

#WhatYouthWant: SRHR Priorities for CSW61

What is Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)?

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) encompass all of the rights and issues surrounding a person's sexual and reproductive life. SRHR is closely linked with many internationally recognized human rights, such as the right to privacy, the right to education and information, the right to bodily integrity, the right to equality, freedom from violence and all forms of discrimination, and the right to the highest attainable standard of health.¹

Why is advocating for young people's SRHR important?

1. We as young people have a fundamental right to decide on issues that concern us directly, as is guaranteed under Articles 12 and 13 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Therefore, it is imperative that we are meaningfully involved in the design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs that affect us.
2. We currently have the world's largest generation of young people.² Girls and young women ages 15-24 are also the group most vulnerable to HIV infection.³ The SRHR of young people are more important than ever, and the health and wellbeing of young people has immense implications for our future.

What is the link between SRHR & economic empowerment for girls, women, and young people?

Limited protection and fulfilment of girls', women's, and young people's SRHR limits their possibilities to pursue opportunities such as access to education and paid and decent work. SRHR for youth has a direct positive effect on their decision-making abilities, access and enjoyment of education and combating discrimination.

Fulfilling SRHR allows girls, women, and young people...



...control over their bodies and their lives.

When girls, women, and young people have control over their sexual lives and can decide if, when, and how many children to have, they are able to make independent and informed decisions about continuing education, work, and their future.

- 225 million women worldwide who want to avoid pregnancy do not have access to effective contraception methods.⁴ In 2015, about two out of five pregnancies overall were not planned.⁵ Each year 21.6 million unsafe abortions are reported.⁶ Providing holistic and youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health care is inexpensive and would prevent 52 million unintended pregnancies and improve access to safe abortion.⁷
- Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) empowers young people to make more informed choices about their sexual lives and establish healthy lifestyles - and it is linked to delaying first sexual intercourse and an increase in safe sexual behavior, decreasing unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, and HIV infection.⁸
- Developing, implementing, and enforcing laws and policies that protect individuals' sexuality and access to CSE and stigma-free health services positively impact HIV infection rates, mental health, and social equity that directly contributes to economic development.⁹



...access to education and training.

When girls and young women complete school and/or professional training, they are better prepared and qualified for employment.

- Less than half of all primary schools in developing countries have water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) facilities on site. Without these, adolescent girls often miss school during menstruation or drop out altogether, but access to hygiene facilities and information removes these barriers.¹⁰
- School-related gender-based violence affects young people around the world. Bullying within schools, including harassment on the way to school, and other forms of discrimination as a result of one's gender or sexual orientation have a negative effect on young people's mental health and participation in school.¹¹
- 15 million girls are married before the age of 18 each year, which jeopardizes their ability to complete their educational training. Girls and young women who do complete secondary school are six times less likely to marry before the age of 18.¹²

Youth SRHR priorities at CSW61

At CSW61, we as young people have the opportunity to advocate for rights and priorities with member states. Priorities we will be pushing for include:

- The provision of youth-friendly, integrated, affordable, quality, and dignified sexual and reproductive health services. This includes contraception, safe abortion services, quality treatment of HIV/AIDS, trans-specific healthcare, and accessible care for young people living with disabilities, free from stigma and persecution.
- The integration of inclusive comprehensive sexuality education into school curricula and other education platforms for all children and youth.¹⁷
- The meaningful participation of youth in the creation and implementation of law, policies, and programs that protect young people's SRHR and that combat gender- and sexual orientation-based violence; early, forced, and child marriage; female genital cutting; and other harmful practices.
- Formally recognizing and fairly compensating the labor girls, women, and young people provide; this includes fair treatment and protection in the workplace, the decriminalization of sex work, and the protection of all from abuse, violence, trafficking, or any form of forced or coerced work.¹⁸
- An intersectional approach to gender equality that does not discriminate against but instead integrates identities such as race, class, migration status, HIV status, sexual orientation, disability, indigeneity, or any other status, into all programs and policies addressing gender issues.¹⁹



...to live free from violence and discrimination.

When girls, women, and young people can access work environments where all genders and sexual orientations are accepted and treated fairly and equally, they can better contribute and benefit from quality work.

- Women face considerable setbacks securing long-term, decent wages at equal pay rates due to gender-based violence. Intimate partner violence and non-partner sexual violence directly impact worker productivity, leading to a decreased productivity and lost income for both the individual and business.¹³
- In many countries, women still face job restrictions, in the workplace and in family structures, and are barred from working in certain jobs.¹⁴ Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, and Intersex (LGBTQI) people also have a higher risk of living in poverty than the general population, in part because of discrimination in employment.¹⁵
- Girls and women are often not paid for the work they do, including child care, caring for the elderly, cooking and cleaning, and collecting fuel and water. This unpaid work is equivalent to USD \$10 trillion per year, or around 13% of the global gross domestic product (GDP).¹⁶

If our priorities are met at CSW61, we will be one step closer to realizing gender equality and economic empowerment for all young people. It's your body, it's your choice, and it's time to raise your voice!

#WhatYouthWant

¹ CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality, SRHR Language. Available on: <https://choiceforyouth.org/srhr/?letter=s>

² UNFPA, State of world population 2014, The Power of Adolescents, Youth and the Transformation of the Future. Published 2014, available on http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/EN-SWOP14-Report_FINAL-web.pdf

³ UNAIDS, Women, girls, gender equality, and HIV. Available on: http://files.unaids.org/en/media/unaids/contentassets/documents/factsheet/2012/20120217_FS_WomenGirls_en.pdf

⁴ WHO, Fact Sheet: Family Planning/Contraception, published December 2016, available on: <http://who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs351/en/>

⁵ Women Deliver, Respect, Protect, and Fulfill Sexual Health and Rights. Available on: http://womensdeliver.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Good_Campaign_Brief_3_092016.pdf

⁶ WHO, Preventing Unsafe Abortion. Available on: http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/unsafe_abortion/magnitude/en/

⁷ Women Deliver, Meet the Demand for Modern Contraception and Reproductive Health. Available on: http://womensdeliver.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Good_Campaign_Brief_2_092016.pdf

⁸ Women Deliver, Respect, Protect, and Fulfill Sexual Health and Rights. Available on: http://womensdeliver.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Good_Campaign_Brief_3_092016.pdf

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ UNICEF, Raising Clean Hands Advancing Learning, Health and Participation through WASH in Schools, available on: https://www.unicef.org/wash/schools/files/raisingcleanhands_2010.pdf

¹¹ UNGEI, School-related gender-based violence is preventing the achievement of quality education for all. Available on: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002321/232107e.pdf>

¹² Girls Not Brides, Education: Key Information. Available on: <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/themes/education/>

¹³ Women Deliver, Ensure Equitable and Quality Education at all Levels. Available on: http://womensdeliver.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Good_Campaign_Brief_7_092016.pdf

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ OHCHR, High Commissioner's report to the Human Rights Council on discrimination and violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity. Available on: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Discrimination/Pages/LGBTUNReports.aspx>

¹⁶ Women Deliver, Boost Women's Economic Empowerment. Available on: http://womensdeliver.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Good_Campaign_Brief_7_092016.pdf

¹⁷ United Nations Youth, Youth and Comprehensive Sexuality Education, Available on: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/youth/fact-sheets/youth-sexuality-education.pdf>

¹⁸ Amnesty International, Respect, Protect, and Fulfill the human Rights of Sex Workers. Available on: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/policy-on-state-obligations-to-respect-protect-and-fulfill-the-human-rights-of-sex-workers/>

¹⁹ AWID, Intersectionality: A Tool for Gender and Economic Justice. Available on: https://www.awid.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/intersectionality_a_tool_for_gender_and_economic_justice.pdf