

Multi Annual Strategy



CHOICE FOR
YOUTH &
SEXUALITY

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ACRONYMS

GUSO	Get Up Speak Out
INGOS	International Non-Governmental Organizations
MYP	Meaningful Youth Participation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
REA	Rights Evidence Action
RHRN	Right Here Right Now
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
SOGIESC	Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics
TOC	Theory of Change
YAP	Youth-Adult Partnership
YID	Yes I Do
YLO	Youth-Led Organization

For youth-friendly definitions of the key terms used check out our glossary on YOU(TH) Do IT! our online resource hub for young people.

FOREWORD

Founded in 1997, CHOICE for Youth & Sexuality (CHOICE) believes in the unique and innovative power of young people to be key drivers of change. For over 20 years, CHOICE has been working with and for young people to fulfill their Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR).

CHOICE uses a dual approach, whereby we strengthen the capacity of young people to advocate for their own rights, while at the same time working together with them to amplify youth voices and increase meaningful youth participation in decision-making spaces. Our results over the past 21 years demonstrate the unstoppable power of young people when we unite for a common cause – we are a force to be reckoned with!

CHOICE also collaborates with organizations working on youth SRHR to do so with and for young people in a meaningful way. We support these partners to successfully integrate young people in their SRHR programs and advocacy, and in all layers of their organizational structures. In this new multi-annual strategy, we will also expand our work to advocate for increased funding for youth-led organizations, programs, and projects, and support funders to make their way of working more accessible and youth-friendly.

Today CHOICE is based in the heart of Amsterdam and run by 15 dedicated youth advocates, 5 board members, and 9 staff members with one shared vision, to ensure that:

all young people have the power to make decisions about their sexual, reproductive & love lives!

This 2019-2021 strategic plan will keep us on course towards achieving this goal.



Nathalie Metheuver,
Executive Director

VISION

All young people have the power to make decisions about their sexual, reproductive & love lives!

MISSION

CHOICE advocates for young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights and for their meaningful participation in the decisions made about their lives. We strengthen the capacity of young people and youth-led organizations, enabling them to become leaders and change-makers in their communities.

WHAT DO WE STAND FOR? CHOICE's core values and concepts

Advocate for Change

We believe advocacy is about having the courage to stand up for what we believe in, regardless of the opposition we face. CHOICE commits to being a champion for change by fighting social inequality and demanding spaces for diverse voices. We believe in setting the agenda – not just following it. We ensure that our advocacy is informed by the real needs and lived realities of young people. We also believe in the power of young people to create social change – we believe that we must make the choice to raise our voice!

Feminism

For CHOICE, feminism is about the equality of all human beings regardless of their gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, sex characteristics, socio-economic status, religion, age etc. Our feminism is also intersectional. We recognize that there are different axes of inequality that can affect a (young) person's position of power in society, and which can prevent young people from actualizing their SRHR.

Furthermore, CHOICE recognizes and celebrates the diversity of sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC). We believe in being self-reflexive, critical and inclusive – always!

Human-Rights Based

Human rights are at the core of the work we do. For us, being a human-rights based organization means that we take rights as the starting point for our programs and advocacy work: from planning and strategizing, to implementing, collaborating, and evaluating. In practice, this means ensuring that our work strives to respect, protect, and fulfil the human rights of all persons. Furthermore, our work aims to strengthen the capacity of duty-bearers (decision-makers) to promote, protect, and fulfill the rights of rights-holders (young people). We also work to empower young people as rights-holders to hold their duty-bearers accountable.

Inclusive

For CHOICE, inclusion is not just a buzzword – it is a policy approach, ethos and strategy. Inclusion means a commitment to actively working to include different social groups, especially those who have been traditionally marginalized or discriminated against. While we recognize that in our current work, we cannot meaningfully integrate everyone – we strive to make informed and carefully considered decisions on who we can involve where, and to include multiple perspectives in our work. The key for us is working with the groups that we are trying to include, not just for them.



In this sense, inclusivity and meaningful youth participation (MYP) go hand-in-hand, as being truly inclusive often also means providing additional resources to ensure that everyone can meaningfully participate. Finally, it also requires that we stay critical of our work and our methods, keeping an open mind, being willing to learn and adapt, and remain proactive to ensure that we are not accidentally excluding others.

Meaningful Youth Participation

Young people are diverse rights-holders, and meaningful youth participation (MYP) is a right of all young people guaranteed by various international agreements. MYP means that young people can participate on equal terms with adults, or work independently, in organizations as well as in all stages of programming and policy-making: design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. For this reason, mechanisms must be in place for young people to have an active role, in which their voices are heard and respected. When participation of young people is truly meaningful, it benefits the young people, the program, policy, organization, and society as a whole. For more on MYP and what it means check out our MYP position paper.

Sex-positive

Too often we only hear about the scary, shameful, or even dangerous sides of sex. While risk mitigation is an important part of comprehensive sexuality education, CHOICE believes strongly in also celebrating the positive aspects – from sexual pleasure, to desire, and intimacy. We also believe in demystifying and destigmatizing sex, and in the importance of creating safe spaces for young people to ask questions without fear and free from stigma and discrimination. We celebrate the diversity in sexuality – from A(sexuality) to Q(ueer) – and we respect that there are many different experiences and choices and that these are all valid.

Being an ally

Finally, we believe that people whose lives are affected by SRHR issues should also lead the process of working on these issues. For this reason, CHOICE strives to be a strong feminist ally: we commit to staying critical of ourselves and of our work, staying responsive to our environment and listening carefully, and supporting a diverse group of young advocates to lead the SRHR agenda, by brokering opportunities for them and amplifying their voices.

WHERE HAVE WE COME FROM?

During the last five years we have

- 1** grown significantly, from five staff members to nine!
- 2** started four new programs: Yes I Do (YID), Get Up Speak Out (GUSO), Right Here Right Now (RHRN), and Rights Evidence Action (REA)
- 3** gained new youth-led partners in Mozambique, Zambia, Uganda, India and Nigeria
- 4** expanded our SRHR advocacy work to Geneva
- 5** developed youth-friendly tools on meaningful youth participation and youth-led advocacy
- 6** renewed our classic Flower of Participation and created several new tools to help monitor and measure meaningful youth participation
- 7** re-developed our organizational Theory of Change and Planning Monitoring Evaluation and Learning (PMEL) framework
- 8** changed our branding and re-designed our website
- 9** launched YOU(TH) Do IT!, our resource hub for young people
- 10** threw a big bash for our 20th birthday where we launched a call for more youth-friendly funding
- 11** Conducted research, which demonstrated CHOICE's impact towards our partners and individual youth advocates in strengthening capacity
- 12** participated in many conferences and international advocacy events, championing SRHR and amplifying youth voices
- 13** Created a Youth Ambassador for SRHR-role at the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Keeping these lessons in mind, we set out on a six-month process with various key-stakeholders both inside and outside of our organization to define our strategic direction for the coming years.



Our Multi- Annual Strategy

2019 – 2022

This 2019–2022 multi-annual strategy builds on the best practices and lessons learned of our previous plans, as well as a changing context. The strategy follows along five strategic pathways corresponding to the key stakeholders that we will engage with over the coming years:

1. **Young people (strategic pathway 1)**
2. **Youth-led SRHR organizations (strategic pathway 2)**
3. **Organizations working on youth SRHR (strategic pathway 3)**
4. **Funders (strategic pathway 4)**
5. **SRHR decision-makers (strategic pathway 5)**

Over the past few years, we have witnessed an ever-growing community of bold youth advocates taking to the global stage. From March for Our Lives to #metoo, all around the world young people are standing up for their rights and demanding change. CHOICE will continue to support SRHR movements by sharing our expertise and providing young people with the resources, knowledge and skills they need to be young leaders and advocate for their SRHR (Strategic Pathway 1: young people).

Youth-led organizations (YLO) provide a vital space for young people to collaborate and grow, and, as these organizations grow stronger and more become connected, their needs are also changing. CHOICE will continue to invest in strengthening youth-led organizations working on SRHR through learning and exchanging together, and through our specially adapted YLO organizational capacity strengthening tools and tailored support. At the same time, CHOICE will seek new ways of collaborating with our youth led-partners who have grown into sustainable youth-led organizations. Together we will continue our collaboration by seeking new opportunities as equal partners, to design and implement programs and projects together, and fostering South-South learning (Strategic Pathway 2: youth-led organizations).

At the same time, CHOICE will continue to support organizations working on youth SRHR to put young people at the centre of their programs and activities, ensuring that young people are meaningfully participating every step of the way (Strategic Pathway 3: organizations working on youth SRHR).

In order to ensure the sustainability of the broader youth movement, we believe we need to increase the investments in youth work. In the upcoming years, CHOICE will be actively lobbying to make funding more accessible to youth-led organizations (what we call our ‘broker’ role). At the same time, we have seen a changing donor-landscape – with funding flows logically moving more towards the Global South, we are re-thinking what our role as a Northern organization entails and how we can share our platform and ensure that Southern youth-led organizations can better access funding (Strategic Pathway 4: funders).

Finally, we have seen many worrying developments that threaten the fulfilment of young people’s SRHR. From an increasingly conservative political climate and a shrinking space for civil society, to the far-reaching effects of the Trump presidency and reinstated ‘global gag rule’, and the climate crisis looming as an ever-present danger. For this reason, we will continue to engage with and challenge decision-makers to keep SRHR issues of young people on the agenda in national, regional, and international spaces. Furthermore, we are committed to doing evidence-based

advocacy and ensuring that diverse youth voices are heard (Strategic Pathway 5: decision-makers).

Keep reading to learn more about what each of these strategic pathways entails.

From Building Bridges to Brokering

In our new multi-annual strategy, we see our role expand beyond being a knowledge partner to that of a broker. But what exactly do we mean by that? Firstly, we see ourselves as a power broker, whereby CHOICE can take on an intermediary role between young people and adults and work to shift the power dynamics in decision-making spaces towards young people. Secondly, we will take a role as a knowledge broker, whereby we can leverage our technical expertise on meaningful youth participation, youth-led organizations, and international advocacy to take on a more consultant role. In this sense, CHOICE will maximize our expertise and the relationships we have established across the public and private sector to create new spaces and opportunities for young people.

This shift from building bridges to brokering spaces is an acknowledgement of the space that we occupy as a Northern-based youth-led NGO. On the one hand, we have to overcome many of the same barriers that YLOs around the world face, and on the other hand we realize that being based in the Global North comes with opportunities and benefits that YLOs based in the Global South might have less access to. In this broker role, CHOICE will utilize our position to share power and to facilitate access to these spaces for ALL young people.

Theory of Change

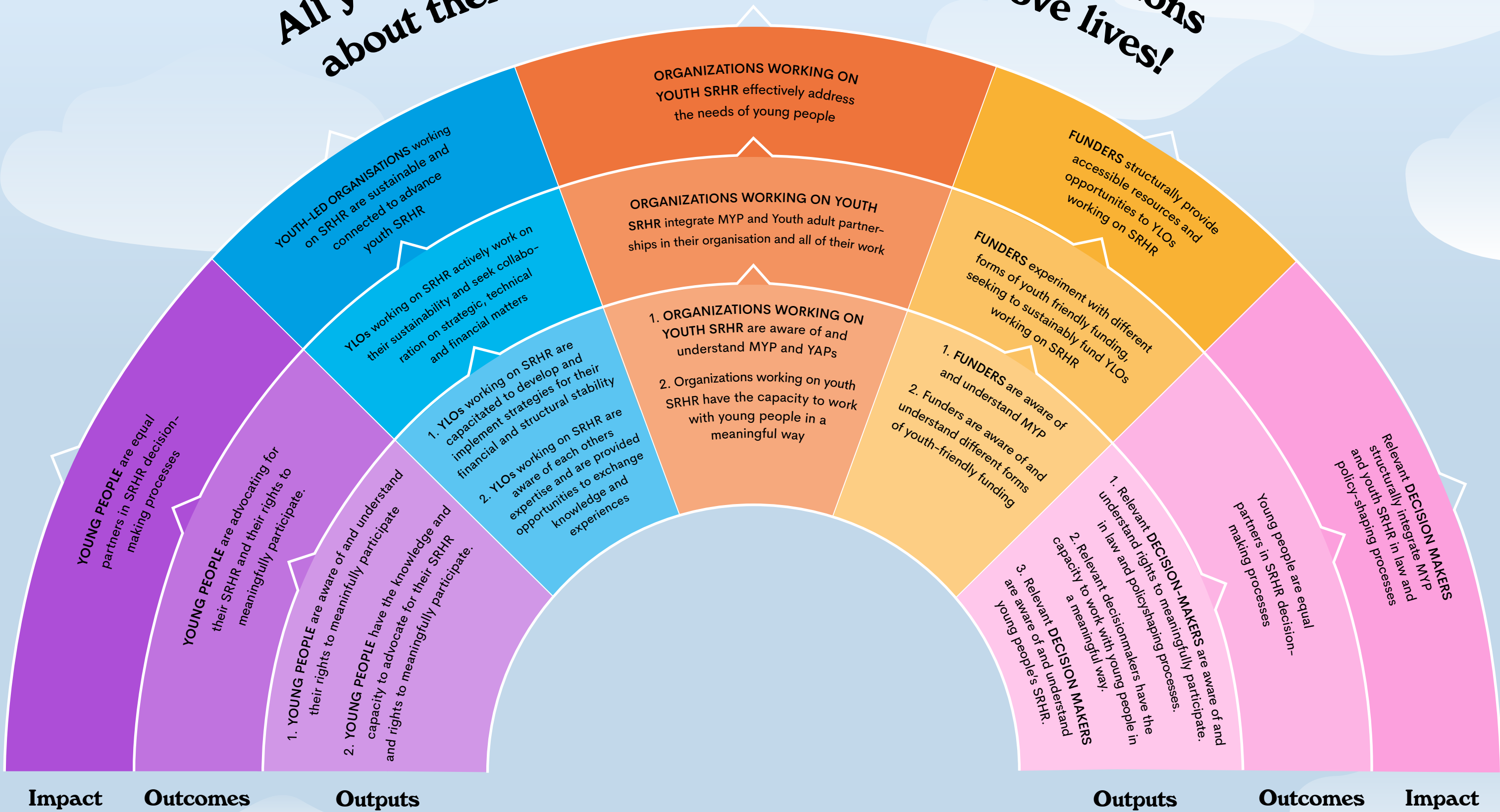
In 2018, CHOICE restructured our organizational Theory of Change and accompanying PMEL framework. The results speak for themselves – today we are proud to present our five pathways of change, which mirror the strategic directions we will take over the next three years: young people, youth-led organizations, organizations working on youth SRHR, funders, and decision-makers. Keep reading to see how we plan to engage with each pathway!

With our Theory of Change we acknowledge that we – as CHOICE and young people – are stronger when we work in alliances and partnerships to achieve our vision. In this strategy, however, we focus only on the areas we can have direct influence on.

**CHOICE can take on an
intermediary role between
young people and adults and
work to shift the power
dynamics in decision-making
spaces towards young people**

Vision

All young people have the power to make decisions about their sexual, reproductive and love lives!



Strategic Directions:

**What do we want
to achieve from
2019 – 2022?**

Young people are equal partners in SRHR decision-making processes

Young people are integral to CHOICE's work.

To make SRHR programs and policies focusing on youth successful, the meaningful participation of young people in decision-making processes is crucial: nothing about us, without us! CHOICE equips young people with the skills and knowledge to meaningfully engage in developing, implementing and evaluating SRHR policies, programs, advocacy and activities, at the national, regional, and international level. We provide the opportunity to put these skills and knowledge into practice, and to create impact. To make this happen we will:

By 2022, CHOICE has a formalized advocacy mentorship trajectory of on the job learning for youth advocates in international advocacy spaces.

By 2019

- In collaboration with partners, we have further developed capacity strengthening resources for young people that are relevant in strengthening their capacity on SRHR, MYP and youth-led advocacy, and we have launched the training manual on youth leadership skills.
- We have developed the CHOICE Capacity Strengthening Menu Card with an overview on what topics CHOICE can strengthen young people's capacity and how.

By 2020

- We have formalized an advocacy mentorship trajectory of on the job learning for youth advocates in international advocacy spaces in New York and Geneva.
- Our online platform You(th) Do It! is renewed and interactive and contributes to the capacity strengthening of many youth advocates working on SRHR.

By 2021

- We have developed and broadcasted an online learning trajectory on youth-led advocacy.

By 2022

- We have formalized an advocacy mentorship trajectory of on the job learning for youth advocates in international advocacy spaces in New York and Geneva.
- Our online platform You(th) Do It! is renewed and interactive and contributes to the capacity strengthening of many youth advocates working on SRHR.

Youth-led organizations (YLOs) are sustainable and connected

Supporting youth-led organizations working on SRHR is in CHOICE's DNA. We strengthen YLOs worldwide and we build a network of YLOs to facilitate linking and learning. The organizational development analysis of 2016 concluded that youth-led organizations benefitted from our tailor-made capacity strengthening support. Furthermore, through our activities, YLOs are linked to each other and share ideas and resources to also strengthen each other's capacity. CHOICE will build on this momentum by ensuring that:



By 2019

- CHOICE has facilitated the Connector Week 2019 to strengthen linking and learning between our youth-led partners and beyond and to build a wide network of YLOs. The Connector Week is a linking and learning workshop where youth-led partners come together to exchange insights, best practices and connect.
- Together with our youth-led partners, we have jointly developed action plans towards sustainability of the organizations.
- CHOICE has conducted further pilots on her Advocacy Capacity Assessment Tool (ACAT) and Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA) tools, hereby further tailoring them to the needs of youth-led organizations.

By 2020

- CHOICE has conducted research on the success factors and gaps of organizational capacity development and used the results to strengthen and deepen her capacity strengthening trajectory for YLOs.
- CHOICE has further developed resources for organizational capacity strengthening and has worked with her partners to implement their sustainability action plan.
- CHOICE has further strengthened the youth movement by facilitating the Connector Week 2020.

By 2021

- CHOICE has evaluated the capacity-strengthening trajectory for youth-led organizations and has communicated the outcomes of the research to other stakeholders in the SRHR field.
- CHOICE has evaluated the Connector Week approach and has data on how this trajectory contributes to the building of a youth movement.

By 2022

- CHOICE is recognized as a grant maker with a purpose: grant management is used as a tool to strengthen the organizational capacity of YLOs in order to work towards sustainability and organizations who work with CHOICE become more sustainable every year.

Organizations working on youth SRHR effectively address the needs to young people

Organizations working on youth SRHR are mostly adult-led organizations which have young people as their main beneficiaries. They are important partners in our fight for young people's SRHR. When organizations working on youth SRHR recognize and value the meaningful participation of young people in their organizations and programs, their interventions become more targeted and effective. CHOICE has seen the most impact of MYP when young people and adults work together as equal partners. Youth-Adult Partnerships (YAPs), facilitate an equitable relationship between adults and young people and integrates young people's perspectives with professional adults' experience. CHOICE will build on our previous work by ensuring that:

CHOICE will facilitate high-quality trainings for decision-makers and civil society organizations working on youth SRHR.

By 2019

- CHOICE has conducted research on the factors which enable YAPs. The research will aim to highlight the effects of youth-friendly, tailor-made approach to facilitate youth-adult partnerships. CHOICE plans to use this research to strengthen its methodologies on YAP and MYP.

By 2020

- CHOICE has researched opportunities to implement consultancy trajectories on MYP and youth-led advocacy for organizations working on youth SRHR, and has a follow-up plan for implementation of consultancy trajectories.
- CHOICE has served as a technical partner on MYP in cross-sectoral partnerships to mainstream and establish young people's MYP and SRHR in areas such as economic empowerment, agriculture, migration, and humanitarian settings.

By 2021

- CHOICE has created a sustainable pool of consultants that lead consultancy projects and facilitate high-quality trainings for decision-makers and civil society organizations working on youth SRHR.

By 2022

- CHOICE has gathered further evidence that MYP and youth-led advocacy work and that it is worth the investments for organizations working on youth SRHR.
- Key stakeholders recognize CHOICE as the expert on capacity strengthening of organizations working on youth SRHR. This makes CHOICE well-placed to work as a consultant for funders, INGOs, NGOs, and on organizational development, MYP and YAPs of YLOs in the area of young people's SRHR.

Funders structurally provide accessible resources and opportunities to youth-led organizations working on SRHR

CHOICE is committed to supporting youth-led organizations both in capacity and financial sustainability. A key priority to improve is the lack of structural, sustainable funding for youth-led organizations. In CHOICE's 20th anniversary Call to Action, we appealed for more youth-friendly, secure and sustained funding for all YLO worldwide. To endorse this call, CHOICE aims to achieve the following:

CHOICE functions as a broker between YLO's and funders by facilitating meetings, relationships and partnerships.

By 2019

- CHOICE conducted research on barriers and enablers to youth-friendly funding and has launched a toolkit on models and best practices on youth-friendly funding.
- CHOICE has organized a constructive space at the Women Deliver conference where donors and young people come together to share ideas and best practices for youth-friendly funding.

By 2020

- CHOICE has established strong relationships with funder networks and opens these relationships up for their youth-led partners.
- CHOICE has strengthened the capacity on MYP and youth-friendly funding of donors.

By 2021

- CHOICE has advocated successfully for the availability of youth-friendly, structural funding for youth-led organizations that not only supports their implementation work, but also their core operating costs as well as institutional capacity-building.
- CHOICE has documented best practices of youth-friendly funding and used these best practices for further budget advocacy purposes.

By 2022

- CHOICE is acknowledged as the expert on MYP and organizational development of YLOs in the field of SRHR by funders. CHOICE acts as a (seed) grant maker on organizational capacity development with YLOs, or acts as a technical partner on MYP and organizational capacity development.
- CHOICE functions as a broker between YLO's and funders by facilitating meetings, relationships and partnerships.

Relevant decision-makers structurally integrate MYP and youth SRHR in law and policy shaping processes

CHOICE advocates for the adoption and implementation of progressive policies and agreements for young people's SRHR as these have important implications for young people's day-to-day life. CHOICE will build on its understanding of existing structures and systems which are adult-led, including the Human Rights Council and the Agenda 2030, and will strengthen youth-adult collaboration in UN processes and agencies, and with member state and civil society representatives.

CHOICE advocacy efforts will be data-driven and reflect young people's SRHR needs and realities.

By 2019

- CHOICE has successfully secured another 5-year term for the youth ambassador SRHR position in the Netherlands.
- CHOICE has increased youth spaces in both the Geneva and New York UN advocacy spaces and has made relevant decision-makers aware of the importance of MYP and youth-led advocacy.
- CHOICE has strengthened its evidence-based advocacy, building on existing research of knowledge institutions and partners.

By 2020

- CHOICE has strengthened its accountability model that links national, regional and international fora and vice versa, and made it adaptable and accessible for other youth advocates and youth-led organizations.
- CHOICE established sustainable and meaningful structures in the Netherlands with relevant decision-makers on SRHR.
- CHOICE has, in cooperation with the Youth Ambassador SRHR, pitched the concept of the Youth Ambassador SRHR to other governments.

By 2021

- CHOICE has increased their advocacy efforts on youth SRHR in the Dutch context and has conducted research with youth to support their advocacy.
- CHOICE has evaluated their impact on youth SRHR and MYP in policy-shaping processes in both the Geneva and New York UN processes and shared the best practices with decision-makers in order to gain more support for MYP and youth SRHR.

By 2020

- CHOICE, in cooperation with the youth ambassador SRHR, support other governments with implementing their youth ambassador SRHR structure.
- CHOICE advocacy efforts are data-driven and reflect young people's SRHR needs and realities. By using research from knowledge institutions and by collecting our own data through surveys, focus groups, and interviews, CHOICE has strengthened its efforts in linking young people's realities with key decision-makers.

