintained a consistent presence on Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn, using regular educational content alongside campaign moments, live sessions and targeted digital amplification. Two flagship campaigns provided moments of concentrated engagement within the broader continuous communication strategy:

- **Faisla Aapka, Saath Sabka**, launched around International Safe Abortion Day 2025, focused on informed choice, supportive decision-making and the role of partners, families and communities in enabling access to safe abortion. It combined relatable storytelling with practical information and framed abortion support as a shared responsibility.
- **My Body, My Pratigya**, developed for International Women's Day 2026, focused on bodily autonomy and reproductive rights through a month-long series of digital activities. It combined educational content with audience engagement, with several of the intervention's strongest-performing posts forming part of the campaign.

To encourage direct interaction, the campaign also hosted two live sessions, creating opportunities for audiences to engage with experts in a safe and supportive environment. Organic content was further strengthened through boosted posts and dark advertisements, allowing high-performing messages to reach priority audiences and increasing the visibility of campaign content during strategic advocacy moments.

Using data to adapt the communication

Data and audience response were built into implementation rather than treated only as an end-of-campaign reporting exercise. Pratigya monitored reach, engagement, content performance, link clicks and sentiment to understand how audiences were responding to different messages and formats. These insights were used to refine message framing, content formats and digital amplification on a monthly basis, during implementation. Particular attention was given to qualitative signals—including sentiment, information-seeking behaviour and the nature of online conversations—recognising that the quality of engagement matters alongside scale when communicating about a sensitive and stigmatised issue.

For this case study, results from September 2025 to May 2026 are used to illustrate the implementation and performance of the digital advocacy strategy. During this period, the campaign developed 143 original pieces of content, including boosted posts and dark advertisements, alongside two flagship digital campaigns and two live sessions across Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn.

The intervention generated substantial digital visibility, reaching more than 2.29 million people and generating 3.35 million impressions. Audiences recorded 149,011 engagements through reactions, comments, shares and other interactions. In May 2026, the campaign also generated 42,962 link clicks, indicating that audiences moved beyond social media content to seek additional information through Pratigya's digital resources. The intervention also expanded Pratigya's digital community. Instagram followers increased from 269 to 1,155 (300%), while Facebook followers grew from 1,600 to 4,467 (179%). The coalition's digital presence was expanded to LinkedIn during this period, building an audience of 871 followers, including public health professionals, advocates, researchers and partner organisations.

Audience sentiment was predominantly supportive, informative and respectful, with relatively low negative engagement. Rather than provoking polarised debate, audiences actively sought information, asked questions, and participated in constructive discussions around safe abortion. Content performance provided evidence that the campaign's shift in how abortion was communicated resonated with audiences. The strongest-performing content moved beyond defending or justifying abortion and instead focused on helping audiences understand the issue, navigate conversations, and support informed decision-making.

The use of popular culture, humor, and familiar social media formats was particularly effective in making difficult conversations more approachable. The carousel "[If Abortion Myths Were Bollywood Villains](#)" emerged as one of the campaign's highest-performing posts, reaching over 400,000 users.

What drove the strategy's success

Started from legitimacy instead of defence

Audience-centred communication

Practical, useful & relatable content

Made abortion feel ordinary

Created safe spaces for engagement

Continuous digital engagement

Created pathways to information & services

Data-driven optimisation

Similarly, the reel "Autonomy, But Make It Everyday" (reached 159,050 users) grounded the concept of bodily autonomy in everyday experiences, making an abstract rights-based concept more tangible and relatable. The post, "Red Flag / Green Flag: Abortion Conversations Edition" reached 40,363 users, adapting a familiar social media format to help young audiences distinguish between supportive and harmful behaviors in abortion and SRHR conversations. With the post "How to Talk to Your Partner About Considering Abortion" (reached 73,136 users) the campaign addressed the larger ecosystem of support around an abortion decision and created ways for wider audiences to engage with abortion even when they were not themselves seeking care, by addressing partners, friends, and others who may influence or support an abortion decision. The campaign's broader results reinforce this pattern: educational content, particularly myth-busting, legal explainers, and practical guidance, consistently outperformed generic awareness messaging.



The strategy also created opportunities to connect abortion with broader conversations about rights and equality. The International Women's Day 2026 reel, "Equality Includes Choice," reached 94,043 users, positioning reproductive choice within a wider conversation about equality and bodily autonomy. "Small Actions Matter", which reached 80,927 users, focused on practical ways audiences could contribute—sharing accurate information, correcting myths, supporting friends, and joining conversations—extending the role of communication from awareness towards everyday support and advocacy.

Together, these results demonstrate both the scale of the intervention and an important pattern: audiences engaged most strongly when abortion was communicated through clear, practical, relatable and useful information rather than generic awareness messaging.

The intervention offers lessons that extend beyond abortion advocacy by creating conditions for people to engage with a sensitive issue in ways that are informed, respectful and actionable.

Start from Dignity, Not Defence

One of the defining features of Pratigya's digital advocacy strategy was its deliberate shift from defending abortion to normalising it. Pratigya's decision to treat abortion as legitimate healthcare, rather than as an issue requiring constant defence, changed the starting point of communication. The strategy started from the assumption that people seeking abortion deserve dignity, respect, and access to accurate information. Abortion was therefore communicated not as an exception or a controversy, but as a legitimate healthcare service and an integral part of reproductive healthcare. Instead, communication focused on practical information, informed decision-making, access to services, and supportive care.

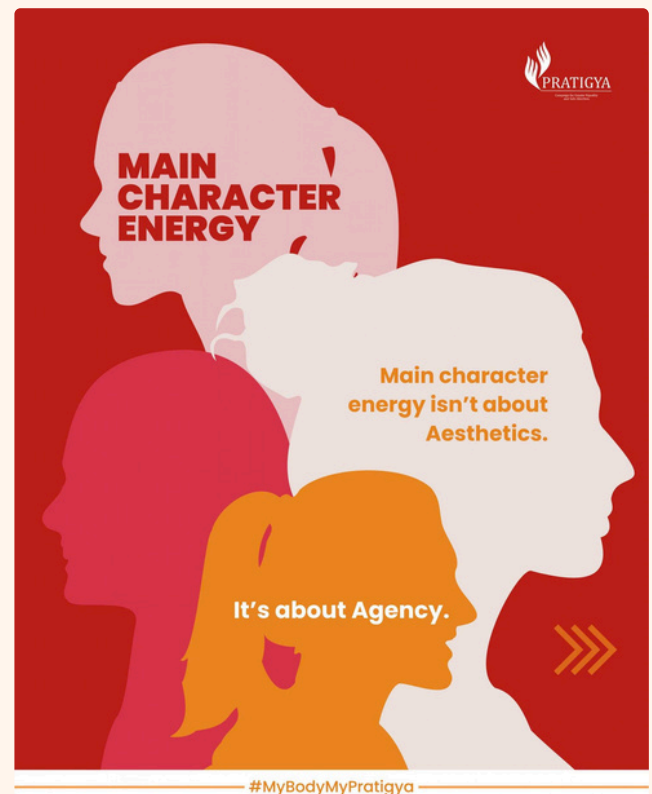


Lesson: *For sensitive health issues, communication can start from dignity, legitimacy and people's rights, focusing on what audiences need to know rather than repeatedly justifying the issue itself. Treating healthcare issues like healthcare issues helps shift public discourse from controversy to care.*

People Engage with Content that Reflects Their Lives

The strongest-performing content was not simply the content with the strongest awareness message. Audiences responded particularly well to content that translated complex medical, legal and rights-based information into simple, practical and culturally familiar formats. Rather than relying on institutional messaging or technical explanations, Pratigya used everyday language, popular culture, humour, and familiar situations to explain legal rights, dispel myths, and encourage supportive conversations. The campaign also recognised that abortion decisions are shaped by social relationships.

The content was designed not only for abortion seekers but also for partners, friends, and family members who often provide information and emotional support during abortion decision-making. This broadened the conversation from individual health-seeking to shared understanding and collective support. The use of culturally familiar language, humour, memes, and popular culture further enhanced engagement, but these elements were employed thoughtfully to make the content approachable without trivialising the experiences of people seeking abortion care. The campaign demonstrated that relatability and credibility are not mutually exclusive; evidence-based communication can be both engaging and respectful.



Lesson: *Accuracy is necessary, but not sufficient. Design communication for conversation, not simply awareness. Sensitive health information needs to be designed for how people actually consume, understand and use information—and for the conversations they may need to have with others. Make information usable rather than merely accurate and use culturally familiar language and formats to make complex health information easier to understand without compromising evidence.*

Careful framing can create space digital spaces

Digital advocacy on abortion is often assumed to invite hostility, misinformation, and polarised debate. However, Pratigya's experience suggests that these risks can be mitigated through careful communication design and consistent narrative framing in a sustainable manner. Sentiment analysis showed that audience interactions were predominantly supportive, informative, and respectful, with almost nil negative engagement. Rather than provoking confrontation, much of the engagement reflected curiosity, information-seeking, and constructive discussion. Educational content—particularly legal and medical explainers, and practical guidance—generated meaningful engagement while maintaining a positive tone across platforms.

The intervention highlighted that the tone of online conversations is influenced not only by the topic itself, but also by how that topic is framed. Communication that emphasises healthcare, evidence, empathy, and practical support appears more likely to encourage constructive engagement than communication centred on conflict or controversy.

By avoiding sensationalism and framing abortion as a legitimate healthcare issue, the campaign encouraged audiences to engage with the subject in a more informed and respectful manner.

Lesson: *Careful framing matters. Digital advocacy on sensitive issues does not inevitably lead to polarization. Empathetic, evidence-based communication can help create digital spaces where people feel able to ask questions, challenge misinformation and engage with sensitive issues without the conversation being defined by stigma or confrontation.*

Digital Advocacy Should Close the Loop Between Awareness and Action

One of the most significant findings from the intervention was that digital advocacy became more effective when it moved beyond awareness and connected audiences to credible information and services. Social media content consistently directed audiences to the Pratigya Campaign website that had valuable resources including easy to understand medical and legal information related to abortion, evidence-based resources, publications, and communication materials. The website also included the 'FindMyMTP' feature, a searchable database designed to help users locate their nearest registered abortion providers. In a month's time the campaign generated almost 43,000 link clicks, demonstrating that audiences were actively seeking additional information beyond social media content. Rather than functioning as an endpoint, social media became the first step in a broader information journey—from raising awareness, to improving understanding, to enabling access to trusted resources and services.



Lesson: *Digital advocacy should create pathways to action. Communication is most effective when it not only raises awareness but also helps audiences access credible information, trusted resources, and appropriate services.*

Consistency Builds Trust

The intervention also demonstrates the value of treating digital advocacy as a continuous engagement strategy rather than a series of isolated campaigns. While the two flagship social media campaigns during the intervention period, generated significant visibility, they were most effective because they were supported by an ongoing stream of educational content throughout the implementation period. This always-on approach ensured that audiences encountered accurate information consistently, while campaign moments provided opportunities to amplify key messages and reach new audiences. The combination of sustained engagement and strategic amplification contributed to continued audience growth, strong engagement, and consistent visibility across platforms.

Lesson: *Changing how a sensitive issue is understood requires sustained presence, experimentation and learning. Campaigns can create moments of visibility, but normalisation is more likely to emerge from repeated exposure to consistent, useful and credible communication over time.*

Measure Learning, Not Just Reach

The intervention illustrates that success in digital advocacy cannot be measured solely through visibility metrics. Alongside reach, impressions, and engagement, the campaign monitored audience sentiment, content performance, and information-seeking behaviour to understand how people were interacting with campaign messages. These insights informed ongoing refinements to message framing, content formats, and digital amplification throughout implementation. The approach also highlighted the importance of measuring the quality of engagement—not simply its volume—particularly when working on sensitive public health issues where respectful dialogue and informed decision-making are important outcomes in themselves.

Lesson: *Measure what communication changes, not simply what it reaches. Combining quantitative metrics with qualitative indicators such as sentiment and audience behaviour provides a more meaningful assessment of digital advocacy.*

What this means beyond abortion

Taken together, these lessons point to a broader principle for strategic communication: sensitive issues do not always need to be communicated through the lens of their sensitivity. Starting from people's needs, dignity and everyday realities can make difficult subjects more understandable, discussable and actionable. The principles underpinning the intervention offer practical lessons for abortion advocacy across diverse country contexts, as well as for other public health issues characterised by stigma, misinformation, or social sensitivity, such as contraception, HIV, gender-based violence, and mental health. These issues require communication approaches that are not only accurate and evidence-based, but also relatable, empathetic, and responsive to people's information needs.

When healthcare is communicated as healthcare, digital advocacy can help make public discourse more informed, more empathetic, and more conducive to improving access to care. The Pratigya Campaign's digital advocacy strategy demonstrates that communication is not simply a tool for disseminating information—it is a powerful means of shaping public perception, influencing discourse, and creating an enabling environment for social change. The strategy showed that how an issue is communicated can be just as important as what is communicated.

As digital platforms increasingly shape how people seek and engage with health information, digital advocacy is therefore increasingly part of the enabling environment for abortion access, complementing policy advocacy, service delivery, and community engagement by reducing misinformation, addressing stigma, connecting audiences with trusted information and services, and fostering a more informed and supportive environment for decision-making.

However changing public perception is not a one-time effort. Continued effort and investment matters because changing a public conversation is a long-term process. The digital community created during the intervention represents an important foundation for sustaining momentum, expanding the constituency for safe abortion, and nurturing a generation of audiences and advocates who already understand abortion as healthcare. In this sense, strategic, audience-centred digital advocacy is not only about communicating differently today, but about creating the conditions for lasting change over time.



About Pratigya Campaign for Gender Equality and Safe Abortion

The Pratigya Campaign for Gender Equality and Safe Abortion is a national coalition advocating for women's rights to safe and legal abortion in India. Launched in 2013, Pratigya brings together 120+ individuals and organisations working to advance access to safe abortion care and reproductive rights.

The campaign works with governments, civil society organisations, healthcare providers, media and other stakeholders at national and state levels to challenge stigma, strengthen policy and practice, and ensure that people can access the information, services and support they need to make informed decisions about their reproductive health.

The campaign is managed by the Pratigya Campaign Secretariat, hosted by the Foundation for Reproductive Health Services India (FRHS India), with guidance from the Campaign Advisory Group (CAG).

About the document

This case study was developed by FRHS India to document the Pratigya Campaign's digital advocacy strategy, implementation and learning.

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