

# The EU's bilateral and regional cooperation with partner countries

## What's in it for SRHR?

*“Sexual and reproductive health (SRH) is a state of physical, emotional, mental and social wellbeing in relation to all aspects of sexuality and reproduction, not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction or infirmity. Therefore, a positive approach to sexuality and reproduction should recognise the part played by pleasurable sexual relationships, trust and communication in promoting self-esteem and overall wellbeing.”* Gutmacher-Lancet Commission<sup>1</sup>



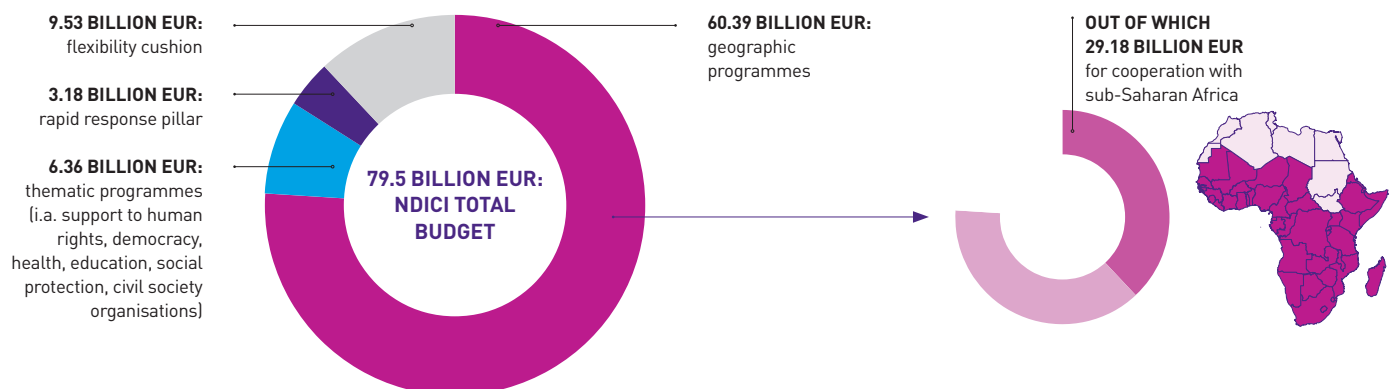
**SRHR** Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are a key part of people's lives. When people, in particular women, youth, and people who live in marginalised settings, have full and equal access to SRHR, they can thrive, live healthy and fulfilling lives, and actively participate in the social, economic, political, and cultural lives of their communities. **Access to and respect for SRHR are therefore critical for sustainable development** in all regions of the world and the EU has the power to contribute to it through allocating much needed funding to the SRHR sector.

← A mobile clinic providing women in rural areas family planning options like contraceptive implants and cervical cancer screening, at a rural village on the outskirts of Mombasa. Photo by Jonathan Torgovnik / Reportage by Getty Images

## THE EU'S INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION INSTRUMENT: A STRONGER FOCUS ON GEOGRAPHIC PROGRAMMES

**NDICI** As part of its Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027, the EU has set up a new instrument for international development and cooperation: the **Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), also known as Global Europe<sup>2</sup>** funds the EU's cooperation with most third countries. In contrast to previous instruments, the NDICI puts a stronger emphasis on geographic collaboration rather than thematic priorities.

### NDICI BUDGET



# SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH IN THE PROGRAMMING DOCUMENTS

**Multiannual Indicative Programmes (MIPs)**<sup>3</sup> which identify the key priorities for the EU's cooperation with partner countries, have been developed in collaboration between the EU Delegations and partner countries' authorities, and are informed by broader stakeholder and civil society consultations.

## 21 OUT OF 45 MIPs FOR COUNTRIES IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA REFER TO SRH

In order for a topic to receive significant support, it needs to be highlighted as a priority in the MIPs. 21 out of 45 MIPs for countries in sub-Saharan Africa included references to SRH<sup>4</sup>, as part of their priorities for 2021-2027. A few countries in other regions of the world have also prioritised SRHR in their MIPs, including El Salvador, the Pacific islands, and Lao PDR.

## DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO SRH SUPPORT

Different MIPs address SRH issues through varying approaches such as human development (including health), gender, and youth. Other countries, while not specifically tackling SRH, have prioritised related issues in their MIPs, such as the fight against sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and the promotion of gender equality, which are key to achieve SRHR.

## SRHR IN THE REGIONAL PROGRAMME FOR SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

The European Commission also developed, through consultations with various stakeholders including civil society, a specific **MIP for its cooperation with the whole sub-Saharan African region**<sup>5</sup> to complement the initiatives that are implemented at country-level.

The sub-Saharan regional MIP includes six key priorities, the first one being the promotion of human development, with a focus on health, education, and skills. As part of the objective of **contributing to stronger health systems and improved health**, the MIP specifically mentions the importance of **improving SRHR outcomes**. **A specific action foreseen as part of the regional MIP is to enable "the legal, political and societal environment for SRHR"**.



## TEAM EUROPE INITIATIVE ON SRHR<sup>6</sup>

The European Commission with a group of Member States will implement a so-called "Team Europe Initiative" (TEI), which will aim to **promote SRHR in sub-Saharan Africa, with a particular focus on girls and young women**. Specific objectives of the TEI will be to:

- **Increase the implementation** of continental and regional SRHR commitments, including in the health and education sectors.
- **Strengthen regional mechanisms** to address supply-side constraints to improve the availability, affordability, and acceptability of SRH commodities.
- **Promote accountability** and evidence-based policy-making and implementation.

The European Commission has already announced that it will contribute 60 million EUR to the TEI which will come from the sub-Saharan regional programme: this amount should leverage contributions from EU Member States who should aim to match the European Commission's contribution.

**60 MILLION EUR**  
**EUROPEAN COMMISSION CONTRIBUTION TO BE MATCHED BY MEMBER STATES**

## IMPLEMENTING THE GENDER ACTION PLAN AT COUNTRY LEVEL: AN OPPORTUNITY TO PRIORITISE SRHR

In November 2020, the European Commission adopted its **3<sup>rd</sup> Gender Action Plan (GAP III)**,<sup>7</sup> which guides the EU's external action in support of gender equality and women's empowerment in partner countries.

**One of the six priority areas of GAP III is the promotion of SRHR**, with EU actions that should contribute to "an enabling legal, political and societal environment that protects the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls and increases access to SRH services and information" and the elimination of harmful practices such as Female Genital Mutilation and child, early and forced marriages.

EU Delegations, in consultation with civil society, developed **Country Level Implementation Plans (CLIPs)**<sup>8</sup>, which are key strategic documents highlighting how GAP III will be concretely implemented in the EU's partner countries and identifying priority sectors.

**SRHR has been identified as a priority sector for GAP III implementation by several countries**, in particular in sub-Saharan Africa. This provides an additional strong element to ensure that bilateral programmes and actions promote SRHR and that this will be funded and implemented by the EU in partner countries in the coming years.

← 19 year old volunteer Nancy, distributes drugs to patients at the RHU mobile clinic in Atega, Uganda. Photo by IPPF

# CASE STUDIES: SRHR IN THE MIPs AND CLIPs

Examples of how SRHR have been included and prioritised in the Multiannual Indicative Programmes, or MIPs and Country Level Implementation Plans, or CLIPs

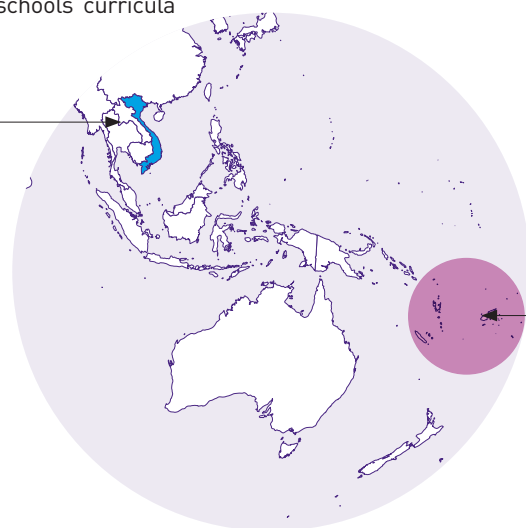
## MALI<sup>11</sup> PROMOTING REPRODUCTIVE, MATERNAL AND NEWBORN HEALTH THROUGH STRENGTHENING ACCESS TO HEALTH

- **Broad objective:** Human Capital Development
- **Specific objective:** Strengthening access to better health
- **Challenges in the country:** More than 3,000 women die every year during pregnancy; 31% have an unmet need for family planning; harmful and traditional practices and social norms impact negatively on health outcomes, in particular on SRH of women and girls
- **The EU is committed to:** Investing in strengthening access to health, including to SRH
- **Specific indicator:** Maternal and newborn mortality rates

## LIBERIA<sup>17</sup> PROMOTING REPRODUCTIVE, MATERNAL AND NEWBORN HEALTH THROUGH STRENGTHENING ACCESS TO HEALTH

- **Priority areas:** Enhancing access to SRHR, prevention and response to SGBV
- **Actions to be implemented:** Focus on increasing the availability and access to reproductive health supplies and services, increasing access to quality sexuality education, and supporting family planning services, with a focus on youth-friendly sexual health services
- **Important role for:** Women's rights organisations and civil society
- **Support for:** Sexually/gender-marginalised populations, promoting a legal framework that protects their rights regardless of their gender identity and sexual orientation

- ## VIETNAM<sup>18</sup>
- **Priority area:** Promoting and protecting "the rights of every individual to have full control over, and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to, their sexuality and SRHR free from discrimination, coercion and violence"
  - **Actions to be implemented:** Lifting institutional, cultural, and technical barriers that prevent individuals from practising their SRHR, focusing in particular on marginalised and/or underserved communities such as "vulnerable groups of adolescents and youth, LGBTQI and people with disabilities"
  - **Specific indicators:** Inclusion of gender equality and SRHR in schools' curricula

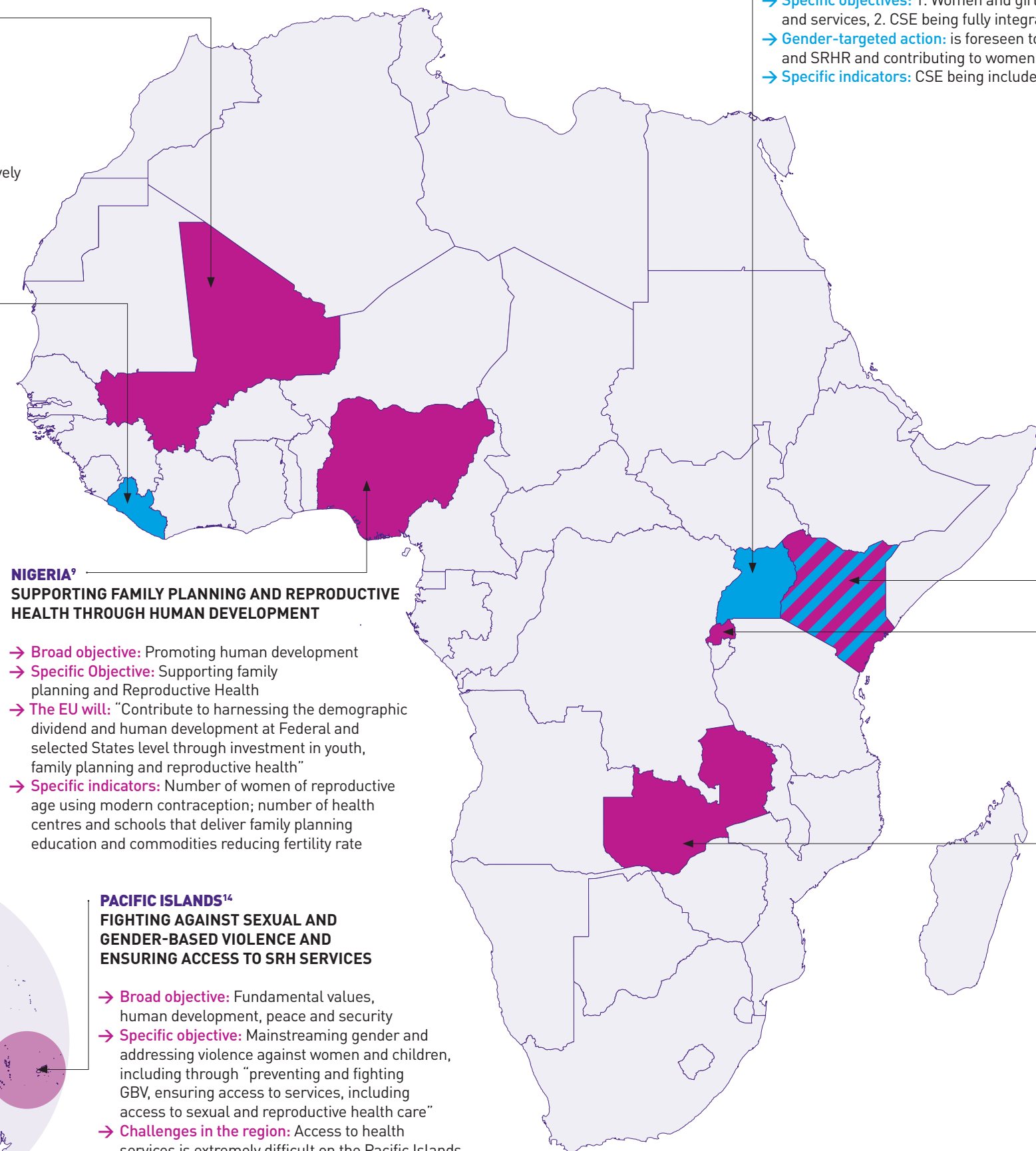


## PACIFIC ISLANDS<sup>14</sup> FIGHTING AGAINST SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND ENSURING ACCESS TO SRH SERVICES

- **Broad objective:** Fundamental values, human development, peace and security
- **Specific objective:** Mainstreaming gender and addressing violence against women and children, including through "preventing and fighting GBV, ensuring access to services, including access to sexual and reproductive health care"
- **Challenges in the region:** Access to health services is extremely difficult on the Pacific Islands, in particular for marginalised communities. GBV is widely spread and survivors do not always have access to services, including SRH services

## NIGERIA<sup>9</sup> SUPPORTING FAMILY PLANNING AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH THROUGH HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

- **Broad objective:** Promoting human development
- **Specific Objective:** Supporting family planning and Reproductive Health
- **The EU will:** "Contribute to harnessing the demographic dividend and human development at Federal and selected States level through investment in youth, family planning and reproductive health"
- **Specific indicators:** Number of women of reproductive age using modern contraception; number of health centres and schools that deliver family planning education and commodities reducing fertility rate



- ## UGANDA<sup>16</sup>
- **Priority area:** Enabling women and girls' access to universal health and enjoy their health and sexual and reproductive rights
  - **Challenges in the country:** Limited family planning services. The majority of women cannot make free and informed decision about their SRH
  - **Specific objectives:** 1. Women and girls having improved access to quality SRH care and services, 2. CSE being fully integrated within the education curriculum
  - **Gender-targeted action:** is foreseen to be implemented in the country, focusing on GBV and SRHR and contributing to women and girls fully enjoying their SRHR.
  - **Specific indicators:** CSE being included in education curriculum, use of modern means of contraception

## KENYA<sup>10, 15</sup> PROMOTING SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH THROUGH EMPOWERING WOMEN AND YOUTH

- **Broad objective:** Promoting human development
- **Specific objective:** Empowering women and youth, with specific actions addressing aspects of GBV, SRHR, enhancing human rights for women and youth
- **The EU acknowledges:** Rise in teenage pregnancies in the country, highlighting the need to strengthen SRHR
- **Specific indicator:** Adolescent birth rate
- **Priority area:** Ensuring freedom from all forms of GBV and promoting universal access to SRHR
- **Actions to be implemented:** Measures and thematic programmes to specifically support targeted, community-based actions to address most urgent challenges around GBV and SRHR
- **Flagship gender action:** In 2025, the EU will implement the action with an estimated budget of 29 million EUR. It will also promote the protection of SRHR, "an area where funding challenges had resulted in a weak health system thus resulting in inaccessible, unaffordable and poor quality services"

## RWANDA<sup>13</sup> FIGHTING SEXUAL AND GENDER BASED VIOLENCE

- **Broad objective:** Political and Economic Governance
- **Specific objective:** Strengthening rule of law, with a priority of "ending violence against women and girls"
- **Specific indicator:** Number of individuals benefiting from EU-funded programmes to counter SGBV

## ZAMBIA<sup>12</sup> PROMOTING SRHR AND COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION

- **Broad objective:** Supporting the people of Zambia to reach their potential and build resilience
- **Specific objective:** Accelerating progress towards universal health coverage (UHC) whilst improving access to youth-friendly SRH information and services, maternal and child health, as well as prevention of and response to SGBV
- **Explicit reference to:** Inclusion of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) in national curricula as part of the efforts to achieve SRHR
- **Team Europe Initiative:** Strengthening human development and building up the resilience of children and youth, including components to address the Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child, Adolescent Health and Nutrition (RMNCAHN), as well as fighting SGBV



# RECOMMENDATIONS

The prioritisation of SRHR in the cooperation with a high number of partner countries can be a game changer, in particular for women and young people. To ensure that SRHR-related objectives are implemented, EU Delegations should:

## **MAINSTREAM SRHR ACROSS ALL PRIORITY SECTORS FOR COOPERATION**

SRHR are mainly funded through the health and gender equality sectors, even though other sectors and programmes, such as education (especially for access to CSE), climate change, economic empowerment or digitalisation, are also relevant for SRHR.

## **PRIORITISE SRHR AS PART OF THE MID-TERM REVIEW OF MIPs IN 2024**

ensuring additional resources are allocated to SRHR through all relevant channels and priority sectors.

## **WORK AS TEAM EUROPE WITH MEMBER STATE EMBASSIES**

to coordinate, learn from each other, identify added value of respective SRHR programmes as well as ways to bridge gaps and ensure funding for initiatives across the SRHR spectrum.

## **PROMOTE REGIONAL LEARNING EXCHANGE BETWEEN EU DELEGATIONS**

and ensure that lessons learnt and successful approaches be considered by other EU Delegations both inter- and intraregionally.

## **CONTINUE CONSULTING AND INVOLVING CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS (CSOs)**

in the implementation of the MIPs and guarantee that funding reaches CSOs, including grassroots, youth-led, women-led, and women's rights CSOs, as they have a unique access to communities, understand their needs better and can bring innovative and tailor-made solutions to local and national challenges.



↑ The Cook Islands is highly vulnerable to climate change impacts which cuts access to SRHR. Photo by IPPF



↑ Women from the Pakamu Women and Girls group, in Pakam Kisoko, Uganda, receiving family planning information and counseling. Photo by Jonathan Torgovnik/Reportage by Getty Images

1. Guttmacher-Lancet Commission report, Accelerate progress, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights for all, available at Guttmacher Lancet Commission report, <https://www.thelancet.com/commissions>
2. [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-instruments/global-europe-neighbourhood-development-and-international-cooperation-instrument\\_en](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-instruments/global-europe-neighbourhood-development-and-international-cooperation-instrument_en)
3. [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-instruments/global-europe-programming\\_en](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-instruments/global-europe-programming_en)
4. Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, South Sudan, Togo, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-01/mip-2021-c2021-9373-sub-saharan-africa-annex\\_en.pdf](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-01/mip-2021-c2021-9373-sub-saharan-africa-annex_en.pdf)
5. [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-01/mip-2021-c2021-9373-sub-saharan-africa-annex\\_en.pdf](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-01/mip-2021-c2021-9373-sub-saharan-africa-annex_en.pdf)
6. <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/tei-jp-tracker/tei/sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-rights-srhr-sub-saharan-africa>
7. [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-01/join-2020-17-final\\_en.pdf](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-01/join-2020-17-final_en.pdf)
8. <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/country-level-implementation-plans-clips---gender-discussions/country-level-implementation-plans-clips-and-gender-country-profiles-gcps>
9. [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-01/mip-2021-c2021-9273-nigeria-annex\\_en.pdf](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-01/mip-2021-c2021-9273-nigeria-annex_en.pdf)
10. [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-01/mip-2021-c2021-9088-kenya-annex\\_en.pdf](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-01/mip-2021-c2021-9088-kenya-annex_en.pdf)
11. [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/document/download/b79ab8be-c041-4d28-bd0e-74d80e8217b1\\_en?filename=mip-2021-c2021-9376-mali-annex\\_fr.pdf](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/document/download/b79ab8be-c041-4d28-bd0e-74d80e8217b1_en?filename=mip-2021-c2021-9376-mali-annex_fr.pdf)
12. [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/document/download/bb7108b9-4a22-4ac7-ae16-95f815451bbb\\_en?filename=mip-2021-c2021-9057-zambia-annex\\_en.pdf](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/document/download/bb7108b9-4a22-4ac7-ae16-95f815451bbb_en?filename=mip-2021-c2021-9057-zambia-annex_en.pdf)
13. [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-01/mip-2021-c2021-9368-rwanda-annex\\_en.pdf](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-01/mip-2021-c2021-9368-rwanda-annex_en.pdf)
14. [https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/document/download/5dde050b-d808-48ef-b97d-628ec955ef22\\_en?filename=mip-2021-c2021-9052-pacific-islands-annex\\_en.pdf](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/document/download/5dde050b-d808-48ef-b97d-628ec955ef22_en?filename=mip-2021-c2021-9052-pacific-islands-annex_en.pdf)
15. <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/country-level-implementation-plans-clips---gender/documents/clip-kenya>
16. <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/country-level-implementation-plans-clips---gender/documents/clip-uganda>
17. <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/country-level-implementation-plans-clips---gender/documents/clipiberia>
18. <https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/country-level-implementation-plans-clips---gender/documents/clip-vietnam>



Countdown 2030 Europe (C2030E) is a Consortium of 16 leading European non-governmental organizations advocating towards European donors for increased funding and support to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), including Family Planning (FP), in international development cooperation. Consult C2030E website and join us on twitter for more information on SRHR in EU policies, including the latest figures on European donor support to SRHR.



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