

Management Summary

SRHR Alliance

The Alliance on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR Alliance) is a Netherlands based alliance that works towards a society free of poverty in which all women and men, girls and boys, and marginalized groups have the same rights irrespective of their ethnic, cultural and religious background, age, gender and sexual orientation.

The partners in the SRHR Alliance are: World Population Foundation (WPF, lead agency), Rutgers Nisso Groep (RNG), AMREF Netherlands, CHOICE for youth and sexuality, Simavi and dance4life international. These partners have signed a collaboration agreement for the intended programme.

The SRHR Alliance covers the whole spectrum of sexual and reproductive health and rights. Each partner has a clear added value and specific areas of expertise. The Alliance brings together expertise on specific areas (comprehensive sexuality education, access to services, gender based violence and sexual diversity) and expertise on specific strategies (health system strengthening, capacity building of partner organizations in SRHR, youth participation, international and local advocacy and research). The SRHR Alliance therefore is able to address these issues together, offering added value as an integrative approach to SRHR and HIV/Aids which is necessary, but often missing¹. The SRHR Alliance explicitly and actively addresses sexual rights. Sexual rights are by and large absent in the MDGs. Reproductive rights, in particular access to legal and safe abortion and sexual rights, such as the right of women, youth and sexual minorities to freely express their sexuality, remain highly controversial. The Alliance will actively address controversial issues at all levels, and as such filling a niche in the mainstream SRH programmes.

The SRHR Alliance recognizes the importance of a multi-stakeholder and evidence based approach. Therefore, academic institutions are involved (e.g. letters of intent have been signed with the Institute of Social Studies in The Hague and the University of Amsterdam). Cooperation with the private sector will be further elaborated. Furthermore, our strategic cooperation with Hivos – formalized in a memorandum of understanding – will lead to improved and increased coordination of SRHR initiatives. Through this cooperation Hivos can add its specific expertise on the promotion of the rights of LGBT and other marginalized groups to the programme of the SRHR Alliance.

Introduction to the programme

The proposed programme of the SRHR Alliance carries the working title 'Unite for Body Rights'. The programme intends to contribute to the realization of the ICPD (International Conference on Population and Development) Program of Action and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), specifically MDG3 (gender equality), MDG5 (maternal health) and MDG6 (HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria). By joining forces and increasing synergy between the different organizations and activities, impact will be increased.

The SRHR Alliance has identified four priority areas (see below) that require urgent and increased attention in order to meet the MDGs, the ICPD Program of Action and other international agreements for the promotion of sustainable development. Poverty cannot be eradicated without ensuring gender equality and SRHR. The four identified key priorities that will be addressed in the programme are:

- (1) improved sexual and reproductive health services
- (2) comprehensive sexuality education
- (3) combating sexual and gender-based violence
- (4) freedom of expression of sexual diversity and gender identity.

¹ (see policy memorandum 'HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in foreign policy – choices and opportunities' (2009, p.27)).

The first two priorities have been identified as crucial intervention strategies to realize sexual and reproductive health and rights. The last two themes have been identified as areas of work that are controversial and therefore under-addressed.

The alliance aims to work specifically with women, young people and marginalized groups (survivors of violence, LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender), MSM (Men having Sex with Men), people with disabilities, people living with HIV/AIDS and people with traditional lifestyles in remote areas. Their voice is not heard in many countries where the alliance works, as they are excluded from public debate. They face discrimination, exclusion and stigmatization.

The Unite for Body Rights programme takes place in ten countries in Asia and Africa. In each country the SRHR Alliance works through local partners such as CBOs, CSOs, NGOs, service providers and (local) governments. Joint, participatory context analyses have taken place in October 2009 in five out of the ten countries (Bangladesh, Indonesia, Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya). The programme is based on the main outcomes of these analyses. However, in the first half of 2010, the remaining context analyses will be conducted and national, tailor-made programmes will be developed in close cooperation with partners in the South.

Rationale

Sexual and reproductive health and rights are basic human rights. All people must have equal access to sexual and reproductive health services and education, and the freedom to make informed choices about their sexuality. However, much remains to be done to achieve sexual and reproductive health for all. Maternal mortality remains unacceptably high across much of the developing world. Still more than 500,000 women die unnecessarily during pregnancy, childbirth or after delivery. Poor women are more likely to be affected by harmful traditional practices, with higher risks of maternal death, illness and injury. Today, children and young people make up the world's largest generation ever in history. Sexually transmitted infections (STI's), abortion and adolescent childbearing place a substantial burden on individual welfare and scarce government resources. Globally, at least one out of three women has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime, with the abuser usually someone known to her. Sexual diversity is still a highly controversial issue and hardly any government policy worldwide defends the rights of sexual minorities.

It is widely recognized that without progress on SRHR issues, the MDGs on gender equality (MDG3), maternal health (MDG5) and HIV/Aids, malaria and TB (MDG6) will not be met. The coming five/six years will be crucial for making real progress in achieving ICPD and the MDGs related to SRHR. Also timely planning is needed beyond 2015 to retain momentum on the realization of SRHR policies and programmes. Therefore the SRHR Alliance will work towards realizing an enabling environment in which each individual can exercise his/her sexual and reproductive rights. Access to services and education, supportive laws and legislation, and increased acceptance of sexuality and sexual rights of all people are the building blocks of such enabling environment.

The four key priorities: (1) improved sexual and reproductive health services, (2) comprehensive sexuality education, (3) sexual and gender-based violence and (4) freedom of expression of sexual diversity and gender identity are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Low status of women leads to sexual and gender-based violence and abuse. And continued discrimination of women and marginalized groups significantly contributes to sexual and reproductive ill-health and denial of rights. Therefore, in our programme, the issues of sexual and gender-based violence and sexual diversity will be mainstreamed in the SRHR services and education.

Approach

The SRHR Alliance will implement its programme using the following intervention strategies: (1) sustainable economic development and direct poverty alleviation, (2) strengthening civil society and (3) policy influencing.

By improving accessibility and availability of SRHR services (information, counseling and treatment) in combination with awareness raising and providing comprehensive sexuality education, people, including marginalized groups, will be empowered to make their own choices around sexuality and reproduction

and claim their rights. At the same time, change agents such as community based organizations (CBOs) and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) should be strengthened to facilitate such processes and use their knowledge and skills to assist marginalized groups to improve their sexual and reproductive health situation. Strengthening civil society is one way of voicing, promoting and claiming the rights of marginalized groups, specifically women, young people, survivors of violence, LGBT, MSM, people with disabilities and people living with HIV/AIDS. However, these efforts need to be embedded and protected by a transparent legislative framework and policy implementation. The alliance aims at creating a supportive policy environment through national and global advocacy and campaigning to mobilize political and financial support for SRHR.

Promotion of equal rights and opportunities for women and girls, the promotion of “bodily integrity” and empowerment are key strategies to improve sexual and reproductive health. By promoting gender equality, many SRH related problems women face are more easily prevented and/or tackled. Reversely, the promotion of women’s SRHR will lead to a better social position and greater empowerment. For this reason gender equality is mainstreamed in the whole programme. Specific interventions include incorporating discussions on gender roles into comprehensive sexuality education, reducing social acceptance of sexual and gender-based violence, increasing women’s access to SRH services (including abortion and related care) and advocating for a gender approach in SRHR policies at national and international level. In addition, the alliance will support women’s and girls’ organizations or associations to claim their rights and increase their capacity to organize themselves. At the same time it is equally important to involve men and boys in the discussion on sexual education, gender roles, violence, empowerment, etc. and make clear what role they can play in positively changing (gender) perceptions and values.

Main activities

The core of the activities of the alliance will focus on individual empowerment in combination with the realization of conducive and enabling conditions and policies for the promotion and protection of SRHR. In order to achieve our overall objectives - increased utilization of comprehensive SRHR services; increased delivery of comprehensive sexuality education; a reduction of gender based violence and; increased acceptance of LGBT and insurance of their rights - the SRHR Alliance aims to improve knowledge on SRHR through awareness-raising and comprehensive sexuality education and to increase the accessibility and quality of sexual and reproductive health services. This will support people to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive lives. Furthermore, the SRHR Alliance actively contributes to an environment in which sexual violence is considered unacceptable, stigma is reduced and the rights of sexual minorities are protected.

In order to reach its objectives, the alliance will be engaged in:

- Strengthening of (both informal and formal) health systems to deliver high-quality, comprehensive SRH services to all people, including marginalized groups
- Delivering high quality, comprehensive sexuality education to young people in-school and out-of-school settings, while mainstreaming sensitive issues like sexual and gender-based violence, sexual diversity and gender roles
- Strengthening communities’ capacity to demand comprehensive services and SRHR education
- Increasing understanding and acceptance of all aspects of sexuality and reproduction, including issues like sexual and gender-based violence, sexual diversity and gender identity of civil society organizations and local structures
- Strengthening civil society organizations and local structures in their capacity to lobby and advocate at a local and national level for improved policies, legislation or funding, and/or to strive for the implementation of existing policies, legislation of budget allocation.
- Global advocacy and public campaigning to increase public awareness and influence policy-makers on SRHR

Within each country and geographical area the SRHR Alliance will look for synergy and added value of the different partners in addressing the actual needs of the target population. Therefore, the Alliance will

develop tailor-made approaches per country deriving from participative context analyses and stakeholders consultations.

The SRHR Alliance estimates to reach approximately 3.500.000 direct beneficiaries in 10 countries within the timeframe of the subsidy. Another 6.000.000 beneficiaries will be reached indirectly through outreach and awareness-raising components.

Expected contribution to MFSII objectives

The programme proposed by the SRHR Alliance is directly linked to two policy priorities as set by the Minister of Development Cooperation:

- Growth and equal distribution of resources to bridge the poverty gaps between poor and rich segments of society (policy intervention 1);
- Equal rights and chances for women and girls and the right to sexual and reproductive health (policy intervention 2).

The programme is also in line with the 2008 policy memorandum 'HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in foreign policy – choices and opportunities'. By establishing this consortium the SRHR Alliance would like to give added value from a civil society perspective to the effort the Dutch government undertakes to improve SRHR in developing countries. In realising this objective the SRHR Alliance intends to closely align its programme and activities with the Netherlands Embassies and with other international development partners in the focus countries.

Improved access and availability of SRH services and education for poor and marginalized groups will not only have a direct impact on the quality of life for poor people, but will also lead to their increased capacity to provide in their livelihoods and contribute to equitable economic development. The prevention of SRHR risks (for example unsafe abortions, maternal mortality, gender-based violence) will diminish economic expenditures on health and put less pressure on scarce resources. A great part of the current SRH risks is directly related to unequal gender relations and the low status of women and other marginalized groups. Therefore, central to the programme is the promotion of equal rights and opportunities for women and girls, the promotion of 'bodily integrity' and empowerment.

Expected contribution to development cooperation objectives

The Unite for Body Rights program contributes to achieving a sustainable livelihood for all. Carrying out its mission, the alliance supports the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and the realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), in particular MDG 3 on gender equality, MDG 5 on maternal health and MDG 6 on HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria. The ICPD Programme of Action states that poverty cannot be eradicated without ensuring gender equality and SRHR; access to high quality sexual and reproductive health services as well as education are crucial for breaking out of cycles of poverty. The ICPD agenda and the MDGs are therefore mutually reinforcing.