

# *Youth* for SRHR change



Recommendations of the Youth Ambassador  
SRHR, Gender Equality, and Bodily Autonomy  
2022–2023

# Recommendations for the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Over recent decades, tremendous efforts to improve legislation and access to sexual and reproductive health and rights have been carried out. The Netherlands is a leader in diplomatic efforts around SRHR and in sexual and reproductive health services provision<sup>1</sup>. However, millions of young people today still face barriers accessing their SRHR<sup>2</sup>. **For this reason, I want to leave my term with a reminder and call to action to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.**

As Youth Ambassador SRHR, Gender Equality and Bodily Autonomy for the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs and CHOICE for Youth & Sexuality, I've talked to young people from all over the world. We discussed the challenges and barriers they face, but also more importantly, where they see room for improvement and how to approach opportunities for progress. Being an independent adviser to the Ministry, I try to align Dutch foreign policy with these realities. During my travels to Nepal, Kenya, Rwanda and New York, I gained an incredible number of insights from young people. **This report reflects the recommendations of 112 young people.**

## regarding youth, SRHR, and inclusive CSE



Young people are knowledgeable and can verbalize their realities well. Every consultation I had with young people taught me new contexts, nuances or different perspectives. In my year as Youth Ambassador SRHR, I learned how delicate it is for young people to bring change in the status quo and to advocate for Meaningful & Inclusive Youth Participation and SRHR. **Youth activists cannot emphasize enough how important it is to listen to young people and take their realities seriously.**

In the consultations with young people, it struck me how three key recommendations came up again and again. I believe that these three recommendations are crucial for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the field of international cooperation, specifically regarding SRHR, Gender Equality, and Bodily Autonomy. When governments and stakeholders intensify their efforts and turn policies into tangible progress, we can secure the current and future wellbeing of youth. **We must act now, recognizing that youth are not just the future but also the present!**

## Best, Jim Monkel

**Time for  
*action***



**a call by Jim Monkel**



## **Dare to invest in youth**

Explore youth-friendly  
funding structures



## **Build bridges with Feminist Foreign Policy**

Integrated approach  
to address SRHR needs



## **Support Inclusive Comprehensive Sexuality Education**

For young people with  
disabilities

# Dare to invest in youth

#1

Policies and programs that prioritize addressing people's needs and realities are most effective. This can be achieved by funding youth and community-led initiatives and exploring youth-friendly funding structures. **With funding-structures that are accessible to youth, young people in all their diversity can develop answers to societal problems that impact their bodies, agency, and decision making.**



## Explore youth-friendly funding structures

# Crucial preconditions for youth-friendly funding:

\* **Meaningfully involve young people in the grant making process**, so that funding is awarded based on the needs of the people who will be affected by it<sup>3</sup>.

\* **Increase domestic funding for youth-led organizations and groups**, and make public funding more easily available, adaptable, and sustainable. Also change policies to better allocate funds to youth-led and youth-driven initiatives<sup>4</sup>.

\* **Promote flexible, multi-year and trust-based core funding** that is unearmarked for youth-led organizations and young independent activists<sup>4</sup>.

\* **Simplify and streamline grant application processes**, reporting mechanisms, and compliance requirements. Also minimize administrative burden, complex requirements, excessive documentation, and restrictive eligibility criteria. Ensure to offer submission forms in different languages<sup>4</sup>.

\* **Acknowledge that young women, girls and young feminist-led organizations are leaders**, who work on several agendas and ensure they are funded for social change. They do not only work on youth-focused issues<sup>4</sup>.

3. We trust youth. Resources [internet]. [n.d.]. Available from: <https://www.wetrustyouth.org/resources>

4. CHOICE for Youth & Sexuality. Written statement on Youth-friendly funding, [internet]. [2023 Oct 18]. Available from: <https://www.choiceforyouth.org/news/news-articles/press-releases/csw68-statement-on-youth-friendly-funding/>



# Build bridges with Feminist Foreign Policy

#2

**SRHR is not a stand-alone issue and is interwoven into every aspect of life.** However, negative trends are shaping SRHR recently<sup>5</sup>.

For example the impact of climate change on SRHR, such as unavailable services in areas affected by disasters, is getting more prevalent. And also the pushback on SRHR, such as the overturn of Roe v Wade in the United States that rolls back the right to access to safe abortion, is showing that human rights to health care, equality and bodily autonomy are at stake. To ensure SRHR for everyone, and especially the most marginalised, efforts need to be intensified and an integrated approach for addressing SRHR is needed.

Therefore, **it is crucial for SRHR to be addressed in all foreign policies** and it must be taken into account that actions taken do not exacerbate inequalities. The recently adopted **Feminist Foreign Policy has the potential to function as a catalysator in this process,** since it addresses the root causes of inequality and power structures and must be incorporated by all departments of the Ministry.

## Integrated approach to address SRHR needs



## Two components to consider for a multi-departmental approach to SRHR:

**The needs of marginalized groups should be front and center throughout all policies.**

It is important to recognize the additional consequences of intersectionality in this approach<sup>5</sup>. It should be explicitly mentioned which groups are marginalized and what their specific needs are. It should also be recognized that marginalized groups are not homogeneous groups and have a wide variety of specific needs.

**A participatory accountability mechanism should be established to follow up on the implementation of these policies.**

Civil society from the Netherlands, organizations from the Global south, and ministries should meaningfully be involved, with special attention to marginalized groups, including women, young people, LGBTQI+ people, and people with disabilities<sup>6</sup>.



5. IPPF. Trends to watch in sexual and reproductive health and rights. [internet]. [2023 Jan 30]. Available from: <https://www.ippf.org/blogs/trends-watch-sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-rights>

6. Jellema, A. Hivos' nine-point plan for a Feminist Foreign Policy for the Netherlands [internet]. [2023 Feb 24]. Available from: <https://hivos.org/opinion/hivos-nine-point-plan-for-a-feminist-foreign-policy-for-the-netherlands/>

# Support Inclusive Comprehensive Sexuality Education

#3

Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) is crucial for the rights and health of young people. **CSE enables young people to learn and think about what is right and safe for them, learn to treat each other with respect and dignity, adopt values of equality, love and kindness, and protect themselves from unsafe situations**<sup>7</sup>. Young people with disabilities often cannot enjoy their SRHR easily<sup>8</sup>. They do not have access to adequate information and education about their bodily autonomy and their sexuality, since they are left behind because of stigmas, taboos, and social exclusion<sup>9</sup>. It is for this reason crucial that CSE is inclusive of the realities of young people with disabilities. **Young people with disabilities should be able to understand their SRHR, stand up for those rights and to make informed decisions on their SRHR**<sup>8</sup>.

For young people  
with disabilities



## Crucial elements in supporting inclusive CSE:

### Support CSE with diplomacy, policies, and funding

CSE should be recognized as integral to improving the health and rights of young people and realizing gender equality and sustainable development. Efforts should be made through diplomacy channels to support clearly mandated CSE provision by law and/or policy<sup>2</sup>.

### In these diplomacy, policy and funding efforts, **make sure that CSE curricula are accessible for young people with disabilities**

and reflect the realities of young people with disabilities, like the body talk program from Liliane Fonds and Rutgers<sup>8</sup>. It is important to also engage stakeholders, including community leaders, political actors, parents and health care providers in this process. This will contribute to understanding long-term benefits and foster a more supportive environment<sup>2</sup>.



2. Cousins, L., & Sharma, M. *The Heart of the Matter: Embrace the reality of young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights today*. Creative Commons; 2023.

7. UNESCO. *Comprehensive sexuality education: For healthy, informed and empowered learners* [internet]. [2023 Sep 26]. Available from: <https://www.unesco.org/en/health-education/cse>

8. Liliane Fonds. *Body Talk* [internet]. [n.d.]. Available from: <https://www.lilianefonds.org/project/bodytalk>

# Time for *action*

**CHOICE**  
FOR  
YOUTH &  
SEXUALITY



a call by **Jim Monkel**