



BIG TECH CASH FOR THE BACKLASH

HOW SILICON VALLEY PHILANTHROPY UNDERMINES
RIGHTS WORLDWIDE

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FOREWORD FROM NOOR:

This report sits within Noor’s multi-year program on the political economy of fascism and fundamentalism. We built this program on a clear proposition: every political project is enforced through an economic one. We are interested in the ways fascist and fundamentalist ideals are financed into longevity, embedded into state policy, and normalized through circuits of capital that appear technical, philanthropic and sometimes even benevolent.

This investigation, conducted by the Institute for Journalism and Social Change (IJSC) in partnership with Noor, asks a direct question: What is Big Tech philanthropy funding, who is it empowering, and where in the world are those resources reshaping political realities?

Over the past decade, seven US-based anti-rights organizations¹ operating internationally received millions of dollars from the Silicon Valley Community Foundation (SVCF), one of the largest philanthropic institutions in the United States. Since its founding in 2007, SVCF has been closely tied to Silicon Valley’s most powerful figures.

Grants to anti-rights actors were routed through one of the most respected philanthropic vehicles in the country. The recipient groups have been linked to anti-LGBTQI initiatives in Latin America, anti-abortion legal challenges in Eastern Europe, and “sexual purity” programming in African countries. At the same time, SVCF funded organizations promoting sexual and reproductive rights and broader human rights protections, going directly against the agendas of those anti-rights actors. The contradiction reveals how philanthropic ecosystems can sustain structurally opposed political projects at once, while reshaping the terrain on which rights struggles unfold.

This report traces those flows. Drawing on years of financial filings, it maps how philanthropic capital travels from the Silicon Valley to internationally active anti-rights networks. It grounds this analysis in case studies from West and East Africa.

For us, this is not a story about isolating “bad actors.” It is about how funding reorganizes political ecosystems. When philanthropic investments support actors whose narratives align with repressive policy trajectories, they help redraw the boundaries of what is considered moderate, pragmatic, or inevitable. They normalize certain agendas while rendering others radical, unrealistic, or unworthy of support.

Following the money, in this sense, is a diagnostic tool for understanding the consolidation of Big Tech oligarchy. To grasp the political power of tech corporations, one must examine their philanthropy. The report concludes with recommendations directed at SVCF and other Big Tech philanthropies, as well as journalists, and researchers concerned with the rise of anti-rights mobilizations worldwide.

We do not see your readership as passive consumption, but as part of the same ecosystem we are mapping, and as actors through whom disruptive and reparative interventions can take shape. As Noor and with partners, we are building a long-term body of work that insists on treating funding as political and governance as designed rather than accidental, and this report marks an opening in that trajectory. What follows is a beginning and an invitation to remain attentive to the infrastructures that shape our political present and to participate in the work of unsettling them.

¹ Note: This report uses the phrase “anti-rights” as a shorthand for groups, networks and individuals actively opposed to sexual and reproductive rights.

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The Institute for Journalism and Social Change (IJSC) is a transnational non-profit initiative bringing together journalists, researchers and activists for impactful collaborations. Noor is a global feminist and movement-driven think and do tank, devoted to building the power of gender justice and progressive movements to obstruct far-right agendas and advance our transformative visions.

Original research and data analysis were conducted by IJSC (by Claire Provost, Allan Olingo and Jerry Richardson, with contributions from Hannah Ajala).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The big money in Big Tech is flowing in different ways to support anti-rights and anti-democratic actors that are active around the world. These financial flows include advertising income (money made by Big Tech platforms from anti-rights actors) as well as monetization revenue, donations and grants (received by anti-rights actors). Public attention and scrutiny has led to some increases in the transparency of advertising revenue. However, major transparency gaps remain, particularly for international research.² At the same time, there are other financial flows that can be documented but have not come to light – until now. This report focuses on Big Tech philanthropy.

Mark Zuckerberg and Meta, but also Netflix, WhatsApp and many other Big Tech companies and CEOs that are household names are also big funders of the Silicon Valley Community Foundation. According to new follow-the-money research conducted by the Institute for Journalism and Social Change in partnership with Noor:

- Seven internationally-active US anti-rights groups, opposing sexual and reproductive rights around the world, received at least \$3.6 million from this Silicon Valley philanthropy over the decade from fiscal year 2014 to 2023 (the last year for which financial filings were available, as of October 2025).³
 - Between them, these groups have been involved in anti-rights activities including: anti-LGBTQI “conversion therapy” in Latin America; anti-abortion legal challenges in Eastern Europe; and “sexual purity” classes in Africa.
 - It is unclear what exactly these groups were given money for, and it is unclear who were the ultimate donors of this money that SVCF managed and spent. SVCF told us it was spent through ‘Donor-Advised Funds’ that it manages, rather than from the foundation’s own endowment.
- At the same time, the Silicon Valley Community Foundation (SVCF) has also channeled funding to groups that promote human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights – and that struggle against these anti-rights threats.

This report details this follow-the-money research. It also looks at the international activities of SVCF anti-rights grantees, and includes in-depth case studies from West and East Africa. It closes with recommendations for action – for SVCF and other Big Tech philanthropies, as well as for journalists, researchers and feminist activists concerned about the rising tide of anti-rights threats around the world and how they’re funded.

² This is driven largely by EU regulations demanding greater ad transparency. There is no legal obligation for platforms to archive or disclose spending for ads outside of this region.

³ See the ‘Following the Money’ section of this report for more detail.

In response to the findings in this report, an SVCF spokesperson said:

“The funding referenced in your inquiry originated from donor advised funds held at SVCF, which work differently from our own endowment. A donor or family that has established a donor advised fund at SVCF – under our guidance on compliance and due diligence – can recommend grants from their DAFs to nonprofits of their choosing.... Silicon Valley Community Foundation’s policy is that we don’t comment on our donors’ individual philanthropic activities.”

SVCF’s full response to these findings can be found in the Annexes.

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Far-right and anti-rights actors around the world have had access to diverse funding streams, including from religious bodies; individuals and oligarchs; international aid donors (including those with official feminist policies); and corporations.⁴ The rise of Big Tech has brought new financial flows into the picture, including new income from content creation (such as social media monetization schemes, making provocative and hateful content profitable); new opportunities to fundraise and sell products (with donations buttons and influencer partnerships); and new payments to platforms (through advertising campaigns).⁵

Transparency gaps make it hard or impossible to track much of this funding, and that via Big Tech is no different. While there have been advancements in the transparency of advertising on some social media platforms, these have been limited and, like monetization revenue, the gaps are bigger when looking outside the Global North.⁶

But even when relevant financial data does exist and is publicly available, it can go unscrutinized or fly under the radar due to complicated mechanisms through which money can flow. This appears to have been the case with the **Silicon Valley Community Foundation – whose funders include founders or CEOs of Netflix, Facebook/Meta, Google and WhatsApp**. Despite these Big Tech companies being household names, SVCF’s connections to anti-rights finances have not been exposed – until now.

⁴ N. Datta. (2021). Tip of the Iceberg: Religious Extremist Funders against Human Rights for Sexuality and Reproductive Health in Europe 2009 – 2018. European Parliamentary Forum for Sexual and Reproductive Rights

C. Provost. (2023). Progressive cash for the anti-LGBTQI Backlash?. The Institute for Journalism and Social Change

⁵ A. Kelly. (2023). How social media has enabled the rise of far right influencers. Raidió Teilifís Éireann

⁶ D. Rayman. (2024). In focus: Tech sector transparency and the Global South. Business Human Rights Resource Centre

This report examines a decade of this Silicon Valley philanthropy’s financial accounts to show **how millions of dollars have gone to internationally-active anti-rights actors**. It also examines these actors’ activities through two in-depth case studies from West Africa (where the Mormon Church has been networking with anti-rights actors and political elites, including against abortion rights in Sierra Leone) and East Africa, including Kenya (where Campus Crusade for Christ has been supporting emerging leaders against rights).

The Silicon Valley Community Foundation

The Silicon Valley Community Foundation (SVCF) says it “engage[s] donors and corporations from around Silicon Valley, the country and the globe to make our regions and world better for all.”⁷ It was established in 2007 as the result of a merger between two smaller philanthropic organizations.⁸ Since then, it has been closely linked to numerous Big Tech CEOs and companies which have donated money and shares to SVCF. By May 2018, Forbes identified 17 billionaire donors who had by then donated, in total, at least \$3.8 billion to the foundation, mostly since 2012. They included founders or co-founders of **Facebook/Meta, Whatsapp, Twitter, Square/Block and Google**.⁹

Towards the end of 2018, Mark Zuckerberg donated additional **Facebook** stock to SVCF, reportedly bringing his total donated by then to more than \$1.96 billion.¹⁰ Between 2019 and 2024, Zuckerberg and his wife Priscilla Chan gave another over \$9 million to SVCF through their Chan Zuckerberg Initiative.¹¹ In 2024, **Netflix** co-founder and chairman Reed Hastings gave an additional \$1.76 billion in Netflix shares in two donations.¹² In April 2025, SVCF also appointed a former **Microsoft** Chairman to its Board of Directors.¹³ Other Board Members include a Vice President at **Adobe**.¹⁴

Note: There is no suggestion that the individuals or companies named in this report as donors to SVCF have donated to anti-rights causes.

SVCF has its own charitable programs and also hosts various Donor-Advised Funds (DAFs) to which donors may give directly and recommend grant recipients, “subject to SVCF’s due diligence and approval.”¹⁵ Its 2023 Annual Report said it awarded a total of \$4.58 billion in grants that year, most of which went to organizations in California and elsewhere in the United States (and just \$197 million internationally).¹⁶ Its 2024 Financial Statement reported lower but still big grant spending (\$3.1 billion) in that year.¹⁷

⁷ ‘[Silicon Valley Community Foundation](#)’ LinkedIn

⁸ J. Rae-Dupree. (2011). ‘[Tying the Knot: The Founding of Silicon Valley Community Foundation](#)’. Silicon Valley Community Foundation

⁹ Kerry A. Dolan. (2018) ‘[Here Are 17 Billionaire Donors Who’ve Donated to the Silicon Valley Community Foundation](#)’. Forbes

¹⁰ K. Chaykowski. (2018). ‘[Zuckerberg Donates \\$200 Million To Silicon Valley Community Foundation As It Hires New CEO](#)’. Forbes

¹¹ ‘[Grants](#)’. The Chan Zuckerberg Initiative

¹² T. Spangler. (2024). ‘[Reed Hastings Gives Netflix Shares Worth \\$500 Million as a Gift to Silicon Valley Community Foundation](#)’. Variety

¹³ (2025). ‘[Silicon Valley Community Foundation welcomes John W. Thompson, former Microsoft Chairman, and Adrian Ludwig of Tools for Humanity to Board of Directors](#)’. Silicon Valley Community Foundation

¹⁴ ‘[Meet The Team: Board of Directors](#)’. Silicon Valley Community Foundation

¹⁵ (2024). ‘[Report of Independent Auditors and Consolidated Financial Statements with Supplementary Information](#)’. Silicon Valley Community Foundation [Consolidated Financial Statements](#), p. 8

¹⁶ ‘[2023-24 Year in Review](#)’. Silicon Valley Community Foundation

¹⁷ (2024). ‘[Consolidated Financial Statements](#)’. Silicon Valley Community Foundation

2. FOLLOWING THE MONEY

The Silicon Valley Community Foundation submits publicly-available financial filings every year to the US Internal Revenue Service (IRS). In particular, it files Form 990, which provides some details about its revenue and spending each year. “Schedule I” is also included, providing a list of grants and other assistance to entities in the US, including amounts of cash grants and the full names and addresses of recipients. This level of detail is not available for grants and assistance to entities outside the US (for such funding flows only total amounts are reported, by region; names of countries and recipients are not usually provided).

According to our analysis of ten years of these filings, from fiscal years 2014 to 2023 (the latest that was available as of October 2025):

- At least \$3.6 million in grants were disclosed, in total, to seven anti-rights groups over this period: Alliance Defending Freedom, Campus Crusade for Christ, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Compassion International, the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship, Focus on the Family, and Life International.
- The largest recipient was the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormon Church), which received \$2.3 million in disclosed grants in 2023. Several of the other recipients received smaller amounts but more consistent funding over the years.
 - Both the Campus Crusade for Christ and the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (the second and third largest recipients, respectively) received smaller but consistent grant funding between 2014 and 2023.
 - Focus on the Family received grants in 2014, 2015 and 2016, but none in years that followed. (It is unclear why they were dropped from SVCF’s portfolio while other anti-rights actors remained in or were added to it).
- At the same time, SVCF has also channelled money to groups that promote human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights – groups that have been struggling against these anti-rights threats. We identified many examples of such “dual funding” over the years, including grants to Global Fund for Women (2014-2023) and International Planned Parenthood Federation (2014-2020)

TABLE: SVCF ANTI-RIGHTS GRANTEES (2014 TO 2023)

<i>Grantee</i>	<i>Amount</i>
LSD Church	\$2,468,734
Campus Crusade for Christ	\$640,700
InterVarsity Christian Fellowship	\$232,800
Alliance Defending Freedom	\$99,415
Compassion International	\$96,474
Life International	\$80,000
Focus on the Family	\$70,968
Grand Total	\$3,689,091

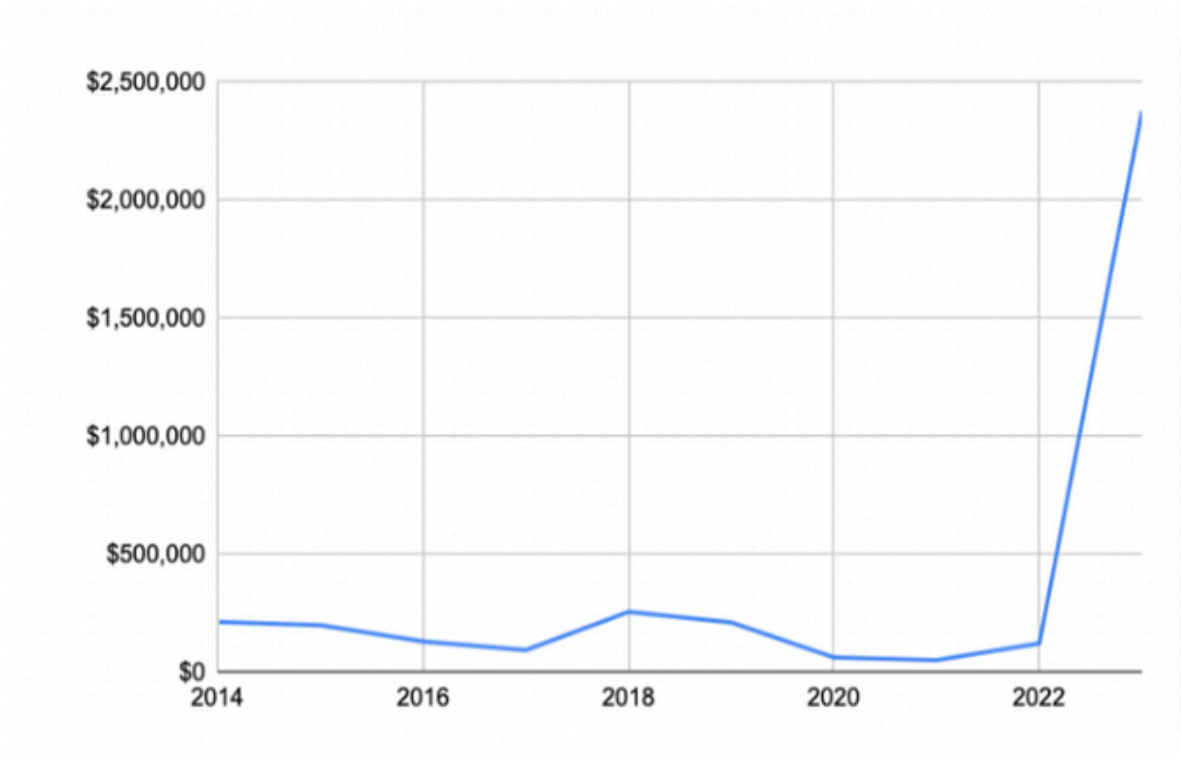
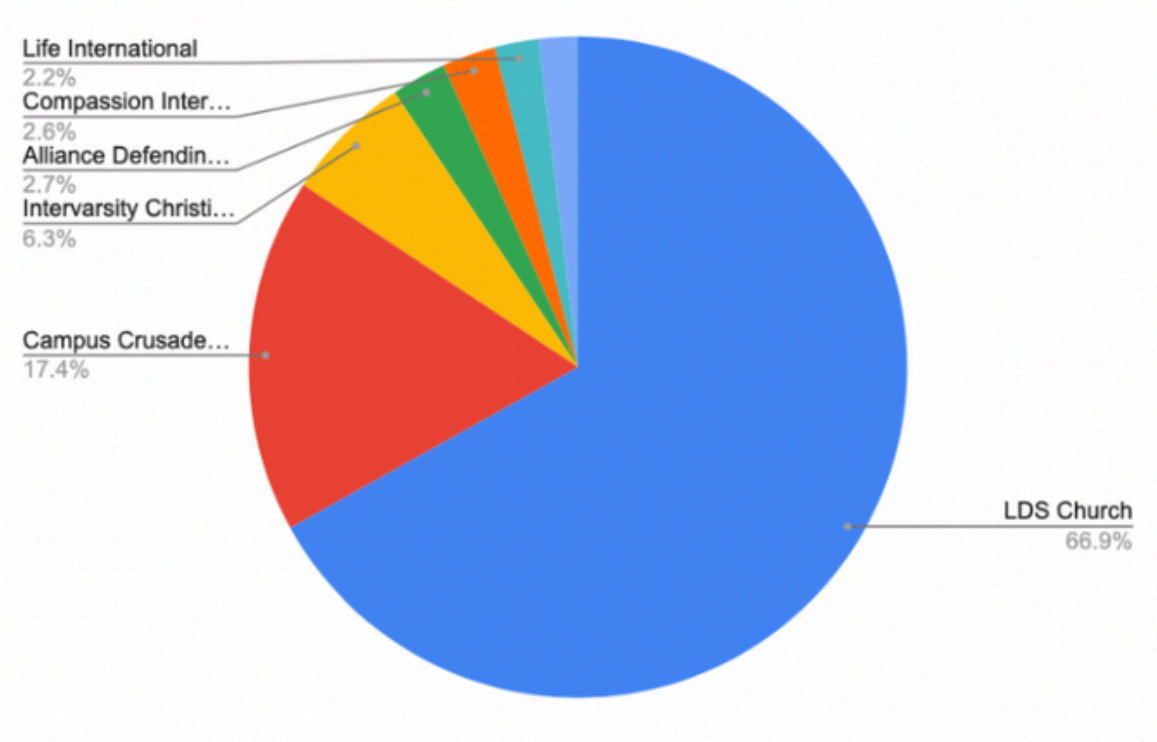
- The year-on-year data shows that anti-rights funding increased in the two years after Trump’s first administration began (2018 and 2019).
 - Life International received its only grant of \$80,000 in 2018, the year after Trump took office, and Alliance Defending Freedom received a grant of \$90,000 in 2018 (it had previously only received a \$9,400 grant in 2015).
 - Campus Crusade for Christ also received its largest grant, \$181,500, in 2019 (though it had received consistent funding over the years, as above).
- SVCF’s financial filing for the fiscal year 2024-2025 was uploaded onto their website in November 2025.¹⁸ It shows an additional \$77,500 of grants to Campus Crusade for Christ (\$66,000), and the InterVarsity Christian Fellowship (\$11,500), however no new funding for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

For each fiscal year, SVCF’s financial filings disclose thousands of grants. These lists of grants were searched for keywords to identify the anti-rights groups in this section. However it is likely that what has been identified is just the tip of the iceberg.

¹⁸ Silicon Valley Community Foundation. (2024). [Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax](#) [Form 990]

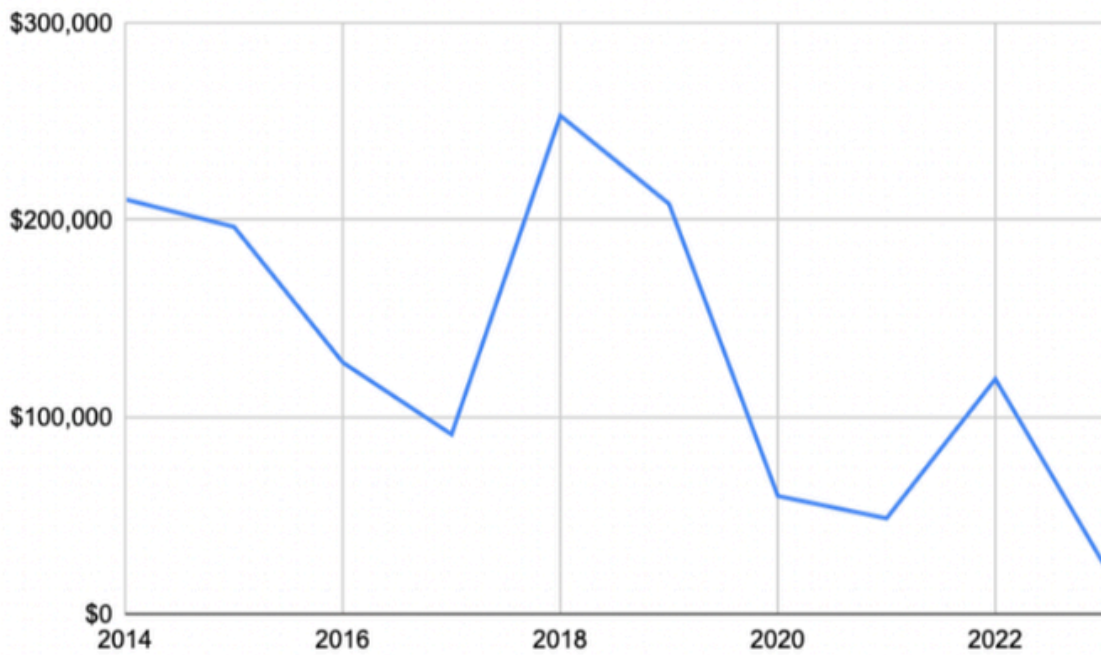
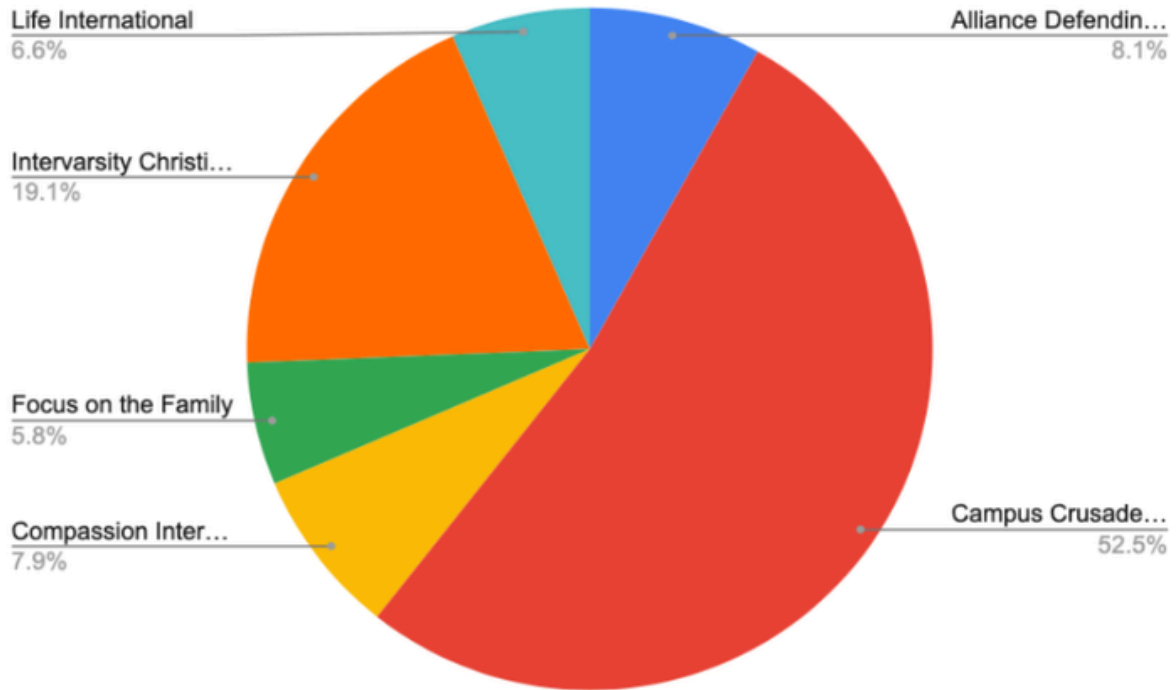
CHARTS: SVCF GRANTS TO ANTI-RIGHTS ACTORS (2014 TO 2023)

INCLUDING THE LDS CHURCH



CHARTS: SVCF GRANTS TO ANTI-RIGHTS ACTORS (2014 TO 2023)

EXCLUDING THE LDS CHURCH



3. UNDERMINING RIGHTS

In June 2022, SVCF’s President and CEO Nicole Taylor authored a post on the foundation’s website arguing that philanthropies should increase their support for “reproductive justice” after the Supreme Court effectively overturned 50 years of constitutional abortion rights in the US. At SVCF she said, “We trust women to make their own decisions as they pursue equitable, fulfilling, secure lives for themselves — particularly when it comes to their own bodies and health.”¹⁹ More recently, in June 2025, SVCF marked Pride month with another website post celebrating “the LGBTQ+ community” and organizations “working year-round to advance equity, visibility and belonging,” and encouraging further donations to “ensure that everyone – regardless of who they love or how they identify – has the opportunity to live with dignity and pride.”²⁰

These commitments to reproductive and sexual rights are at once demonstrated and undermined by the detail in SVCF’s financial filings. They’re reflected in grants over the years to organizations supporting rights, and contradicted by those to the anti-rights groups identified in this report. The following table provides examples of the anti-rights grantees’ activities internationally and in the US. Subsequent case studies go in-depth in West and East Africa.

TABLE: ANTI-RIGHTS ACTIVITIES OF SVCF GRANTEEES

SVCF GRANTEE	ANTI-RIGHTS ACTIVITIES & STATEMENTS
<p>The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (The LDS Church, AKA ‘The Mormon Church’)</p>	<p>The LDS Church is clear in its opposition to reproductive and sexual rights and freedoms. “Church members who encourage an abortion in any way may be subject to Church discipline,” it says, and even circumstances where the pregnant person’s life is at risk “do not automatically justify an abortion.”²¹ It says same-sex activity is a “sin”²² and does not allow same-sex marriage. Internationally, it has engaged in anti-rights networks including the World Congress of Families.²³ It has also been networking with and supporting anti-abortion and anti-LGBTQI actors and political elites in Africa. Speakers at its West Africa “Strengthening Families” conferences have included LDS anti-rights activist Sharon Slater, president of Family Watch International, whose record on opposing SRHR in Africa includes the Stop CSE Campaign against comprehensive sexuality education.²⁴ <i>(For more on this see the below case study).</i></p>

¹⁹ N. Taylor. (2022). ‘[After Roe, philanthropic sector should prioritize organizations that support reproductive justice and women’s rights](#)’. Silicon Valley Community Foundation

²⁰ (2025). ‘[Celebrating Pride through community giving](#)’. Silicon Valley Community Foundation

²¹ ‘[Abortion](#)’. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints

²² ‘[Same-Sex Attraction](#)’. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints

²³ (2000). ‘[Church Participates in World Congress of Families](#)’. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints

²⁴ ‘[Africa CSE Map](#)’. Stop CSE website

K. Cullinan, Z. Geloo T. Haidula. (2020). ‘[US Christian right group hosts anti-LGBT training for African politicians](#)’. OpenDemocracy

TABLE: ANTI-RIGHTS ACTIVITIES OF SVCF GRANTEES

SVCF GRANTEE	ANTI-RIGHTS ACTIVITIES & STATEMENTS
Campus Crusade for Christ	<p>This US Christian Right group was founded during the Cold War to also combat “communist influence” in universities. Vocally anti-LGBTQI and anti-abortion, they’ve been part of the push against anti-discrimination policies/laws, using religious freedom arguments. (Campus Crusade for Christ’s founder, Bill Bright, was also a co-founder of Alliance Defending Freedom, below). Their name is deceptive because they don’t focus exclusively on campuses (and in the US they are now known as “Cru”). Internationally, they support “emerging leaders” including in Africa. (For more on this see the below case study).</p>
InterVarsity Christian Fellowship	<p>The InterVarsity Christian Fellowship is an evangelical student-led ministry, which is anti-abortion and anti-LGBTQI rights. In the US, it was represented by a Christian right legal advocacy group (The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty) in a case against the University of Iowa.²⁵ The ultimately successful case argued that the group was discriminated against for following Christian doctrine including on its theories about gender and sexuality.²⁶ The group says it has an international presence on over 700 campuses worldwide and an affiliation with the International Fellowship of Evangelical Students, which extends its reach and partnerships.²⁷</p>
Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF)	<p>This group battles sexual and reproductive rights through legal systems. In the US, it has supported multiple high-profile Supreme Court cases challenging anti-discrimination laws and regulations. Internationally, it has intervened in cases around the world, including one that would block gender-affirming care for young trans people in Brazil²⁸, and one to prevent same-sex couples from getting equal health insurance benefits in South Korea²⁹. In 2023, ADF lawyers also addressed a South African parliamentary committee to oppose a bill that would criminalize hate speech against LGBTQI people.³⁰</p>

²⁵ [‘InterVarsity Christian Fellowship v. University of Iowa’](#), The Becket Fund for Religious Liberty
²⁶ (2021). [‘InterVarsity Christian Fellowship v. University of Iowa’](#), United States Court of Appeals For the Eighth Circuit
²⁷ [‘InterVarsity and IFES History’](#), InterVarsity Christian Fellowship website
²⁸ (2025). [‘Brazilian Supreme Court Urged to Protect Children from Gender Ideology Experiments in Brief Filed by Human Rights Organizations’](#), ADF International.
²⁹ (2024). [‘No right to same-sex marriage—Korean Supreme Court to hear case with potential to redefine marriage’](#), ADF International
³⁰ (2023). [‘Up to five years in prison for peaceful expression: South African parliament passes “hate speech” bill’](#), ADF International

TABLE: ANTI-RIGHTS ACTIVITIES OF SVCF GRANTEEES

SVCF GRANTEE	ANTI-RIGHTS ACTIVITIES & STATEMENTS
Compassion International	Compassion International is a Christian conservative child-sponsorship program that says it operates in 29 countries across Africa, Asia, Central America and the Caribbean. ³¹ In these countries, it partners with local anti-rights actors. The Church of Uganda, for example, is a “Frontline Church Partner.” ³² The Church of Uganda was among the proponents of the Anti-Homosexuality Act. In 2023, it was also revealed that Compassion International paid \$1 million annually to the Hillsong Church to promote its initiatives among church members. ³³ The Hillsong Church has been hit by a series of controversies, including allegations of financial impropriety and reported child sexual abuse by its founder. ³⁴
Life International	Life International is an anti-abortion Christian group with a network of global ministries in 164 countries that says it exists “to uphold the biblical value of all human life worldwide.” ³⁵ It also partners with local anti-rights actors in these countries. In February 2025, for example, Life International signed a memorandum of understanding with the Church of Uganda, and a reverend of the church stated, “Through comprehensive training programs, mentorship, and resource development, the partnership will integrate the message of the sanctity of human life into the Church of Uganda’s extensive network.” ³⁶
Focus on the Family	Focus on the Family has previously partnered with the World Congress of Families and, in 2022, its President Jim Daly spoke at this anti-rights networks’ summit in Mexico City. ³⁷ A 2021 investigation by openDemocracy also revealed that therapists connected to Focus on the Family were engaging in conversion therapy practices in Costa Rica in association with conversion therapy group Exodus Global Alliance (formerly Exodus International). ³⁸ Founder Jim Daly has defended conversion therapy publicly, including during a 2020 interview on Daily Blast LIVE. ³⁹

³¹[About Us](#), Compassion International

³²(2023). [‘Up to five years in prison for peaceful expression: South African parliament passes “hate speech” bill’](#). ADF International

K. Joel. (2023). [‘Archbishop Kaziimba Meets Compassion International Uganda’s Outgoing and Incoming National Directors’](#). MS News Uganda

³³L. Blair. (2023). [‘Hillsong Church charged Compassion International \\$1M annually for promotion: report’](#). The Christian Post

³⁴J. Butler. (2023). [‘Hillsong accused of money laundering and tax evasion by Australian MP under parliamentary privilege’](#). The Guardian

T. Turnbull (2023). [“Brian Houston: Hillsong Church founder cleared of concealing father’s abuse.”](#) BBC

³⁵‘2024 [Impact Report](#)’, Life International

³⁶A. Anthony. (2025). [‘Church of Uganda, Life International Sign MOU to Promote Family Life’](#). Uganda Catholic Television

³⁷P. Batura. (2022). [‘At World Congress of Families, Focus President Jim Daly: Liberal and Conservative Scholars Agree Traditional Family](#)

[Critical for Survival of Civilization’](#). Daily Citizen

International Organization for the Family. (2023). [‘World Congress of Families XIV - Jim Daly, Focus on the Family’](#) [YouTube]

³⁸D. Cariboni, D.C. Hernández, S. Corpi. (2021). [‘Therapists backed by US groups tell LGBTQ Costa Ricans that homosexuality is ‘wrong’](#).

OpenDemocracy

³⁹Daily Blast LIVE. (2020). Youtube [channel](#)

CASE STUDY 1: MORMON “FAMILY VALUES” IN WEST AFRICA

In a glittering hall in Freetown, Sierra Leone’s First Lady, Fatima Maada Bio, smiled as she accepted a bronze sculpture of a family – a symbolic gesture honoring her “work in promoting family values.” The award was presented by Alfred Kyungu, the Africa West Area President of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), during the country’s Strengthening Families Conference in July 2025.⁴⁰

But this was more than a ceremonial moment. It marked the crescendo of a growing movement – one where faith and politics intertwine to shape the continent’s social narrative. Just hours before the presentation, speakers at the conference, including representatives from Family Watch International led by American LDS activist Sharon Slater delivered passionate addresses on the preservation of “traditional family values,” echoing broader debates across Africa over gender, sexuality, and reproductive rights.⁴¹



Fatima Bio, First Lady of Sierra Leone in a blue kaftan and matching headgear at the SFC in July 2025

⁴⁰M. Richards. (2025). ‘Church’s Strengthening Families Conference in Sierra Leone focuses on women, children’, Church News

⁴¹Ipas and Empower. (2023). ‘Pulling Back the Cover: The Roots, Relationships and Rise of Family Watch International’. Ipas

“Today, families are under pressure from all sides – from shifting gender ideologies to the powerful influence of social media,” said Archbishop Edward Tamba Charles, head of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Freetown and president of the Interreligious Council of Sierra Leone (IRCS), during the July 2025 gathering in Freetown. “We must confront the forces that are undermining – and in some cases destroying – the very foundation of marriage and family life.”⁴²

His presence at the conference was no coincidence. Under Archbishop Tamba Charles, the IRCS has emerged as a formidable force, leading the charge against the Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Care Bill – a landmark proposal that would, among other provisions, legalize abortion in the country.⁴³

Over the past decade, a wave of conservative activism has been sweeping across West Africa – anchored by the annual Family Values Conference, sponsored by the Mormon Church. From Ghana to Nigeria and now Sierra Leone, the gatherings have drawn powerful audiences – First Ladies, cabinet ministers, religious leaders, and traditional authorities – all rallying around a shared mission to “protect family values.”

But beneath the hymns and speeches lies a deeper agenda. Despite the Mormon Church’s official adherence to political neutrality regarding domestic and international legislation, its influence in West Africa is leveraged through an effective indirect political influence model – Strengthening Families Conferences.

These conferences, sponsored via conservative groups like Slater’s have become rallying points against LGBTQI rights and abortion reform, framing such issues as threats to African identity, faith, and morality. In doing so, they’ve ignited fierce debate about the growing intersection of religion, politics, and women’s rights across the region.

“Some may ask, why improve marriage?” challenged Spencer James, an associate professor at Mormon-founded and sponsored Brigham Young University’s School of Family Life, as he addressed delegates at the 2024 Strengthening Families Conference in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire.⁴⁴ “Because strengthening marriage – as prescribed in the bible – strengthens families – and, in turn, society itself. Marriage is essential to sustainable development.”

⁴²M. Richards. (2025). ‘Church’s Strengthening Families Conference in Sierra Leone focuses on women, children’. Church News

⁴³(2025). ‘SIERRA LEONE – Government officials are currently considering the Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Care Bill of 2024’. International Campaign for Women’s Right to Safe Abortion

⁴⁴‘About’. Brigham Young University [website](#)

The influence of the Mormon Church in West Africa reflects a calculated and sophisticated use of soft power. The region has become the church's fastest-growing frontier – now home to over 933,000 members. Within this landscape, several West African nations have been marked as strategic growth hubs, with Nigeria leading the way. According to LDS Church data, the country boasts an estimated 193,000 members followed by Ghana with 113,470 members, underscoring its role as the heart of the church's expansion on the continent.⁴⁵

It is no coincidence that Ghana, host of three Family Values Conferences between 2019 and 2022 (attendees included the Ghana Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection; the Ministry of Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs; and the Domestic Violence and Victim Support Unit), and went on to debate the Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill (2024) – a new law seeking to criminalize the promotion or sponsorship of LGBTQI activities.⁴⁶ The bill was passed by parliament in 2024, but didn't become law as the then president, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, did not sign it, citing a case challenging the bill at the Supreme Court. The proposed legislation drew strong support from religious institutions such as the Global Evangelical Church, which publicly urged the president to sign it into law.⁴⁷ John Dramani Mahama, who in 2024 was a presidential candidate, promised to sign the bill if he became president. He was sworn into office in January 2025, and the bill was presented again to Parliament for a first reading in February 2026.

A similar trajectory emerged in Liberia. In 2022, the Mormon Church hosted a Strengthening Family Youth Symposium in Monrovia, promoting conservative views on marriage and family life.⁴⁸ Two years later, lawmakers tabled the Anti-Homosexuality Bill (2024), proposing severe penalties for LGBTQI people and those perceived to support them.⁴⁹ Now, with the main Family Values Conference set to take place in Liberia in 2026, the country again stands at a pivotal moment — where religious influence, political power, and human rights intersect in an increasingly polarized debate over what constitutes “family.”⁵⁰

Jennifer Kuwa Henshaw is Country Director of LEGAL-Liberia – a rights-based organization championing the voices of the LGBTQ+ community in the country. As a feminist, a lot of her work also centers around access to sexual and reproductive health and rights, especially regarding HIV and AIDS services. In an interview for this report, she warned that current anti-rights fights in Liberia, including the proposed Anti-Homosexuality Bill, “endanger the existence of LGBTQ+ people” in the country.

⁴⁵‘The Church in Africa’, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints website

⁴⁶T. Naadi – J. Lapham. (2025). ‘Ghanaian MPs reintroduce controversial anti-LGBT bill’. BBC News

⁴⁷(2024). ‘LGBTQ+ law will protect our values, leaders must accept it without hesitation - Methodist Bishop’. Ghana News Agency

⁴⁸(2022). ‘Strengthening Family Youth Symposium in Liberia’, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

⁴⁹R. Igual. (2024). ‘Liberia: New Bill Aims to Punish Homosexuality with Life in Prison’. MambaOnline

⁵⁰(2025). ‘The Church’s ‘Strengthening Families’ in Sierra Leone’. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

This bill, Henshaw said, contradicts the Constitution of Liberia and the international human rights principles that Liberia stands for. Already, the proposed legislation has a significant negative impact, she explained, describing how it has “threatened the lives of LGBTQ+ people, creating a new wave of threats, attacks, abuse, neglect, increased violence against people of same sex; all with stigma and discrimination that has led to our community members being made more vulnerable and threatened by hate speeches from state actors, religious leaders and also community leaders.”

Previously, in 2022, Sierra Leone tabled what could become one of Africa’s most progressive reproductive health laws – a bill allowing abortion for pregnancies up to 14 weeks under defined conditions.⁵¹ If passed, it would overturn the country’s colonial-era abortion ban, marking a major shift in women’s health rights. Because of this, it has faced heated opposition from the Inter-Religious Council. But feminist groups and women’s rights advocates are pushing back, warning that the Council’s opposition threatens hard-won gains for women and endangers lives in a nation where unsafe abortion remains one of the leading causes of maternal deaths.

The timing, however, proved contentious. As the 2025 Strengthening Families Conference unfolded in Freetown, the nation was already deep in debate over the proposed reforms. Activists raised alarm over what they described as a “soft power” push – religious organizations, backed by conservative groups, including C-Fam from the United States, mobilizing through the conference to influence public opinion and stall the bill’s passage.⁵²

“Anti-abortion groups have raised their profile, and are much more adept and astute at their efforts,” says Ramatu Bangura, co-chief executive at Purposeful, a hub for girls’ activism in Sierra Leone. “They’ve seen successes in places like Uganda and Ghana, so they feel emboldened.”⁵³

⁵¹C. Kelley. (2025). ‘Sierra Leone debates decriminalizing abortion as women and girls endanger their lives’. Associated Press

⁵²(2024). *The Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Care Bill 2024* (Draft, Sierra Leone). C-Fam

⁵³Dr R. Bangura. (2025). ‘Sierra Leone is on the brink of making history. We must not allow the US far right to infiltrate and stop us’. The Guardian

CASE STUDY 2: EVANGELICAL “CRUSADERS” IN EAST AFRICA

Tucked along Jabavu Lane in Nairobi, the Kilimani Police Station sits in unlikely company. To its left rises the imposing five-story headquarters of Life Ministry Kenya. The station itself doubles as an outpost of Life Ministry’s “Military Ministry” in Kenya – an evangelical outreach focused on the military and police.

Just a kilometer away, at the fortress-like Defence Ministry, top military brass chart Kenya’s security strategy. But here as well – between pulpit and parade ground – the Military Ministry has quietly entrenched itself, evangelizing and building influence among the country’s uniformed elite for more than 35 years.

These sites are part of the international infrastructure of the American Christian Right – connected specifically to a group called Campus Crusade for Christ, which was founded in the 1950s in the US, where it became known for its anti-communist stance and conservative views on sexuality and gender – opposing LGBTQI and reproductive rights, and pushing “purity” culture.

Compared to other US groups which have received attention for “exporting” conservative agendas to Kenya, it has flown relatively under the radar – despite the extent of its connections to, and role in supporting anti-rights leaders. The IJSC had to go on the ground in Nairobi and comb through hundreds of pages of documents from Life Ministry Kenya in order to understand this influence.

“The world was no longer content with the sin of fornication – we have now plunged into the depths of homosexuality,” lamented Wilfred Lai during a sermon in May 2025. “God designed families with purpose and order; they exist for creation, for reproduction, and for the continuation of his plan.”⁵⁴

Lai is the founder of a pentecostal ministry called Jesus Celebration Centre. According to an edition of Life Ministry Kenya’s magazine, he was also one of the first Kenyan staff to join the organization in the early 1980s, along with Arthur Kitonga, founder of Redeemed Gospel Church International, who has also become a vocal campaigner against abortion and homosexuality.⁵⁵

⁵⁴(2025). JCC TV. Facebook post

⁵⁵P. Maundu. (2015). ‘Church faults court ruling in favour of gays’. Daily Nation

*“The world was no longer content with the sin of fornication
– we have now plunged into the depths of homosexuality”*

- Wilfred Lai, founder of Redeemed Gospel Church International,
and among the first staff of Life Ministry Kenya in the 1980s

Kepha Omae, a current Life Ministry Kenya board member, also serves as a presiding bishop at the Redeemed Gospel Church. In 2020, he read a statement on behalf of a group of conservative religious leaders opposing the Reproductive Health Bill, calling it “problematic and dangerous” and calling for its rejection.⁵⁶ That bill (which has gone through multiple versions and is still not law) has faced vociferous opposition from conservative religious and political leaders over provisions related to abortion and adolescent sexual and reproductive health.

Many of the most prominent anti-rights voices in the country have connections to Life Ministry Kenya. Among them is First Lady Rachel Ruto, a hardline opponent of LGBTQI rights.⁵⁷ In 2022, she headlined a ministry event in Mombasa; the next year, at Life Ministry’s Golden Jubilee, she called for “family institutions” to be “protected” from “external influences that seek to undermine” them.⁵⁸

In May 2025, Ruto was a keynote speaker at the Second Nairobi Pan-African Conference on Family Values, which brought local conservative leaders together with international supporters, including other US Christian Right groups such as C-Fam and Family Watch International, at a high-profile gathering.⁵⁹ “These anti-rights movements are perpetrators of hate,” Nelly Munyasia, director of Reproductive Health Network Kenya told The Guardian ahead of that event, adding that their anti-abortion stance “predisposes women to death”.⁶⁰

“These anti-rights movements are perpetrators of hate.”

- Nelly Munyasia, director of Reproductive Health Network Kenya

⁵⁶ (2020). Standard Kenya. Facebook post

⁵⁷ (2023). ‘First Lady to lead prayers against LGBTQI ‘onslaught’ on family’. The Star

⁵⁸ (2023). The Life Partners Magazine. Life Ministry Kenya

(2023). ‘50th Anniversary... The Life Ministry Kenya Session 2 - 21st October 2023’. Hope TV Kenya

⁵⁹ S. Misteli. (2025). ‘The devil is coming here to you too’. NZZ

This event was co-organised by the Kenya Christian Professionals Forum (KCPE) and the African Christian Professionals Forum

⁶⁰ J. Williams. (2025). ‘We’re ready to fight’: activists brace as US anti-rights figures descend on Africa’. The Guardian

A few months later, Life Ministry Kenya hosted an “Ignite” conference in Nairobi, with other prominent speakers including Dr. David Oginde – who straddles Kenya’s religious and governance spheres.⁶¹ Currently the chairperson of Kenya’s anti-corruption agency, Oginde is also chair of the Evangelical Alliance of Kenya, which opposes sexual and reproductive rights.⁶² Previously, he was Presiding Bishop of Christ Is The Answer Ministries, among the signatories of a letter to the U.S. Congress objecting the reauthorization of PEPFAR.⁶³

PEPFAR (The U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief) is a global initiative launched in 2003 by then-President George W. Bush. Since then it has been reauthorized under subsequent governments – until March 2025, amid intensifying opposition from the US Christian Right, who claimed that the program was promoting abortion and LGBTQI “agendas.”

From the pulpit to newspaper columns, Oginde has been an unflinching critic of homosexuality, teenagers’ access to sexual and reproductive health services, and rights to safe abortion – positions that align with Life Ministry Kenya’s.⁶⁴

Despite its name, Campus Crusade for Christ is not only active at schools (and in the US, since 2011, it has adopted the more ambiguous name “Cru” in its public communications).⁶⁵ It is also focused on supporting “emerging leaders” in politics and the armed forces. Since 1965, it has had a Military Ministry in the U.S., – one of many such initiatives that it has expanded around the world, including through local partners.

The group’s Kenyan affiliate, Life Ministry Kenya, emerged in the early 1970s – not by design but by detour. It had first sought to plant roots in Uganda, but looked across the border after Uganda’s then-President Idi Amin declined to register it.⁶⁶ In its early years, the ministry leaned heavily on American support. Short-term mission teams – fresh-faced, Bible in hand – would fly in from the US, spending two or three weeks evangelizing across campuses and city centers before heading back home. Their zeal set the tone for a movement that would leave a lasting imprint on Kenya’s religious and political landscape.

Life Ministry Kenya doesn’t explicitly state its affiliation with Campus Crusade for Christ/Cru on its website, although it shares “resources [that] carry Cru’s core teaching and training – they distinctly express who and what we are as a ministry”.⁶⁷ Its Board of Directors includes the “Vice President Africa Region, Campus Crusade for Christ Intl.”⁶⁸ Cru’s website has meanwhile called “Life Ministry, the name for Cru in Kenya”.⁶⁹ And, in person in Nairobi, Cru’s branding was clearly visible at Life Ministry’s campus.

⁶¹‘Global Ignite Conference 2025’, Global Ignite Movements

⁶²Oginde is also Vice-Chair of the Association of Evangelicals in Africa (AEA).

⁶³‘Journey to date’, Christ is The Answer Ministries [website](#)

⁶⁴D. Oginde. (2022). ‘Malinda ruling on abortion has now opened a pandoras box’. The Standard

⁶⁵It remains officially registered as Campus Crusade for Christ, with the IRS

⁶⁶Two years later, in 1973, Life Ministry was formally registered in Kenya.

⁶⁷Life Ministry Kenya. “[Campus Ministry Resources for Discipleship](#)”

⁶⁸Life Ministry Kenya. “[Our Leadership](#)”

⁶⁹Cru. “[Kenya: 10 Years in High Schools](#)”

Among the international religious conservatives that Life Ministry brought to Kenya was the fiery German-American Pentecostal evangelist Reinhard Bonnke, who came to the country for the first time in the late 1980s.⁷⁰ When he died in 2019, the BBC called Bonnke the “father of modern-day crusade preaching” in Africa. His legacy includes mass outdoor sermons and condemnation of traditional beliefs.

“Nothing like this had ever happened in Nairobi before,” recounts a publication from Bonnke’s ministry about his crusade in the country in 2013. “Many of the Christians had been afraid of witchdoctors and in some cases animism and traditional beliefs had even crept into the churches. What [Bonnke’s event] did by burning the fetishes and publicly renouncing witchcraft represented a monumental breakthrough for the Body of Christ in Nairobi.”⁷¹

Fifty years after Life Ministry Kenya’s 1973 establishment, its Golden Jubilee celebrations showcased its extensive influence and connections within Kenya’s political, business and social elite. Celebration attendees included former Vice President Kalonzo Musyok – a staunch supporter of the country’s anti-abortion movement – as well as representatives of Nairobi Baptist Church, the anti-abortion Protecting Life Movement Trust, and Focus Kenya (formerly the Fellowship of Christian Unions), which has publicly branded homosexuality as “a choice and a sin” and blames it for what they call rising “moral decay.”⁷²

Life Ministry Kenya’s website showcases writings by Campus Crusade for Christ’s co-founder Bill Bright, including lessons on “Personal Purity.” Another “Leader’s Guide” for mentorship sessions speaks about “sexual purity,” promoting chastity and abstinence before (heterosexual) marriage, saying “even if a person has not sinned sexually they will learn why they should wait,” and that abortion is an “inevitable result” of not following “God’s instruction.”⁷⁴

The group also continues to run social media campaigns on “morality” issues, including Instagram events on abortion from anti-rights perspectives.⁷⁵

⁷⁰Christ for All Nations [website](#)

⁷¹(2013). ‘[Impact](#)’ magazine. Christ for All Nations

⁷²(2019). ‘[Kenya: Vice President Calls for Campaigns Against Abortion](#)’. Catholic Information Service for Africa

(2023). FOCUS Kenya. [Twitter post](#)

Fellowship of Christian Unions. (2016). ‘[Strategic Plan 2016 - 2020](#)’. FOCUS Kenya

⁷³B. Bright. ‘[Personal Purity](#)’. LIFE Ministry Kenya

⁷⁴‘[Leader’s Guide](#)’. LIFE Ministry Kenya

⁷⁵(2020). LIFE Ministry Kenya. [Instagram post](#)

“Across Africa, anti-rights actors are quietly reshaping policy spaces... to undermine women’s rights and silence progress.”

- Evelyne Opondo, Africa Director at the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW).

For rights activists, Campus Crusade for Christ’s affiliate in Kenya is an example of how local conservatives are being supported by powerful and well-resourced international allies to reshape policy across the region – against the rights of women, girls and LGBTQI people with their lives at stake in the process.

“Across Africa, anti-rights actors are quietly reshaping policy spaces – using backdoor lobbying, foreign pressure, and religious influence to undermine women’s rights and silence progress,” said Evelyne Opondo, Africa Director at the International Center for Research on Women.

“These tactics embolden policymakers to roll back freedoms already protected under our laws and human rights commitments. This is not just about policy – it’s about power, justice, and the right of every woman and girl to control her own body and future,” Opondo said, in an interview for this report.

These crusaders are not advancing unresisted, however. African feminists are pushing back against these threats. “As these attacks escalate,” Opondo insisted, “we must stand united to defend equality, dignity, and choice for all.”

4. CONCLUSIONS

This is how the anti-rights movements get funded and sustained funding: through ecosystems and intermediaries that must be exposed and challenged to de-fund these threats to rights. This report focuses on a case study – the Silicon Valley Community Foundation (SVCF) – which illustrates wider problems including transparency gaps that limit accountability, and ‘chaotic’ funding that support rights and anti-rights groups at the same time. These problems are not ‘technical’ ones, devoid of politics and ideology. Granting is political and approaches and vehicles that fund everything and anything don’t help. They may be giving with one hand and taking away with another.

SVCF’s financial filings disclose grants over the years both to organisations supporting rights, and those opposing rights, internationally. However, they don’t say what exactly this funding was for, or where it ultimately came from. The foundation’s response to our findings (included in full in an Annex), says the funding we identified “originated from donor advised funds held at SVCF,” and that it does not, as policy, “comment on our donors’ individual philanthropic activities.” Donors to these funds, hosted at the foundation and “under our guidance on compliance and due diligence”, are able to “recommend grants from their DAFs to nonprofits of their choosing.”

Amidst escalating threats to rights – including from well-resourced and well-connected anti-rights organisations with varied revenue streams – it is even more essential that donors step up to resource feminist movements around the world, taking courageous action to defend against these threats and continue to build more just futures. To deepen their understanding of anti-rights forces, actors and impacts, SVCF and others in the donor community should also engage in regular and ongoing consultation with feminist, LGBTQ and human rights groups with expertise on these issues.

Progressive donors should not fund the opposition to rights and justice. However, de-funding anti-rights movements is also not enough. Donors and DAF sponsors that have previously channelled funding to groups threatening human rights and gender justice should take steps to redress harm by increasing their funding for local groups affected by the anti-rights organisations which received their grants.

5. ANNEXES

A. TABLE: SVCF GRANTS TO INTERNATIONALLY-ACTIVE ANTI-RIGHTS ACTORS

<i>Grantee</i>	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Total
Alliance Defending Freedom		\$9,415			\$90,000						\$99,415
Campus Crusade for Christ	\$75,635	\$72,680	\$65,045	\$52,400	\$51,750	\$181,500	\$48,500	\$25,000	\$56,190	\$12,000	\$640,700
Compassion International			\$22,744	\$22,672	\$16,182	\$13,158	\$11,284	\$10,434			\$96,474
Focus on the Family	\$17,205	\$48,513	\$5,250								\$70,968
InterVarsity Christian Fellowship	\$117,600	\$16,000	\$15,700	\$16,000	\$15,000	\$13,500		\$13,000	\$13,000	\$13,000	\$232,800
LDS Church		\$49,874	\$18,860						\$50,000	\$2,350,000	\$2,468,734
Life International					\$80,000						\$80,000
Grand Total	\$210,440	\$196,482	\$127,599	\$91,072	\$252,932	\$208,158	\$59,784	\$48,434	\$119,190	\$2,375,000	\$3,689,090

B. RESPONSE FROM SVCF

Silicon Valley Community Foundation is a regional catalyst, connector and collaborator dedicated to improving the lives of people in California's Santa Clara and San Mateo counties. Community foundations are public charities that serve a specific geographic area, connecting donors with local needs and channeling resources, through advocacy, research, and grantmaking, toward enduring community change. There are more than 800 community foundations in the United States.

Because we are deeply rooted in our region, our discretionary grantmaking supports only local nonprofits working to advance equity and opportunity for our neighbors. SVCF holds and manages our own endowment, and our discretionary, staff-directed and board-approved grants are sourced from those funds. Through that endowment, we support organizations working on affordable housing, early childhood development, emergency response, and more. Most recently, that has included our Community Lifeline Fund, which has provided rapid-response grants to local organizations on the frontlines of protecting services in the face of federal funding cuts, addressing food insecurity, housing instability, and healthcare access across our two counties.

In addition, as do many community foundations, SVCF offers individuals and families the ability to create a variety of charitable giving vehicles administered by SVCF. The most popular of these is called a donor advised fund (DAF). The funding referenced in your inquiry originated from donor advised funds held at SVCF, which work differently from our own endowment. A donor or family that has established a donor advised fund at SVCF – under our guidance on compliance and due diligence – can recommend grants from their DAFs to nonprofits of their choosing. We partner with more than 1,000 individuals and families to help them administer their charitable giving locally, nationally, and around the world. SVCF distributes grants only to organizations that are charitable in purpose and in good standing with the IRS. International grant recommendations are vetted to ensure that the grantee organization meets an IRS equivalency standard for international entities.

Individual and family charitable giving is a constitutionally protected freedom that we wholeheartedly support. As a community foundation, we are proud to steward our donors' philanthropic resources.

We are proud to be among the largest supporters of Bay Area nonprofits, distributing \$1.54 billion in grants in 2024, including \$131 million to organizations in Santa Clara and San Mateo counties. Silicon Valley Community Foundation's policy is that we don't comment on our donors' individual philanthropic activities.

-- Silicon Valley Community Foundation spokesperson Erin Musgrave

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