

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

“*Sexual and Reproductive Health 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

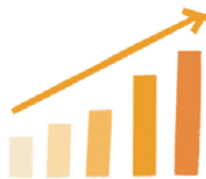
## Realising universal access to SRHR depends on:

### Realising & protecting individuals' SEXUAL & REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS (SRR) to:

- Bodily integrity, privacy and autonomy;
- Freely define and express sexual orientation and gender identity;
- Exercise choice around whether, when and with whom to be sexually active;
- Choose if, when and by what means to have children;
- Safe and pleasurable sexual experiences;
- Live free from discrimination, exploitation, coercion and violence.

### Providing an essential package of SRHR INTERVENTIONS

- Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) Information, counselling, service delivery around a range of modern contraception options;
- Antenatal and postnatal care, safe services for childbirth;
- Safe abortion services, and treatment for complications arising from unsafe abortion;
- HIV and other STI prevention and treatment;
- Prevention and detection, services and referrals for sexual and gender based violence (SGBV);
- Prevention, detection and management of reproductive cancer;
- Information, counselling, and services for subfertility and infertility;
- Information, counselling, and services for sexual health and wellbeing.



## Demand for SRHR is growing and will continue to grow

**Half the global population (over 4 billion people) is of reproductive age (15-49).** Almost each person will lack at least one essential SRHR service during their reproductive lives. <sup>1</sup>

**The world currently houses the largest ever generation of youth** (1.21 billion people aged 15-24), with a growing need for SRHR services. <sup>2</sup>

Globally, the number of women using modern contraception nearly **doubled from 467 million in 1990 to 874 million in 2021.** <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Lancet. Accelerate Progress - SRHR for all. 2018: [https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736\(18\)30293-9.pdf](https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736(18)30293-9.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> UN Population Division. World Youth Report. 2020: <https://social.desa.un.org/sites/default/files/publications/2023-08/2020-World-Youth-Report.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> UN Population Division. World Family Planning. 2022:

[https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/files/documents/2023/Feb/undesa\\_pd\\_2022\\_world-family-planning.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa.pd/files/files/documents/2023/Feb/undesa_pd_2022_world-family-planning.pdf)

# Several interconnected global challenges remain in the provision of SRHR



164 million women have an **unmet need for contraception**.<sup>4</sup>



Yearly, 121 million **unintended pregnancies** occur, accounting for nearly half of all pregnancies. Over 60% of unintended pregnancies end in abortion.<sup>6</sup>



45% of all abortions remain unsafe - up to 13% of all maternal deaths worldwide are attributable to unsafe abortions.<sup>8</sup>



31% of all pregnant women receive **inadequate or no antenatal care**.<sup>10</sup>



**Disruptions during emergency** contexts lead to increased instances of SGBV, discontinuation of contraceptive coverage and unintended pregnancies.<sup>12</sup>

Over 370 million **new cases of four curable sexually transmitted** infections occur every year, with inadequate access to screening, diagnosis and treatment.<sup>5</sup>



1.3 million people became **newly infected with HIV** in 2023, and over 600 000 died from AIDS-related illnesses in 2023.<sup>7</sup>



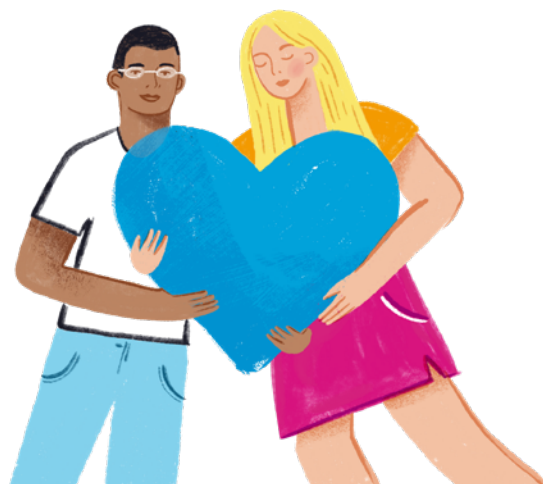
640 million girls and women alive today were **married before their 18th birthday**.<sup>9</sup>



There are 21 million **adolescent pregnancies** in low-middle income countries (LMICs) every year, 50% of which are unintended.<sup>11</sup>



1 in 3 women worldwide experiences **intimate partner violence**, with rates skyrocketing during the COVID pandemic.<sup>13</sup>



<sup>4</sup> UN Population Division. World Family Planning, 2022: [https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa/pd/files/files/documents/2023/Feb/undesa\\_pd\\_2022\\_world-family-planning.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org.development.desa/pd/files/files/documents/2023/Feb/undesa_pd_2022_world-family-planning.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> World Health Organization. Global Health Sector Strategies, 2022: <https://iris.who.int/bitstream/handle/10665/360348/9789240053779-eng.pdf?sequence=1>

<sup>6</sup> United Nations Population Fund. State of World Population, 2024: <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/swp2024-english-240327-web.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> UNAIDS. Factsheet, 2024: [https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media\\_asset/UNAIDS\\_Factsheet\\_en.pdf](https://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/UNAIDS_Factsheet_en.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> United Nations Population Fund. State of World Population, 2024: <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/swp2024-english-240327-web.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> Guttmacher Institute. Adding It Up, 2019: [https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/report\\_pdf/adding-it-up-investing-in-sexual-reproductive-health-2019.pdf](https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/adding-it-up-investing-in-sexual-reproductive-health-2019.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> UNICEF. The State of the World's Children, 2023: <https://www.unicef.org/media/108161/file/SOWC-2023-full-report-English.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> ICPD. The Future of SRHR, 2024: [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/2.%20SRHR\\_ICPD30\\_Think\\_Piece\\_050724\\_FINAL\\_WEB\\_V2%20%281%29.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/2.%20SRHR_ICPD30_Think_Piece_050724_FINAL_WEB_V2%20%281%29.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> ICPD. The ICPD and Climate Action, 2024: [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/4.%20Climate\\_Action\\_ICPD30\\_ThinkPiece\\_050724\\_FINAL\\_WEB.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/4.%20Climate_Action_ICPD30_ThinkPiece_050724_FINAL_WEB.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> ICPD. The Future of SRHR, 2024: [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/2.%20SRHR\\_ICPD30\\_ThinkPie-ce\\_050724\\_FINAL\\_WEB\\_V2%20%281%29.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/2.%20SRHR_ICPD30_ThinkPie-ce_050724_FINAL_WEB_V2%20%281%29.pdf)



## Why invest in SRHR?

A single individual can have multiple and intersecting SRHR needs. It is essential to look at SRHR as more than a set of isolated services, as this does not do justice to the needs and rights of individuals and communities.

### Providing comprehensive SRHR services has huge returns

Every 1\$ invested in comprehensive access to modern contraception brings over \$8 in economic returns. <sup>15</sup>

Every 1\$ invested in comprehensive access to modern contraception and maternal and newborn care reduces the costs of pregnancy related and newborn care by \$3. <sup>16</sup>

An increased investment in LMICs of \$31.2 billion annually would result in over 60% reductions in unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions, maternal and newborn deaths. <sup>17</sup>



## What is the EU doing?

### The EU's policy commitments to SRHR

#### Global Health Strategy (2024)

The GHS commits to strengthening support for universal access to SRHR, and upholds this as a focus in its guiding principle to tackle the root causes of ill health. The strategy also commits to the TEI on SRHR and support to the UNFPA Supplies Partnership. The scope of this work includes addressing gender-based violence and harmful practices; unmet need for contraception; equitable access to quality services and information.

#### Samoa Agreement (2023)

The Partnership agreement between the EU and the Organization of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS) commits to promoting SRHR, including comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information and education, as well as access to SRH services.

#### Youth Action Plan (2022 - 2027)

The first ever Youth Action Plan for the EU's external action includes provisions to promote access to youth friendly SRHR information and services, including the support of comprehensive sexuality education for all young people. The YAP also mainstreams gender equality and non-discrimination and applies an intersectional approach.

#### Gender Action Plan III (2020 - 2027)

Asserts that SRHR is an essential priority in achieving gender equality; and reaffirms EU's commitment on 85% of external cooperation projects featuring GE as a principal/ significant objective; includes a commitment for EU delegations in partner countries to implement at least one action with GE as principal objective.

#### Report on the situation of SRHR in the EU (2021)

Adopted by the EP, calling on EU and member states to promote and ensure access to SRHR, remove barriers to access – including in all external actions.

#### European Consensus on Development (2017)

Reiterates the EU's commitment to promote SRHR, within the framework of the Beijing Platform for Action and ICPD Program of Action and the outcomes of their review conferences.

<sup>14</sup> The Lancet. The Importance of Insufficient Data on SRHR. 2024: <https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S2589-5370%2824%2900133-0>

<sup>15</sup> United Nations Population Fund. Investing in three transformative results:

Realizing powerful returns. 2022: [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Investment\\_report\\_8%20Nov\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Investment_report_8%20Nov_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> United Nations Population Fund. State of World Population. 2024: <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/swp2024-english-240327-web.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

## EU Council Conclusions

EU member states have reaffirmed the importance of the promotion of SRHR, calling for stronger support in EU's external action, through the adoption of multiple council conclusions ([Human development](#), [EU-Africa relations](#), [Youth in external action](#), [Global Health Strategy](#)).

## How is the EU investing in SRHR?

The EU supports the promotion of SRHR in partner countries through different instruments and modalities, including through

**Bilateral aid and budget support in LMICs**

**Funding global and multilateral initiatives**, such as the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Supplies Partnership

The **Team Europe Initiative** on SRHR in sub-Saharan Africa jointly with EU member states

**Funding to local CSOs**, women's rights and grass-root organisations



The EU invested on average **€370 million** in Official Development Aid (ODA) in SRHR annually between 2020 - 2022.



In absolute funding amounts, this makes **the EU the 6th largest SRHR donor worldwide (2022)**.



Putting this amount into perspective, these €370 million represent **less than 2% of the EU's overall ODA funding**.



In **terms of prioritising SRHR investments as part of their ODA**, **the EU only ranked 21st internationally** in 2022, far behind other donors who spend bigger parts of their ODA on SRHR.

Check out the **Annual Report Donors Delivering for SRHR** for more info on donor funding:



## CALL TO ACTION



To address the many challenges that remain in terms of protecting SRR and providing SRH services, create positive change and benefit from the huge return on investment, **the EU needs to step up their support to SRHR in external action, through increased ODA funding and intensified political dialogue with partner countries!**

**As an EU decision maker you have the power to contribute to achieving universal access to SRHR!**

Check out the [Countdown 2030 factsheet](#) for detailed recommendations on how to ensure the EU champions SRHR as part of their development cooperation policies and funding instruments!



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