

CALL TO ACTION

On the 1st of September, the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Alliance, Youth Empowerment Alliance & OneWorld Love organised the talkshow 'About a girl'. This talkshow has brought stories about girls' challenges, their efforts to overcome them and successes achieved. The gaps and threats were discussed and the urgency to continue investments and potential strategies to go about this. Together we fight for these body rights: the right to make your own choices about your body and matters related to love, sexuality and health.

The MDG's are ending this year and a new set of Sustainability Development Goals are being adopted by the UN and member states this September. Looking back at the MDG's, a lot was accomplished for example poverty is diminished by more than half and access to drinking water is improved, but there are also some major gaps and worries.

Particularly in the field of SRHR, results are lagging behind and many challenges remain. We all know that MDG 5, improving maternal health, hasn't been reached by far. For example just half of pregnant women in the Global South receive the recommended minimum of four antenatal care visits. The poor progress reported last year has deteriorated even further. Now only 18 (!) countries are expected to achieve the SRHR goal.

As you know, in the Netherlands SRHR has made great progress and is well organised and accepted by the majority, however internationally there is another situation and SRHR is very much under pressure.

In many countries conservative forces are at play and many taboos remain, resulting into an increase in inequality in access to SRHR services and information. Young people are having difficulty accessing comprehensive sexuality education and SRH services, abortion is illegal in many countries, LGBT are discriminated against and hence are unable to access sexual reproductive health services. Young girls and boys are married out against their will, AIDS is still the number one cause of death among women of reproductive age, closely followed by maternal deaths and particularly the poorest, most vulnerable groups are unable to access the SRH services they need.

Only 18 countries! A lot still needs to happen. From this perspective, we are happy to see that the Post-2015 development agenda has the potential to be truly transformative for women and girls, if *fully implemented*! There are two goals incorporated in the new

Sustainable Development Goals that are related to improving the SRHR of all. **SDG 3**, ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages, and **SDG 5**, achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls. They are quite broad and essential SRHR issues for youth, such as Comprehensive Sexuality Education and Youth Friendly services, are still missing, but an entry point is there with SRH and the empowerment of girls and women being part of the new development agenda. Thanks to efforts from progressive governments like the Dutch government.

That being said, looking at the global context pictured before, the risk exists that SDG 5, like MDG 5, will be the goal that is least supported financially and that youth and the poorest groups will again be unable to fulfill their Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. It is now time to act. If we really want a world that leaves no one behind, we need to make sure that everyone has access to full information and services, that everyone can participate meaningfully and that everyone has equal chances for a happy, healthy and stable life, regardless of age, income, gender, sexual orientation, health- or marital status.

Therefore we are asking for your help in:

- 1) Calling on the Dutch government to keep SRHR and the empowerment of women and girls a priority of the international development policy. By taking action towards achieving SDG 3 and SDG 5 with long term financial and substantive commitments.
- 2) Holding the Dutch government to account for addressing inequality in access to SRHR, specifically youth issues such as Comprehensive Sexuality Education and Youth friendly Services through SDG 3 and SDG 5.

The continued support and leadership role of the Dutch policy makers in SRHR, in addressing sensitive topics and not shying away from taboos has brought us a long way. Continuation of this support will help the new development agenda to be really an agenda that leaves no-one behind.

Thank You!

