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INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY

RFSU's Direction
2022-2025

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Swedish Association for Sexuality Education (RFSU) is a non-profit organisation working on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).


This is a summary of the RFSU's International Strategy for 2022-2025. The strategy is based on RFSU's strategic framework called the Sextant. The full International Strategy is found at rfsu.se/internationalstrategy

The International Strategy sets the direction for RFSU's international programming in low- and middle-income countries, global policy advocacy, knowledge and learning, and initiatives to enhance Swedish public support.

2. RFSU'S VISION, IMPACT GOALS AND CIVIL SOCIETY'S ROLE

2.1 VISION

**RFSU's vision outlines the world
we aspire to create**



**A world in which
everyone is free
to make decisions about
their own bodies
and sexuality**



2.2 IMPACT GOALS

To realise our vision, these conditions should be in place:

- Political, legal, and financial policy decisions in Sweden and globally promote SRHR and sustainable development for all people, notwithstanding their power and resources.
- Norms and attitudes in Sweden and globally afford people greater opportunities to enjoy and make decisions about their bodies and sexuality.

- People in Sweden and globally, notwithstanding their power and resources, have improved access to qualitative and equal sexual and reproductive care.
- People in Sweden and globally, notwithstanding their power and resources, have more opportunities to organise and influence sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- People in Sweden and globally, notwithstanding their power and resources, have increased knowledge about bodies and sexuality.



2.3 Civil Society's role in contributing to change

RFSU believes civil society organisations (CSOs) are essential for citizens to unite, learn, and support each other. CSOs are voluntary associations and organisations that operate independently of the government. They empower people by building critical consciousness and providing a platform for knowledge-sharing. People unite to demand access to rights, justice, and resources as a result of empowerment.

It is in this regard that RFSU works with CSOs to advance SRHR. Building and sharing evidence and knowledge on sexual and reproductive health and rights with CSOs help inform policy development and raise awareness.

3. RFSU'S PRIORITY GOALS

RFSU's international work is focused on 8 priority goals.

3.1 Agenda 2030 & Civic Space

Agenda 2030 is implemented in its entirety with an SRHR perspective in Sweden and globally.

The Agenda 2030 is a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy peace. RFSU envisions a world where everyone can make decisions regarding their bodies and sexuality.

Poverty, conflicts, climate change, anti-rights movements, and shrinking democratic spaces . The challenges in implementing Agenda 2030 are significant.

RFSU, together with others, will address the problems by:

- Engaging in solidarity initiatives with local and transnational SRHR, youth and/or feminist movements, as well as other actors who fight for social, economic, and environmental justice, including organisations working for climate justice, labour rights and against racism.
- Collaborating with organisations representing persons who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and oppression, learning from their experience and activism.
- Playing an active role in broad CSO coalitions, aiming to uphold freedom of expression, the right to organise, freedom of assembly and an independent media.



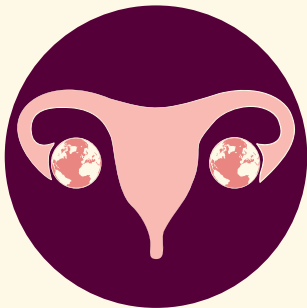
3.2 Body, Sexuality & Relationship Norms

Norms about the body, sexuality and relationships create enhanced and equal conditions for desire, pleasure and reciprocity and are not characterised by racism or other power structures.

Sexuality and the norms surrounding it have a major impact on most aspects of people's lives. Harmful norms can be upheld subtly or enforced through discriminatory laws, direct violence, and harmful practices like forced marriage. This is often at the expense of groups with less power and resources, such as LGBTQI+ people, women, and children.

RFSU, together with others, will address the problems by:

- Challenging and changing traditional patterns of thinking and promoting new and alternative perspectives, ideas, and discourses around gender and sexuality.
- Collaborating with organisations representing persons who face discrimination and oppression, learning from their experience and activism. Particularly important is to support groups creating a safe space to reflect, empower and mobilise for sexual and reproductive rights.
- Advocating for improved laws and policies protecting sexual and reproductive rights that, in turn, may influence norms.
- Generating, sharing, and making use of evidence and learning together with civil society, academia, governments, UN institutions and other actors.



3.3 Safe, Legal & Stigma-Free Abortion

People, notwithstanding their power and resources, have access to legal and safe abortion, and abortion stigma has decreased.

Millions of women, girls and other people suffer serious injuries or even death as a result of unsafe abortions. The more marginalised a person is, the greater the risk of not accessing a safe abortion.

RFSU, together with others, will address the problems by:

- Supporting and working jointly with CSOs and movements to normalise abortion and ensure that women and non-binary groups can access and champion abortion in a supportive environment, free from stigma and discrimination.
- Supporting other CSOs advocating for legal and policy reform at all levels and working to ensure that states deliver comprehensive abortion care that is non-discriminatory, available, accessible, acceptable, and of appropriate and good quality.
- Supporting partners that work to ensure access to the full spectrum of quality, person-centred abortion care, including self-care and telemedicine.
- Systematically using evidence and learning to improve abortion access and care and contribute to innovation and research on abortion.



3.4. Contraceptives for All

People, notwithstanding their age and resources, have access to and knowledge of contraception according to their needs.

There is an enormous unmet need for modern contraception that is disproportionately high among adolescents who want to avoid pregnancy. The barriers include inadequate service provision, high costs, misconceptions, and discriminatory social and gender norms.

RFSU, together with others, will address the problems by:

- Working with and highlighting the importance of sexuality education in increasing levels of knowledge and awareness, especially focusing on adolescents and the youth.
- Exploring the potential for partnerships related to stigma and social norms, integrated sexual and reproductive health and rights services, and expansion of the range of contraceptive methods offered, ensuring that available contraception methods are tailored to adolescents and youth needs.



3.5. Sexual & Reproductive Health for All

Improved access to qualitative and equal sexual and reproductive health care for all people, notwithstanding their power and resources, with a particular focus on people subjected to racism.

Access to sexual and reproductive health remains a challenge due to various obstacles, such as limited clinical care, insufficient health systems, and discriminatory social norms and values. The marginalised groups who face the biggest barriers are women and girls, adolescents, persons with disabilities, LGBTQI+ persons, indigenous groups, and ethnic/racial minorities.

Universal Health Coverage (UHC) ensures quality health services for all without discrimination or financial burden. UHC plays a key role in advancing sexual and reproductive rights.

RFSU, together with others, will address the problems by:

- Using UHC as a strategic entry point to increase access to and the quality of sexual and reproductive health services and supporting civil society and related movements that are pursuing this through policy influence, implementation and monitoring.



3.6. Non-Discriminatory Family Laws

People have more opportunities to live, form relationships and start a family in the manner they wish without being hindered by discriminatory legislation on gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and other power structures.

Today, many people, especially women, children and LGBTQI+ persons, are prevented from deciding if, when and how to be sexually active, form sexual relationships, get married and have children. LGBTQI+ persons are also often prevented from independently defining their sexual orientation and gender identity. Such

inequalities and injustices may be enshrined in legislation and policies, such as laws that criminalise same-sex relationships by consenting adults and same-sex family formation.

RFSU, together with others, will address the problems by:

- Working with and supporting movements with people facing multiple and intersecting forms of oppression and discrimination who mobilise to claim their sexual and reproductive rights.
- Working to abolish discriminatory laws and ensure legal protection from discrimination, hate, and violence hinders the fulfilment of sexual and reproductive rights. RFSU prioritises working for the legal protection of groups most at risk of discrimination and violation of sexual and reproductive rights.
- Harvesting and making use of experiences from other movements and legal processes across countries and regions.



3.7. Prevent Sexual & Gender-based Violence

The sexual and reproductive health and rights of women, children and LGBTQI+ people are not limited by gender-based violence, such as harmful practices, including honour-related violence and oppression.

Hate, threats of violence, and acts of violence are systematically used to enforce norms around sexuality. Sometimes, these discriminatory and harmful norms are also supported by the legal system. RFSU, together with others, will address the problems by:

- Supporting youth, women and LGBTQI+ movements who work for empowerment and mobilisation to claim their sexual and reproductive rights.
- Advocating for legal protection from discrimination, hate and violence, as well as the abolishment of laws allowing sexual violence, early and forced marriage, female genital mutilation and other harmful practices.
- Harvesting and making use of experiences from other movements across countries and regions.



3.8. Sexuality Education

All children and young people, regardless of life situation, have equal access to sexual education and knowledge about sexuality, bodies and relationships.

The provision of sexuality education in schools remains both limited and incoherent in most countries. Access to knowledge is especially limited for marginalized groups facing multiple and intersecting forms of oppression and discrimination. Even in countries with commitments to comprehensive sexuality education, curricula are often not comprehensive and are closely regulated by governments. Digital

sexuality education presents an opportunity to positively impact the knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors of young people.

RFSU, in collaboration with other organisations, will address the issues by:

- Creating safe online spaces for young people to discuss sexuality.
- Supporting youth organisations and movements promoting access to knowledge about their sexuality, bodies, and relationships
- Advocating for high-quality CSE in schools.
- Improving access to sexuality education through online platforms.
- Contributing to pleasure-based, norm-conscious content focusing on health and well-being.

4. RFSU'S MISSION AND STRATEGIES

Through knowledge, mobilisation, and policy advocacy, RFSU contributes to a world in which everyone is free to enjoy and make decisions about their own bodies and sexuality.



RFSU has identified three key strategies to achieve change:

Knowledge: Build knowledge and empower people to know their body, sexuality, and relationships.

Mobilisation: Build public opinion and mobilise people as well as civil society.

Policy Advocacy: Contribute to and advocate for laws, frameworks and systems and hold duty-bearers to account.



5. RFSU'S CONTRIBUTION TO CHANGE

RFSU contributes to change in five ways.

Strengthening intersectional feminist perspectives:

People have multiple identities that intersect and interact with each other in complex ways. Discrimination and oppression are not experienced in isolation but rather in interconnected ways. This means that someone who experiences discrimination based on their gender may also face discrimination based on their race, class, sexual orientation, ability, or other factors. RFSU integrates these inter-

sectional feminist perspectives throughout all of its work. RFSU collaborates with organisations that represent individuals who face multiple forms of oppression.

Ensuring a human rights-based approach: RFSU believes in the universality of human rights. RFSU works with civil society organisations to empower groups claiming their rights and holding governments accountable. RFSU follows the principles of active participation, empowerment, non-discrimination, transparency, and accountability.

Strengthening civil society voices and agency:

RFSU wants to contribute to the empowerment and mobilisation of communities to influence public opinion, make demands on governments and hold them to account. RFSU aims to strengthen the influence of civil society globally through channelling funds and partnering with progressive civil society voices and actors.

As a donor and partner, RFSU prioritises independence, mutual accountability, equitable partnerships and solidarity, and mutual learning in its partnerships. This is in accordance with the Istanbul CSO Development Effectiveness Principles.

Harvesting, generating and sharing knowledge:

RFSU collaborates with other civil society organisations to co-create knowledge that empowers individuals and advocates for sexual and reproductive health and rights policies. RFSU values lived experiences and recognise that people's experiences and needs related to sexual and reproductive health and rights vary significantly based on their position within intersecting power hierarchies.

Influencing and holding governments to account:

RFSU engages in policy advocacy to achieve legal, political, and financial commitments to sexual and reproductive health and rights at the global level, regional level (European Union) and national level (Sweden).



6. GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

RFSU partners with organisations globally in Asia, Africa, Europe, Latin America, and the Caribbean. RFSU aims to have partners across different regions to inform global policy work, be part of the global SRHR community, be relevant partners, and enable access to diverse funding streams for RFSU and its partners.

The choice of countries and regions is guided by contextual factors, including ensuring unmet sexual and reproductive health and rights needs, identifying opportunities for change, active civil society, unmet donor funding needs, possible synergies with other organisa-

tions, connections and networks with relevant actors, and ensuring cost-effectiveness and security for staff.

7. SELECTION OF PARTNERS AND WAYS OF WORKING

RFSU's partners are a mix of more established organisations, self-organised rights movements and non-registered smaller organisations. The partners operate in places where sexual and reproductive health and rights needs are, to a large degree, unmet. They drive change in line with RFSU's priorities.

Context, conflict sensitivity and intersectional analyses will guide RFSU's selection of partners, collaborations, and ways of working. RFSU assumes that by supporting a variety of organisations and actors which have different roles in society, RFSU will contribute to a multitude of strategies and methodologies to address sexual and reproductive health and rights concerns.

Guiding principles used to select partners include the focus on RFSU priority goals and SRHR, conflict sensitivity, type of organisation and reach.

Three types of collaborations

RFSU will collaborate with partners in three ways. A partner can be in all categories and move across the different categories.

- 1** Partners receiving funding from RFSU and with limited engagement with RFSU and other partners.
- 2** Partners receiving funding from RFSU and engaging with RFSU and other partners.
- 3** RFSU cooperates with other CSOs in networks and solidarity initiatives.

Criteria for partners receiving funding from RFSU

When identifying new collaborations with partners that will receive funding from RFSU, the most important criterion is the potential partner's ability to contribute to improving access to SRHR for all.

INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY - RFSU'S Direction 2022-2025

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ISBN 978-91-89837-14-0

