

# SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH & RIGHTS (SRHR) – A REFRESHER

“*Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) is a state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being in relation to all aspects of sexuality and reproduction, not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity.*”

Guttmacher Institute and the Lancet Commission<sup>1</sup>

## AN INTEGRATED DEFINITION OF SRHR

The Guttmacher Institute and the Lancet Commission report “Accelerate progress – sexual and reproductive health and rights for all”<sup>2</sup> suggests that a **positive approach to sexuality and reproduction** should recognize the part played by pleasurable sexual relationships, trust, and communication in promoting self-esteem and overall well-being.

### ACHIEVING SRH RELIES ON:

Access to the necessary information, resources, services and support, including, access to modern contraceptives.

Realizing the sexual and reproductive rights (SRR) of all individuals to:

- have their bodily integrity, privacy and personal autonomy respected
- freely define their own sexuality, including sexual orientation and gender identity and expression
- decide whether and when to be sexually active
- choose their sexual partners
- have safe and pleasurable sexual experiences
- decide whether, when and whom to marry
- decide whether, when and by what means to have a child or children
- be free from discrimination, coercion, exploitation and violence

## AN ESSENTIAL PACKAGE OF SRHR INTERVENTIONS

According to the Guttmacher-Lancet Commission, an essential package of SRHR interventions includes the commonly recognized components of SRH, and less commonly provided interventions that are necessary for a holistic approach to addressing SRHR:<sup>3</sup>

- ➔ Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE)
- ➔ Counselling and services for a range of modern contraceptives
- ➔ Antenatal, childbirth and postnatal care
- ➔ Safe abortion services and treatment of complications of unsafe abortion
- ➔ Prevention and treatment of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STI)
- ➔ Prevention, detection, immediate services and referrals for cases of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV)
- ➔ Prevention, detection and management of reproductive cancers, especially cervical cancer
- ➔ Information, counselling and services for subfertility and infertility
- ➔ Information, counseling and services for sexual health and well-being



“*Youth must be healthy. HIV has claimed more than 32 million lives so far. We want to be the generation that sees the end of HIV & AIDS. Through reshaping healthcare, engaging young people and through the development of innovative tools, delivered by the community at the community level – I am confident we can succeed!*”

Eddie, Youth Champion, Kenya

<sup>1</sup> Guttmacher-Lancet Commission (2018). [Accelerate Progress: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights for All](#).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

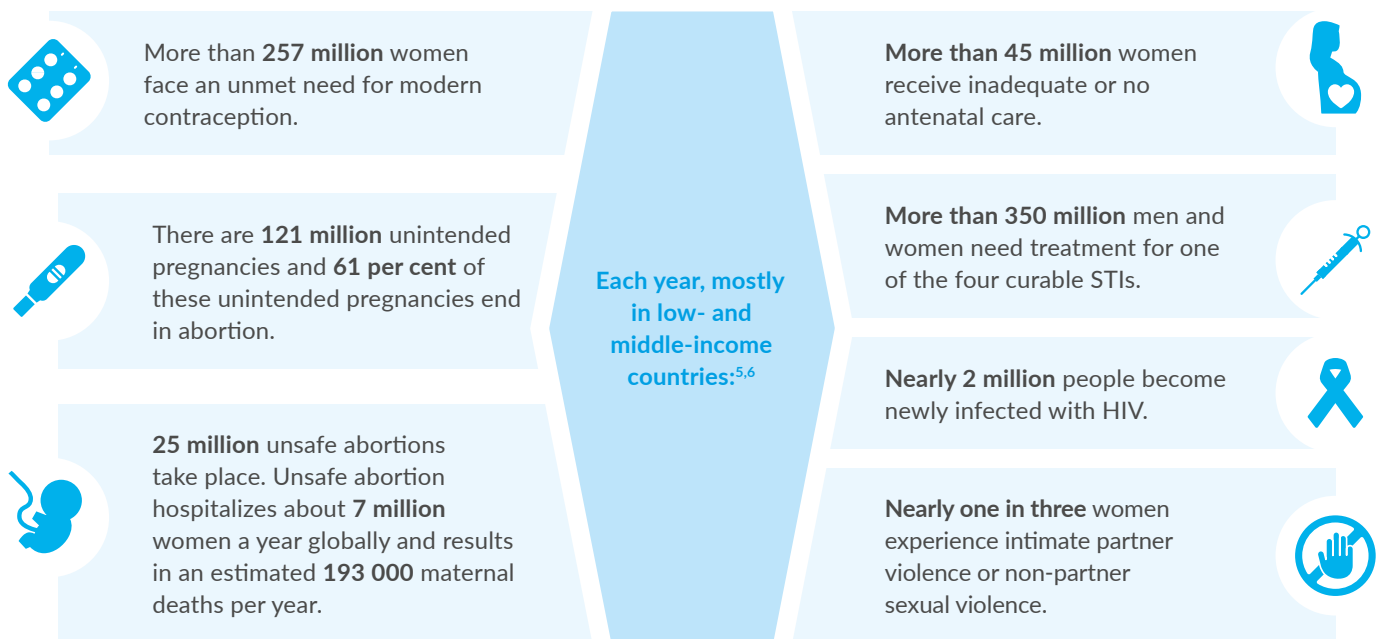
## THE BENEFITS OF FULLY REALISING SRHR



**“ Youth rights must be respected & promoted. Supporting young people to be informed about their sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as being empowered to become active citizens are equally important in them realising their full potential! ”**

Andrew, Youth Champion, Kenya

## GLOBAL CHALLENGES AROUND SRHR



<sup>4</sup> Guttmacher institute (2019). [Adding it up: Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health in Low- and Middle-Income Countries.](#)

<sup>5</sup> UNFPA (2022). State of the World Population Report - Seeing the Unseen: Seeing the Unseen: The case for action in the neglected crisis of unintended pregnancy.

<sup>6</sup> Guttmacher-Lancet Commission (2018). [Accelerate Progress: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights for All.](#)

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated these challenges



COVID-19 has caused severe disruptions in meeting family planning needs.<sup>7</sup> The need to provide urgent COVID-19 response, plus the lack of personal protective equipment for clinical staff, has prevented health personnel from providing SRHR services safely. Furthermore, **visiting health facilities was dangerous in itself due to the risk of COVID-19 exposure** or impossible due to movement restrictions.

The COVID-19 pandemic is also expected to undermine efforts to end gender-based violence (GBV), by reducing prevention, reporting and protection efforts, social services and care. Furthermore, in the wake of COVID-19, schools, which act as safe spaces for young adolescents, were closed. The imposed movement restrictions meant adolescents had to stay at home, resulting in **further increase of drug abuse and teenage pregnancies**.

A modelling study has shown that a 10 per cent decline in use of short- and long-acting reversible contraceptives due to reduced access because of the pandemic could result in an **additional 48 million women with an unmet need for modern contraceptives and an additional 15 million unintended pregnancies** over the course of a year.<sup>8</sup>



**“Youth must have access to education. 130 million girls worldwide are not in school. In many countries around the world, including Uganda, social and cultural norms still exist that reinforce gender stereotypes, preventing girls from attending school. This has to change! An extra year of secondary schooling for girls can increase their future wages by 10 to 20%.”**

Peace, Youth Champion, Uganda

## THE EUROPEAN UNION'S COMMITMENTS TO SRHR

The EU shows a strong political commitment to SRHR in its international cooperation, which is reflected in numerous political documents:



[The New European Consensus on Development](#) reaffirms the EU commitment to SRHR, in the framework of the implementation of the [Beijing Platform for Action](#) and the [Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development \(ICPD\)](#) and the outcomes of their review conferences.

In 2020, the EU adopted the [Gender Action Plan III \(GAP III\)](#), which recognises SRHR as an essential priority for the achievement of gender equality. GAP III also reaffirms the EU's commitment to dedicate 85% of external cooperation projects to the promotion of gender equality as a principal or significant objective, with a new commitment for all EU Delegations in partner countries to implement at least one action with gender equality as principal objective.

Strong and explicit commitments to the promotion of full SRHR are also included in the recently negotiated [ACP-EU Partnership Agreement](#), which guides the relations between the EU and Africa, Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP).

**Numerous EU Council Conclusions**, reaffirm and call for the promotion of SRHR in the EU's external action, such as those on [Human Development](#), the [Team Europe approach](#), [Water in the EU's external action](#), [EU-Africa relations](#), and [Youth in external action](#).

A landmark [report on the situation of SRHR in the EU](#) was adopted by the European Parliament in June 2021, calling upon the EU and its Member States to support and promote access to SRHR services, ensure access to the full range of SRHR, and remove all barriers impeding full access to SRHR, including in the EU's external action.

<sup>7</sup> UNFPA (2020). [Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Family Planning and Ending Gender-based Violence, Female Genital Mutilation and Child Marriage](#).

<sup>8</sup> Guttmacher institute (2020). [Estimates of the Potential Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Sexual and Reproductive Health in Low- and Middle-Income Countries](#).

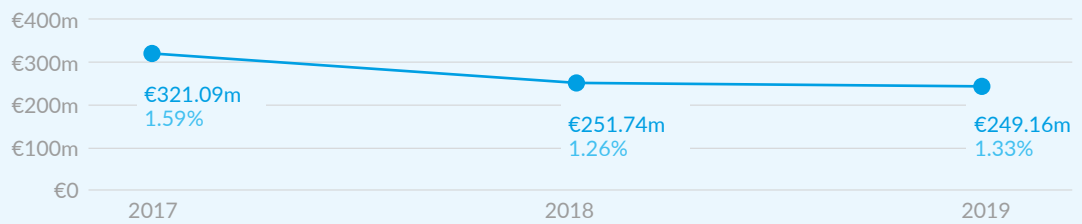
The EU's political support is also backed by financial commitments to SRHR



At the end of 2020, the EU adopted its current seven-year Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF 2021-2027), that allocates €79.5 billion to the new EU development cooperation instrument, the [Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument/Global Europe \(NDICI/GE\)](#). The NDICI includes strong references to SRHR and provides a sound basis for future implementation of EU programmes on SRHR.

As part of its external action, the European Commission (EC) is set to adopt a “Team Europe Initiative” (TEI) on SRHR in sub-Saharan Africa, which brings together the EC and several member states.

**Worrying funding trends:** In the past years (2017 to 2019), under the previous EU financial framework, there was a notable decrease of EU funding to SRHR, both in total disbursements and when looking at EU support to SRHR as percentage of Official Development Assistance (ODA).<sup>9</sup>



# SPEAK UP!

## WHAT THE EU AND DECISION MAKERS CAN DO TO PROMOTE SRHR



### TAKE ACTION

Make sure EU policies, including in international cooperation, support universal access to SRHR wherever possible and relevant.



### INVEST IN SRHR

Make sure EU policies and commitments on SRHR are backed by adequate and ambitious funding, in particular in the EU's external action.



### HOLD POWER TO ACCOUNT

Ask questions and scrutinise policies, holding the EU accountable to its international commitments.



### KEEP FOCUS

Make sure that the focus of EU development policy remains on issues that matter, including SRHR.



### SPEAK UP

Be a voice for these issues in daily work within the EU institutions.



**“Youth must be equal. We must stand up for the rights of girls around the world, and fight for our right to freely make decisions about our health, our bodies, and our futures.”**

Mercy, Youth Champion, Kenya

<sup>9</sup> DSW and EPF (2021). [Donors Delivering for SRHR. Tracking OECD Donor Funding for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.](#)