



End-term evaluation of the
Strategic Partnership
Right Here, Right Now (2016-
2020)

Let's talk about sex, baby.



**“Let’s talk about sex, baby
Let’s talk about you and me
Let’s talk about all the good things
And the bad things that may be”**

– Salt-n-Pepa

NB: This report contains sensitive information and (parts of) its contents may not be disseminated, used or shared without Rutgers’ consent.

Preface.

Let's talk about sex, baby!

A world where all young people are able to access quality and youth-friendly health services, and are not afraid to openly express who they are and who they love.

That is the vision of the Strategic Partnership Right Here Right Now.

To realise this vision, the right circumstances need to be created where (young) people are empowered to talk about their gender identity, their relationships and also about sex. Not just in the Netherlands, but everywhere.

Civil society organisations in all countries in the world have a vital role to play in the realisation of this vision. Strengthening their capacities to play this role is one of the main goals of Right Here Right Now.

Formed under the 'Dialogue and Dissent' policy framework of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, and coordinated by Rutgers Netherlands, Right Here Right Now is implemented globally by a consortium of eight organisations: the Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW), CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality (CHOICE), Dance4life, HIVOS, International Planned Parenthood Federation African Region (IPPF AR) and the Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network (LACWHN). The programme is implemented in ten low- and middle-income countries in Africa (Kenya, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Senegal), Asia (Bangladesh, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan), Latin America (Bolivia, Honduras), and one sub-region (the Caribbean).

The evaluation of this Strategic Partnership has shown us that the activities supported by Right Here Right Now (RHRN) have inspired the dialogue on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.

Even in countries where talking about sex is still a major taboo, remarkable steps forward have been achieved. Brave organisations and dauntless individuals have found ways to initiate Comprehensive Sexuality Education on schools, engage with politicians and legislators, have found support to broaden the conditions for legal and safe abortions, have put same-sex marriage on the political agenda, and improved the acceptance by society of the LGBT+ communities. This list goes on.

As part of the evaluation, we have assessed and validated all outcomes that were harvested through Outcome Harvesting. We have conducted a Sprockler-based inquiry among platform organisations in all countries and regions where the programme was implemented.

And finally, we have developed in-depth Stories of Change to see what the results of the programme look like 'in real life': how did the advocacy work of the national RHRN Platforms affect the lives of people? What challenges did the partners meet while trying to change government policies? How does international advocacy affect national and sub-national policies and vice versa? We have tried not only to look at the 'what', but also at the 'how'.

The evaluation started in January 2020, and only now, in February 2021, we have finalised the end report. Obviously much later than anticipated. The COVID-19 pandemic that hit the world in March 2020 changed everything. Initially, we hoped that 'live' meetings and site visits would only have to be postponed, but slowly and surely the realisation set in that we

were forced to redesign our set-up to a completely online approach.

A few months later, we were shocked to learn that our colleague and team member Kim Caarls was diagnosed with a serious illness and was forced to put down her work. Fortunately, in the very last stages of this evaluation, Kim has slowly been able to resume her work. But in the meantime, we sorely missed her expertise, her cool research skills, but mostly her sparkling personality and optimism to guide us through this complex assignment.

This evaluation would not have been possible without the collaboration and support of a number of people.

First of all, we would like to mention the local consultants who developed the Stories of Change: Sardar Arif Uddin (Bangladesh), Klara Virencia (Indonesia), Era Shrestha (Nepal), Ayesha Kabeer (Pakistan), the Georum Team Kudzai Mandima and Takaitei Bote (Zimbabwe), Josephat Nyamwaya (Kenya), Brian Mutebi (Uganda), Marije van Lidth de Jeude (Caribbean), Gerardo Torres Zelaya (Honduras), and Claudia S. Peña Claros (Bolivia).

The help and assistance of several people active in the RHRN Platforms was indispensable. We want to single out the PMEL-officers: Abdul Borkat, Erry Kamka, Sanskriti Shreshta (and her replacement), Qasim Mumtaz, Robert Ocaya (national coordinator), Sebastien Meunte, Christine Kanana, Tafadzwa Gora, Osman Cárcamo, Moira Rimassa, Jonathan Chalon. We would also like to thank Ana Christina Solano and Ecaterina Trujillo from the Latin America regional office, and the National and Regional Coordinators, as well as the other consortium members who supported us.

Our intern, Neha Basnet, helped us in editing the Stories of Change and later provided an insightful overview of the takeaways from the 11 stories.

During the whole evaluation process, Inge Vreeke, PMEL advisor at Rutgers, and Rose Koenders, Programme Manager of RHRN at Rutgers, were of great help. Way beyond the call of duty. Thank you, Rose and Inge!

And last but not least, thank you to all the people who have taken the time and the trouble to provide us with their insights and wisdom

We hope that the results of this evaluation will provide insight into the achievements of the RHRN Strategic Partnership, and that our conclusions and recommendations will offer food for thought.

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The changing landscape of sexual diversity in Bangladesh



Rani at a dance set in Khulna, posted on Facebook, 27 October 2020

Rani Chowdhury has come a long way.

Rani is a qualified dance instructor and a proud Hijra. A leader in the Hijra community across Bangladesh.

Facebook profile pictures show Rani dressed like a Bangladeshi woman. Yet Rani does not want to be identified as a female or as a male: “We are Hijras, third gender people.”

Having lost both parents at an early age, Rani grew up in a charity home for orphans and abandoned children in Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. Rani remembers the cozy and welcoming environment at the shelter home when Rani was young. But trouble began in adolescent years, when Rani started showing signs of sexual otherness. Now facing abuse and discrimination, Rani left the orphanage at the age of about 16. The world waiting for Rani outside the orphanage was even harsher, with nothing to eat, nowhere to sleep and no one to go to, facing discrimination and abuse in a society that did not recognise equal rights for Hijras.

In Bangladesh, *Hijras* are seen as outcast. They have no place in the family or in the society, and have little shelter from the law. Often, they are denied public and private



Rani distributing relief, posted on Facebook, 26 Oct 2020

services just because of their sexual identity, forcing them to lead undignified lives.

There is no reliable official data on the Hijra community as they are not included in the national census. In 2013, for the first time, a high-level government meeting led by the current Prime Minister recognised their identity as 'Hijra lingo' (third gender). But their struggle for equal rights to education, employment, health and housing is far from over.

Rani is frustrated. "The reality is that society still looks down upon us. The government has recognised us, but that is not enough. Are we getting treatment, for example?" said Rani, referring to the case that one of their fellow Hijra was recently denied admission to a hospital. And, even though Rani is a qualified dance director with a dancing diploma from India, Rani never gets an opportunity to perform in mainstream films or television programmes.

Upon return from India after obtaining a dancing diploma, Rani was shocked to still see widespread gender-based discrimination, especially after the government's official recognition of the Hijras in 2013. Outspoken since a young age, Rani was already working, in personal capacity, to promote Hijra rights. And it was sometime in 2015 - the timing could not be more perfect - that Bandhu was preparing to launch the RHRN programme in Bangladesh. It was then that Rani got actively involved in the work of Bandhu to organise Hijra community members and raise a stronger voice on third gender and SRHR issues.

Over the last five years, Bandhu and other RHRH platform members have tried to bridge the existing gap between policy and practice on the third gender. The focus

of the platform has been to promote policy changes so that the recognition of the third gender population by the government is reflected in relevant laws and institutional policies. From advocacy to skills training, all RHRN interventions have been designed to ensure equal access to services and opportunities for Hijras.

As part of their advocacy strategy, RHRN brought together faith leaders from all the four major religions, which led to a joint publication of a booklet that details what the scriptures of all the four religions say about the Hijras. Despite the misconceptions, all the four 'holy' books of religion prohibit all forms of mistreatment of Hijras.

"The reality is that society still looks down upon us."

Nasima Khatun and Rita Bhowmick, two journalists who wrote about sexual orientation and gender identity and expression (SOGIE) in 2018 in two prominent Bengali dailies, see the achievements made by RHRN so far as a significant leap in the right direction. "Journalists can play a big role here. They can write in-depth reports on these issues and the associated taboo and stigma. Another challenge is religious misconceptions. This is a key area to work on," said Khatun.

The journalists were both part of a group of 20 journalists who attended a sensitisation workshop on SRHR and third gender in 2019. After the session, 11 journalists published reports on areas of focus of the RHRN Bangladesh platform in local dailies and online news portals. Although this was only event reporting, their significance lies in the fact that such reporting is rare –

journalists do not usually cover these issues in Bangladesh.

RHRN also brought the Hijra community in touch with the Deputy Commissioner (the highest government official at district level) in Faridpur district. This kind of grassroots advocacy has seemingly yielded results. Recently, the Deputy Commissioner made a list of Hijra people in the district and provided sewing machines and other livelihood support so that they can cope through the Covid-19 pandemic.

We have not yet achieved as much as we should have. We are only halfway there ... I am a human being like any other. Why can't I enjoy my rights? In equal measures like everybody else?"

In addition to advocacy, the platform has also provided emotional, social and moral support to these people, who lag behind – not because they lack skills, but because they are ostracised. RHRN has provided leadership and advocacy training to people in the Hijra community. Rani was also part of it. Now Rani trains other Hijras living in different parts of Bangladesh. Rani also works to build a future generation of Hijra leaders.

Ripples of change

Due to political unrest across the country, RHRN's operational activities have suffered significant delays. Then came the coronavirus pandemic, leading to cancellation of field activities and suspension of all intended advocacy meetings. These two factors, coupled with other issues such as staff dropout at the initial phase and changes in the programme design, stood in the way of achieving some of the expected outcomes.

For example, the programme had to shift its focus from its initial plan for national level advocacy – aimed at bringing more national level policymakers on board to ensure jobs for Hijras in private and public sectors – and go for grassroots advocacy instead. For the programme staff, this policy shift meant devising new advocacy strategies and revising the activity plans, which was time-consuming and needed a lot of adjustments. But despite the unfavourable political and social conditions, the programme has managed to sensitise a section of the press and policymakers. Over 1,000 young volunteers and journalists were trained and sensitised on sexual diversity,

Hijra people's rights and SRHR. Also, each of the 10 platform members has its own network of partner organisations and young volunteers spread across the country, and many of them have been directly and indirectly sensitised about RHRN issues in Bangladesh. Other small ripples of change can be felt, although it cannot be directly linked to the RHRN interventions. Very recently, in October 2020, the Bangladesh Open University for elderly citizens and school dropouts announced that it will include Hijras in their school certificate programme. There are also ongoing discussions to provide Hijra people with the right to their parental property. These first steps demonstrate that the rights of the Hijra people in Bangladesh are becoming a concern for policymakers.

The end goals – the total empowerment and freedom of Hijras and other sexually diverse communities to live, to work and to make their own choices – are still a long way off. But RHRN's achievements are by no means inconsequential considering the relatively conservative mindset that many Bangladeshis still harbour. The developments make Rani Chowdhury hopeful, although the Hijra community leader is only half satisfied: "We have not yet achieved as much as we should have. We are only halfway there ... I am a human being like any other. Why can't I enjoy my rights? In equal measures like everybody else?" says Rani, and sounds disheartened over the phone.

Maruf Rahman, the focal person of RHRN programme at Obojob, is more positive. "Projects like these cannot run forever. This is why we have focused on training, sensitising and developing the capacity of young people. Someday, some of them will likely be in a position of power when they will make policies and design their own projects. By any measure, this is a significant achievement."

■ Outcomes

In 2018, two journalists published reports in two prominent Bangla national dailies (The Daily Ittefaq and The Daily Jugantor) about SOGIE (sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression) and the importance of SRHR for young people, whereas generally the journalists don't want to publish the news on SOGIE issues.

In 2019, 11 journalists of daily printed/online media published positive SRHR focused reports, including on rights of Hijra people.

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Between disbelief and hope in Uganda



National newspapers report on the rejection by Minister Kaducu

It was all smooth until the very last minute ... Uganda was set to launch the National Policy and Service Guidelines for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). Activists thought all had been done, and done well. But at the end of a two-day National Conference on Family Planning, the State Minister for Health, Dr Joyce Moriku Kaducu, got to the podium with an announcement. “Today, ladies and gentlemen,” she called, “We are expected to launch two important strategic guidelines that are supposed to help us, to give us a road map, to help us in terms of implementation: The National

■ Outcomes

On September 28, 2017, the Ministry of Health declined to launch the national guidelines and standards for SRHR services.

In June 2018, the Minister of Health, Ruth Jane Aceng, reviewed and approved (with comments) the SRHR Policy.

Guidelines and Service Standards for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. But I am sorry to tell all of you and to disappoint you that we are not launching these guidelines together with the second document.” The reason Dr Kaducu mentioned was that the Guidelines included issues that were not considered appropriate for the age groups that were targeted. “... as a Ministry, we are not owning this document and that’s why we are not launching it.” In a startling move, the government of Uganda had deferred the launch of the National Policy and Service Guidelines for SRHR.

This definitely was not what members of civil society who had significantly contributed to the process expected. According to Robert Ocaya, National Coordinator of the Right Here Right Now (RHRN) Uganda Programme, the deferral was due to reactions around the Guidelines recommending that adolescents have access to contraceptives. In early 2017, when the Guidelines awaited approval, some media outlets ran stories accusing the Ministry of Health of planning to offer contraceptives to ‘ten-year-olds’. They referred to a proposed section of the Guidelines calling to: “Increase age appropriate information and family planning services to adolescents (10-24).”

A conversation to have

Due to public outcry, the Ministry of Health reviewed the Guidelines again and revised them to clearly state that contraceptives are intended for sexually active persons of reproductive age (15-49), as the World Health Organisation recommends. This, however, did little to convince the powers that be.

Solomon Sserwanja, an investigative journalist in Uganda, finds it 'disturbing' that the government refused to pass the policy and guidelines that would otherwise streamline SRHR service delivery. "It is a conversation (on sexuality education and access to SRH services and commodities for young people) parents, Members of Parliament, and the government do not want to have," he says.

"There are incidences where a youth goes to a health centre to get condoms and the nurse says 'I can't give you condoms; you're my son's age'."

Sserwanja, whose investigative journalism career spans eight years of covering maternal health - documenting challenges and strides made in the health sector in Uganda - says the lack of guidelines means that health workers are not guided on what to do in providing SRHR services.

"I know there are youth-friendly service points at health centres but there are incidences where a youth goes to a health centre to get condoms and the nurse says 'I can't give you condoms; you're my son's age.' When you deny young people services, what you get are unwanted pregnancies, among other consequences. I think the country needs serious conversations and pay attention to what science is telling us."

Dr Dinah Nakiganda, the Assistant Commissioner for adolescent and sexual health at the Ministry of Health, says that by declining to launch the National Policy and Service Guidelines for SRHR, the Minister felt that the Ministry needed to engage more and incorporate the views of a wide range of stakeholders. "In this country, there are very many coalitions and groups, so you may think that by engaging one group everyone is represented, but that's not always the case. You have got to engage more to ensure that the policy appeals to everyone," she stated. For instance, in Uganda, there are various Christian or Muslim groups that all claim to

represent their faith constituency and that want to be consulted.

Patrick Mwesigye, Team leader at Uganda Youth and Adolescents Health Forum, one of the 14 partners of the RHRN Platform, says the Ministry's decision was politically motivated and moral values-driven. Nakibuuka Noor Musisi, Director of Programs at Center for Health Human Rights and Development (CEHURD), agrees. "We conduct mapping and get to know who the key influencers for which policy are. We are strategic on who we meet. We target the right people; we press the right buttons. The problem is that there is an influential group in this country that determines which policies pass."

Not in bad faith

The Church has openly expressed opposition to the SRHR agenda in the country. Rev. Richard Mugume Rukundo, the provincial coordinator for children's programmes at the Church of Uganda, does not deny this accusation. "I thank God that the Ministry of Health declined to launch the policy," he categorically stated. "We are happy that we can influence such an outcome. If someone says that the Church influenced the process, I will not take it in bad faith; I am happy that indeed that can happen." The RHRN Platform instead fiercely advocated for the establishment of the National Policy and Service Guidelines for SRHR. They consider the Guidelines important in determining what services should be delivered, and how and where they should be delivered. By regulating service provision, the Guidelines can prevent denying young people access to contraceptives, which is a violation of human rights. The Guidelines spell out tasks and responsibilities of various stakeholders in the services provision chain, outlining *what* for example, the private sector, Ministries of Health, Education and other actors will do to ensure that SRH services are provided to young people.

"We mobilised young people, amplified their voices and justified the policy with evidence."

This, activists believe, would bring about inclusivity and non-discrimination in the provision of SRHR services.

However, Rev. Rukundo says that the Church was not meaningfully consulted and accuses RHRN of promoting sexuality education that “takes away the responsibilities of parents.” “We rather need to strengthen the institution of a family,” he says, adding that, “As a Church, we advocate for family planning but family planning in families. We do not promote family planning for people who have no families. If you give contraceptives to young people in schools, what help are you offering them? We should tell young people that you won’t die when you abstain from sex.”

Being careful about language

Such opposition, Nakibuuka says, derails their work. Yet, after the Minister’s public refusal to endorse the Policy and Guidelines, she and her colleagues were determined not to let their earlier efforts be in vain. They went back to the drawing board. This involved engaging religious groups who were opposed to the Policy and the Guidelines. They engaged the youth, the Director General of Health Services and the political leadership of the Ministry of Health. The RHRN Platform supported technical working groups to review the policy and organised advocacy activities that included holding breakfast meetings with Ministry officials and engaging the media, raising awareness on why the policy was needed. “We mobilised young people, amplified their voices and justified the policy with evidence. We were strong on documentation of evidence such as producing policy briefs, research studies, rapid assessments, surveys and reports, to inform the process - in addition to being careful about the language used in the document,” says UYAHF’s Mwesigye. Earlier, the language used in the policy and guidelines – particularly the use of words ‘rights’ and ‘sexual’ – had been a bone of contention.

In September 2017, the Ministry of Health had disowned the document and refused to launch it. In June 2018, as a testament of RHRN’s sustained

strategic engagement with key policy actors, the Minister of Health, Dr Jane Ruth Aceng, reviewed and approved, with comments, the National Policy and Service Guidelines for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. The comments included putting emphasis on ‘age appropriateness’ to ‘provision of SRH information’, rather than ‘provision of contraceptives to adolescents’ and removal of ‘provision of abortion services’, which the Minister said contradicts the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda.

Another process all together

The policy is yet to be launched but getting it actually implemented is another process all together.

Doing effective advocacy, Mwesigye stated, is about strategy and funding, and the Platform fell short on the latter.

“We tried, though I wouldn’t say it was the best. We knew what to do; we were limited on funding though.” According to him, working through these budget constraints slowed things down for the RHRN platform. Nevertheless, activists are happy about the progress. CEHURD’s Nakibuuka believes that continuous knowledge and evidence sharing will bring about the desired outcome.

To sustain the outcome, activists have tapped into existing coalitions and movements in the country beyond the RHRN platform members such as mainstream human rights defenders for building synergies. Ocaya, the RHRN National Programme Coordinator, says that they trained and built capacity of young people on regional, continental and international windows for advocacy, such as at the East African Community, African Union, UN, and Universal Periodic Reviews, because “we know that when pressure comes from the top, sometimes governments tend to work faster.”

At a hotel located atop one of the hills that make up Kampala city where the interview was conducted, Ocaya seems to not only have a clear view of Kampala city, but also the terrain of SRHR advocacy in the country. “When we started out five years ago, we did not know where the centre of power in government ministries lies. Now we know.”

Changing the safe abortion narrative in Nepal

In Nepal, approximately half of all pregnancies are unintended and unwanted and about one-third of all pregnancies end in abortion, according to research by CREHPA and the Guttmacher Institute in 2014. And, even though abortion is legal since 2002 and available free of cost, almost 58% of those abortions are still clandestine and unsafe. Lack of awareness about the abortion law, particularly among adolescents and marginalised groups, is one of the main reasons for this. The Reproductive Health Rights Working Group (RHRWG) is determined to turn these numbers around.

■ **Outcome:**

On October 15, 2018, the government of Nepal passed the 'Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Right Act', after several years of discussions and submission of the first draft act for review in 2016.

Since 2009, RHRWG has been working on raising awareness and safeguarding women's right to safe abortion. The most recent hurdle was overcome on 15 October 2018, when the Nepalese Government enacted the 'Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Rights Act', which includes 'safe abortion' as a right for all - without discrimination based on caste, disability, age or marital status.

Securing women's right to safe abortion has been a long-standing battle. This story is a reconstruction of the efforts by CSOs that led up to enactment of the 2018 Act.

The start of a journey

July 19th, 2011.

Asianews.it, a local online news outlet, reports about rising abortion numbers. The title of the article reads: '*Nepal: record in abortions among teenagers. Proposal to revise law*'. In the article, the abortion numbers in the 2007 Nepalese Health Service Department (DHS) report are mentioned: 'This year more than 18 thousand girls aged between 15 and 18 have interrupted their pregnancy while in their schools', with the key message that the government should ban abortion. The article quotes Shakti Bahadur Basnet, the then Minister of Health, who allegedly told AsiaNews that the DHS report is worrying. "We are creating a committee to verify the phenomenon, and immediately take action. Among the proposals is the concrete possibility of overturning the legalisation of abortion".

What took decades to build is likely to collapse in a moment.

"When such news (about abortions) started emerging, we were concerned where this would lead to", says Sanila Gurung, Programme Director of Beyond Beijing Committee (BBC) Nepal, as she recalls similar media coverage at that time, with headlines such as '*Girl in skirt goes for abortion*'.

Gyatri Shakya (not her real name), representing one of the member organisations of RHRWG, also mentions the power of media narratives to influence the government. She recalls one particular news article by a leading national daily following which the TCIC (a Technical sub-committee on safe abortion under the Family Welfare Division) is summoned to 'an emergency meeting' at the Ministry of Health, where they are told to find ways to stop medical abortion, "as it is creating problems". Eventually, after some deliberation the situation settled down.

Overturning of the 2002 abortion law would be a serious blow to many women like Anjana (not her real

name). Anjana explains: “Who would understand the importance of the right to abortion more than me? I was referred to India after an anomaly scan when I was six months pregnant. I was told my baby had severe complications. It was emotionally very difficult for me, I didn’t even want to come back to Nepal. But the law in India did not allow abortion at six months and I was advised to go back to my country, where abortion was legal.”

RHRWG members started contemplating on these emerging strong anti-abortion, ‘pro-life’ narratives. They considered it high time to push for a separate act on abortion, as an act cannot be revoked as easily. The drafting process began. While other members of the group led the process of legal documentation and hardcore negotiations with the lawmakers, BBC’s role was to counter the anti-abortion narratives, particularly bringing in young people’s perspective. Their stance: make the act ‘youth friendly, discrimination free and stigma free’.

A draft-act was submitted to the Health Minister in 2013.

Changing the narrative

It has not been not easy to change the conservative forces that dominate public opinion, including the common belief that women in ‘illicit relationships’ or ‘spoiled teenagers’ opt for abortions, or that access to safe abortions would ‘promote free sex among teenagers’. BBC research showed that the communities’ understanding of abortion is that of ‘killing of babies’ or ‘throwing away babies’. “That’s why we started the conversation on why it’s important to recognise safe abortion as a reproductive health right,” says Sanila.

BBC organised awareness-raising workshops for journalists, using stories of real-life situations. An attending journalist recalls stories of some of the drastic measures that women in desperation take, such as consuming excessive alcohol, smoking loads of cigarettes, chewing marijuana pods, and filling their vagina with red mud. After the workshops, the journalist spoke to her editor and colleagues and has suggested not to use pictures of an unborn baby while covering news on abortion, and use the term ‘abortion’ instead of the colloquial term ‘dropping babies’. Another journalist shares: “We had not thought about abortion with this perspective”.

A different, more neutral, news coverage starts emerging.

BBC continued to advocate for youth-friendly, discrimination and stigma free abortion services. They collaborated with other members of RHRWG to pool

together resources for media and public engagements. Other members of RHRN join in solidarity as they attend the events organised by BBC and RHRWG members.

“When we talked about adolescents, they said: ‘why do youth even need abortion services?’”

When it became clear that resistance also came from the Government and even from health workers, RHRWG scaled up their dialogue with the stakeholders. Research-based evidence was used to counter the government’s arguments. One of the members recalls: “When we talked about adolescents, they said: ‘why do youth even need abortion services?’, so we built our argument around maternal mortality and protecting the women from lifelong repercussions. Without giving much importance to safe abortion, we talked more about why the Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Right Bill is important, and within it we talked about stigma-free, youth-friendly services.”

Statistics were put forward to show that not just ‘unmarried’ teenagers but also many married youths are vulnerable – youth who marry early and opt for unsafe abortion following early and unwanted pregnancies, and how unsafe abortions contribute to maternal mortality. Being a recipient of the ‘United Nations award for reducing maternal mortality (MDG 5)’ in 2010, safe motherhood is a matter of national pride for Nepal.

A way opened up.

The Health Minister recommended to incorporate safe abortion as part of the Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health Act that the Ministry was reviewing at the time. This raised concern among CSOs working on safe abortion as they feared a merger may dilute the focus, but ultimately, they agreed, because a separate act on abortion would not be easy. “Bringing it (abortion) under the wider umbrella of Reproductive Health helped ‘normalise’ the issue”, one of the members explains.

“So, we started again, drafting the safe abortion act as part of the umbrella act!” says Gyatri, taking a deep breath.

Gyatri emphasises: “It was just eight or nine of us who could talk about safe abortion, because others who



received US funding could not, due to the global gag rule (a U.S. policy that restricts funding to organisations who provide abortion-related services)". "It's a multi-layered process. It's a collaborative effort. No one could have done this alone," shares another RHRWG member, as he reflects on the journey that required intensive engagement with several actors, including the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, the Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Health and Population, the Women's Commission, as well as health professionals, media, the general public, and lawmakers.

2016.

The draft was submitted to the Health Minister, Mr. Gagan Thapa. A plethora of external stakeholders, including doctors, health workers, CSOs, donors and government officials also reviewed this draft. While RHRWG members continued to negotiate different aspects of the draft with the government, BBC ensured that 'stigma-free, youth-friendly services' were specifically mentioned in the act. A separate

section on adolescents is added as a cross-cutting priority in the draft.

"In case of adolescent minors below 18 years, the provision requires an adult guardian above 18 to give consent for abortion. We sneaked in a sentence stating that a guardian can be anyone accompanying the girl. It need not be parents. We know the reality. The girl does not go with her parents, or sister or brother or aunty or uncle. The person who accompanies her is a friend," says Gyatri. Tension still rings in her voice as she adds: "We were so worried that the clause would be removed". She emphasises: "We need to empower the girls. If it's in the act, then they can speak for themselves."

The last stretch

The Health Minister indicated that he had secured political commitment on the draft bill. But the political regime soon changed once again in 2017, and so did the Minister, derailing the process. Sanila remembers: "Political vacuum was our greatest challenge, because with every change in officials we needed to start the dialogue again."

“We need to empower the girls. If it’s in the act, then they can speak for themselves”

The bill now needed to go to parliament, but all of a sudden it went missing. Nobody can say whether it was genuinely misplaced or lost on purpose as a member suggests: “There were people who were against it”.

A fanatic search for the draft starts, everyone reaching out to their respective contacts, but the draft already approved by the ‘Council of Ministers’ was nowhere to be found.

Gyatri sighs, “So, we started again!”

Luckily, a copy of the old draft was found with the Family Welfare Division (FWD), the government wing responsible for family planning and safe motherhood services. The division now took the lead and drove the process forward. Gyatri reflects “Probably our approach was not appropriate earlier and probably they (FWD) felt bypassed.”

End good, all good?

It is 2018.

This time the process went smoothly and the draft bill reached parliament. All was the same as in the previous law – abortion is legal within 12 weeks on women’s request and at any time in case of health concerns and fetus anomaly, but with a proposed change to extend this period in case of incest and rape. A series of dialogue sessions were held with Members of the Parliament (MPs), specially targeting women parliamentarians. Gyatri shares: “Women parliamentarians from the grassroots were more receptive as they are more aware of the grassroot reality”. Hon. MP Jayapuri Gharti Magar proudly shares: “We pushed the bill. There were many discussions and we debated that women should have the right to decide.”

The parliamentarians were under pressure as the constitution dictates that within 3 years there should be an act for every fundamental right enshrined in the

constitution of 2015. Reproductive health is defined as such a women’s fundamental right.

As dusk sets in on the very last day of the deadline, October 15, 2018, the President finally signed the act. Everything comes intact, except the provision allowing abortion at any time of gestation was removed and replaced with a provision allowing abortion up to 28 weeks for all other conditions. This is different than expected, and not well received by some – particularly gynaecologists and paediatricians involved in neo-natal care, who think 28 weeks is a far too long a period as it is viable to save babies as early as 25 weeks.

“We pushed the bill. There were many discussions and we debated that women should have the right to decide”

Hon. MP Jayapuri Gharti Magar sternly added: “The act is good for women, but it should not be misused”. Sanila is hopeful. “The act has included safe abortion and it gives leeway to advocate further”

To follow-up on the momentum, RHRWG prepared 2-pager reference guidelines on the abortion act, targeting the federal governments who now have the authority to prepare local laws on safe abortion and implement it.

It’s 2020.

RHRWG has not rested since the act came to life. In addition to the act, there is now also a regulation in place, which is essential for implementing the act. RHRWG got this regulation after another legal battle.

- **The Right Here Right Now (RHRN) platform is organised into three thematic sub-groups. Beyond Beijing Committee (BBC), a member of the thematic sub-group on ‘safe abortion’ had been working closely with other CSOs, including the CSO alliance on Reproductive Health Rights in Nepal: Reproductive Health Rights Working Group (RHRWG), which advocated for the Safe Abortion and Reproductive Health act (2018).**

With support from RHRN, a youth movement has been built to continue with advocacy on safe abortion and young people's access to SRHR. The youth have been given a platform to discuss important issues that they could not previously talk about with adults in the open. They now know how to engage Parliamentarians and how to package their advocacy issues as attested by Dr. Labode: "The youths have learnt the art of sitting MPs down and making them listen to their demands, as opposed to having the legislators talking to them. Some of the different avenues youths have been using to approach MPs include using petitions."

"The youth have learnt the art of sitting MPs down and making them listen to their demands"

Working with the media appears to be paying off generously. RHRN trained young journalists to play a key role in advocating for safe abortion. The role of journalists was to help solicit public support on safe abortion. The positive writing from the mainstream media has meant that the youth are no longer labelled as immoral or wayward when they talk about issues of SRHR. For RHRN, the lesson learnt from media engagement is that training on SRHR is critical in converting journalists to write positively on abortion. The advocacy work on safe abortion is building momentum. A strong collective voice on the review of the ToP Act – comprising the RHRN platform members – has been built, as evidenced by some of the petitions they have put together, such as the age of consent for adolescents to access sexual and reproductive health services. The petition is calling for the review of the age of consent to 12 years and providing access to SRHR services at the exclusion of parental care. "SRHR services include abortion. The abortion issue is a controversial one. So, every time we approach it in a diplomatic way. If we get the government to agree on the age of consent issue, it opens the next door", notes Dr. Labode. A regional breakthrough on the issue of abortion has been scored at the Southern African Development Community (SADC) level. Armed with skills provided under the RHRN initiative, the Parliament of Zimbabwe, led by Dr. Labode, in 2018 successfully advocated for all SADC countries to commit to safe abortion in the SADC Parliament. She explains why this is so important. "The commitment on safe abortion at

SADC Parliament level makes it easy for us to convince other Parliamentarians in Zimbabwe. I can challenge the Zimbabwe Speaker of Parliament to say, 'you signed at SADC level.' Or if the SADC adopted it, Zimbabwe is obliged to approve the review of ToP Act".

A petition on the review of ToP Act is currently being drafted by the RHRN members. According to Dr. Labode, Parliament will organize public hearings on the review of the ToP Act once they receive the petition. Some of the lessons learnt were that working inclusively makes organisations stronger in terms of advocacy on SRHR issues. Collaboration is key in achieving higher advocacy outcomes. For truly inclusive collaboration, platform organisations need to learn to appreciate diversity among each other.

Happy

At the beginning, some of the members were finding it difficult to work or associate with organisations that work with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex (LGBTQI) persons. Some platform members that are funded by the United States of America in other projects were finding it difficult to support the review of the ToP Act since the reinstatement of the so-called 'Mexico City Policy'. And Lorraine?

Lorraine is happy that work on reviewing the ToP Act has gathered momentum, although she feels that the matter is taking too long due to parliamentary processes that have to be followed for a review to take place.

With the capacity of enthusiastic youths like Lorraine, the efforts of MPs like Dr. Labode, and the commitment of RHRN members, Zimbabwe seems on track to attaining safe abortion legislation.

As put by Dr. Labode, the programme has become a slogan in Parliament when MPs say: "Mr. Speaker Sir, we need to review the ToP Act, *Right Here, Right Now!*"

■ **Outcomes:**

On the 3rd of December 2018, The Herald, a state run media house, for the first time published an article amplifying the RHRN's call for the need to broaden circumstances under which abortion is permitted and also to ensure the availability of safe, legal abortion services and post-abortion care to reduce clandestine and unsafe procedures.

The state owned weekly newspaper, the Mirror of 2-8 April 2019, for the first time published a story about the Parliamentary Consultative Forum (PCF) on safe abortion and review of the Termination of Pregnancy (ToP) Act that was convened in Chiredzi District of Masvingo Province.

Taking back the street



When Sucre's highest education authority was sending an order to all schools that their students must participate in the March for Life and Family, under threat of punishment, a cry of indignation resounded in WhatsApp groups and other social media. Gender rights activists, LGBTs, feminists and others immediately jumped to action. Fortunately, their network was strengthened over the last years through the Right Here Right Now Platform. They even got the national government to intervene.

■ Outcome

On March 26, 2019, the Department Director of Education of Chuquisaca for the first time cancelled the instruction 025/2019 that forced students to participate in the 'March for life and family' and suspended the District Director of Education of Sucre with sanction days.

The Constitution is clear: Bolivia is a secular state. But at the same time, certain traditions still persist that confirm the traditional authority of the Catholic Church. That is certainly true in a conservative city like Sucre. In colonial days, Sucre was the city where traditional Spanish families lived, families with last names that still echo their dominance over the current authorities and institutions. So does the catholic church: when you see the bishop in the street, you have the obligation to kiss his hand.

It was this strong, albeit non-official, hold that the church still has over a large part of Bolivian society that was used by the conservative 'Association in Defence of Life and the Family' (ADEVIFA). On Monday March 25th 2019, the District Director of Education, Marlon Zeballos, called upon high school students in the city of Sucre to participate in a demonstration organised by

ADEVIFA, for traditional – ‘straight’ – family values and against the legalisation of abortion.



The official document ordering students to participate in the ‘pro-life’ manifestation

This was not the first time that ADEVIFA had approached the official authorities to obtain support for its activities, but it was the first time that this support had been backed by a legal document signed by the District Director of Education, ordering the students to participate in the manifestation, under threat of punishment.

The legal character of the call stirred indignation. It was in fact a blunder. The document went viral among activists, who work in various organizations to demand the rights of young people, women and the LGBT population. Without having any resources other than the networks between them, people started to react. It was Monday, March 25th. The ADEVIFA-demonstration was scheduled to take place on Wednesday 27th. Two days left to change the course of events.

The activists immediately understood that the best course of action was to attack the legality of the action by the District Director of Education and not target the content of the ADEVIFA-demonstration. In a small and conservative city like Sucre, it was quite possible that this road would have led nowhere. In two days’ time, that discussion would not have been finalised.

A lawyer, 28 years old and energetic, is part of the Bolivian Youth Consortium (CONBOJUV), one of the organisations that mobilised against the march. She looks back: "When we saw the document, we were activated on the spot." Activists analysed the order that had been sent to the schools and looked for the legal

justification to stand against it. They studied articles of the Ministerial Resolution, of the Political Constitution on laicism, of the Child and Adolescent Code. "All information we found strengthened our argument that this instruction should be revoked."

What the activists were looking for was a legal argument that it was not allowed to force students to participate in any demonstration for political or other purposes. The right legal argument was quickly found: article 118, issued in 2019, by the Ministry of Education, stipulated that "... it is strictly forbidden for Principals, Teachers and Mothers, Fathers and/or guardians to force or use students to participate in any mobilization to be part of protests, complaints and others." Backed up by the law, it was now time to develop a strategy.

Formal complaint

One of the strategies involved social networks. Through personal accounts, but also using the Facebook pages of different institutions, a formal complaint was formulated: the state body that governs education in Sucre is forcing students to participate in a march with religious overtones. Several institutions from other departments joined in and shared their own statements, criticizing the decision of the Sucre District Management.

The controversial document, signed by the District Director of Education, was also sent to the media, which was the focus of the second strategic line. Various newspapers and radio stations condemned the abuse of taking young people out of the classroom and onto the streets to demonstrate in favour of something that they had not been consulted on.

Finally, and this was perhaps the most forceful strategy, the network of relationships and alliances, which the Right Here and Now Platform had been building and strengthening since 2017, was put into action. Different non-governmental organisations involved in the struggle for rights of women, for sexual diversity and for young people, were called upon to mobilise forces and use their advocacy capacity.

By coincidence, at the time, several members of the Platform were in the city of La Paz, the seat of government, to push for a law on gender identity. They seized the opportunity to meet with representatives from different organisations and institutions to discuss the events in Sucre. Among others, they met with the President of the Senate, Adriana Salvatierra, and informed her about what was about to happen. Known as a feminist politician, senator Salvatierra paid attention to the activists but also had the discretion of not doing phone calls in front of them.

“Any credibility that this march would have had, because of its massiveness, was erased”

The young lawyer from the Bolivian Youth Consortium looks back on the events between March 27 and March 29 with satisfaction. “I think our action has limited ADEVIFA's influence on education. In the past, the District Director always said ‘yes’ to everything the ADEVIFA people told him. But nowadays, he knows he has to be more careful. The sanction maybe did not hurt him economically, but his room to move has seriously been reduced.”

The activists who participated in the mobilization recognize the importance of the RHRN alliance. A member responsible for public policies at the Bolivian Youth Consortium, says: “Having all these contacts and all this capacity for movement, has allowed us to make things visible. That helped us a lot to stop the march.” But the results go beyond just preventing the march. She has years of experience as an activist and is often requested to give advice to younger people. Thoughtfully adjusting her hair, she argues: “Any credibility that this march would have had, because of its massiveness, was erased. The goal of the march was to say: ‘look at all those children! They are all marching to our cause.’ That sensationalist discourse has completely vanished with the public knowing that the students did not march voluntarily: they were forced to participate.”

Take back the street

The intervention by the Departmental Directorate of Education gave extra visibility to the claim, and at the same time, this made the sanction against the District Education Directorate, and specifically Director Marlon Zeballos, more severe. It has set a precedent that cannot be underestimated by other education authorities in other regions of the country.

According to a Bolivian Youth Consortium member, the suspension of the march also has a significance with regard to the use of

space: “For example, we march because we want to and we take to the streets because we want to, with our activism. One thing we have learned is to take back the street, and that is exactly what the anti-rights people were doing: taking away a space that is ours. They have their spaces, their schools, their churches. In conservative cities like Sucre, this is very difficult to change. But our action has secured that they are not going to use the street anymore, at least not in that way.”

Looking back

Looking back on the events in March 2019 one also has to acknowledge that some things did not go as hoped. For example, both students and their parents were absent in the mobilization. The Federation of Secondary School Students was weak in Sucre, due to internal struggles, and therefore did not participate. With regard to the parents' organisations, a member of the Bolivian Youth Consortium regrets that they did not take a unified position, because there were parents who supported the march and there were other parents who joined in the denunciation.

Perhaps this absence of the actors directly involved – students and the parents – has opened the door for the March for Life and Family to take place on Wednesday 27 March anyway, despite the prohibition by the national government. Some religious schools ordered their students to the streets, but none of them had the school uniforms on, and there were no signs of the schools that were taking part in the reduced march that crossed a few streets in the downtown of Sucre. Finally, the demonstration had lost its forcefulness and legitimacy. Nevertheless, it disappointed several youth organisations, and highlighted the long road that remains to be travelled in Bolivia towards a true secular state.

Lessons that remain

Beyond the victories and defeats, the lessons of working within the Right Here Right Now Platform remain. Especially since the RHRN partnership has ended at the end of December 2020. The person responsible for public policies at the Bolivian Youth Consortium comments: “The synergies that emerged while working within the platform are not going to die, only because the project is terminated. I believe in ‘intersectionality’. I may be young and feminist, and heterosexual, but I am interested in the LGBT struggle and I am going to continue working on it. Human rights are intersectional: it is a joint struggle. I think that is one of the wonderful, hard-fought lessons of working in the RHRN Platform.”

2. Evaluation methodology

2.1 Evaluation questions

The main purpose of this End of Term evaluation is to assess the extent to which the Right Here Right Now Programme has achieved the expected outcomes. The evaluation questions below are directly linked to the objectives of the global ToC and country-level 'strategic lenses', and are further operationalised into the several sub-questions:

1. The RHRN Theory of Change presents a number of short-term, intermediate and long-term outcomes. To what extent have these outcomes been reached?
 - a. To what extent has RHRN contributed to more progressive and inclusive SRHR legislation and policies?
 - b. To what extent has RHRN contributed to increased knowledge, skills and political will of decision makers?
 - c. To what extent has RHRN contributed to creating spaces for civil society and young people?
 - d. To what extent has RHRN contributed to stronger public support for advocacy?
 - e. Were there any unexpected outcomes or setbacks?
2. What has been the contribution or added value of RHRN in reaching these outcomes?
3. To what extent have the investments that RHRN made in its short-term (capacity strengthening) outcomes led to better and more sustainable outcomes at intermediate and long-term levels?
 - a. What changes in RHRN platform members' and YP's advocacy skills can be identified?
 - b. What is the contribution of RHRN capacity strengthening (CS) activities to the reported advocacy capacity changes?
4. To what extent has the programme's choice to invest in diverse and inclusive platforms been effective, not only in terms of advocacy outcomes but also in relation to capacity strengthening of civil society? What are lessons learned?
 - a. What is the perceived diversity and inclusivity of the RHRN platforms?
 - b. To what extent has the internal collaboration within the platform been effective?
 - c. To what extent have the platforms been effective in achieving advocacy outcomes?
 - d. To what extent did the outcomes of the RHRN advocacy platform have a positive effect on the target groups (women, young people, LGBTQI)?
5. How have the national, regional and international level reinforced each other and especially how have the regional and international levels supported the national level outcomes? What are lessons learned?
 - a. To what extent have the national, regional and international levels reinforced each other, and how?
 - b. To what extent has the work of the national RHRN platforms been supported by the regional and international RHRN partners, and how?
6. Based on the above, what can be said about the validity of the RHRN Theory of Change (ToC)?
 - a. How did change occur within the RHRN platforms and how does that relate to the ToC and the strategic lenses?
 - b. What is the perceived sustainability of changes influenced by RHRN?

As described in the Inception report (July 2020, see annex 1.1), the COVID-19 pandemic heavily affected the execution of the planned end-evaluation. The evaluation team delivered their first inception report and developed their methodology just before the start of the pandemic (March 2020). But since the original approach heavily relied on the availability and willingness of external social actors (such as policy-makers) as respondents for substantiation, this methodology needed to be adapted to a new reality. In close consultation with and approval of the RHRN Consortium, an alternative approach for the end-term evaluation was developed and a second Inception report was delivered (July 2020). The new approach resulted in a stronger focus on an internal online validation process with the RHRN platform members, to complement the existing OH-database. This alternative approach made the evaluation less dependent on external factors and actors in the volatile context of the corona crisis. In addition, the tailor-made inquiry allowed for extra primary data collection among a large number of platform members, which is something that was initially not included in the methodology. Furthermore, the number of Stories of Change increased from 3 to 11, in order to guarantee that the perspectives of external stakeholders are taken into account for this ETE.

Hence, this evaluation is built around three methodologies that complement each other:

- > Outcome validation and substantiation
- > Sprockler story-based inquiry
- > Stories of Change (SoC)

Every methodology is qualified to answer one or more evaluation questions, and for some questions all three methods are used. Together they allow capturing the results of a programme that adopts a nonlinear approach, such as programmes around capacity strengthening, advocacy, and alliance- and partnership development. In Annex 1.2 you can find the evaluation matrix for an overview of how the methods are applied, and the methodology and process of data collection and analysis is also further explained in the following sections.

2.2 Outcome Harvesting

Throughout programme implementation, RHRN platform members and coalition partners applied the outcome harvesting (OH) methodology, resulting in an outcome database with 392 outcome descriptions (period 2017-2019). This database was used as the basis for this evaluation. Since the evaluation process started early 2020, outcomes achieved throughout 2020 are not included in this evaluation. In this section, the quality check, analysis and substantiation of the harvested outcomes is described.

First, the evaluators conducted a **quality check** of all 392 outcomes. In Outcome Harvesting, there are five criteria for verifiable outcome statements, known as SMART. For an outcome statement to be 'specific', there needs to be sufficient detail so that a reader without detailed subject or contextual knowledge is able to understand and appreciate what is described.⁴ However, during the quality check, the evaluators found the outcome descriptions in the RHRN outcome database unsuitable for analysis, because many were insufficiently specific. The majority of descriptions contained too many words, causing confusion as to which actor changed what exactly, when and where. The limited 'SMART-ness' of the outcome descriptions also made the categorisation of the outcomes less reliable than anticipated during the inception phase.

As stated in the inception report, the evaluators initially planned to only remove the incomplete outcomes (and share the motivation for removal with the consortium and platforms for learning purposes). However, given the shape and quality of the outcome descriptions, the evaluators, in close consultation with Rutgers, decided to prioritise re-writing the outcome descriptions into short 1-sentence titles, followed by a round of feedback on the proposed title. This feedback round was also used to collect evidence supporting the outcome and contribution of RHRN for the purpose of substantiation through documentation review (see below). Although one round of feedback was planned for, the inputs received turned out to be rather fragmented and therefore the evaluators

⁴ R. Wilson-Grau (2019). Outcome Harvesting: principles, steps, and evaluation applications (page 17)

facilitated a second (extra) round of feedback in order to maximize the quality of the outcome, contribution and relevance descriptions. As a result, the evaluators re-formulated almost all outcomes into an additional outcome title. Besides the factual information, such as when (day, month and year that the change happened), full name of who changed, and where (located on a map), the evaluators also focused on clarifying (and re-formulating) the actual change: what did the actor do concretely that was significantly different? In addition, internal outcomes were removed, next to duplicating outcomes. Outcomes that remained incomplete or were not considered an outcome (following the OH definition) were deleted as well. All this while platforms were kept up to date of the changes made, ensuring a participatory and respectful process. After this thorough quality check phase, 317 outcomes remained in the database as the final set of OH outcomes (see Annex 2.1).

Secondly, as stated in the inception report and following the quality check, it was planned to conduct an initial analysis vis-à-vis the ToC on the full final set of OH outcomes. Based on this analysis, the evaluators would identify pathways of change at national and global level, consisting of outcomes that are causally related to each other. Unfortunately, only the first initial analysis was conducted, but due to several reasons (as explained below) a detailed analysis of the pathways of change was not carried out.

In order to conduct the initial analysis of the outcomes against the ToC, the evaluators planned to use the existing **categorisation categories** (e.g. type of change, type of social actor, strategic lens) of the outcome statements and plot the corresponding total numbers against the existing ToC. This would give an overall impression of the type of results achieved by RHRN. However, as the outcomes were not consistently assigned into categories by the various platform members and consortium partners, conducting this analysis based on the existing categorisation would result in an unreliable analysis. Consequently, the evaluators spent a lot of time to consistently re-allocate the outcomes into categories. A complicating factor in that respect was that definitions of categories were lacking, making it harder for the evaluators to decide which outcomes should or should not be included in a category. This reclassification continued almost until the end of the draft report writing, since inconsistencies were persistent and the evaluators re-assessed the consistency of the outcome classification several times. For example, an outcome describing how a media actor *verbally committed* to start publishing more progressively about LGBT could potentially be placed under strategic lens 'Increasing political will of decision makers' and type of change 'Change in public opinion', as well as under strategic lens 'Public expressions of support in favour of SRHR'⁵ and type of change 'New verbal or written commitment for SRHR from influential actors'. In the end, the evaluators even decided to rename certain categories to avoid confusion. All re-categorisations made are explained in Annex 2.2.

After this extended phase of quality checks and re-categorisations, unfortunately no time was left for the planned identification of pathways of change consisting of causally-related outcomes. The evaluators observed that some platforms had registered all outcomes, including the smaller steps (or 'baby outcomes'), that over time accumulated to a larger policy change outcome, whereas others reported only the larger policy change outcomes, and included the road towards that change in the contribution description. Unravelling this 'puzzle' and mapping out the pathways towards larger changes for such a large database consisting of 317 outcomes, was too time consuming to conduct after all the efforts that went into the quality review and re-categorisation. In hindsight, and with the evaluators' current knowledge of the database, it would have been better to design a participatory process to develop the mappings of the pathways. This confirms that Outcome Harvesting is an iterative process: making and revisiting decisions as the process unfolds and results emerge is inevitable.⁶ Fortunately, although not mapped out visually onto pathways, the Stories of Change do provide insights into how changes happened over time.

Thirdly, and as per the inception report, it was planned to select key outcomes based on the emerging pathways of change, for **substantiation through a documentation review**. Even though the pathway-analyses were lacking, the evaluators were still able to select a sample set of outcomes, in accordance with the non-probability,

⁵ Originally called 'Strengthening public support for advocacy, through SRHR champions' by RHRN

⁶ R. Wilson-Grau (2019). Outcome Harvesting: principles, steps, and evaluation applications (page 44)

purpose, expert sampling method used in Outcome Harvesting.⁷ In other words, they used their own expert judgement about the outcome's individual importance to come to a sample of 'key' outcomes. The selection criterion was informed by one of the two purposes of this evaluation, which is to assess to what extent the programme has reached its envisaged goals. The evaluators therefore selected outcomes amongst the long-term outcomes of RHRN's Theory of Change, related to the strategic lens 'SRHR legislation and policies'. Based on the expert- and purposive sampling strategy mentioned above, a set of 32 key outcomes were identified. Six of these key outcomes were also selected for the Stories of Change (while the other six Stories of Change focused on other 'SoC outcomes'; see also 2.4 below). However, in order to maximize the acknowledgment and consultation of external opinions, these six other 'SoC outcomes' were included as well, bringing the total number of substantiated outcomes through documentation review to 38.

During the two feedback rounds carried out as part of the quality check (as described earlier), the evaluators had requested external sources of evidence supporting the harvested outcome (e.g. links to news articles, reports, policies), next to evidence describing the contribution claim (e.g. internal documents, activity reports, photos, etc.).

For 36 outcomes evidence was received, implying that for 2 outcomes the outcome and the contribution claim had to be marked as 'unverified' during the documentation review. For the remaining 34 outcomes the **outcome title** (thus the outcome itself) was verified through documentation review. The **contribution claim** was fully verified for 30 outcomes; for 1 outcome the link between the contribution and the outcomes was not fully clear, meaning the contribution claim was marked 'partly verified'; and for the remaining three the contribution was marked as 'not verified' due to lack of convincing evidence.

As a fourth step, **additional substantiation was done with external social actors** to complement the documentation review, as part of the data collection for the Stories of Change. In the inception report, the evaluators cautioned that this would be done only 'when possible', but it turned out that this was indeed possible for all 12 outcomes selected for the Stories of Change. The national consultant requested external social actors to fill in a Sprockler inquiry through face-to-face or distance interviews.⁸

In total, 23 external social actors (interviewees for the Stories of Change) gave feedback on these 12 outcomes. Some social actors fully agreed with the outcome titles and contribution claims, while others agreed only partly, or not at all. Several motivations were provided for their level of agreement, all of which were assessed by the evaluators.

Figure 1 provides a summary of the evaluators' judgement regarding verification, based on both documentation review and (multiple) stakeholders' feedback. A total of 31 outcomes (82%) could be sufficiently verified, while 7 outcomes could not be fully verified: for 2 evidence was missing, and for 5 the evidence of the contribution claim wasn't convincing enough. The detailed assessment of each outcome (title and contribution claim), including both the documentation review as well as the substantiation by external social actors, can be found in Annex 2.3.

⁷ R. Wilson-Grau (2019). Outcome Harvesting: principles, steps, and evaluation applications (page 93)

⁸ See Annex 2.4 for the Sprockler substantiation inquiry

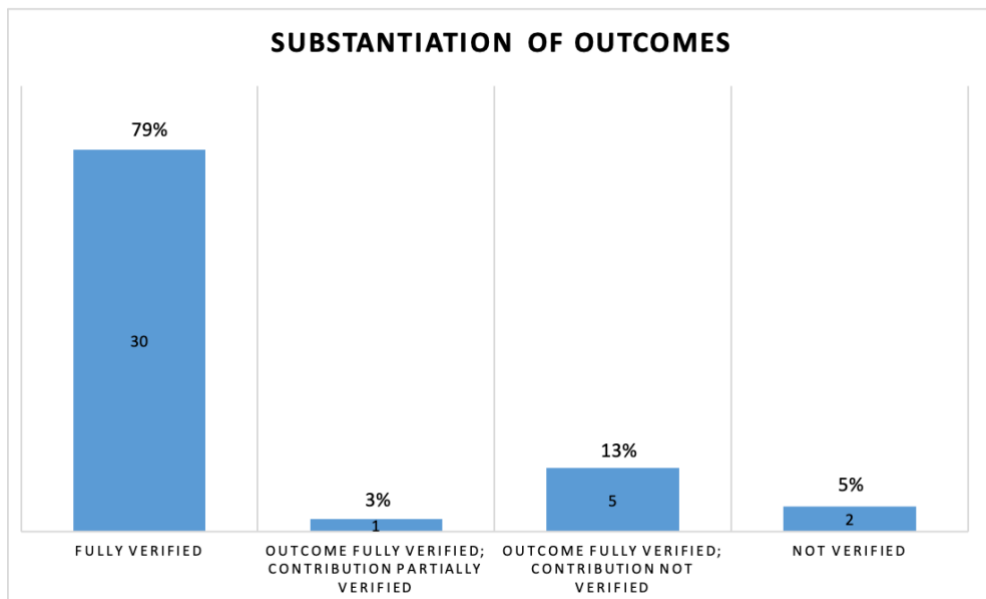


Figure 1. Substantiation results of 38 sampled outcomes

As the fifth and final step, based on the available documentation and responses from substantiators (external social actors), the evaluators assessed the credibility of the complete set of outcomes. As agreed in the inception report, instead of working with percentages and thresholds, the evaluators based their final judgement on their experience and expertise to assess whether the complete set of outcomes is sufficiently credible or not. In the end, the outcome database should provide sufficiently accurate information with the depth and breadth necessary for the purpose of the evaluation.⁹

For 82% of the sampled outcome statements, the outcome titles and the contribution claim were sufficiently verified. The evaluators find this percentage sufficiently high, and the data thus sufficiently accurate (credible), even though the 38 substantiated outcomes represent only 12% of the entire set of outcomes (317). This implies that the evaluators feel confident that the outcome database is useful for analysis and drawing conclusions.

2.3 Sprockler inquiry

A Sprockler inquiry was used to assess the benefits of capacity strengthening among platform members' representatives (see Annex 3.1). The organisation's representatives were asked to share a narrative describing a moment during the RHRN programme, when they did something new or different than before, by applying their improved advocacy skills. In addition, respondents were probed to identify a moment or situation that they are most proud of. Along with this open question, follow-up questions were included for answering a selection of evaluation questions. Representatives of platform members provided information related to the RHRN capacity strengthening activities, and how they applied certain advocacy skills that were specifically strengthened. Furthermore, they shared insights around the functioning and inclusivity of the RHRN advocacy platform, setbacks, outcomes of the advocacy efforts, and additional classifying questions.

RHRN hosts an impressive number of 131 platform member organisations, and they were all invited to participate in the inquiry about capacity strengthening. The inquiry was available in 6 languages (English, Spanish, French, Bahasa Indonesia, Nepali and Dutch), and tested before dissemination, in close collaboration with the platforms. Two persons per platform member organisation, who had participated in RHRN capacity strengthening activities,

⁹ R. Wilson-Grau (2019). Outcome Harvesting: principles, steps, and evaluation applications (page 92)

were asked to fill out the inquiry individually. Participation of young people representing the platform was encouraged.

The data-collection process was spearheaded and followed-up pro-actively by the RHRN PMEL focal persons operating within the platforms. Despite the challenging timing with regard to COVID-19, and limited internet accessibility in some regions, the inquiry yielded a satisfying response figure of 60% (166 responses). After data cleaning, 155 responses are included in the analysis.¹⁰ Since the inquiry could be filled out anonymously, and respondents were not asked for the name of the organisation they work with, we do not know which and how many organisations are represented, but we do know that not all organisations are represented.¹¹ However, all country platforms are represented.

Overall, platform member organisations from Asia, Latin America and Africa are well represented, both within the sample of respondents (see figure 2 and 3), as well as compared to the total number of member organisations within the RHRH programme at their respective regional levels (Asia 74%, Latin America 73% and Africa 56% response rate). Especially within Asia and Latin America, the majority (60% or more) of member organisations' representatives participated in the inquiry. Only Pakistan is an exception here, with a response rate of 40%. Most responses come from Bolivia (26), followed by Nepal (23), which can be explained by the fact that these platforms are among the largest ones within the RHRN programme, and many of these partners responded to the inquiry (80% and 90% respectively). Within the African region, responses from platform organisations seem to be a bit lower (40%), except for Zimbabwe, where 60% of the platform members responded.

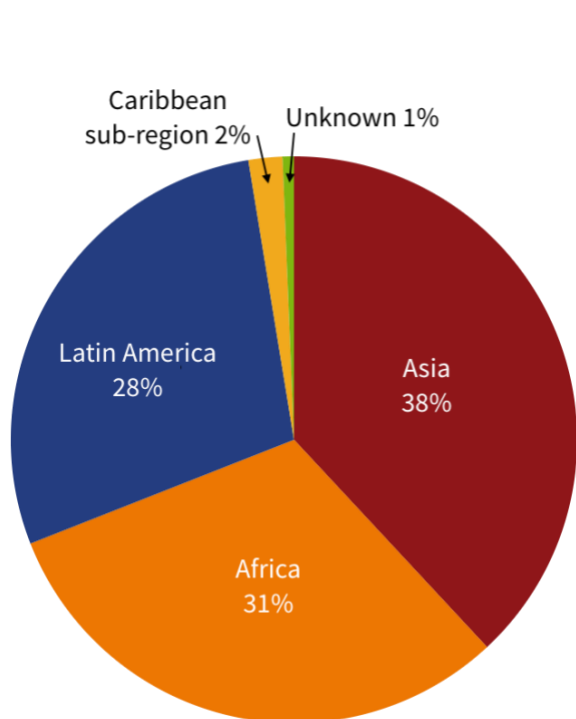


Figure 2. Percentage of respondents per region



Figure 3. Number of respondents per country

¹⁰ The initial number of responses was 166, including 23 responses from the testing round. After data cleaning, 11 responses (including 4 responses from the testing round) were removed as they contained too little information.

¹¹ Four respondents didn't consent to sharing their story, which means they will not be quoted in this report, nor will their answers to the open questions be made visible in the interactive Sprockler report (see Annex 3.2).

With only 3 persons responding, the Caribbean sub-region is the only platform that unfortunately is not well represented. Although they remained part of the analysis, findings and conclusions drawn in this report do not necessarily apply to the Caribbean platform. Another three respondents indicated that the region they work in is 'Global' while, for two of them, their country of residence is Nepal.

Most respondents (58%) identify as female, and 30% identify as male. 6% indicates to identify as non-binary, and another 6% prefers not to share their gender identity.¹² We also asked the respondents what type of organisation they work for. All four types of organisations are represented, with most respondents working with a youth-led organisation (see figure 4).

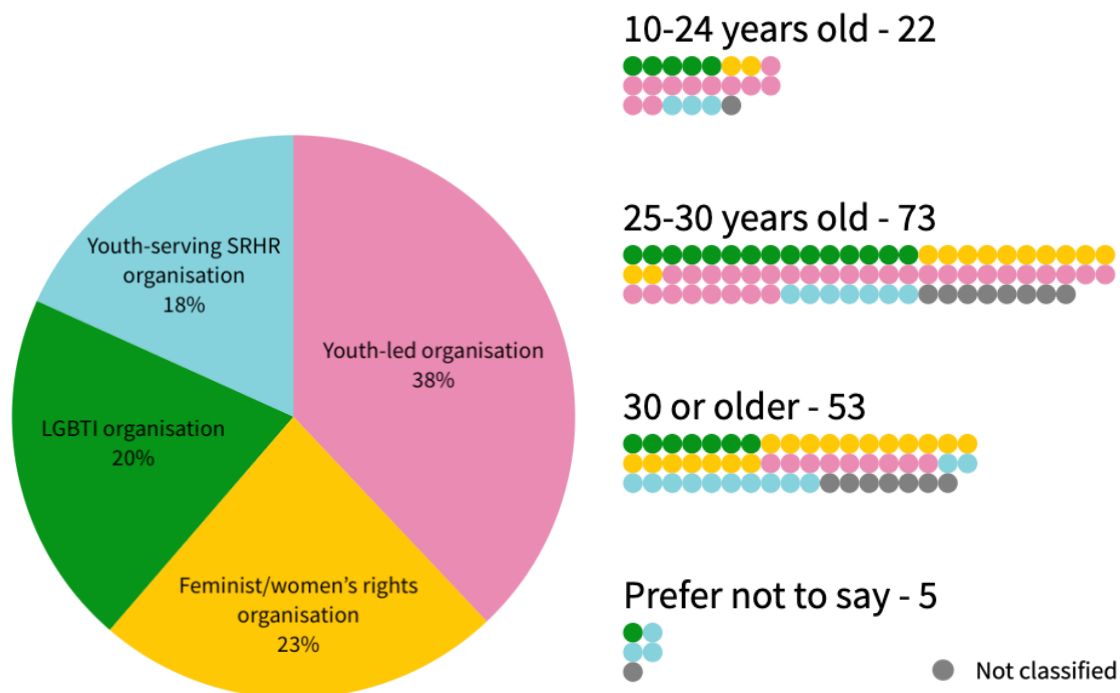


Figure 4. Percentage of respondents per type of organisation Figure 5. Number of respondents age group

Most respondents (48%) are between 25-30 years old and 35% are above the age of 30. Only 14% of the respondents are younger than 24 years. When only looking at the youngest age group (below 24), half of these respondents (11 out of 22) work for a youth-led organisation, while the other half works for a variety of types of organisations (see figure 5). It is also observed that youth-led organisations employ people of all ages, also people above 25. Those working for feminist/women's rights organisations are mostly 30 years or older.

Platform members that work for feminist/women's rights organisations all identify as female, except for one who prefers not to say. Those that identify as non-binary or prefer not to say, work mostly for LGBTI organisations.

¹² As we don't know how gender is represented across the various platforms, we don't know to what extent this matches with the division of gender identities among the respondents.

2.4 Stories of Change

Stories of Change are in-depth, lively presentations of a change process, using journalistic/narrative techniques like quotes, reportage, dialogue, or a monologue. The stories focus on the change processes leading to the outcome, which explains the 'how' of change processes and the contribution of several actors, including those involved in the programme. By their narrative and lively character, Stories of Change are transparent and easy to read, explaining the event in the language of those who have been involved. The SoC are based on document study and interviews with external stakeholders and relevant RHRN programme staff.

Building upon the results of the Outcome Harvesting and the Sprockler inquiry, together with 'national consultants', 10 country-based stories plus 1 story on the linkages different programme levels are developed. The 10 country stories were researched and written by selected local consultants. Before they began their work, all consultants participated in a three-day workshop on writing a Story of Change. To provide extra added value, the Stories of Change specifically focused on bringing in an outsider's perspective. This approach became particularly important, as due to the COVID-19 outbreak the Sprockler inquiry mainly targeted 'inside actors' from the RHRN platform in their country. The outside actors – allies, lobby targets, government officials, media etc – interviewed for the Stories of Change were also specifically selected for extra Sprockler inquiries to substantiate outcomes as part of the Outcome Harvesting exercise (see § 2.2).

The evaluation team selected, in coordination with Rutgers, 1 (or in some cases 2) outcome(s) per country story (except Senegal), and one outcome about the linkages between the different programme levels. We selected outcomes at a **high level of change**, and a second important selection criterion was that all stories together would **cover all themes and 'strategic lenses'**. In addition, we wanted at least one story on a **negative or unintended outcome**. But the sample was also to a large extent purposive: we wanted stories that would shed light on the daily practices of the organisations and individuals working in the RHRH platforms, showing how they contributed to changes regarding SRHR in their countries, and the obstacles and challenges they faced throughout programme implementation.

The local consultants developed drafts of the Stories of Change. Final versions were developed based on comments and feedback by the international evaluation team. The 11th, interlinking, story was developed by the international evaluators, based on desk research and one interview.

2.5 Ethical considerations

All actors interviewed for the Stories of Change were, prior to the interview, presented with a 'consent form', indicating their rights, like their right to refuse cooperation and their right to participate anonymously. When interviewees did not object, and if we were convinced that mentioning their names would not in any way be disadvantageous to themselves or others, their names are mentioned in the story.¹³ The quotes in the stories have been presented to the interviewees for verification. The Sprockler respondents have also provided their informed consent to participation in the inquiry and the use of their data. In a few cases the respondents did not allow their responses to be used in the report. Respondents' or organisation's names have not been asked. The PMEL focal points have been consulted on risk analyses and processes.

2.6 Limitations

Limitations overall:

- > As described in Section 1.2, the COVID-19 pandemic heavily affected the methodology of the planned end-evaluation. The alternative approach resulted in a stronger focus on an internal online validation process with

¹³ The Consent Form is included as Annex 4.1

the RHRN platform members. A relatively limited number of external stakeholders with an ‘outside’ perspective were included per country, through interviews for the Stories of Change.

Limitations regarding Outcome Harvesting and substantiation:

- > Since the OH quality review process started early 2020, outcomes achieved throughout 2020 are not included in this evaluation. This is considered a limitation, because the effects of key activities carried out throughout 2020 (e.g. the global youth festival) are not captured through the OH methodology.
- > As explained in Section 2.2, developing outcome maps (pathways of change) for all levels (national, regional, global) was too time-consuming to conduct after the quality review and re-categorisation of the 317 outcomes in the outcome database. This limited the analysis of how changes happened over time and the comparison with the Theory of Change. Fortunately, the Stories of Change do provide insights into how changes happened over time.
- > Although capacity strengthening was measured satisfactorily by means of the Sprockler inquiry, the contribution descriptions also contained references to how capacity strengthening has been beneficial for achieving outcomes. An analysis of the contribution descriptions (for example by classifying them into categories) was not planned for in the inception report, but was found to be a gap in the analysis when searching for working mechanisms underlying the capacity strengthening support delivered by RHRN to answer evaluation question 2 (see Section 3.1.3).

Limitations regarding the Sprockler inquiry:

- > Although the implementation of the Sprockler inquiry was well supported by the PMEL focal points, also due to COVID-19, platform member organisations might have been less responsive.
- > As the inquiry was set up for platform members at national level, it does not contain responses from regional or global RHRN Consortium members, whereby the evaluation has not captured capacity strengthening from their perspective. This was agreed in advance and stated in the inception report, but it would have provided a more complete picture of how capacity strengthening support was delivered by RHRN.

Limitations regarding the Stories of Change:

- > Due to COVID measures, the Stories of Change workshops for local consultants (in three regions of the world) were conducted online. This had some consequences for the intensity of the workshop: instead of three full days, the duration of the workshops per regional group was restricted to three sessions of three hours.
- > The interviews for the Stories of Change were also primarily done online. These limitations have severely impacted the ‘liveliness’ of the SoCs. We are also convinced that ‘looking someone in the eye’ while interviewing produces information that will be missed when using online methods.
- > In a number of cases external stakeholders (interviewees) were not available for comments or for validation. In those cases, alternatives were sought, or story lines were adapted.

High school students in Christian Jamaica learn about sex

Covert lobbying for sexuality education

Sharing experiences was key: Looking back at the whole process that led to the decision to include comprehensive sexuality education in the school curriculum in Jamaica, one can say that it started in Panama. In August 2018, that Central-American country hosted a two-day workshop on 'Comprehensive Sexuality Education' organized by the Caribbean Right Here Right Now Platform. During that workshop, the Jamaican Curriculum Officer, Allison (not her real name), shared her shocking experiences of being publicly vilified after it became public knowledge that she propagated sexuality education in Jamaican high schools.

■ Outcome Caribbean

On March 25, 2019, the Ministry of Education of Jamaica endorsed the recommendations of the Jamaica Family Planning Association and revised the Health and Family Life Education (HFLE) curriculum to make the section on sexuality and sexual health more comprehensive, and released the new version of the curriculum, with an additional section on sex and sexuality which was not there previously

Sexuality education in the Caribbean is termed 'Health and Family Life' (HFLE) and in each Caribbean country there is a HFLE Coordinator who works with the Ministry of Education with responsibility for curriculum development and oversight of the syllabus at the national school levels. Previous attempts to include *Comprehensive Sexual Education* (CSE) in the Jamaican HFLE curriculum had failed: the lobby of the churches had been too strong.

Propagating sexuality education in Jamaica is not without risks. Government officials that are involved in the process can be publicly shamed and they could even lose their jobs. In the best case, they can see their career options seriously reduced. Knowing that, many participants during the two-day workshop in Panama were nevertheless shocked when they heard the experience of the Jamaican HFLE-officer Allison. During a Sharing and Learning session, in which participants spoke about their experiences in a generally conservative environment in the Caribbean, Allison told her painful experience. She spoke about how she was vilified, verbally abused and attacked in the media, on talk shows and even in the supermarket, after her recommendations for an improved HFLE curriculum for Jamaica became public. In the words of one of the workshop participants: Allison was personally blamed for 'putting sex in the curriculum, thus stimulating children to have sex'.

Going undercover

The fact that the Ministry of Education of Jamaica agreed to include Comprehensive Sexuality Education in the new version of the curriculum in March 2019, was the result of numerous meetings, lobby events and meticulous curriculum revisions by different stakeholders from Jamaica and the whole Caribbean region, which spanned over 15 months. The process was led by the RHRN Platform and Jamaica Family Planning Association. Various platform members participated, as well as other important stakeholders



like the Caribbean Coalition on Population and Development.

As earlier attempts were blocked by the strong influence of religious conservatives, this time another strategy was chosen: to work undercover. As little as possible was communicated about the development of the additional sections for the curriculum. As soon as the CSE sections were finished and approved by the Jamaican Ministry of Education, they were simply introduced into the school curriculum and HFLE teachers were trained on providing these new CSE classes.

This covert strategy also involved promising confidentiality to Jamaican politicians who lobbied hard for getting the CSE chapters approved. In this way they could (and still can) continue working on pushing forward important issues of SRHR at the political level. Another important part of the strategy was the work done by the 11 platform members and establishing relations with key people, such as the HFLE officers. A pivotal activity in this process was the aforementioned August 2018 workshop in Panama, which had as the main objective to train HLFE Curriculum Officers and gain their trust and support, so that they could apply more proactive and strategic approaches towards a more progressive curriculum at the national levels. Why did the lobby have the right effect this time? Mostly because the key decision makers at the Ministry of Education that had recently taken office were quite young and came with a fresh look focused on youth. They did not mind working with the RHRN platform, as long as it was done secretly. According to one of the platform members: “They did not want to openly show their solidarity with us, so everything was done in a covert manner.”

What also helped was the sensitization efforts done by the Caribbean RHRN Platform at the highest governmental levels, including the Minister of Education and the Prime Minister, during Heads of State conferences from the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the United Nations. It was here where verbal promises “to make this happen” were made by

high governmental officials, which turned out to have indeed been passed on to their subordinates subsequently.

A key role in the sensitization efforts was played by youth who were empowered by the RHRN training on advocacy and the experience they got by attending high-level conferences of CARICOM and the United Nations. CARICOM Youth Ambassadors signed a statement supporting CSE and this document was used to lobby policy makers. Many youth representatives had discussions on social media platforms about the need for including CSE in the Jamaican curriculum, thus becoming powerful champions of change.

The fact that CSE is included in the curriculum implies that all schools in Jamaica have to use it by law. Therefore Brandon Antoine, the coordinator of the RHRN Platform, does not “see us turning back the clock.” CSE is here to stay. “There is always room for improvement, but it is a milestone we can use for other countries.” Especially because Jamaica is one of the biggest countries in the group and considered by all interviewees as one of the most conservative. You could almost hear all interviewees say: “If it is possible there, it is possible anywhere.”

The Caribbean RHRN Platform is still lobbying for getting CSE into the school curriculum of all countries involved, working together on this with, among other, CARICOM.

“You saved my life”

14-year old Winston is currently a ninth-grade student in a high school in Montego Bay in Jamaica. “In grade 7 and 8 we discussed sexuality in class. I think it is great. We all have the right to be educated so we can make informed decisions in the future. We had several classes on this and really went in-depth. It helped most of my classmates to be more aware of their sexuality. After the teacher finished talking, we asked numerous questions.” The first experiences show that comprehensive sexuality education has a positive influence on children to become less shy, ask questions, and speak more in-depth about the topic, both with the teacher and with their peers. Winston addresses this when he says: “At first, me and my classmates were shy but after some time we got to be more comfortable with it.”

Although Winston agrees that they could always look things up on the Internet, talking about it in class allowed for a more in-depth conversation. For Winston, the classes on contraceptive methods were “the most important, because students need to know how to protect themselves.”



HFLE teacher Sophie is responsible for the classes on CSE in Winston's Montego Bay high school. She specifically highlights the importance of discussions on tolerance in the curriculum. "Students that are not 'hetero-normative' often face bullying at school. The inclusion of tolerance and respect for others that is incorporated in the sexuality part of the curriculum has made a great impact. It has changed the social landscape of teaching and learning, and the whole school culture. If students can understand the emotional side of what others are going through in terms of their sexuality, then they will be able to be more respectful and tolerant." This increased tolerance has also contributed to self-confidence with students who previously were not able to accept themselves. "Now they say: 'I am me and this is who I am'."

Legal age

Even though in Jamaica the legal age of consent to sex is 16, Sophie says that it is important to teach children as soon as they start high school – roughly at age 13 – how to protect themselves in order to avoid sexually transmitted diseases or pregnancies. This is also the reason why, for the Jamaican Family Planning Association, the most important recommendation that was included in the curriculum is the section on access to services and advice on sexuality. Since the implementation of the new curriculum, the Jamaican Family Planning Association noticed a raise in youth contacting them. One 14-year old girl who visited the Jamaican Family Planning Association said: "Without your organization I would not have known where to get the morning-after pill. You saved my life." She had gotten the information from the discussions in CSE class. HFLE teacher Sophie indicates that already, after just 1.5 year, she has seen a gradual change in her

students when it comes to their sexuality. "Earlier students did not easily talk about their sexuality and how they were feeling. But after the CSE lessons, more students are willing to speak to me personally, one on one, just to share how they are feeling deep down." Especially regarding LGBTI issues students, after receiving CSE classes, are more open and willing to speak. Sophie: "They seldom have the opportunity to talk about this at their home, with their guardians. So, I think this change in the curriculum really did well for the students."

"I am me and this is who I am"

Both Winston and Sophie stress that students get primarily informed on sex and sexuality issues by their parents. However, most parents never received any sex education themselves. The passing along of misinformation is a real danger. Moreover, in view of the conservative and religious society, many feel ashamed to openly talk about it with their children. Therefore, it is key to also include parents into the learning process, says Sophie, for example by offering extra curriculum sessions for parents. Like this, students and parents can receive similar information and, knowing this, might have more open conversations about the topics at home.

Other stakeholders that should be included for their strong influence on general perceptions in society regarding sexual health and sexuality are traditional media and religious leaders. This will require a continuous process for many years to come.

Launching the National School Health Policy

The long-awaited day was finally here, after five years. On 21st June of 2019, at the modest looking Vipingo Primary School in Mombasa, a delegation of senior government officials, Right Here Right Now (RHRN) platform representatives, school children and other young people aged below 24 years convened for the official launch of the revised National School Health Policy. This is the policy that for the next five years would guide interventions for improved school health services and education. It had been a long and difficult road to get to this point. “Actually, to be honest, if they (RHRN) weren't there, maybe we would not have finished the policy,” says Alex Mutua, a trained clinician and a Program Officer at the Ministry of Health's Division of Adolescent and School Health.

■ **Outcome:**

On 21st of June 2019, at Vipingo Primary School, the joint Technical Working Group Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education launched the School Health Policy.

In 2015, after implementing the first National School Health Policy (2011-2015), it was time to incorporate the lessons learnt while also aligning the policy to the country's progressive 2010 constitution which recognized the right of all Kenyans to health - including reproductive health. Of concern was the weak coordination between the Ministries of Health and Education, with the devolved government structures also not adequately supporting the Policy's implementation. In reviewing the policy, stronger linkages were to be created between the ministries and other stakeholders.

For the next five years, however, the revision process would drag out for various reasons, including the lack of adequate resources to facilitate the revision and the government's bureaucratic system causing delays. Yet, without a policy document in place, the RHRN platform members did not have any legal backing to support comprehensive sexuality education in schools - allowing millions of school-going children the opportunity to get accurate information, and develop positive values and critical life skills about sexuality and reproductive health.

The revision process started off promising.

The Ministry of Health wanted to get all stakeholders on board and, after a stakeholder mapping, invited several organizations including RHRN to the Technical Working Group (TWG). Sensing the opportunity to turn the tide in a country where the sexual and reproductive health and rights of young people are rarely discussed, seldom provided for, and not protected, the platform jumped at this opportunity to bring in their expertise in the revision and financial resources to bear. In trying to include all stakeholders and to simultaneously achieve government ownership, the Working Group incorporated organisations and senior



Health Chief Administrative Officer Dr. Rashid Amana at the launch

leadership in line ministries from different sectors such as health, education, water, and gender. However, incorporating so many different views created significant delay in the revision process and the document launch. It proved particularly difficult to work on comprehensive sexuality education (CSE). The Ministry of Education and religious actors focused on life skills, whereas others, including RHRN members, wanted a document that would go beyond the traditional sexuality education that only focused on biology, to a policy that would make sure that all children and young people can access information, in line with – according to the RHRN members – their evolving capacities, that is scientifically accurate, non-judgemental, inclusive, gender-sensitive and developmentally appropriate. It was a balancing act to find language that accommodated all. At this time too, meetings were held infrequently as financial resources from the government were inadequate. It was only after RHRN committed to financially supporting the process that structured meetings, with clear deliverables and timelines, were held - but even with the best planning, there were times that the government calendar did not support that.

A young person’s perspective

To ensure that all components of the school health policy were addressed, the TWG was divided into thematic areas with the RHRN representatives joining the adolescent health thematic area. As RHRN joined the revision process, it deliberately chose members who were engaged in CSE and had the advocacy skills required to push for a more progressive sexual and reproductive health agenda. RHRN also provided financial resources that proved useful for convening the

meetings of the working group, hosting the launch and printing of copies for the policy. Some insiders, including at the Ministry of Health, suggest that without these financial resources the process would not have been completed as envisaged.

At least three representatives of RHRN attended the TWG meetings. Among them one young person to provide a young person’s perspective on what works at schools. While it was the intention to meaningfully engage young people in the process, their representation was subdued. In a meeting hall of over twenty adults, the voice of the one young person present was drowned. Further compounding this, each meeting would have an alternate young person - therefore derailing the contribution.

Josephine, an 18 year old who only attended the launch felt the revision did not adequately engage the young people whose voices were necessary in its success. “Actually, if I feel like I was not engaged totally. Because when we’re speaking about meaningful engagement of young people, then it has to be from the beginning to the end. Being invited for the launch only, it beats the purpose. I felt like I was not engaged as I would have wanted. Because for me going to Mombasa, it’s like I’m being used, so to speak. Because ideally, what happens when developing policies is that young people need to be part of the process from the beginning to the end. But then if one process is missed, then it means I was not *meaningfully* engaged. So that is from my point of view what meaningful engagement looks like to me.” After the launch of the policy, Josephine and another

young person with the support of RHRN are now writing a crisp summary of the policy for young people.

“Young people need to be part of the process from the beginning to the end”

Josephine’s position is shared by Hannington, a 24 year-old who is the Youth Action Movement representative to RHRN. Measured in his speech, he stares at a poster on the wall and carefully weighs every word he says. As a young person who was alternately attending the TWG meetings, he was on the front seat as the revision took place. He states that more young people should be given opportunities to attend the meetings where decisions are made. He explains that his involvement has built his skills in advocacy. He is now more confident when he goes to schools or when attending meetings with government officials, and he can prioritise his ‘key asks’ in advocacy work and lead advocacy campaigns. This improved capacity is personal though, and he would wish that other young people are engaged from the inception of the policy review to its validation so that their growth can be measured.

Lengthy process

Looking back at other aspects of the revision process, some technical working group members suggest that the lengthy process could have been avoided through better coordination. Judy Ndung’u, the World Food Program representative would have liked to have seen more coordination “especially from the government side, so that they have a clear roadmap on what needs to be done and at what time, you know like the day to be launched because that is very, very important.”

Chrispine Owaga, of Evidence Action (another member of the technical working group) suggests that hiring of a consultant to manage the process would have saved time as a consultant would keep the focus on the big picture without getting lost in the details.

With so many areas to cover in the new school health policy, not everything made it to the final document. Hannington considers it a good starting point. The policy provides a reference document when talking to schools and county governments, especially in areas where sexual health and rights are not promoted and protected. This view is shared by most of the other respondents. There is ‘room for improvement’, as Josephine puts it when asked whether she is satisfied with the policy document as it is now: “A bit because

(...) the fact that (CSE) is in the policy (...), I think that's a good thing. It's not as comprehensive as we as young people would have wanted it to be, because if it were up to me and other young people, the policy would have a component of CSE on its own, not (...) covered under ‘life skills’ because that's where it is now.” Josephine would have wanted to see the document address issues of sexual rights, pleasure and diversity, which are part of the seven essential elements of comprehensive sexuality education.

While the policy document is always work in progress, RHRN could focus on monitoring its implementation, and documenting the gaps it fails to address in comprehensive sexuality education so that they make a stronger case for more components of CSE in future editions.

Colourful ceremony

In working with the government and other stakeholders, the National School Health policy has established broad ownership and an accompanying implementation strategy has been developed. The policy document can be used as a guide in schools and the government - with the support of other players - can budget for its implementation as it was launched in 2019. When asked about sustainability, Alex Mutua from the Ministry of Health, mentions that the policy would not require many resources to implement because of the goodwill it has already attracted from the Ministry of Education. ‘Because some of the components of the policy actually only require (...) the teachers to be able to teach, others just require that you put in place some certain measures in schools. So yes, it is sustainable. But what is most critical is the buy-in from the implementers and the implementers are actually at the school level. But you have a lot of support from the Minister of Education in terms of trying to implement this policy.’

This position is shared by other respondents with Chrispin from Evidence Action indicating that the five year lifeline of the document provides an impetus for its implementation. He is impressed that the document provides direction at the national level and the primary stakeholders were involved in the revision. All these factors added up make him convinced that this policy implementation will take place and the hard work the TWG engaged in will be sustainable.

In a colourful ceremony, organised by the Dream Achievers Youth Organisation (DAYO), one of the youth led organisations in the Right Here Right Now platform and officiated by the second highest ranking official at the Kenyan Ministry of Health, the revised National School Health Policy was launched at one of the schools that DAYO works with.

3. Findings

Right Here Right Now strives towards young people’s SRHR being protected, respected and fulfilled: free from stigma, discrimination and violence, and with access to comprehensive youth-friendly services, comprehensive information, and spaces for young people’s voices.

In the RHRN Theory of Change (ToC), short-term outcomes are centered around capacity strengthening, as well as inclusion and collaboration of the RHRN platform and networks, at (sub)national, regional and global level.

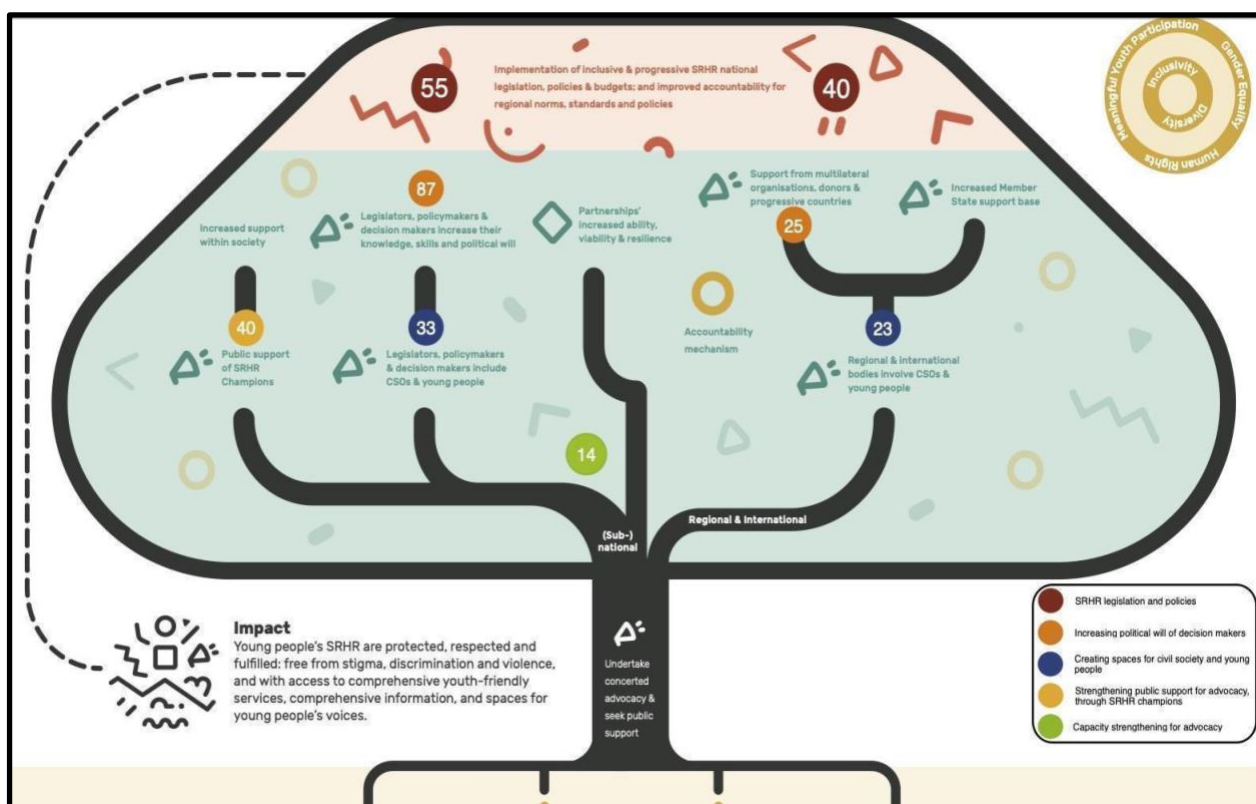


Figure 6. Theory of Change visual including numbers of harvested outcomes

Combined, these short-term outcomes should lead to intermediate outcome areas that are divided into four pathways of change. These pathways are visualised in figure 6 below. From left to right:

- > Public support for SRHR advocacy (at national level) - please note that this will be referred to as ‘public expressions of support in favour of SRHR’ in the remainder of the report (see Section 3.1.1 below)
- > Legislators, policymakers and decision makers include CSOs and young people, and increase their knowledge, skills and political will (at national level)
- > RHRN Partnerships’ increased ability, viability and resilience
- > Regional & international level: CSO and young people involvement, and support for SRHR

All pathways are contributing to the long-term outcome: Implementation of inclusive & progressive SRHR national legislation, policies & budgets; and improved accountability for regional norms, standards and policies.

The coloured dots in the ToC (see figure 6) show how the strategic lenses are intertwined with the ToC's pathways (below we explain why only five of the six strategic lenses are visualised). The numbers in the coloured dots portray the number of outcomes achieved.

Out of the total set of 317 harvested outcomes,¹⁴ a significant number of outcomes are achieved at (sub)national level (227 outcomes), as well as at regional and international level (90 outcomes). The evaluators are especially impressed by the large number of outcomes at regional and international level. As observed from the outcome database, these outcomes have been achieved in close collaboration with the national platforms, next to other actors operating in this field of work.

A large number of outcomes (35%) are related to the strategic lens '**increasing political will of decision makers**' (orange dots; 112 intermediate outcomes) at both (sub)national and regional and international level. Notably, another 30% of outcomes are related to **SRHR legislation and policies**, which corresponds with the long-term outcome level in the ToC (red dots; 95 long-term outcomes).

Another 56 outcomes contribute to **creating spaces for civil society and young people** (blue dots; 18%), at both (sub)national and regional and international level. Represented by 40 outcomes (13%; yellow dot) are changes related to **public expressions of support in favour of SRHR** at national level.

The third pathway of change is all about **internal outcomes** and mostly corresponds with the strategic lens **capacity strengthening for advocacy**. The Outcome Harvesting database did not contain sufficient and quality outcomes related to this strategic lens and the ones that were registered were therefore removed by the evaluators. In this evaluation, these internal outcomes are assessed by means of the Sprockler inquiry among platform member organisations' representatives, who were asked to reflect on their own, and RHRN's internal, capacities.

One strategic lens is not represented in the ToC visual, namely linking national, regional and international advocacy. In our analysis of the ToC, this strategic lens is the 'bridge' between pathways 1, 2 and 3 and pathway 4. A clear definition of this lens was lacking, which made it impossible to use it as a category for analysis of the outcome database. This strategic lens is addressed in the 'interlinking' Story of Change (*'I'm sure that our issues were heard'*) and other Stories of Change, as well as through the responses by the platform members to the inquiry. Paragraph 3.5 is dedicated to this strategic lens.

This chapter describes the evaluation findings at all levels of the Theory of Change. Paragraph 3.1 explains outcomes achieved at long-term and intermediate outcome level. Paragraph 3.2 describes how the external context affected the programme. In paragraph 3.3, we further describe how platform member organisations benefited from the capacity strengthening efforts of RHRN, which is the third pathway of change, as visualised above. This is followed by an assessment of the functioning of the RHRN platforms (3.4). In paragraph 3.5, we further reflect on the interaction between national, regional and international levels within the RHRN partnership (one of the strategic lenses). Paragraph 3.6 is about the sustainability of changes observed and contributed to throughout programme implementation. Finally, paragraph 3.7 contains a reflection on the validity of the Theory of Change and the assumptions underlying the pathways of change. The graphics will depict the number of outcomes per strategic lens and type of change. In Annex 2.5 graphics from Sprockler can be found whereby the outcomes are classified per region.

¹⁴ In Annex 2.2 you can find a full description of the Outcome Harvesting categorization review process, and adaptations made in the category descriptions.

3.1 Outcomes influenced by RHRN

3.1.1 To what extent have the intended outcomes been reached?

Public expressions of support in favour of SRHR

The first pathway in RHRN's Theory of Change focuses on increasing public support for SRHR advocacy. For this purpose, RHRN planned to work with change agents, also called SRHR champions, who publicly supported their agenda. The 40 outcomes contributing to this strategic lens show how the media, civil society or influential actors publicly expressed support for SRHR. All RHRN platforms, except for Senegal, reported outcomes related to this change. Among these were 8 outcomes classified as new commitments from influential actors and 32 outcomes as actual expressions of support (see figure 7 and explanation below). Please note that this pathway thus refers not to strengthened public support¹⁵ (i.e. citizens have a more positive view on SRHR), but outcomes under this pathway are **public expressions of support**.

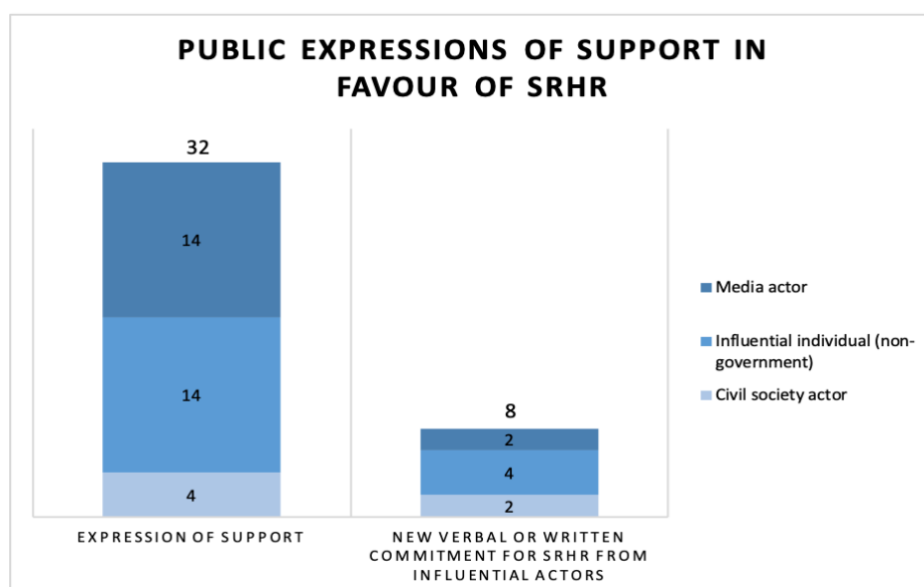


Figure 7. Outcomes per type of change and actor for strategic lens Public expressions of support

Public expressions of support start with an intention or a commitment. 8 outcomes are identified regarding these **new verbal or written commitments for SRHR from influential actors**. These outcomes describe how influential (non-government) actors, civil society or media made a new verbal or written commitment that might help to gain public support for SRHR. The commitments from these actors are about their intent to advocate for SRHR publicly. For example, in Kenya in 2018, editors and journalists from leading media houses verbally committed to report positively and objectively on LGBTI issues, whereas before reporting was less objective and even adding to stigmatisation.¹⁶

¹⁵ RHRN called this strategic lens 'Strengthening public support for advocacy through SRHR champions'. In this report, the wording is changed to 'Public expressions of support in favour of SRHR', since it more accurately describes the types of outcomes that are labeled as such.

¹⁶ Outcome ID 37827

Subsequently, another 32 outcomes mention actual public expressions in favour of SRHR. In terms of **public expressions in favour of SRHR**¹⁷, 14 outcomes are related to *media exposure around SRHR*. For example, Ugandan national newspapers (New Vision and the Daily Monitor) published articles on the public health crisis of unsafe abortion, whereas before these media outlets rarely reported on the topic of abortion.¹⁸ In Bolivia, two outcomes describe the mobilisation of a public demonstration on International Women's day 2019, where 18 feminist organisations and 600 independent people demonstrated for the rights of women, SRHR and the decriminalisation of abortion.^{19 20}

From the Stories of Change, it is also confirmed by external stakeholders how RHRN influenced media reporting on sensitive SRHR issues. In Zimbabwe, mainstream newspapers (favourably) reported on the issue of safe abortions and the need to broaden the circumstances under which abortion is permitted.²¹ A similar situation was observed in Nepal, where journalists started using more neutral terminology and different visuals in their reporting about abortions (i.e. not to use pictures of an unborn baby, and use the term 'abortion' instead of the colloquial term 'dropping babies'). In Bangladesh, newspapers reported in a positive tone-of-voice about sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression (SOGIE) and the right of the Hijra-people (third gender).²² In these countries, reporting on SRHR by these media was to a more or lesser extent a direct result of a strategy of the RHRN platform to sensitise journalists. For example, in Bangladesh, a workshop on SRHR and third gender in 2019 was attended by 20 national journalists. After the session, 11 journalists published articles on areas of focus of the RHRN Bangladesh platform. In Zimbabwe, involving the media was part of an array of strategies, including dialogue sessions with community members, videos demonstrating the dangers of unsafe abortion and 'mock abortion trials'. RHRN Zimbabwe trained young journalists to play a key role in advocating for safe abortion.

Another set of outcomes describes how **influential (non-government) actors** (14 outcomes) **or civil society** (4 outcomes) **publicly expressed themselves in favour of SRHR**. For example, during World Aids Day in Zimbabwe in 2017, the National AIDS Council National Youth Coordinator made a public announcement over the radio on the urgent need to address the stalling of the adoption of the School Health Policy, which had been in draft form since 2013.²³

To conclude, in almost all countries, the media has been an important (potential) ally for RHRN, as some have been responsive and reported positively on SRHR related issues. Changing the 'tone-of-voice' of journalists when writing about LGBTI communities or individuals or when reporting on the right to abortion, is a significant change as it contributes to a more favourable 'public narrative' regarding these (and other) SRHR issues. Ideally, the influential actors, or SRHR champions, who expressed themselves publicly in favour of SRHR, also form a core group of change agents, as was intended by RHRN. However, their influence as change agents on society cannot be confirmed based on the outcome database review, as it requires a more in-depth contextual analysis. Finally, the intentions, or commitments of other influential actors to positively express themselves about SRHR in the future are valuable as well, and especially when these commitments are materialised and put into practice. Follow-up on these commitments is therefore important. The evaluation has not been able to verify if the RHRN programme has consistently done this, but information from the Stories of Change indicate that platform members put efforts into moving beyond verbal commitments to achieving policy outcomes.

¹⁷ RHRN called this type of change 'Change in public opinion'. In this report, the wording is changed to 'Expression of support', since it more accurately describes the types of outcomes that are labeled as such.

¹⁸ Outcome ID 37740

¹⁹ Outcome IDs 37870 and 37875

²⁰ Notably, these are the only outcomes referring to a massive demonstration whereby the public directly participated, which is a strong sign of public support.

²¹ Outcome IDs 38044 and 38047; Story of Change Zimbabwe

²² Outcome IDs 37980 and 37985; Story of Change Bangladesh

²³ Outcome ID 38035

Creating spaces for civil society and young people

The strategic lens ‘creating spaces for civil society and young people’ includes intermediate outcomes that are at the base of pathway 2 and 4, as the underlying assumption is that CSOs’ and young people’s meaningful participation in policy and decision making will encourage governments’ political will and support base to adopt progressive and inclusive SRHR policies.

As can be seen in figure 8, out of the 56 outcomes showing increased spaces for civil society and young people, 33 outcomes were reported at national and sub-regional level (pathway 2), and 23 at regional and international level (pathway 4). At national level, the 33 outcomes were reported by 10 platforms, whereby Asia reported the lowest number of outcomes (4) about increasing space for civil society and youth participation at national level: two from Pakistan, one from Nepal, one from Indonesia, and none from Bangladesh.

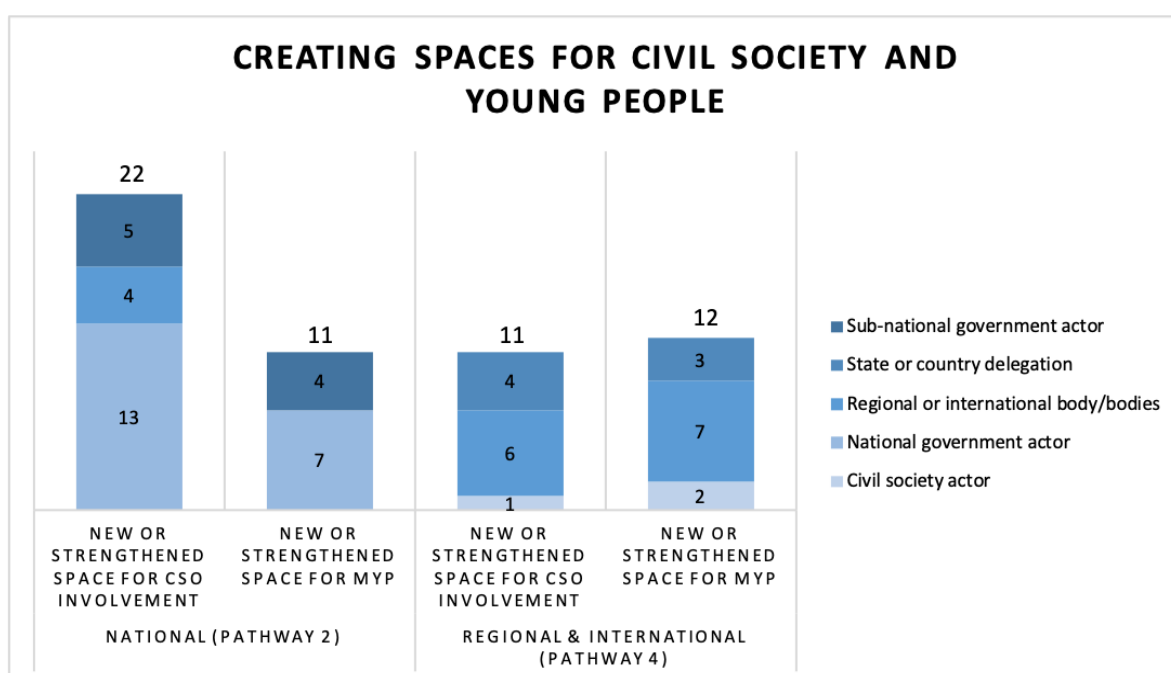


Figure 8. Outcomes per type of change and actor for strategic lens *Creating spaces for civil society and young people*

The outcomes showing **new or strengthened space for CSO involvement** range from receiving an invitation for an introductory meeting with an influential actor, to being admitted as a permanent member of a governmental working group. An example of a national level outcome is the integration of the RHRN platform into the multisectoral consultation mechanism on youth reproductive health in Senegal in 2018.²⁴ Another example of increased spaces for CSO involvement is observed in the Caribbean sub-region, where the RHRN Platform was invited to participate in the Commonwealth Education Council meeting in 2019, whereas before the organisers were not in favour of activism and advocacy for SRHR.²⁵ In Pakistan, the RHRN Platform was included in the national process to present the Voluntary National Review (VNR) on the progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals, during the High Level Political Forum in New York in July 2019 (see the ‘interlinking’ Story of Change *‘I’m sure that our issues were heard’*).

²⁴ Outcome ID 38132

²⁵ Outcome ID 37813

Outcomes showing **new or strengthened space for meaningful participation of youth** are similar in nature compared to those showing involvement of civil society, besides that they often describe the participation of young individuals, instead of organisations or alliances. At national level, especially the African RHRN platforms (Uganda, Kenya and Zimbabwe) presented outcomes showing how youth representatives were involved, for example by being invited to participate in consultative meetings and taking part in technical working groups for the review and monitoring of governmental policies. Notably, four other national platforms (Bangladesh, Bolivia, Nepal and Senegal) did not report any outcomes indicating increased space for meaningful youth participation, which shows that especially at national level meaningful youth participation has been a challenging objective for most of the platforms. However, potential overlaps between youth participation processes, such as the advocacy spaces carved out for greater participation of youth advocates, at both (sub)national and regional/international levels should be acknowledged. For example, when youth are participating in an international event, a lot of preparatory work takes place at national level, whereas the outcome (such as the one described below) is reported at international level.

Meaningful youth participation outcomes reported at regional and international level mostly show how youth representatives took part in delegations and sometimes also delivered speeches. For example, during the 62nd session of the Commission on the Status of Women in New York, the governments of Malawi, Honduras and the Netherlands for the first time included civil society and youth representatives in their delegations.²⁶ Another example can be taken from the 4th Asian Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD) held in Thailand in 2017 (and also in subsequent years, RHRN youth advocates participated in the APFSD pre-Youth Forums, which became institutionalised), where a RHRN youth advocate from Nepal delivered an opening speech addressing gender issues and SRHR.²⁷ External stakeholders that were interviewed for one of the Stories of Change confirmed how, in July 2019, a youth advocate from Pakistan delivered a statement about gender stereotypes and sexual harassment during the national review of her country on the progress on the Sustainable Development Goals during a High Level Political Forum before the United Nations in New York.

Meaningful youth participation is not always considered ‘meaningful’ by the youth participants themselves. Youth participation should involve more than including one young person in a committee, or allowing a young person to deliver a preconceived statement. The Story of Change from Kenya includes a section on the participation of youth in a Technical Working Group to draft a new ‘School Health Policy’. According to the youth participating in the working group their representation was subdued. In a meeting hall of over twenty adults, the voice of the one young person present was drowned. Further compounding this, each meeting would have an alternate young person - therefore derailing the contribution. Josephine, an 18-year-old who only attended the launch of the new policy felt the revision did not adequately engage the young people whose voices were necessary in its success.

“Actually, I feel like I was not engaged totally. Because when we’re speaking about meaningful engagement of young people, then it has to be from the beginning to the end. Being invited for the launch only, it beats the purpose. I felt like I was not engaged as I would have wanted. Because for me going to Mombasa, it’s like I’m being used, so to speak.”

Participation of young people, even if just one, is of course a good step towards more inclusive participation, but it does not necessarily entail *meaningful* participation. Just including one youth in a committee also gives the impression that young people are a homogenous group, automatically speaking with one voice and who share one single opinion on SRHR matters. In sum, the importance for civil society actors and young people to get a seat at the table with decision makers, is not always a given. The African platforms harvested some promising outcomes in this respect, and also impressive results have been achieved at regional and international levels. However, whether it is a permanent seat embedded in a regulated participation process, or rather a one-off chance to voice their opinion depends largely on the willingness of the (future) decision makers, as well as the ever-changing

²⁶ Outcome ID 38164

²⁷ Outcome ID 38119; 8 outcomes in the database report about the APFSD. 2 outcomes are classified as ‘creating spaces’. Organising the youth pre-forum, mentioned by RHRN as an important milestone, is only documented as outcome in 2017; in 2018 and 2019 it is only mentioned in the contribution description.

context with regard to civic space. Overall, the evaluators conclude that creating space for civil society, and even more so for meaningful youth participation, has been a challenging objective for the platforms.

Increasing political will of decision makers

This strategic lens includes intermediate outcomes that can be found at the upper part of pathway 2 and 4 (see ToC above). An impressive number of 112 outcomes show how RHRN contributed to increasing the political will of legislators, policy- and other decision makers (see figure 9).²⁸

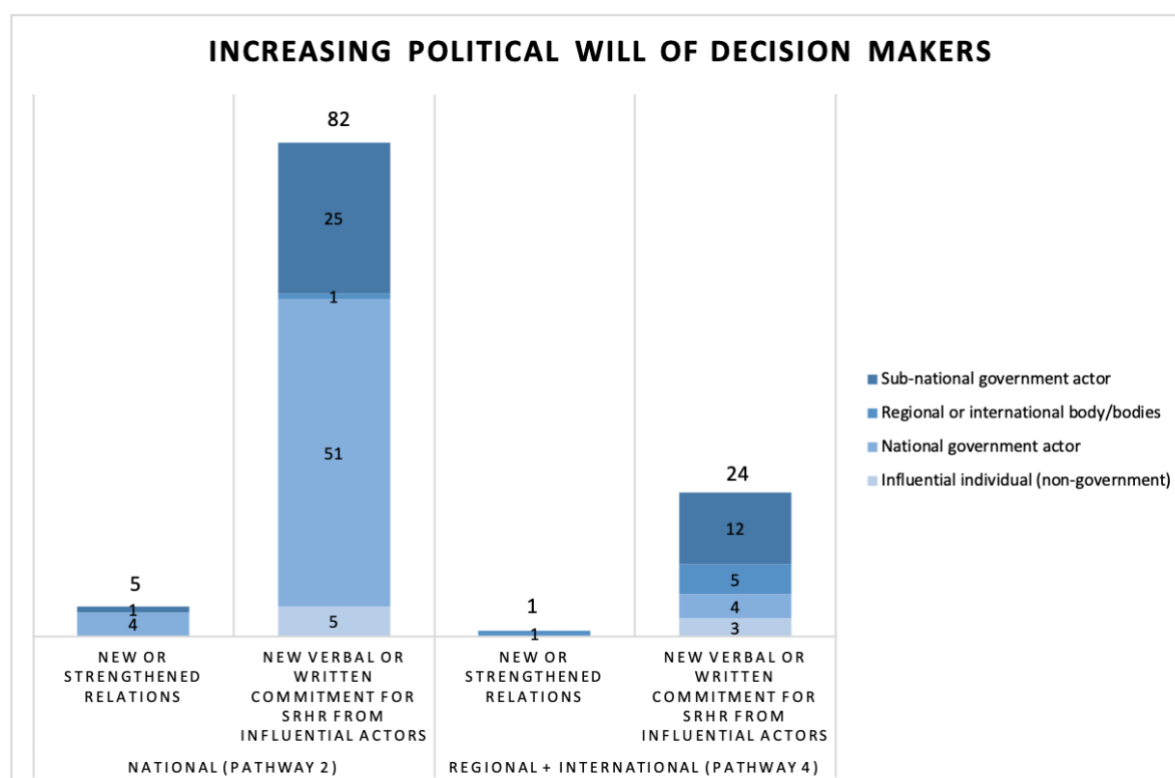


Figure 9. Outcomes per type of change and actor for strategic lens 'Increasing political will of decision makers'

Most (82 of the 87) outcomes harvested at national level (pathway 2) are changes related to **new verbal or written commitment for SRHR from influential actors** acting within the political arena at national platform level. Increased political will is demonstrated in many different ways, but always consists of a commitment to take action in the future towards the advancement of SRHR. These commitments were made verbally or in writing, and were expressed in a public setting or in small group meetings, and in such a way that the actor(s) can be held accountable for the promises made during follow-up. Examples of type of commitments include agreement to initiate a conversation, to start working with CSOs, to organise a meeting, to write an official letter, to present a motion in parliament, to support a bill, or to allocate resources.

²⁸ Originally the strategic lens is called 'Increasing knowledge, skills and political will of decision makers.' In this report, knowledge and skills are removed from this description. Following the Outcome Harvesting methodology, where an outcome is defined as an 'observable change', knowledge and skills cannot be observed.

The nature of the topics that social actors committed themselves to, due to the contributions made by RHRN, differ from country to country, and are related to issues that the respective platforms were advocating for. For example, during an open forum in Bangladesh in 2018, a District Commissioner stated that a separate health desk for the third gender will be established in the Sadar Hospital of Khulna, and that the transgender community will be able to work with the police force, whereas government officials usually did not make such statements related to the third gender.²⁹ Another example can be taken from Bolivia (2019), where four young candidates who were likely to be elected as national deputies of the political parties, verbally committed to implement proposals on sexual and reproductive rights once they were part of the Chamber of Deputies.³⁰ An example of a written commitment is the letter that was addressed to the RHRN platform by the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Health in St. Vincent and Grenadines (Caribbean sub-region), in 2018, which formally shows support for Comprehensive Sexuality Education in the school curriculum, and the permanent secretary's commitment to facilitate a training for youth and SRHR stakeholders on the importance of SRHR.³¹ In Honduras, in 2019, the Supreme Court for the first time in history accepted a petition of unconstitutionality filed by two male citizens arguing that their constitutional rights were violated as they were not allowed to marry each other (see Story of Change from Honduras).³²

Five (of the 87) other outcomes at (sub)national level (pathway 2) describe increased *political will towards new or strengthened relations*. For example, in Honduras, the Minister of the Secretary of State in the Office of Education and the RHRN platform signed an agreement to jointly promote the sexual education guide 'Taking care of my health and my life'.³³

At regional and international level (pathway 4), almost all (24 of the 25) outcomes are changes related to **new verbal or written commitment for SRHR from influential actors**. Similar to increased political will at national level, also at regional and international level, decision makers made commitments to take action in the future towards the advancement of SRHR. For example, in 2019 during a panel discussion organised by RHRN at the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights 64th Session in Egypt, the Zimbabwe delegation led by the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs, for the first time verbally assured the African Union commissioners to submit joint reports on the African Charter on Human and Peoples rights backdated from 2006 to date, in order to facilitate investigation of previous violations of human rights with relation to Zimbabwe citizens.³⁴

Even though outcomes in this category are merely commitments, the evaluators find the large number of outcomes compared to the other outcome categories and based on their experience in evaluating complex, multi-country advocacy programmes, promising. Some of the political will outcomes have directly contributed to changes in policy and legislations (the next strategic lens), others will still require follow-up, and some will not result in policy changes at all. Overall, it demonstrates that RHRN has been successful in implementing its advocacy strategies, both at platform level (pathway 2), as well as at regional and international levels (pathway 4).

SRHR legislation and policies

This strategic lens includes an impressive number of 95 long-term outcomes that can be found among the upper branches of the ToC tree: Implementation of inclusive & progressive SRHR national legislation, policies & budgets; and improved accountability for regional norms, standards and policies. Outcomes at this level are by nature a result of efforts achieved at both (sub)national (55 outcomes) and regional/international level (40 outcomes). At national level, all platforms, except for Bangladesh, achieved long-term outcomes that contribute to this strategic lens.

²⁹ Outcome ID 37986

³⁰ Outcome ID 37879

³¹ Outcome ID 37819

³² Outcome ID 37803

³³ Outcome ID 37788

³⁴ Outcome ID 38227

In theory, the distinction between the types of changes (see figure 10) that are included under this strategic lens might seem clear, but in reality, they are rather fuzzy and often intertwined. The latter is especially the case for law/policy adoption, change or implementation, and budget allocation, where the common denominator is the fact that these outcomes are all related to official governmental laws or policies. In contrast, outcomes classified as ‘adoption of a norm-setting document’ are those documents that are *not* governmental laws or policies, but related to it, such as documents agreed upon during the decision making process towards a policy change or documents containing norms to monitor policy implementation. Most norm-setting work takes place in regional and international bodies and institutions.³⁵

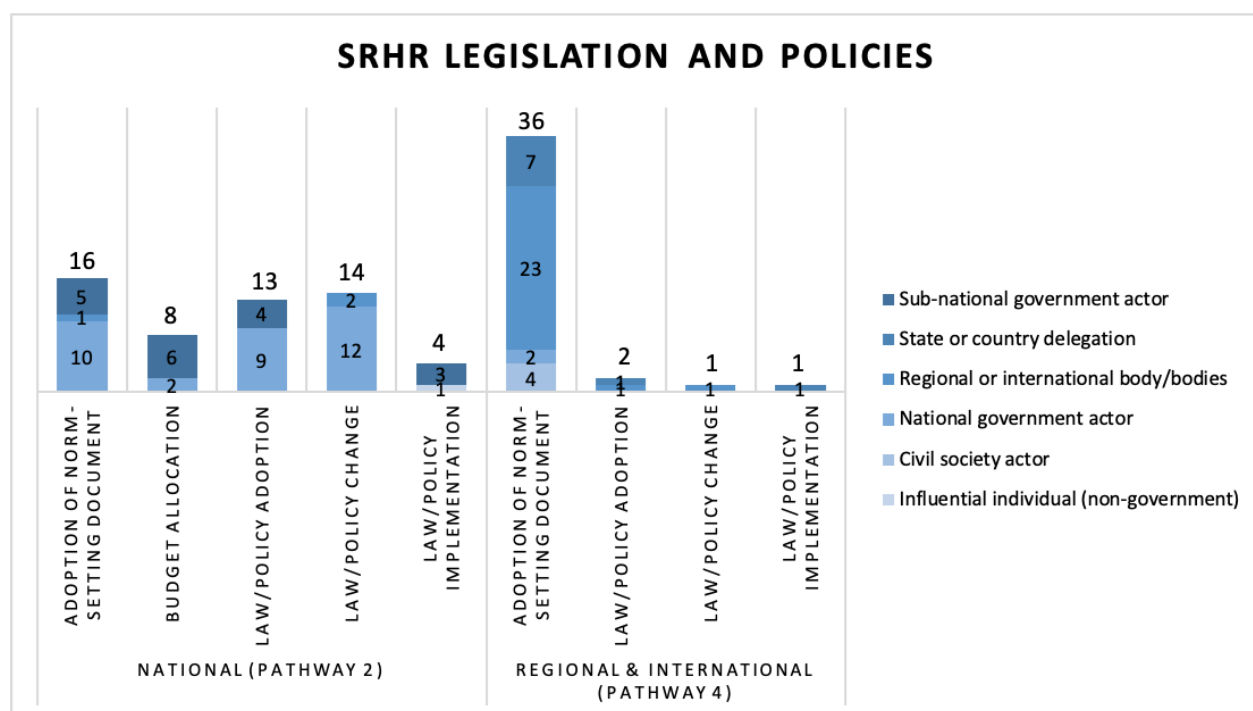


Figure 10. Outcomes per type of change and actor for strategic lens SRHR legislation and policies

A total of 52 outcomes describe the **adoption of a norm-setting document**, which, as said above, took place for the most part in pathway 4, at *regional or international level* (36 out of the 52). More specifically, the actors that changed are mostly operating within regional or international bodies, such as the United Nations bodies and/or its member states, the Committee on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Human Rights Council (HRC) and/or its members, and the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). Others are related to state or country delegations operating at regional or international level. An example of such change are the recommendations made by 11 member states towards the government of Bangladesh in May 2018, during the 3rd Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Bangladesh in Geneva, to address issues of sexual orientation and gender identity, which was the first time that such a high number of recommendations were made on Section 377.^{36 37} Also, another couple of outcomes describe changes by civil society actors that took place at large regional and international events, such as the Kenya CSO Coalition on

³⁵ A formal definition of ‘a norm-setting document’ is missing, but RHRN usually understands norm-setting as taking place in regional and international bodies and institutions. The definition we apply encompasses norm-setting at the national level.

³⁶ Outcome ID 37978

³⁷ Section 377 of the Bangladesh Penal Code forbids ‘carnal intercourse against the order of nature’, regardless of the gender and sexual orientation of the participants.

the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), that included the RHRN recommendations on comprehensive SRHR in their Kenya UPR CSO report.

Out of the 52 outcomes describing the adoption of a norm-setting document, 16 happened at *national level* (pathway 2), and include documents that were produced on the often long road towards policy change, such as drafts or roadmaps developed by working groups or committees. An example of such a norm-setting document is the national monitoring tool that was adopted by the Nairobi school health policy technical working group in November 2019 in Kenya. This tool now includes Comprehensive Sexuality Education indicators, whereas the working group was against it before.³⁸

A smaller number of 30 outcomes are related to **policy adoption and policy change**, in both pathway 2 at *national level* (27) and pathway 4 at *regional/international level* (3). An example can be taken from Indonesia, where in September 2019 president Joko Widodo requested the House of Representatives to postpone the ratification of the draft Penal Code, after he had examined the input of various groups, including RHRN platform, who objected to parts of the penal code.³⁹ Outcomes related to 'policy adoption or change' also provide proof of the actual formal adoption of policies. For example, in 2017, the Family Health Division in Nepal revised the Safe Abortion Service Guidelines in 2017, that now have a stronger focus on service delivery and accessibility.⁴⁰ Other examples include how in June 2018, the Government of Zimbabwe signed and launched the School Health Policy, or how in January 2018, the Life Skills Based Education content was approved in Pakistan.

Out of the 8 outcomes that show **changes in budget allocations**, 2 of these changes took place in pathway 2 at national level (Uganda), while the remaining 6 occurred at sub-national level. For example, in the municipality of Saint-Louis, Senegal, some of the 2019 budget was allocated for youth reproductive health, whereas previously the budget was to be spent in the health sector.⁴¹ In another municipality, namely Ramdhuni in Nepal, a new program 'Adolescent Health Education Program' started, which included a budget of more than 1000 USD for comprehensive sexuality education for out of school children, which is the first time a Nepalese municipality has introduced such a programme.⁴²

A limited number of 5 **policy implementation outcomes** were reported, among which 4 in pathway 2 at national level and 1 at regional or international level. Outcomes related to policy implementation are typically difficult to pinpoint, as they can describe a wide variety of actions taken by (sub-)national government, whereby the link with a policy is not always immediately clear. One such example was found in Pakistan, where in January 2018, the health department of government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province provided health insurance cards to the members of transgender community, who now have the same benefits package as everyone else, whereas in the past discriminatory behaviour of public health care providers constrained their access to healthcare services.⁴³ This outcome clearly concerns the implementation of a policy, but which policy exactly is not described.

The fulfilment of SRHR through legislation and policies has clearly been the focus of the RHRN programme, which is also shown by the large number of outcomes contributing to this, at national, regional and international level. The evaluators want to emphasize that this is an impressive achievement, especially considering the sensitivity of SRHR topics (e.g. safe abortion), and challenging contexts in which the platforms find themselves. The adoption of (non-governmental) norm-setting documents, next to governmental policy adoption and change, is considered crucial for holding duty bearers accountable for SRHR. Evidently, a limited number of outcomes have been reported related to policy implementation, and they mostly describe how actors were influenced to improve the *monitoring* of the implementation of policies.

³⁸ Outcome ID 37855

³⁹ Outcome ID 38022

⁴⁰ Outcome ID 36908

⁴¹ Outcome ID 38131

⁴² Outcome ID 36923

⁴³ Outcome ID 38217

The small number of policy implementation outcomes is not surprising, given the large number of outcomes related to adoption of policies and legislation as reported above. Following-up and lobbying for policy implementation, is the next step in this long process of change.

New or strengthened relations and youth champions

A final set of outcomes (14) are about new or strengthened relations (10) with civil society actors and youth champions (4).⁴⁴ In the ToC the area of new or strengthened relations with others besides the platform member organisations and consortium partners, is not explicitly represented. The evaluators suggest that this element could be added to a future Theory of Change: strengthening relations with allies such as civil society actors or other consortia.

The 4 outcomes related to **youth champions** and were all harvested in Indonesia. For example, follow-up actions of the Queer Camp event held in October 2018 demonstrated strengthened capacities.⁴⁵ In addition, two outcomes from Indonesia nicely describe how young SRHR champions strengthened their capacities through their participation in RHRN. For example, a young transwoman reportedly increased her self-confidence after she was enabled to speech at an regional event about the effects of religious conservatism on transgender issues in Indonesia.⁴⁶ To the evaluators it is unclear whether these young people are regarded as part of the platform or not. If they are, these four outcomes should have been marked as internal outcomes.

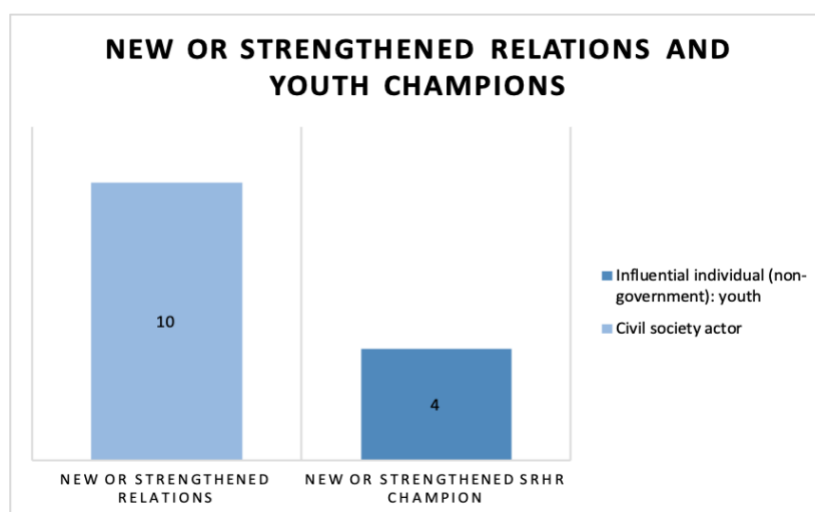


Figure 11. Outcomes per type of change and actor related to New or strengthened relations and youth champions

3.1.2. Unexpected positive and negative outcomes

This section describes the unexpected outcomes that were found by analysing the outcome database,⁴⁷ as well as findings from the Sprockler inquiry.

⁴⁴ RHRN called this strategic lens ‘Capacity strengthening for advocacy’. In this report, the wording is changed to ‘New or strengthened relations and youth champions’, since it more accurately describes the types of outcomes that are labeled as such.

⁴⁵ Outcome IDs 38020 and 38021

⁴⁶ Outcome ID 38026

⁴⁷ Evaluators examined whether outcomes were positive or negative by reviewing the classification in the RHRN outcome database. However, whether outcomes were expected or unexpected was not structurally captured in the outcome database,

Unexpected positive outcomes

The 6 unexpected positive outcomes⁴⁸ occurred in Pakistan, Honduras, Bangladesh, Nepal (2 outcomes) and one at regional level in Latin America and the Caribbean. One example is how in Bangladesh, during a debate competition held in January 2020, the Minister for Health and Family Welfare unexpectedly promised to distribute free sanitary napkins to unmarried girls under 18.⁴⁹ Afterwards, different national-level print and electronic media published his statement. The debate competition on SRHR was organised by a member of RHRN Bangladesh, and preceding the event, RHRN advocates regularly contacted the Minister's staff and department to meet, discuss and lobby demands on increasing youth-friendly health services. Hence, the relationship building through these RHRN meetings contributed to the Ministry having more focus and knowledge on the need to improve and increase such services.

Another example of an unexpected positive outcome is how in Honduras, the Minister of the Secretary of State in the Office of Education and the RHRN platform, signed an agreement to promote the sexual education guide 'taking care of my health and my life'.⁵⁰ Although the RHRN Honduras platform had intentionally influenced the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health towards the effective implementation of comprehensive sexuality education programs, a signature on an agreement was unexpected at the time.

It is not surprising that the number of unexpected positive outcomes is small, since it seldom happens that a change that is hoped for, is truly a surprise for the advocates who have been working towards it for a long time. Programme staff usually know the stakeholders in their field really well, and are experts in anticipating their behaviour. At the same time, addressing young people's SRHR is a highly sensitive topic in many countries, and stakeholders might not always be outspoken about their points of view, which can also lead to unpredictable situations.

Unexpected negative outcomes and setbacks

The 5 unexpected negative outcomes (taken from the database) occurred in Uganda, Zimbabwe, Indonesia, Bolivia and the Latin America and Caribbean region. This section also provides examples of setbacks that occurred during advocacy work, and were reported by the platform member representatives through Sprockler. Most setbacks shared were related to contextual challenges, among which by large the COVID-19 pandemic, next to internal challenges (related to collaboration and to a lesser extent about reporting and funding issues).

In Uganda,⁵¹ the Ministry of Health declined to launch the national guidelines and standards for SRHR services. This setback was also mentioned by one platform member representative who participated in the Sprockler inquiry. The Story of Change from Uganda also reflects on this unexpected negative outcome, and further explains how, by involving more stakeholders, the national guidelines were eventually launched (albeit slightly rephrased).

Another negative outcome from Uganda (reported through Sprockler), reflects the role of the Inter-Religious Council of Uganda, that revoked the implementation of the national Sexuality Education Framework in schools, which was initially launched by the first lady of Uganda in 2018. The Council emphasised that 'the contexts in the documents are contrary to the beliefs and values of the Religious institutions who are gatekeepers of morality in the country.' This all delayed the access of SRHR information for young people in schools who need it most.

since there was no column with the options 'expected' and 'unexpected' which harvesters could have used to indicate this aspect of the outcomes. Nevertheless, in line with the Outcome Harvesting methodology, the relevance section often describes whether the outcome was expected or unexpected, positive or negative, a set-back or a turning point. The evaluators therefore conducted data mining on the outcome database, by searching for words such as 'unexpected', 'unintended', etc, to find examples of unexpected outcomes.

⁴⁸ Outcome IDs 38209, 37798, 36910, 37788, 37987, 36913

⁴⁹ Outcome ID 37987

⁵⁰ Outcome ID 37788

⁵¹ Outcome ID 37732

Especially since the outbreak of COVID-19, the number of reproductive health challenges including teenage pregnancy, sexual violence (e.g. defilement, sexual exploitation etc.) grew considerably.

Another example reported through Sprockler is from Kenya, where RHRN advocated for increased youth-friendly and non-discriminatory services for all young people, including young LGBTI. The platform sensitised decision makers on gender diversity and sexuality. However, a section of the members of the county assembly in Kisumu were annoyed and accused LGBTI groups and RHRN of 'recruiting'. They then proceeded to develop an Anti-Homosexuality Bill that would take away constitutionally guaranteed rights to protection from violence and discrimination. The RHRN platform identified champions in the group and worked with them to defeat the Bill. As explained by the respondent, the lesson learned here is about the value of strong champions and collaboration.

Platform member representatives from Senegal mentioned examples in Sprockler where opponents posted images of two members of the platform on social networks, claiming the RHRN promotes homosexuality. This resulted in an unexpected crisis, members fearing to be defamed on the internet on these sensitive issues. Luckily, the steering committee as well as the partners were able to find solutions to ensure the safety of the people affected, and also of the other members of the platform. Lessons taken from this are about the importance of a security plan, a crisis management strategy and a communication strategy.

In Indonesia,⁵² the Love Family Alliance, a religious conservative group, used the Strategic Plan of one of the RHRN platform members as a propaganda to reject the Draft Sexual Violence Bill, which led to a backlash against the online campaign conducted by this platform member organisation. This setback was also mentioned and confirmed by one platform member representative who participated in the Sprockler inquiry. It was explained that since RHRN Indonesia is explicitly working on the issues of LGBT+, and access to contraceptive and safe abortion services, the organisation's identities were exposed to the public, which led to security threats. From this experience, the platform was urged to rethink their approach and strengthen their safety and security protocols. The Story of Change, titled '*Tiptoeing between visibility and security*', further describes this unexpected setback.

In Bolivia,⁵³ the Multinational Legislative Assembly of Bolivia and President Evo Morales repealed two laws of the Bolivian Penal System Code, which included 8 grounds for unpunished abortion. This setback was also identified and confirmed by 3 platform member representatives who participated in the Sprockler inquiry. The cancellation of the new Bolivian penal code was a major setback for the work being done up to that point in opening more grounds for unpunished abortion. Due to the onslaught of fundamentalists and anti-rights groups, pressure was put on the authorities and the government, which convinced the president to abrogate the document. One respondent mentioned: 'Looking back, it was commented that possibly more citizen support for the new penal code was needed, and that the position of some organisations of the RHRN platform was weak in this sense.'

Negative outcomes are those that RHRN did not intend to influence and are therefore by definition unexpected, but nevertheless can occur as a result of the programme. Social change is never a linear process, and therefore also when increasing the participation of marginalised groups, things often get worse before they get better. Despite programme staff's best intentions, RHRN interventions may provoke other stakeholders to take action that undercuts young people's SRHR. Therefore, negative outcomes are important to capture too.⁵⁴ Harvesting negative outcomes is challenging, as people often cannot identify those outcomes because they are either not aware of it, and if they are, they might be a bit biased. Consequently, the ultimate positive outcomes are often considered more significant (negative side-effects are blocked). In addition, negative outcomes are often mentioned less, since it might bring about a fear of being held accountable for the 'failure'. This explains the small number of 7 negative outcomes reported. However, the evaluators expect the actual number of negative outcomes to be higher.

⁵² Outcome ID 38024

⁵³ Outcome ID 37887

⁵⁴ R. Wilson-Grau (2019). Outcome Harvesting: principles, steps, and evaluation applications (page 177)

3.1.3. Contribution of RHRN in reaching the harvested outcomes

This chapter reflects on the extent to which RHRN contributed to the harvested outcomes. According to RHRN's Theory of Change, two strategic interventions were applied within the partnership, i.e., capacity strengthening (on advocacy) and advocacy. A review of the contribution description of the harvested outcomes confirms that indeed these two intervention strategies were applied. The first, capacity strengthening, will be elaborated upon in paragraph 3.3. The second, advocacy, is examined in this section and is based on the substantiation process (as described in paragraph 2.2), and a reflection on the Stories of Change. In hindsight, a more thorough analysis of the contribution descriptions (for example by classifying them into categories) would have been helpful in searching for working mechanisms underlying the capacity strengthening support delivered by RHRN. This is mentioned as a limitation in paragraph 2.6.

During this validation process, 23 external stakeholders (interviewees for the Stories of Change) substantiated a selected set of 12 outcomes. These interviewees were asked to verify the outcomes and RHRN's contribution claim, as well as to elaborate on the extent of RHRN's contribution. Most stakeholders (65%; 15 out of 23) indicated that the outcomes happened to a large extent as a result of RHRN's activities. 14 out of 23 stakeholders also indicated that the contribution of RHRN, compared to other contributors, has been large. Stakeholders were also asked whether RHRN's influence on the outcomes was direct or indirect, and 15 out of 23 stated their influence was direct. However, two stakeholders rated the outcomes from Uganda⁵⁵ and Nepal⁵⁶ as small and indirect. In Nepal, as explained in the Story of Change, another big SRHR alliance – in which one RHRN member organisation also took part - has taken the lead, explaining the RHRN platform's smaller contribution. Please note that any contribution, being small or big, can still be significant.

Also, it is important to underline that overall, the national RHRN platforms include a large part of the national CSOs working on SRHR and related issues. Even though the significance of the contribution cannot be established, the RHRN platforms determined to a large extent the advocacy agenda, as not many other civil society actors advocate for similar issues, and if there are other actors, RHRN often collaborates with them.

The stakeholders that were interviewed for the Stories of Change, and that validated the sampled set of harvested outcomes, shed light on the pathways to change and RHRN's contribution. They explained that RHRN platform members are often the main actors in shaping national SRHR policies. Combining the efforts of a large part of the CSO-landscape is one of the strong suits of the partnership, most interviewees agree. It is also observed that for most SRHR-campaigns, the platforms seek alliances with a broad selection of stakeholders, like the media, government institutions, international organisations, other CSOs, Members of Parliament, etc. Although like in all advocacy programmes, advocates are faced with developments and shifting attitudes that to a large extent are beyond their control, their 'allies' to a large extent operate within the strategy and the logic of the RHRN platform.

A joint agenda was created, with and for different target groups, such as women, youth and LGBTI. Whilst doing so, the organisations involved shared knowledge and learned from each other's perspectives and expertise. All platforms were able to target key allies among decision-makers, and invested time and resources into building relationships and sensitising them. It was found important to also involve and sensitise parents at an early stage. Youth also played a key role in a number of Stories of Change (although in some stories, youth was not mentioned at all): RHRN built capacity and confidence of youth advocates, and involved them in determining the advocacy agenda and implementing it.

In every country the context is different, so the advocacy topics and strategies chosen by the various platforms are diverse. It is important to note that the RHRN and the local platforms were not afraid of taking risks and of dealing with controversy and opposition. This required a high level of adaptability. The Stories of Change show

⁵⁵ Outcome ID 37761: In June 2018, the Minister of Health, Ruth Jane Aceng, reviewed and approved (with comments) the SRHR Policy.

⁵⁶ Outcome ID 36915: On October 15, 2018, the government of Nepal passed the 'Safe Motherhood and Reproductive Health and Right Act', after discussions to change the act had been going on since 2016.

how the platforms were able to respond to windows of opportunity that emerged while implementing their advocacy strategy. Choosing the right momentum within the political process was found to be important in a number of stories. For example, in the Caribbean, the advocacy had an effect because the key decision makers at the Ministry that had recently taken office were quite young and came with a fresh look focused on youth. They did not mind working with the RHRN platform, as long as it was done secretly. The Caribbean platform was then able to make use of this window of opportunity. What RHRN also did in a number of cases when advocating for policies and legislation, was to link to an already existing progressive country's Constitution. Or to align with already existing policy review processes. Some of the platform members also needed to be flexible and strategic in compromising on their envisaged ideal outcome. For example, in Nepal, it was found that improvements in abortion legislation would not be achieved if it was not placed under a wider umbrella of reproductive health – whereas the involved CSOs would have initially preferred to advocate for a separate abortion Bill. This constant adaptability is a key asset of the RHRN programme, especially in ever changing contexts and on such contentious issues as sexual and reproductive health and rights.

3.2 Contextual challenges

Knowing that SRHR is not an easy topic to work on, especially not in countries where civic space with regard to such progressive issues is shrinking, respondents were asked about the extent to which the context (external environment) affected their efforts. They could indicate whether the external environment was enabling (positive) or hampering (negative), and whether its influence was big or small. As can be seen in figure 12, external factors vary between hampering and enabling but the majority of responses are somewhere in between the two. A common denominator among the responses is that the external environment has a big influence on the RHRN platform activities.

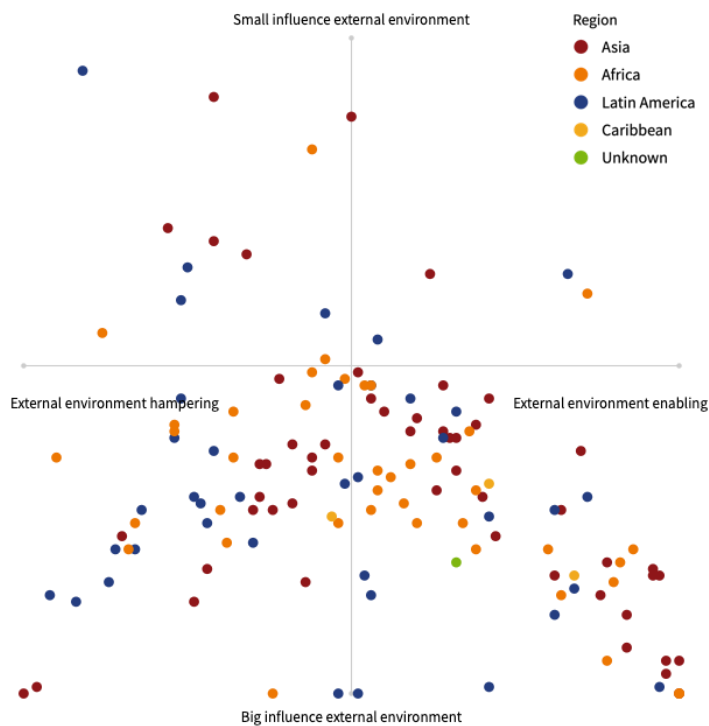


Figure 12. Perceived influence of the external environment

Evidently, the COVID-19 pandemic greatly affected 2020 programme implementation, as especially (informal) advocacy engagements and public rallies are difficult to facilitate virtually/online due to technical aspects (e.g. internet connectivity) as well as interpersonal aspects (e.g. missing out on the power of personal interaction/building rapport etc.). Furthermore, the pandemic also caused delays for planned or ongoing policy processes and accountability mechanisms, and very likely also led to changes in priority setting and agendas. Also, marginalised groups such as young people, women and the LGTBI population are more at risk of poverty and insecurity as a result of the pandemic. Apart from COVID, other external factors hampering the advocacy work of the platforms are contextual factors such as conservatism, religious fundamentalism, militarism, socio-political unrest, lack of political will, impunity by legislators, electoral processes and the re-positioning of government officials. In Senegal, for example, the RHRN faced various difficulties, among which the social stigma that they were considered as ‘a platform that promotes homosexuals’.

An important development that was mentioned in some Stories of Change (see for example the Story from Nepal) impeding the work of RHRN members and their partner CSOs, was the reinstatement of the so-called ‘Global Gag Rule’ by United States’ president Trump in 2017. This policy banned non-US non-governmental organisations from receiving any US funds if they give information and referrals for abortion, provide safe abortion or plead for better abortion legislation. As the US was one of the largest funders of programmes for sexual and reproductive health, this meant that the gap in access to safe abortions and comprehensive sexuality education became enormous.⁵⁷ ‘She Decides’, a joint initiative by the Ministers of Foreign Trade and International Development in the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark and Sweden, is a response to the Global Gag Rule and has created a counter-movement to demand respect for women’s rights, including addressing the funding gaps. It is unclear to what extent the RHRN partners have been aware of and benefited from this initiative.

3.3. Capacity strengthening

3.3.1. Improved advocacy skills

RHRN platform members (participating in the Sprockler inquiry) were asked individually whether they experienced an improvement in their advocacy skills⁵⁸ as a result of their participation in the platform and the capacity strengthening activities offered by the consortium. Almost all respondents (153 out of the 155) responded positively to this question, acknowledging that their **advocacy skills are strengthened**. Only two respondents, both affiliated with the RHRN platform in Bolivia, replied negatively, as one respondent explained: “*There were no productive advocacy training activities within the platform and the few that were done were poor in terms of content.*” The other respondent explained that she participated in a few platform meetings only.

Respondents who indicated that they experienced an improvement in their advocacy skills, were asked to share a story about how they applied their improved advocacy skills in practice. They were specifically asked about an experience or moment that made them feel proud. To analyse the stories, the evaluators coded the stories and listed the most mentioned elements. Below are the key elements that were mentioned across the stories (in order of most mentioned).

⁵⁷ <https://www.shedecides.com/what-is-the-global-gag-rule/>.

⁵⁸ The term ‘advocacy skills’ was explained to the respondents as follows: the ability to advocate and campaign for SRHR, which can include policy and budget analysis, policy engagement, use of evidence in advocacy, documentation, holding duty bearers accountable, working with allies, engaging with the press, negotiation skills, and, in general, dealing with sensitive issues such as LGBTI rights or safe abortion.

Many respondents describe **improved technical skills for advocacy**, such as drafting a policy or policy framework, developing an advocacy strategy document or a policy brief, making budget recommendations, using evidence for advocacy, and organising advocacy events. Other strengthened skills mentioned are: strategy development or monitoring, conducting research, conducting training, and raising funds for advocacy.

A large number of stories describe how the respondent **participated in regional and international events**, such as the Commission on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). Respondents describe how much they learned from being able to represent their country and take part in country delegations, draft statements, or chairing sessions.

Example from Uganda:

“The moment I was most proud of was in 2019 at the ICPD conference in Nairobi. During one of the sessions with key policy makers, UN Agencies, Governments, and Donors,(...) I chaired a session along (with others) from different countries and presented a Position paper on the future that Adolescent Girls and Young Women Want for their improved SRHR well-being. With the mentorship of Uganda Network of Young People Living with HIV/AIDS, I managed to call key policy makers to action on enhancing SRHR for Young people. It was a pleasure to see our President His Excellency Kaguta Museveni commit to Transforming the Society to Achieve Gender Equality. Quote: "Gender equality can only be achieved if societies transform and develop". He also committed to ensuring Livelihood development for Young people and Accessibility to SRH services for all.”

A youth advocate from Pakistan participated in a High Level Political Forum on the Sustainable Development Goals in New York (in July 2019). In the Story of Change on this outcome, she was quoted:

“I was really nervous. It was my first time to present such an important statement. I didn't know what to expect. Fortunately, the RHRN people provided a lot of support. [They] gave me lots of tips on how to deal with the situation. They helped me to connect to the right people and provided tips on advocacy. At first I was afraid to engage with people during the event. I was so much in awe about everything that was happening around me. But [the RHRN people] convinced me to just do it. You have to make the opportunity, nothing will happen if you just stand there. So I decided to plunge in: during a 'side event' I approached the former ambassador of Pakistan to the UN. Not a lot came out of my conversation with her, but it taught me that I could do it. For me it was very motivational. It was a learning experience.”

A third often-mentioned element in the stories is how respondents, personally, **directly engaged with decision-makers and key stakeholders**. They describe how much they learned from talking to a Minister or someone else representing the national government or a municipality, or other influential actors such as religious leaders. Other examples include how they interacted with a specific target group, such as sex workers. They describe their increased skills in organising community dialogues, awareness meetings or campaigns.

Example from Bangladesh:

“To give an example of the practical use of my advocacy skills: the country-wide shutdown in Bangladesh, due to the outbreak of COVID-19, exposed members of the Hijra community (a specific group/culture within the broader gender diverse umbrella in Bangladesh) to particular vulnerabilities as the closure of shops and markets and restrictions on movement meant that they were unable to engage in their traditional profession of Hijragiri (collection of money from streets and markets). (...) I used my rapport with the local administrative authority and the district social welfare office in my area, built through previous advocacy with these stakeholders on Hijra and GDC rights, to facilitate communication between these authorities and members of the Hijra community and ensure that the community was able to receive emergency food aid from the government.”

Many respondents state how much they have learned from **collaborating and networking** with others. Their collaboration skills have increased by being part of the RHRN platform, and collaborating with other allies and alliances. Some people wrote down how much they have learned from meeting new and different kinds of people, and analysing problems from different perspectives and realities. Some respondents mention the collaboration between youth and adults as being valuable, or how feminist causes and LGBTI collectives have increased understanding of each other. One respondent from Bolivia explains how feminists and young people now support LGBTI demands, LGBTIs support feminist causes, and young people support the right to decide or the right to an identity.

Increased knowledge of SRHR is also mentioned by many respondents.

Example from Nepal:

“Gaining correct and adequate information regarding different issues of SRHR, along with sensitive issues such as LGBTIQ rights or safe abortion by participating in various platforms has definitely been an asset to my advocacy skills (...) and has capacitated me enough to know about the basics and more on safe abortion and LGBTIQ. I have practiced the skills gained through these platforms to advocate for safe abortion as the right of women and to establish it as an essential healthcare service.”

Another example from Nepal:

“During the implementation of RHRN program, It was my very first opportunity to know about marriage equality and LGBTIQ rights. Meanwhile, another opportunity for me was to meet and know many transgender, lesbians and many more. When I know about them, their situation (...) I felt I should do something as a friend or as a human being. So this feeling helped me to advocate for them. Yes, one moment is enough to know your ability to do something in your life. And that one moment has come in my life when I was with my family. They were randomly talking about gender minorities and said unnecessary things about them like ‘cheapest people in the world, no rights to live like normal people’ and many more. I was so upset and angry to see them like that. So, I interrupted them in the middle of conversation and said: ‘I have a friend who is lesbian and she is close one in my friend circle.’ (...) I raised my voice against my family and told them a story of gender minorities cases and their rights as well as shared my friend's story. Everyone was quiet after listening (...). I believed that my family understood their feelings and their situation in Nepal. Now they are with us to advocate about LGBTIQ rights. Therefore, I must say first you have to change the perception of your own people before you try to change the society, community, country and world.”

Respondents also give examples of how much they have learned from **protesting** (such as organising marches and demonstrations) and **campaigning** at community level. Increased skills in public campaigning (media/social media) is also mentioned by some respondents. Respondents describe how much they have learned from organising a mass media campaign, engaging with the media, developing a radio show, participating in a television show or publishing articles. Some specifically mention skills in social media campaigning, such as initiating a YouTube channel.

Example from Honduras:

“One of the moments that most marked my level of capacity to advocate and mobilise action for sexual and reproductive rights, is through a week-long process that I received in Panama from the Dutch organisation Dance4Life, in which I was empowered in campaign strategies (...). This knowledge has helped me to continue in a self-taught way (...) in the communication area and also to dedicate myself to it in different organisations, where I develop communication strategies and strategic litigation,

transmitting this information acquired with the Youth Network of the Secretary of Youth of RHRN. (...)”

Other stories also describe how people have learned to speak up, increase their communication and negotiation skills, resulting in an **increase of self-confidence**, which enables them to better deal with emotions and setbacks.

Example from Bolivia:

“One day at the University one of my classmates told a professor that homosexuality was not an option, the professor answered him with his arguments. (...) I stood up and told the professor that I was gay. (Being) a lesbian, trans or bisexual is not an option. (Do) you think we would choose a life where you are afraid that your parents will not accept you and where you receive derogatory comments? Not knowing if I will be able to get home without any hits or I live? Because it is something that some of the LGBTI population go through, so it is not an option; it is a sexual orientation and gender identity and I say this because as a teacher you have to handle the terms well. Why else do you confuse your students’.”

3.3.2. Contribution to increased advocacy skills

At consortium level, RHRN has both an International Advocacy Working Group (IAWG) and a Capacity Strengthening Capacity Working Group (CSWG). The CSWG works on a demand-basis, and requests for capacity strengthening come from the countries themselves (the CSWG also works on cross-cutting issues). In 2018, the CSWG developed a ‘Capacity Strengthening Supply Menu’, created to give RHRN platforms a better understanding of the capacity strengthening that is on offer from each global consortium member. For example, ARROW would be the focal point for support with evidence generation for advocacy, and Dance4Life for inclusive youth consultations. The evaluators did not ask the platform members to what extent this menu was used.

The examples of increased advocacy skills, as described in the previous section, are a direct result of RHRN’s capacity strengthening activities. After having shared their experiences, respondents were asked to further explain **which types of capacity strengthening activities contributed to their increased capacities**. They could select multiple answer options, and often all options were selected.

This indicates that for a majority of the 155 respondents, it was a mix of activities that were beneficial for their advocacy skills strengthening. It also shows that not only specific events such as training, but also (and even more so) ongoing collaboration, platform participation and knowledge exchange are important tools and objectives of capacity strengthening for advocacy (see also figure 13). Interestingly, this finding is also supported by the analysis of the improved capacity skills examples (in chapter 3.2.1), where ‘participation in regional or international advocacy events’, ‘joint implementation of national advocacy interventions’ and ‘knowledge exchange within other RHRN platforms or consortium members’ was also referred to in the experiences shared by the respondents.

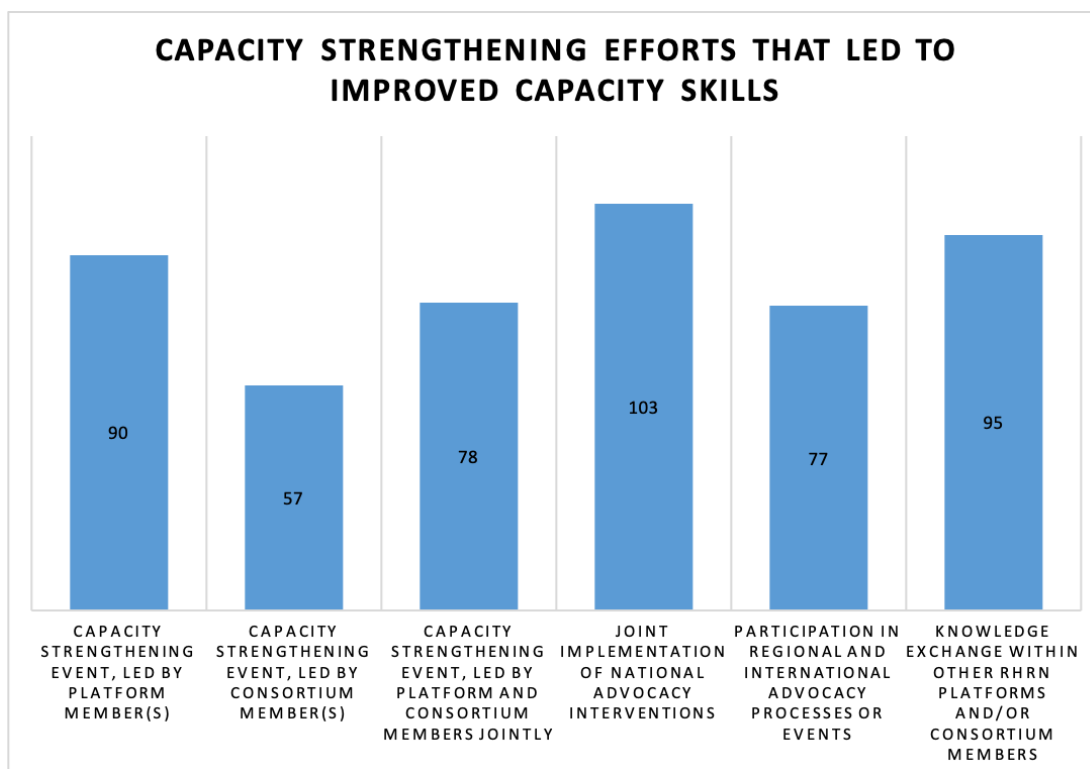


Figure 13. Capacity strengthening efforts that led to improved advocacy skills, according to respondents (multiple-choice question)

Capacity strengthening events were most often selected, as 122 respondents selected at least one of the first three options from this multiple choice question. The events led by platform members (selected 90 times), or jointly organised with consortium members⁵⁹ (selected 78 times) were selected most often, while capacity strengthening events organised by consortium members were selected 57 times.⁶⁰ The topics of these training sessions or events also included preparation for regional or international advocacy or operating gender-transformatively.

A respondent from Nepal explains:

“In September 2019 I participated in universal periodic review (UPR) and gender-transformative trainings. (...) I learned many things, how the UPR process is formulated and how representatives address issues in the UN. (...) Since, I've attended various UPR workshops, where I have recommended on LGBTIQ issues. Gender-transformative approach: This session was so fruitful and really relatable to my work. (...) I've learned so many things which help me for my upcoming activism. (...) So this workshop really teach me how to apply a gender transformative approach in a hetero-normative system.”

Interestingly, **joint implementation of national advocacy interventions** (e.g. through working groups, or participation in national events) is considered most instrumental for improving advocacy skills, as this was selected by 103 respondents as a contributing factor to their increased capacity. The analysis of the strengthened

⁵⁹ Rutgers, ARROW, CHOICE, Dance4life, HIVOS, IPPF AR, LACWHN.

⁶⁰ Please note that since this is a multiple choice question, the type of responses cannot be added up, since respondents could choose one or more answers.

capacity examples already demonstrated this (see Chapter 3.2.1). The increased coordination seems one of the reasons for this. Furthermore, **knowledge exchange between other RHRN platforms or consortium members** (e.g. linking and learning events) are important for capacity strengthening, as this was selected by 95 respondents.

Example from Zimbabwe:

“Joint implementation at national level helped as organisations would work based on capacity and achieve results through coordinated advocacy. The use of working groups made work a bit easier as there is maximum effort (...) on issues that are an area of speciality for the working group organisations. The merging of youth-led and youth-serving organisations strengthened the work and organisations too. This harvested solid mutual respect and appreciation of different areas of specialities. Instead of working towards consuming each other for personal gains or organisational gains the two work hand and glove to achieve a common goal.”

An impressive 77 respondents felt that **participation in regional and international advocacy processes or events** contributed to their increased capacity. The analysis of the strengthened capacity examples already demonstrated this (see Chapter 3.2.1). This aspect of capacity strengthening goes hand in hand with other aspects, such as capacity strengthening events or knowledge exchange. For example, a member in the Caribbean explains that the RHRN platforms allow members to consolidate their resources on a national level for conducting advocacy on a regional and international level to advance SRHR. *“The linking component of the project enabled the platform to form partnerships and alliances with like-minded organisations.”* The respondents indicate that they have come to understand better how advocacy at regional or international level works. There are also examples where this strengthened capacity was passed on to other consortium members.

Example from Zimbabwe:

“I received a lot of capacity building through the SDGs process. Having been part of my country delegation to the UN HLPF, RHRN supported me to be part of the African Regional Forum on Sustainable Development. (...) Not only did I receive the capacity through pre-engagement processes which gave me the capacity to understand how to lobby and negotiate with policy makers at that level, but also direct exposure to the experience. I attended the 2018, 2019 and 2020 AFRSD sessions and also because of this experience managed to train the other consortium members on this process to also prepare them for the other sessions.”

Indonesia:

“One of the most memorable advocacy experiences through RHRN was when I was able to participate in the CSW 2018 meeting in New York. I understand how countries convey each other's problems and solve them by working together. And also I understand how the work and function of the FBB in advocacy work. Although there are not many successes, at least through RHRN I understand the international advocacy mechanism.”

When asked about **the added value of RHRN for capacity strengthening**, and more specifically if the change in advocacy skills would have happened anyway, or only as a result of the RHRN programme, a large number of respondents indicated it was merely a result of the RHRN programme (see figure 14). However, since quite some respondents chose to put their dot more in the middle, this implies that their improved advocacy skills were not fully a result of the RHRN programme, but also would not have happened anyway, without RHRN.

A possible explanation can be that CSO members of the RHRN platforms also collaborated with other organisations and alliances which contributed to capacity strengthening. Also, responses suggest that it wasn't merely the capacity strengthening events that contributed to improved skills, but that especially the day-to-day

participation in the platform itself as a contributing factor - as is clear from the answers that relate to collaboration and knowledge exchange.

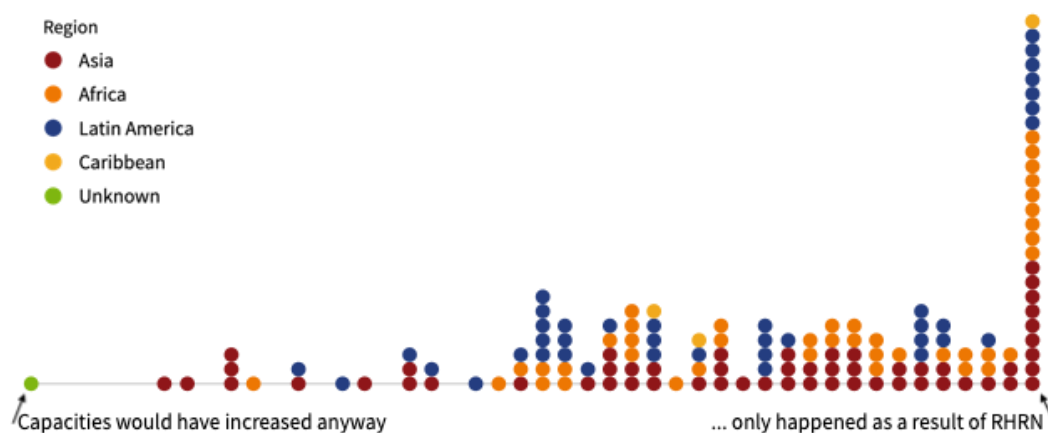


Figure 14. Perceived added value of RHRN to increased capacities

In sum, capacity strengthening in RHRN is characterised by working together in alliances (‘the platform’). This served as a good basis for learning by doing, knowledge exchange, and coordinated advocacy. The platform members value this collaboration as a tool for strengthening their advocacy skills, as well as a strengthened skill in itself: being able to better work together with others, even with those CSOs or people with different backgrounds and objectives (e.g. youth-led, feminist organisations, LGBTI).

Especially the answers regarding improved capacities to operate in regional and international forums are remarkable. Evidently, the RHRN programme has allowed many respondents to be involved in regional/international advocacy, which was valued as informative and meaningful.

3.4. Functioning of RHRN platforms

3.4.1. Perceived diversity, inclusivity and internal collaboration within platforms

The Sprockler inquiry for platform members contained one question about the inclusivity, which was interpreted as inclusive decision-making, and one question about internal collaboration within platforms. Overall, **most respondents appreciate the effectiveness of the internal collaboration as well as the inclusivity** (see cluster A in figure 15). However, there are also quite a number of respondents from various regions who appreciate the effective internal collaboration, but feel that the internal decision-making was to a more or lesser extent dominated by a few partners (see cluster B in figure 15). As the lead organisation was tasked with reporting and finances, it is likely that this has led to internal power dynamics at national level. Time constraints might have hampered inclusive decision making processes, as lead organisations were faced with high ‘upward accountability’ pressure.

Furthermore, another 9 representatives of platform member organisations indicate that the platform was not very effective, nor inclusive in its decision-making (see cluster C in figure 15). These responses are from Honduras (3), Bolivia (3), Pakistan (1) and Uganda (1). Overall, the Sprockler data indicate that platform members from Latin-

American countries are more critical than those from the other regions, most notably when it comes to inclusivity and internal collaboration within the platforms.

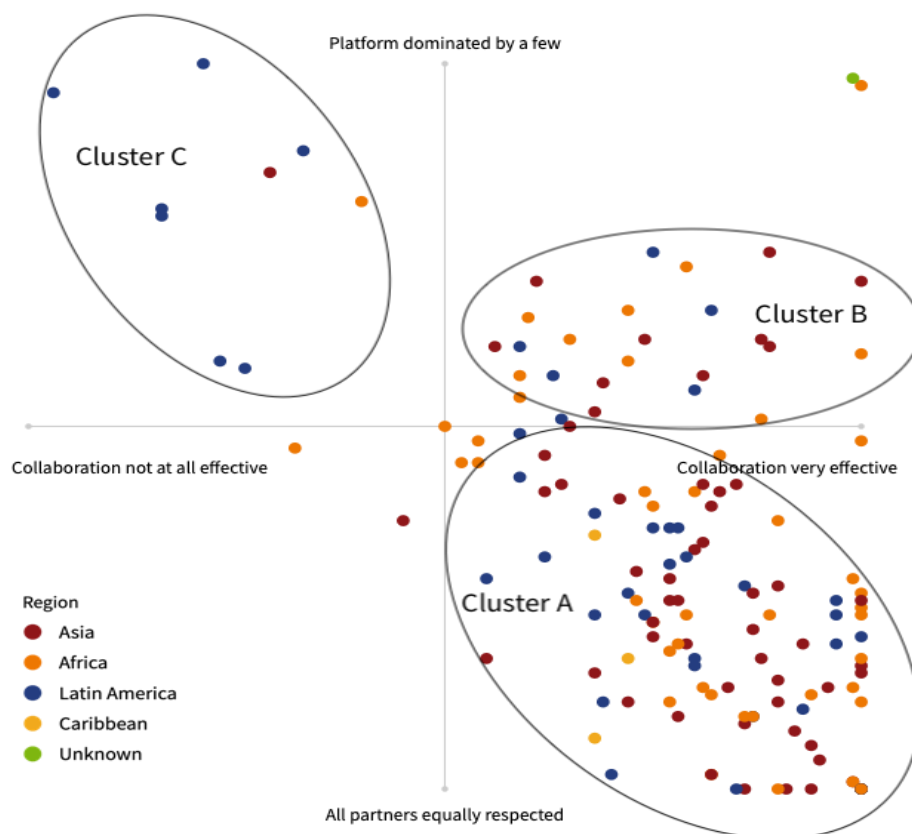


Figure 15. Perceived internal collaboration (x-axis) and inclusivity (y-axis)

The Sprockler inquiry did not ask respondents to elaborate on the above-mentioned answers, which makes it difficult to further explain this critical note. It is therefore advised that RHRN uses this data for an internal dialogue, such as the one held during the Youth Conference organised by RHRN in November 2020, to find out what caused the decision-making to be perceived as less inclusive.

The perception of respondents about the diversity within the platform was not directly addressed in the Sprockler inquiry. However, in terms of gender identity of the respondents themselves, most (58%) identify as female, 30% identify as male and 6% identify as non-binary (see figure 4 in Chapter 2.3). This shows quite a diverse picture. Furthermore, the evaluators looked at the diversity in terms of types of organisations taking part in the platforms. Overall, all types of organisations are well represented across the platforms. Most respondents are working with a youth-led organisation (38%). Another 23% work with a feminist/women’s rights organisation, an LGBTI organisation (20%) or youth-serving organisation (18%) (see also chapter 2.3).

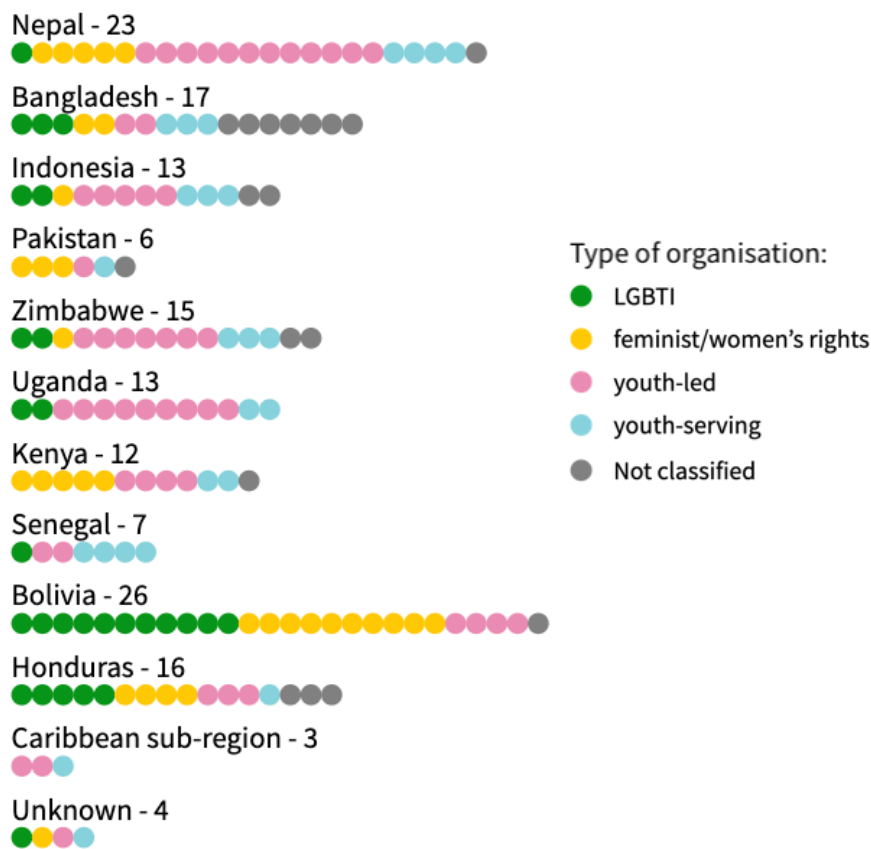


Figure 16. Diversification of types of organisation of respondents

However, we should be careful in terms of drawing conclusions about the platform’s diversity, especially at national level, since not all organisations participated in the Sprockler inquiry, and in some occasions more than one respondent from one organisation participated. However, it does give an overall picture, which shows that youth-led and/or youth-serving organisations are represented in all countries.

Also noteworthy is the fact that diversity, inclusivity and internal collaboration within the platforms did not really come up in the Stories of Change, which shows that related to the outcomes elaborated in the SoCs, these aspects of the platforms were not seen as decisive. The only exception here is the SoC on the outcome in Indonesia, where it was noted that working in a platform enabled one platform member to receive individual moral support from their fellow platform members. Operating in a platform also accelerated access to funding at a time when that was most welcome. At the same time, knowledge gaps between platform members resulted in one of the activists not feeling supported by the platform at a time when she needed that.

3.4.2. Perceived effectiveness of the ‘platform approach’

The Sprockler inquiry also explored whether, in hindsight, working through a ‘platform approach’ is considered the right choice for achieving SRHR advocacy outcomes. The responses show a mixed picture (see figure 17). Most respondents are to a more or lesser extent convinced that the platform was exactly what was needed, others (17%) indicate that something else would have worked better.

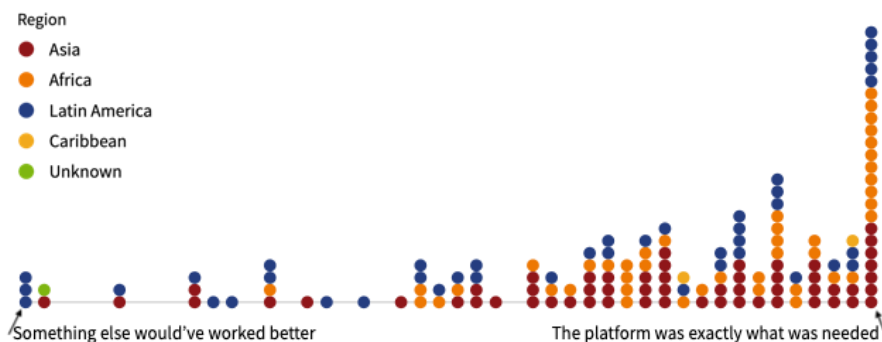


Figure 17. Perceived effectiveness of platform-approach

Respondents who indicate that the platform was exactly what was needed, confirmed the **effectiveness of the platform-approach**, and especially emphasised the importance of collaboration at national level which brought together organisations with different backgrounds (e.g. movement building, advocacy, accountability mechanisms, campaigning, policy communication etc.) and representing various constituencies (LGBTI, women, youth, etc.). They explain that before the existence of the RHRN platform, SRHR organisations were working mostly individually (e.g. Senegal, Kenya, Nepal), less coordinated (e.g. Indonesia) or were even competing with each other for funds and ‘spaces’ (e.g. Zimbabwe). In Bangladesh, RHRN is the only platform that works for ensuring youth SRHR. Many respondents confirm that through RHRN, platform member organisations joined forces and could speak with one voice on SRHR topics. A respondent from Nepal mentioned that, consequently, the government and other stakeholders took SRHR more seriously when approached through the platform than when individual organisations approached them. A respondent from Indonesia stresses that RHRN encouraged them to build networks with other movements, which promoted campaigning and organising masses.

Furthermore, youth advocates, especially in youth led orgs, were enabled to work more strongly under the umbrella of the platform, as they were also guided and supported by the bigger platform member organizations. In the absence of a platform, the impact and breadth of their work, very likely, would have been less. For example, a small youth led organisation in Bangladesh focused strongly on LGBTIQ issues, for which they could not have registered themselves officially. However, the platform gave them the opportunity to advocate on this theme on national, regional and international level.

Creating platforms brought together partners with different capacities and expertise. Not only at individual level capacities were strengthened (as explained in the strengthened capacities examples), but also at organisational level experts complemented each other on several SRHR advocacy issues. As explained by a respondent from Uganda:

“Where an organisation lacks capacity, they would be helped and be supported. This worked not only as an effective approach to achieving results but also as a learning curve or capacity building exercise for most organisations in the platform.”

In sum, the platforms were able to reach more, and also a wider range of decision-makers. As explained by a respondent from Kenya: *“There is power in numbers and togetherness: the impact is better and bigger.”*

The Story of Change from Honduras shows that the RHRN platform provided a unique space for working together. The work agenda and the objectives of the platform were developed by the local organisations and have been carried out by dozens of young people who found in the Right Here Right Now Platform a space to work for their rights together with other young people from different regions and with different contexts.

However, collaboration also comes with challenges. Most challenges mentioned are related to internal coordination, collaboration and decision-making processes. One pitfall seems to be a limited cohesion within some platforms, when organisations fail to internally share their progress or results, or when they only work on their own priority issues, or work in silos. Some respondents from Latin America mentioned that there was a lack of synergy, inclusion and support at national level, which made it difficult to find a balance and work together. A respondent from Honduras further explains: *“Each group only works to solve their specific problems, and the actions of the other axes are not known.”* Another element of concern is the decision-making process, which was not appreciated by all (especially not in the LAC region) or led by a non-functioning host organisation, as was shared by a respondent in Senegal.

Some respondents share points for improvement regarding the effectiveness of the platforms. Suggestions for improvement include **applying a larger variety of advocacy techniques**, such as a stronger focus on campaigning and influencing the public opinion, next to more attention for academic research, and evidence-based advocacy in order to increase effectiveness. One respondent from Bolivia noted that, although RHRN is all about amplifying youth’ voices, there were not that many activities with youth themselves and suggests intensifying activities with youth, such as a youth camp. One respondent from Pakistan also says that the platform should **engage more with key stakeholders like religious leaders, media, academia and also youth**. According to this respondent, especially the religious leaders’ role is very critical for promoting SRHR, but was not recognised sufficiently. This is confirmed by an analysis of the Stories of Change, showing that a focus on engaging religious leaders and media has indeed been a necessary approach to change the perceptions and narrative on SRHR.

3.4.3. Perceived effect on women, youth and LGBTI

According to the responses of the platform member organisation representatives, their advocacy work had a positive effect on the lives of young people and women, and to a lesser extent also of LGBTI. In Africa, there seems to be more attention for young people whereas in Latin America focused a bit more on LGBTI and women,⁶¹ and Asia on all three target groups (see figure 18). This also roughly corresponds with the diversity of the types of organisations in the different platforms (see figure 16 in section 3.4.1). It should be noted that the more limited effect on LGBTI organisations and their constituents, is not surprising as they have a longer way to go. They found their place in the platforms – which can be seen as an important achievement – but not yet to the same extent in the advocacy agenda. These new relationships and integration into the platforms are important steps forward towards a larger impact on the lives of LGBTI.

⁶¹ Since there were only three responses from the Caribbean, reference is made here to Latin America (without the Caribbean), and this conclusion especially applies to Bolivia and Honduras.



Figure 18. Respondents' opinion on effect of platforms on the lives of women, young people and/or LGBTI

Some critical notes, especially from the LAC region, have been recorded as well. A respondent from Honduras felt that the women's agenda was prioritised too much, especially in terms of international and regional RHRN support, whereas inclusion of activities by the LGBTI axis was too limited. A respondent from Bolivia added that promotion and advocacy around SRHR has been very challenging, as it is a process of change that requires time and continued programming. Especially the latter is a relevant issue for the platforms in Latin America and the Caribbean, since RHRN will not continue in these regions. This possibly has coloured the inquiry responses of the representatives of the respective platforms in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Overall, challenges that were mentioned include limited cohesion when organisations fail to internally share their progress or results. Especially in Latin America, some respondents indicate a lack of synergy, inclusion and support at national level. Their suggestions for improvement include: a stronger focus on campaigning and influencing the public opinion; more attention for academic research; more evidence-based advocacy; attention for engaging with key stakeholders like religious leaders, media, academia and youth.

3.5 Interaction between national, regional and international level

3.5.1 Reinforcement between levels

The extent to which RHRNs advocacy at national, regional and international level reinforced each other ranges from 'somewhat', to 'a lot' (see figure 19).

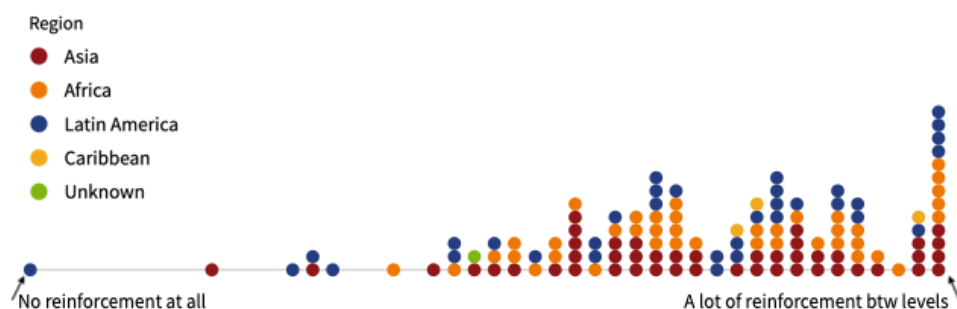


Figure 19. Perceived reinforcement between national, regional and international levels

Most respondents acknowledge that **RHRN’s advocacy at national, regional and international level reinforced each other significantly**. At national level, respondents mentioned how the RHRN platform strengthened skills and capacities of member organisations and their representatives, in order to engage in national strategies, and as such contributed to changes around SRHR at national level. Furthermore, RHRN partners at regional and international level supported this national-level advocacy and pressured the respective governments to consider the advocacy message.

A respondent from Kenya explained the reinforcement of RHRN in international processes:

“RHRN coalition followed up the CPD, ICPD and Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development Goals (ARFSD) recommendations regionally and nationally, to ensure implementation.” Also direct support from international partners (e.g. resources, expertise) enabled and empowered the platforms to increase effectiveness.

Another respondent from Kenya explains:

“Through the joint capacity strengthening sessions, the platforms have been able to learn from each other and jointly push for statements in regional and international spaces as well.”

A respondent from Bangladesh adds:

“The harmony between national, international and regional advocacy has always been so effective and fruitful. The international partners always helped the national platform to share their voice and situation in the international places. Also, regional and international advocacy were enforced successfully by getting the information from a country’s context. RHRN also created a scope of knowledge sharing between countries, which helped a lot. Network building is one of the key components of advocacy. RHRN played a very successful role in terms of networking. Opportunities were created to advocate from grass root to internationally.”

Another respondent from Bolivia:

“Above all, at the national and regional levels, I believe that the RHRN platforms have managed to reinforce each other, because they have allowed for the realisation of various joint actions to strengthen capacities and others to have an impact at the regional level.”

The pressure that international/regional forums can exert on governments becomes clear in some of the Stories of Change. In the SoC from Uganda, one of the interviewees from RHRN says that they trained and built capacity of young people on regional, continental and international windows for advocacy, such as at the East African Community, African Union, UN, and Universal Periodic Reviews, because *“we know that when pressure comes from the top, sometimes governments tend to work faster.”*

An interviewed parliamentarian in Zimbabwe says something similar when she explains why advocacy at the Southern African Development Community (SADC) level is so important.

“The commitment on safe abortion at SADC Parliament level makes it easy for us to convince other Parliamentarians in Zimbabwe. I can challenge the Zimbabwe Speaker of Parliament to say, ‘you signed at SADC level.’ Or if the SADC adopted it, Zimbabwe is obliged to approve the review of ToP (Termination of Pregnancy) Act”.

A youth SRHR advocate from Pakistan, who participated in the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in New York, said that the internationally coordinated process of the Sustainable Development Goals, has made her government more accountable vis a vis the national CSOs. Her participation in the Voluntary National Review of her country forced government officials to think about SRHR. *“Thanks to the SDG-process we have put it on the agenda of our government, they have to do something with it.”* In very practical terms, the SDG-commitments made by the Pakistani government, for example, allowed national Platform members in Pakistan to (carefully) address Comprehensive Sexuality Education in public schools. Yet, the youth advocate also indicates that interactions on an international platform are difficult to follow-up on a national level. She indicates that Pakistani government officials reacted to her statement at the HLPF, but assurances of a follow-up once back in Pakistan did not materialise.

During the validation meeting that was held as part of this evaluation, RHRN participants from all parts of the world mentioned that, often, the space to engage at the regional or international level is good, but that it is more difficult to follow-up at the national level. Examples that were given are that young people, and particularly young women, are often not taken seriously at the national level. Another issue that was mentioned was that there is a lack of awareness among national actors, including government, about regional/international processes and commitments (e.g. UPR, SDGs), which makes follow-up for the RHRN partners difficult.

Respondents who indicated that **reinforcement between levels has been limited** explained that knowledge was not well distributed across all levels within the network (Asia). A respondent from Africa tells us that reinforcement could have been better if there had been more cross-learning and joint activities between countries in the consortium, and if individual grants had been applied (with central coordination), instead of a combined pool of funding. Also, it was mentioned that there was a limited variety in the people participating in international spaces.

One respondent from Bolivia explains:

“Advocacy and capacity building spaces have been very important to learn about international processes and their linkage or implementation at national and local levels. RHRN has undoubtedly contributed to getting more people, especially young people, involved and able to influence these spaces in a better way. However, the appropriation of this knowledge and its implementation has not been generalised in many of the member organisations, and many people who have strengthened their capacities did not share this with other members.”

During the aforementioned validation meeting, it was also mentioned that receiving timely information from the Consortium partners was a challenge. There is limited time to select young people and prepare them in time for the regional/international advocacy event. In addition, after an important advocacy event has taken place, the Consortium members have to move on to another event, and there is no time to support follow-up at the national level. It was said that these challenge shall be taken into account in the next RHRN programme.

3.5.2 Support of regional and international RHRN partners

We asked respondents about the extent to which regional and international RHRN partners supported the work of their national RHRN platform. As can be seen in figure 20, response patterns on regional and on international support are similar, with a large majority (about 85%) being **very positive and appreciative about the**

support received from both regional and international RHRN partners. Examples of support are: funding participation in international conferences and advocacy at UN level and assistance through the UPR process, next to workshops and capacity building trainings about a wide range of topics (e.g. storytelling, Theory U, power relations, social entrepreneurship, implementation of ‘Meaningful and Inclusive Youth Participation’, opposition management and safety and security).

A representative from a LGBTBI member organisation in Bolivia explains:

“Above all, it has been a reciprocal process of learning from experiences, from tours, from experiences, from the stories of each region regarding the issues that interested us. Support networks have been established above all to strengthen our demands and expectations. It has generated important exchanges of knowledge, debates, studies, research etc.”

A respondent from Zimbabwe mentioned:

“(…) the support was great and provided on demand. Both the regional and international teams provided guidance well. The only challenge was the assumption that being in the international team or regional team means you are far more knowledgeable than the national team.”

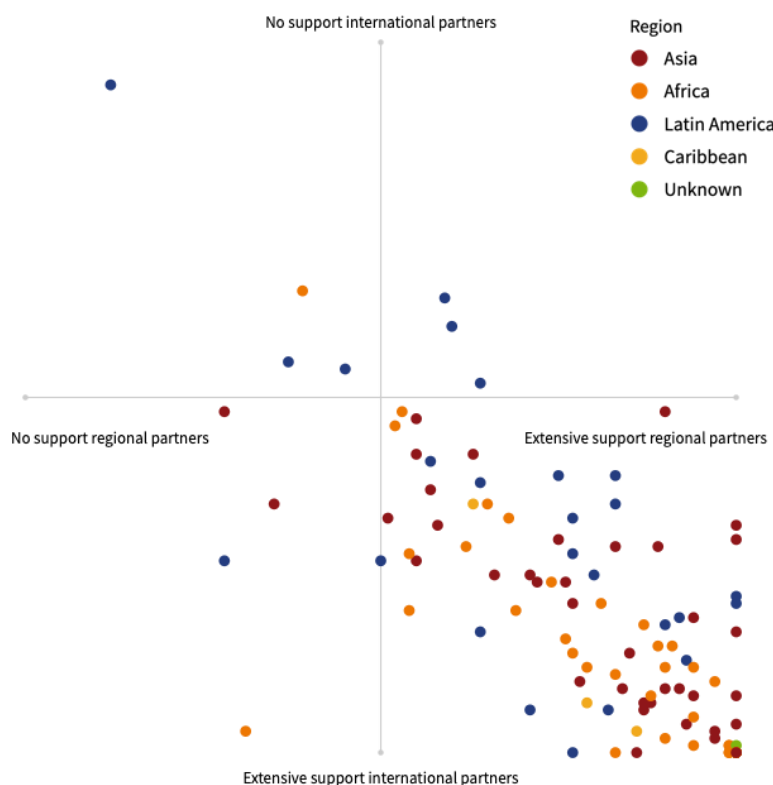


Figure 20. Perceived support from regional (x-axis) and international (y-axis) RHRN partners

Several critical responses reflect on administrative bureaucracy at international level (e.g. delays in approval of annual operational plans and budgets resulting in delayed implementation) as well as limited synergy and contradictory directions, especially at the start of the programme. A respondent from Indonesia mentioned “Some regional strategy workshops were too short, resulting in a feeling that certain strategy decisions were imposed on the teams.”

In sum, the advocacy efforts of RHRN have been reinforced significantly through engagement of the various levels within the programme. RHRN partners at regional and international level strengthened national-level advocacy. Limiting elements indicated by respondents include: knowledge was not always well distributed across all levels within the network; lack of cross-learning and joint activities between countries; limited variety in the people participating in international spaces.

Actors involved in the national platforms are also very positive and appreciative about the support received from both regional and international RHRN partners. Critical responses especially reflect on administrative bureaucracy at international level as well as limited synergy and contradictory directions.

3.6 Sustainability

In terms of perceived sustainability, platform member representatives (Sprockler inquiry respondents) are mildly positive about the extent to which they think the changes that the RHRN platform contributed to, will last in the future (see figure 21). As the inquiry asked for ‘changes’ in general, no distinction can be made between changes in terms of policy outcomes, strengthened capacity or networking.

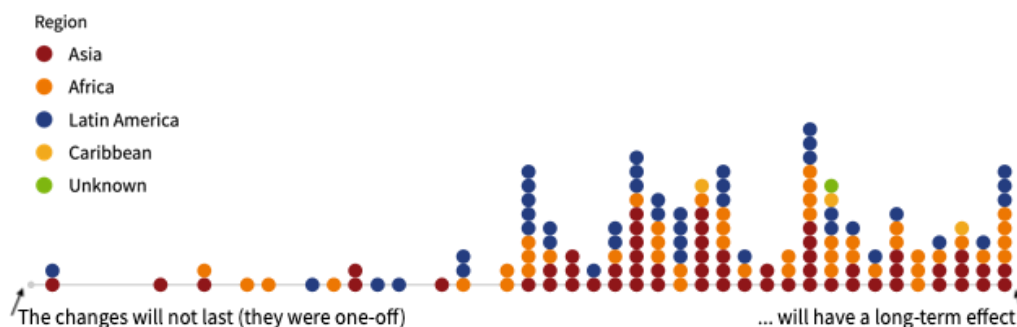


Figure 21. Expectation of sustainability

An inspiring example can be taken from Nepal: “Solidarity between the platform members will remain even after the termination of the platform. The platform has helped in mutual learning and sharing. RHRN platform also played a crucial role in holding each organisation accountable as they all had to work in a group.”

Another respondent from Zimbabwe explains: “Regardless of the conflicts, the consortium will always come together to do the work.”

As part of the outcome substantiation and Story of Change process, external stakeholders were also asked to rate the sustainability of the outcome under review. In total 23 external stakeholders reviewed 12 outcomes. A convincing majority (20) of these 23 stakeholders rated the outcome they were reviewing, as long-lasting. One of the 3 stakeholders that rated their outcome as moderate sustainable, refers to Pakistan, a country that scores poorly in providing access to basic SRHR services, such as access to contraception, counselling on family planning and sexuality education, especially to unmarried young people. The outcome related to the establishment of 17 youth health centers in the Punjab province in 2019 is noteworthy. However, one of the external stakeholders who was interviewed for the Story of Change for Pakistan says:

“The centers are actually a door ajar to address sexuality issues among the young”. The sustainability of the youth health centers, however, depends to a large extent on continued financing by the Punjab provincial authorities.

Furthermore, based on the Stories of Change, some more observations about the sustainability of the outcomes can be made. The Honduran SoC was based on the outcome that the Supreme Court and the Constitutional Chamber admitted the appeal of unconstitutionality on the right to same-sex marriage. This was celebrated as a success according to the interviewees, as, for the first time, the Supreme Court of Justice opened a possibility to recognise equal marriage. The story, however, shows the frustration of the two couples who, two years after filing the lawsuit, still have not seen any progress in their case. Although a court ruling on the unconstitutionality of same sex marriage, would be a very sustainable outcome, the admittance of the appeal by the court is not really sustainable.

The agreement of the Parliamentary Task Force on the SDGs in Pakistan to allow participation of NGOs in the national review process of the SDGs will not likely be withdrawn, as it is part of an internationally agreed process. It is, however, not certain that participation of NGOs will actually result in policy influence and in more progressive stances of the Pakistani government on SRHR issues.

The SoC on the Caribbean sub-region highlights the introduction of CSE in schools in Jamaica. It is clear that this result is quite controversial in Jamaican society. It is significant that officials advocating for CSE had to do so covertly. Sustainability of SHRH outcomes in Jamaica depends to a large extent on further acceptance by large sections of society and that will require a long-term process of engaging media and convincing, for example, religious leaders.

In Uganda, the Minister of Health initially rejected the launch of the national guidelines and standards for SRHR services. Although RHRN platform members who had advocated to get the guidelines approved were disappointed when the Minister first rejected the guidelines, the extra efforts to get the guidelines accepted in a second try probably increased the sustainability of the outcome. Between September 2017, when the guidelines were rejected, and June 2018, when they finally were approved, the SRHR activists succeeded in engaging many individuals and institutions for the guidelines, which in some cases, were redrafted to eliminate certain words that had been a bone of contention. After the final approval of the guidelines, the matter of sustainability is now mainly an issue of implementation.

The sustainability of the recently launched School Health Policy, described in the Story of Change from Kenya, was strengthened by the inclusiveness of the working group that drafted the new policy. The resources necessary for implementation of the policy were not the issue, as according to one interviewee The Ministry of Health had already secured funding. In his view, “what is most critical (for sustainability) is the buy-in from the implementers at the school level”.

The outcomes described in the Stories of Change in Bangladesh and Zimbabwe are limited to favourable articles in national newspapers on ‘sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression’ (including the rights of the so-called Hijra people) in Bangladesh and safe abortion in Zimbabwe. These are rather early level outcomes, and as such not very sustainable. That is not to say that these outcomes are not relevant. The position of Hijra people in Bangladesh is extremely marginal, sensitising journalists to write more favourably on the group in society is an important step towards recognition. Likewise, it was an important step in Zimbabwe that two mainstream media outlets reported on the need to broaden circumstances under which abortion is permitted and also to ensure the availability of safe, legal abortion services and post-abortion care.

And finally, of course, RHRN has helped build the capacity of the platform members (see Section 3.3.1), which is an important aspect to ensure continued efforts and knowledge to further the SRHR agenda, even after RHRN has ended.

One of the respondents in Sprockler says:

“The strengthened capacity helped to provide various opportunities for youth representatives to contribute to other relevant initiatives. I feel that now we have ample information and knowledge on the issue, and that we can advocate for the cause, which definitely won’t stop even if the project ends. We shall keep working for the issue and advocating for the required needs further honing our knowledge and skill set.”

In sum, programmes in the field of SRHR meet a number of challenges that might hamper longer-term effects. However, the programmes’ members often have a great, often personal, dedication to furthering the SRHR agenda in their country and will continue to find ways to fight for their objectives. The capacity and relations that were built will support organisations in that. The challenge for the programme is to make sure knowledge is not lost with staff turnover and that members also have the know-how and the means to monitor and follow-up longer-term changes.

3.7 Reflection on the Theory of Change

In this paragraph, the four pathways and their coherence are reflected upon.

The evaluators found it doable to plot the outcomes clearly along the four pathways of change identified in the Theory of Change. The ToC tree has a fairly logical and realistic flow from roots, to trunk, and via the main branches and twigs up to the leafy crown. That being said, some remarks can be made.

In **pathway 1** it is assumed that when media and public influential persons are strengthened (by RHRN) to positively express themselves related to SRHR, this also increases support for SRHR within society at large. To what extent this is the case is not assessed by this evaluation, since the Outcome Harvesting methodology that was applied by RHRN is not suitable for capturing changes that relate to attitudes among the general population, such as increased support for SRHR within society at large. The upper part of pathway 1 falls outside of the scope of this final evaluation. Hence, using OH, no conclusions can be drawn about the extent to which public expressions of influential actors and bodies (both governmental and non-governmental) and the media in favour of SRHR, has indeed also increased support for SRHR within societies at large.

In addition, societal changes are difficult to be brought about, and are often a result of an interplay between many different factors. For the ToC of the programme, it is suggested to ‘move’ societal changes up from intermediate outcome-level to long-term outcome-level, as the wording (societal change) implies impact-level change, thus changed in the everyday lives of people. On the other hand, seeking support from the ‘public’ to put pressure on decision makers could be regarded as a valid campaign strategy, and could then best be added to the list of interventions implemented to achieve policy change, and not appear as intended outcome at all. A future ToC could focus more in detail on developing a media strategy, or a strategy to work with champions to create public support, and it would be good to separate the two, as during the analysis it was found that the outcomes of those two groups are quite distinct.

It is assumed in **pathways 2 and 4** that increased involvement of CSOs and young people in policy and decision making (increased civic space) contributes to increased knowledge, skills and political will of these decision makers. However, at national level (**pathway 2**), the evaluators found little evidence of a relationship between the outcomes reported about increased civic engagement on the one hand, and outcomes related to political will. The political will outcomes at national level seem to have been achieved by platforms directly influencing advocacy targets, rather than through the structural involvement of CSOs and young people in mechanisms, such as technical working groups. Especially meaningful youth participation has proven to be challenging, and even more so for the platforms in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. In **pathway 4**, at the regional and international level, this relationship seems more evident, since CSOs and young people have directly influenced advocacy targets by participating in regional and international events. It is therefore advised to regard increased

civic space as a separate pathway, whereby any outcomes achieved that are signs of increased civic space can be a contribution to specific policy outcomes, but often also the final result.

There are quite a large number of outcomes on 'increase of political will' and on 'policy adoption'. By removing Increased civic space from **pathway 2** and putting it into a separate pathway, the 'political will' outcomes can be 'moved down' the pathway, which is a more appropriate place, because political will outcomes can, at times, be achieved quite early on. That implies that the policy adoption outcomes can also be moved one level down, from long-term outcome level to intermediate outcome level, and will therefore fall within RHRN's sphere of influence. Actual policy implementation can be kept at long-term outcome level though, but all other policy outcomes, such as drafting of policies, policy adaptations, roadmaps, ensuring budgets for SRHR, developing monitoring and evaluation tools for policy implementation can then be moved down to intermediate outcome level.

Regarding **pathway 4**, the evaluators are impressed by the large number of outcomes at regional and international level, which has surely been achieved in close collaboration with the national platforms, next to other actors operating in this field of work. However, the link between pathway 2 and 4 were not clear in theory, and also not found during the analysis. In future programming, assumptions underlying the link between advocacy processes at national versus regional/international level could be clarified a bit more. Further light could be shed on how global processes are expected to be supportive at national level and/or vice versa.

The outcome harvesting process also revealed outcomes related to **relationship building** that are not made explicit in the ToC. As positive engagements and relationships between actors are often 'the glue' for change, this is considered an important type of change that could be included in a future ToC. The platform approach, as is currently described in **pathway 3**, could be expanded to include also building relations, or working in coalitions and alliances, with like-minded organisations.

Still much to do for SHRH in Pakistan

Youth Friendly Spaces in Punjab



In 2019, after extensive lobbying by RHRN members, seventeen youth health centres were established in the Punjab province of Pakistan. Here, young Pakistani can get information about all matters regarding sex. Hopefully they will not have to face the experiences of the 15-year old pregnant girl that sought help at the centre in Lahore. The seventeen centres are a big step forward, but a mere drop in the ocean compared to the actual needs in the young country of Pakistan.

Sex is not a frequent topic of conversation between parents in Pakistan and their children. That is an understatement. “As a result, many young people in Pakistan get into harmful activities with sometimes disastrous outcomes”, says a young (29) postgraduate therapist working in one of the recently established youth-friendly health centres in Lahore, Punjab, during an online interview. The therapist quickly finds an example. “Some time ago, a 15-year old girl

came to our centre. She turned out to be pregnant. When we talked to her, she admitted that she had never been educated about menstruation by her parents or other family members. Instead she talked about it to girlfriends, who shared wrong information about menstruation and about fertility. Before long the girl got pregnant.”

The example is one of many. The health centres that have been recently opened cater to the needs of many young people in the region. “We understand the issues; we are here to help the youth with practical solutions and guidance.” An important bottleneck is the cultural sentiments of many people regarding youth and sexuality. As the postgraduate therapist explains: “We need to learn more on how to reach out to communities without offending them and without making them feel vulnerable.”

The creation of youth-friendly health centres was one of the targets of the Family Planning Association of Pakistan (FPAP), a RHRN platform member. The road was not easy: social stigma associated with sexual and reproductive health and rights proved a major challenge. FPAP engaged in numerous lobby meetings with the Population Welfare Department (PWD) and other stakeholders. Several relevant officials and technical consultants were encouraged to advocate for an exclusive budget for this purpose. The efforts paid off: In 2019, the PWD launched the so-called *Costed Implementation Plan of Punjab*, allowing the establishment of 17 Adolescent Health Centres. Considering the context, many stakeholders reacted that a mere 17 centres was just a drop in the ocean. In

the words of Ahmad, youth president (governing board) of FPAP: “Youth constitute a major fraction of the total population of Punjab. Allocating funds for just 17 health centres for such a huge number is nothing. We wanted to address the issue at a larger level but owing to agendas of the government, limited availability of funds for youth and the stigma and taboos attached with the topic of SRHR, it remained a consistent challenge to achieve the aim.”

Something fishy

But not only the limited number of centres is an issue. The situation of the centres is problematic as well. Sarfaraz Kazmi, the regional head of FPAP Punjab, explains that the actual use of the centres is often hampered by their location. “The youth centres are located in the existing family planning centres. This is a problem. When we saw that in some centres the number of visitors was less than expected, we organized a discussion with the community members. A midwife explained that the main entrance of the centre was facing the central marketplace of the town. Someone entering the centre was plainly visible to all people in the market. That is not something you want. If someone sees his or her niece, or the daughter of their neighbour entering the centre, people may think there is something fishy. Understanding this, we opened another entrance at the back and quite soon the number of visitors increased from merely a couple daily to some 35-40 visitors.” Another matter was the gender of the therapists and counsellors. FPAP proposed a model of male and female counsellors for both male and female clients. But PWD instead focused on hiring female staff. Sarfaraz Kazmi: “For some male adolescents this is problematic as they do not feel comfortable discussing their issues with someone from the opposite gender. We as FPAP have tried to cover this by initiating our own helpline where young men can discuss sex matters with male counsellors.

To address the other flaws in the recent youth health centres, FPAP engaged in additional lobby efforts to increase the allocated budget for the centres and to increase the number of centres to a level more appropriate for the population they are catering to. According to Kazmi, a well-designed implementation plan is missing. “There is no reference to periodic

capacity building and refreshers of the staff, accountability mechanism including monitoring and measuring progress and productivity is also not touched upon.” He adds with a hint of sarcasm: “It is like they have developed a religious scripture around the needs of youth and then assume it will never need updating.”

Door ajar

In spite of the limitations in the execution of the CIP, health centre therapist says: “The centres are actually a door ajar to address sexuality issues among the young. We try to reach out to target groups through schools, local nurses and doctors to sensitize the high school students and patients and do the referrals to the centre. This mechanism is a long process but it is slowly picking up pace. Prior to our sessions with adolescents at schools we sensitise the school staff as well. But even if we are very careful and sensitive to cultural sentiments, we are still told to not to talk about certain things openly. They fear that the local community won’t like it and it will do harm to the reputation of the school. In such scenarios we struggle to increase the outreach of the centre.”

She continues: “The centres target adolescents from 12 to 19 years, but here at our centre we welcome youngsters of 20 or even 22 years of age as well. They recently crossed the target age but they are going through the turmoil of sexuality issues resulting in emotional and psychological problems.”

All stakeholders interviewed for this story shared mixed feelings about the outcome: yes, the spaces are functional, but there is much more to be done to make them sustainable and effectively cater to the needs of the youth and the community.

- **Outcome 2.1** Population Welfare Department Punjab launched the Costed Implementation Plan of Punjab which includes initiatives for youth (i.e. the establishment of 17 Adolescent Health Centers and trained female clinical psychologists), whereas before there were no official documents by Punjab Government that catered to young people’s SRHR needs to such lengths, as the Punjab Youth policy does not address this issue in detail.

Donny and Denilson get married

You must really love someone ...

She crosses the dangerous streets of Tegucigalpa and Comayagüela, the twin cities that are the Honduran capital. In her backpack she carries shiny clothes, heels and makeup. That's her identity, sheltered in that bag. She is on high alert to the dangers surrounding her and she tries to stay invisible to safely navigate a terrain full of hate and violence.

■ Outcomes Honduras

On February 9, 2019, the Magistrates of the Constitutional Chamber of the Judicial Branch of Honduras admitted the appeal of unconstitutionality on the right to same-sex marriage, which was openly discussed for the first time, for their study and legal consultation, which was filed a month before by the representatives of the LGBT strategic objective.

On October, 2018, the Supreme Court of Justice in Honduras accepted the unconstitutionality appeal presented by Donny Reyes and Alex Sorto from RHRN Honduras, to make evident that the right of same-sex couples to equal marriage is being violated and that the state is not responding to the mandate in the OC24, whereas in the past these types of actions were rejected.

When she arrives at Arcoíris' (rainbow in Spanish) headquarters, everything changes. Fear turns to hope, and the embrace of sisters and brothers indicates that she has reached a safe harbour. In the

grey landscape of Honduras' capital, the colourful office of the LGTBI organization has become a beacon. The building is the centre where trans women, gay men, lesbian women and bisexuals come together to care for each other and demand their rights. Joint solidarity is needed, because people who break the ultraconservative norms imposed by those in power will endure injustice, violence and discrimination.

In October 2018, the Supreme Court of Justice received a petition of unconstitutionality filed by citizens Donny Reyes and Alex Sorto. Reyes and Sorto argued that their constitutional rights were violated as they were not allowed to marry their (male) partners. In 2018, their case was celebrated as a success, as for the first time the Supreme Court accepted such a petition. In earlier cases similar requests had been rejected.

But two years later, not much progress has been made. The body of Magistrates has still not given an answer, but social pressure is increasing and the action itself has become a milestone in the struggle. If the response of the Honduran justice system – whenever it comes – is negative, the case will go to international bodies where it has a much better chance of achieving a change in the current regulations.

My partner

In Arcoíris' office we talked to Donny Reyes, who is also the director of this association, and his partner Denilson Barrientos. “Will I have to endure this appeal for 20 years?” Donny asks rhetorically. “We know that justice here is slow. I was not worried about problems or arguments with my partner, but the most difficult thing was to ‘out’ him. His family is quite conservative and even though they accept us, we didn't want to expose them in front of the whole country. “



Donny (l) and Denilson at the Arcoiris office

Initially the unconstitutionality appeal was filed in the name of an organisation, Donny explains. “But the Court denied it, arguing that we have no way to prove that we are representatives of the LGTBI community. So we changed it, and filed as individuals. And this time it was accepted.”

Donny explains that he filed the lawsuit for different reasons. “Not being married affects us directly. For example, when my partner went to register in the Contribution, Savings and Pension Regime, and wanted to inscribe me as his beneficiary, as his partner, they didn't accept it. And on another occasion, when we wanted to take out a mortgage loan, they didn't allow it either.

“So we don't have access to having a home because we are not recognised as a couple. That is not fair”

So we don't have access to having a home because we are not recognised as a couple. That is not fair,” Reyes explained. “Denilson is my partner, the person with whom I have shared the last five years of my life, who knows all my misfortunes and triumphs, and that is why we made this decision. We know it is a risk because it also makes us visible. By doing so, we will have to face a conservative society. Our step may even generate violence. But after evaluating the pro's and con's, we took the risk.”

The leader of the LGTBI community stops for a moment, and looks around the photos and memories in his office, as if to find answers in them. “I have faced tougher situations: I have been in jail, I have been forced into exile, I have been a victim of cruel treatment, physical and sexual violations. What else can happen to me? This has happened to me in the past, let it give me strength to face this situation now.”

Right Here Right Now

Alex Sorto is the director of the Centre for Development and Cooperation LGTBI (SOMOS CDC). Together with his partner he is also a plaintiff against the State of Honduras. “The same-sex marriage case has been in court for almost two years now. The constitution, however, guarantees that these cases must be resolved expeditiously. This delay is a violation of human rights, not only of our rights, but for thousands of citizens, by omission. We are all waiting for a response.”

Arcoiris and SOMOS CDC are two of the fifteen organizations that make up the Right Here Right Now (*Derechos Aquí y Ahora*; RHRN) Platform in Honduras. The platform, that began in 2017, brought together feminist organizations, LGTBI and youth networks, whose objectives were to promote an anti-discrimination law to protect the rights of the LGTBI population, to debate a proposal for the decriminalization of abortion, to campaign against the Ministerial Agreement 2744 that prohibits the use and commercialization of the Emergency Contraceptive Pill, and to promote sexuality education programs at all educational levels. The

platform proved a unique space of coordination, to service many agendas and demanding rights for a diverse group of people. The work agenda and the objectives of the platform were developed by the local organizations and have been carried out by dozens of young people who found in the Right Here Right Now Platform a great space to know and work for their rights together with other young people from different regions and with different contexts. Natalia Lozano, coordinator of RHRN Honduras: “The organizations said what they needed, they developed a country plan uniting the different priorities of each target group population. And that is the backbone of the RHRN project: a space where comprehensive sexuality education, contraceptive pills, abortion and LGBTI rights coincide.”

A hard road

Honduras has a history and tradition of homophobia, machismo and violence. The group in power uses the government, the media, and even the churches to attack and control everything that does not conform to their values.

“I have been in the LGBTI movement since I was 15 years old, and I have become an adult in this daily struggle. But I am afraid nonetheless.”

“I have been in the LGBTI movement since I was 15 years old, and I have become an adult in this daily struggle. But I am afraid nonetheless. We have experienced threat, persecution, harassment by the repressive forces of the state and even assassination attempts. And yet, we went to court to accuse the State of Honduras of violating us, of not recognizing us, of treating us as second-class citizens, and to make it clear that we will no longer remain silent”, emphasized Sorto, who also coordinates the LGTBI axis of Right Here Right Now.

“Confronting the Government of Honduras this way, really is an attack on the patriarchal system, the macho system”, says Alex Sorto. “The system demeans us as people and puts us in second place. We experience discrimination in the workplace, in education, in health. Article 60 of our Constitution assures that we are all equal before the law, that all

acts of discrimination are punishable and that judicial authorities are there to enforce the law. And exactly in the case of the right to marriage this right is violated.”

Both Sorto and Reyes explained that it is very difficult to engage with the State of Honduras, that each power of the State has a particular challenge, but it has been in the Judicial Branch where they have found the least openness. According to experts, this is due to the fact that both in the Executive and the Legislative Branches there is pressure to at least show openness, even if only for electoral purposes. The justice system, on the other hand, feels free from pressure or citizen scrutiny.

The Court

Alex Sorto is hopeful: “We presented two pleas, equal marriage was the first one and some months later we presented a case for the right to choose one’s own gender identity. I really believe that the Court is going to call for the truth, for equality, and for the recognition of human rights. I believe in the end the Court will order the National Congress to legalise marriage between couples of the same sex.” But the other side also made themselves heard. When Sorto and Reyes went to present their appeal there were reporters from several news agencies and evangelical groups who requested a hearing with the magistrates. They demanded the court to deny the right of marriage to homosexuals. Sorto: “We also requested to be heard, as a right of reply. The Court agreed and we explained our claims, and we told them what actions we were taking and where we were going. The president replied that the Court would study the case; that she was going to give her sentence soon. It would be a sentence based on law, not on religion, she assured us. She added that we should have confidence that justice would prevail for our people.”

Regional jurisprudence may provide hope for Reyes and Sorto: there is an important precedent from the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) that ruled in favour of the equal rights of all people in Costa Rica and sentenced the State to allow same-sex marriages. If the Court in Honduras would deny the claim for the legalization of same-sex marriage, that ruling could be overturned if the case goes to international courts.

For Alex Sorto, Donny Reyes and their partners, the political struggle is also a deeply personal one. They are risking so much in their wish to get married. You must really love someone to be willing to give so much for him.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

Paragraph 4.1 brings the findings of the evaluation together to answer the overall evaluation question: *To what extent did RHRN achieve its expected outcomes as stipulated in its Theory of Change?* The conclusions are structured along the operationalised evaluation questions that form the heart of this evaluation.

In paragraph 4.2, the evaluation team provides a number of recommendations.

4.1. Conclusions

Outcomes achieved

Evaluation question 1. The RHRN Theory of Change presents a number of short-term, intermediate and long-term outcomes. To what extent have these outcomes been reached?

In total, the evaluation team has identified 317 harvested outcomes. Some 30% of these are 'long-term outcomes': changes in SRHR legislation and policies. 112 outcomes (35%) are at intermediate level, involving increased political will of decision makers at both (sub)national and regional and international level. 'Increased space for civil society and young people' (both at national and international level) and 'strengthened public support for advocacy' account for 31% of outcomes. In all, the evaluators are impressed with the quantity of outcomes. Especially regarding a highly controversial theme as SRHR for young people, and more specifically topics such as access to safe abortion, LGBTIQ rights, CSE and access to youth-friendly SRH services, the sheer number of changes in policies and legislations is impressive. Out of the 317 outcomes, 227 are achieved at (sub)national level. An impressive 90 outcomes relate to the regional and international level.

1.a. To what extent has RHRN contributed to stronger public support for advocacy?

Transforming the 'narrative' on SRHR and increasing the public support for the advocacy efforts of CSOs is an important gateway towards future policy and practice changes. A notable strategy to change the narrative is to work through change agents (or 'champions'). This strategy includes targeting political and community leaders, other influential individuals (e.g. celebrities), and also media and individual journalists. Several outcomes involve media outlets (both old and new media) reporting favourably about SRHR issues. One-off news items or background features in suitable media can contribute significantly to specific, short-term campaigns. In the long run, however, establishing steady relationships with knowledgeable and responsible journalists is a more sustainable way forward. In some cases, national platforms invested in sensitising groups of journalists on SRHR issues. Such efforts are specifically useful if they are the beginning of longer-term relationships. In all, the evaluators have not really been able to assess if the strategy of working with change agents (or 'champions') and the media was fully utilised. It could be worthwhile to have a closer look at the context and conditions under which working with influencers did or did not contribute to an increase of public support, and develop a more elaborate and contextualised strategy on this.

1.b. To what extent has RHRN contributed to creating spaces for civil society and young people?

Quite a few outcomes refer to creating space for civil society and (to a lesser extent) young people. In some cases, additional civic space was conquered through the linking of national and international advocacy (see also the conclusions on evaluation question 5). In most cases, the space created for young people is a result of national platforms using the existing civic space to give a voice to young people. Meaningful youth participation is one of the guiding principles of RHRN. The evaluators have seen how youth are involved in decision-making, in voicing their concerns on issues regarding their sexual and reproductive health and rights. Promoting meaningful youth participation is challenging. Inviting a young person to participate in a one-off meeting, or to have a youth deliver a statement during a conference is not necessarily meaningful. For their role to be truly meaningful, youth must be allowed to participate fully in policy making that concerns them. Youth should also be facilitated to fill their role to the maximum capacity. The evaluators saw inspiring examples of how youth is capacitated to participate fully in committees and delegations. There is room for improvement in the selection procedure of youth representatives and in securing that the youth participants can raise their voice with confidence at a relevant platform.

1.c. To what extent has RHRN contributed to increased knowledge, skills and political will of decision makers?

Expressions of political will are notoriously volatile, but they are often an important first step. In that regard the substantial amount of outcomes indicating changed political will are a major advancement: political will is a gateway towards changes in policy or practice. RHRN has been successful in implementing its advocacy strategies, both at national platform level, as well as at regional and international levels. But as always, the proof of the pudding is in the eating. The evaluation has seen that in a number of cases, the expressions of political will have indeed been followed by changes in policy or legislation. In many cases this will involve CSOs putting continuous pressure on politicians and government officials to put their money where their mouth is: to tie promises to a concrete time frame, or to extract additional promises, e.g. regarding accompanying budgets to back up an otherwise vague plan.

1.d. To what extent has RHRN contributed to more progressive and inclusive SRHR legislation and policies?

The same call goes for the considerable and impressive number of policy and legislation change outcomes at all levels. The evaluators want to emphasise that this is an impressive achievement, especially considering the sensitivity of most SRHR topics (e.g. safe abortion), and the challenging contexts in which the platforms find themselves. However, the value of a changed policy or legislation is to a large extent defined by the way it is implemented. Implementation is the highest level of outcomes identified in the ToC. It is no surprise that the number of implementation outcomes is relatively low: the timeframe of five years is in most cases too short to move from advocacy and influencing efforts, to policy making, and to implementation. It is also very possible that implementation outcomes happen without interference of RHRN platform members, and are as such not 'recognised' as outcomes that RHRN contributed to. Implementation is, however, an essential step towards impact and sustainable change. So continuing attention for, and monitoring of implementation is called for.

1.e. Were there any unexpected outcomes or setbacks?

Evidently, COVID-19 has greatly affected programme implementation in 2020. However, this evaluation did not assess the effects of Covid on the outcomes reported through Outcome Harvesting, as the analysis is based on outcomes reported until the end of 2019. The effects of Covid were, however, included in a Sprockler-question related to contextual challenges. The respondents indicated that the pandemic greatly affected the last year of

programme implementation: advocacy engagements and public rallies became difficult to facilitate virtually/online due to technical aspects (e.g. internet connectivity) or it instigated a change in priority-setting and agendas. Also, marginalised groups such as young people, women and the LGBTBI population are more at risk of poverty and insecurity due to the pandemic. A limited number of negative outcomes were reported, and they were all related to other contextual challenges (e.g. conservative governments, pressure and smearing by religious groups), next to setbacks related internal challenges, especially in terms of collaboration and to a lesser extent about reporting and funding issues.

Such negative outcomes are inevitable throughout processes of social change, as things often tend to get worse before they eventually get better. Especially when the issues at stake are highly controversial, successes in securing SRHR are faced with actions of other stakeholders that try to undercut the progress made. It is a matter of three steps forward and two steps back. Identifying the setbacks is a necessary step in learning from them. The evaluators were happy to see that, through the use of the Outcome Harvesting methodology, also unexpected positive outcomes came to light.

Added value of RHRN

Evaluation question 2. What has been the contribution of RHRN in reaching these outcomes?

Based on the outcome verification and substantiation with external stakeholders, an analysis of the Stories of Change, and also complemented by additional desk review, the evaluators think it is plausible that the reported outcomes can – at least partially – be contributed to the interventions of RHRN. In most cases the contributions were substantial and direct, as the RHRN platform members are often the main actors in influencing national SRHR policies. Combining the efforts of a large part of the CSO-landscape is also a value added by the partnership. National RHRN platforms have often succeeded in uniting a sizeable part of relevant civil society organisations. Furthermore, youth advocates, especially in youth led orgs, were enabled to work more strongly under the umbrella of the platform, which also powered the solidarity between the platform members.

It can be concluded that from the side of civil society, the RHRN platform developed into a major actor and a strong voice on the theme of SRHR. Beyond the realm of civil society, RHRN platforms managed to form alliances and coalitions with other stakeholders (government agencies, media, politicians, influencers etc). Such coalitions make it hard to single out the specific contribution of the RHRN platform (or its individual member organisations). But on the other hand, the leading (and often initiating) role of RHRN platforms in these coalitions can also be argued to add to the overall contribution of RHRN to the reported outcomes.

Capacity strengthening

Evaluation question 3. To what extent have the investments that RHRN made in its short-term (capacity strengthening) outcomes led to better and more sustainable outcomes at intermediate and long-term levels?

Answering the question how respondents applied their increased capacities in practice, many platform members shared inspiring examples and experiences in how their capacities led to better results. Also the Stories of Change show examples of how increased capacities contributed to the reported outcomes.

3.a. What changes in RHRN platform members' and young people's advocacy skills can be identified?

There is consensus among the platform members that their influencing and advocacy capacities have increased during the RHRN programme period. Increased capacities include abilities to draft policy frameworks, to design advocacy strategies, to carry out evidence-based advocacy through research, and to do fundraising. Also 'soft skills' are mentioned: being 'empowered' to speak out, increased self-confidence, engaging with decision makers

and 'networking'. Also protesting and campaigning capacities are strengthened. The respondents to the Sprockler inquiry shared many examples of how their increased capacities contributed to outcomes, and many valuable experiences were captured. Especially the opportunity to be involved in regional/international advocacy has been a powerful and educational experience for those involved. By working in alliances the participating organisations and individuals also learned about each other. Women's organisations learned about the challenges of the LGBTI-community and youth learned about the feminist movement. This mutual learning enhanced mutual understanding and solidarity.

3.b What is the contribution of RHRN capacity strengthening activities to the reported advocacy capacity changes?

Joint implementation of national advocacy campaigns was the factor that was most mentioned as a contributor to advocacy capacities. Learning from each other was also identified as a major contributing factor. It is remarkable that participants of the platforms predominantly mentioned 'informal' factors (on-the-job learning) as contributing to capacity strengthening. Yet, the more 'traditional', purposeful capacity strengthening activities (such as workshops and training sessions) were still mentioned by a large number of respondents as contributing to advocacy capacities.

Platform approach

Evaluation question 4. To what extent has the programme's choice to invest in diverse and inclusive platforms been effective, not only in terms of advocacy outcomes but also in relation to capacity strengthening of civil society? What are lessons learned?

The answers to evaluation question 4. are integrated in the answers to the sub-questions.

4.a To what extent have the platforms been effective in achieving advocacy outcomes?

A great majority of respondents agree that working through platforms was a sensible and fruitful strategy and the right choice to achieve advocacy outcomes. In many contexts, the platforms have not only reduced the isolation of individual CSOs, but also increased the leverage of individual CSOs working towards SRHR. Some platforms even solved competition between CSOs and co-created a platform of solidarity. Speaking with one voice has certainly increased the influencing power of civil society on duty bearers.

4.b. To what extent has the internal collaboration within the platform been effective?

In most cases the internal collaboration within the platforms has been effective, shown by the impressive number of outcomes achieved and the solidarity among the platform member organisations and within the coalition at large. But working in a platform has its downsides too. The relationships between members of the platform can easily become an issue. Some respondents indicate that 'their' platform is dominated by one or two members. Decision-making is not always experienced as an inclusive process. Uniting independent organisations within one platform will always be coupled with challenges regarding cohesion: a fine balance has to be found between using the identity and resilience of independent organisations and the advantages of sharing strategies, combining strengths and uniting under shared values. In some cases this balance was not found, resulting in members not sharing results, continuing to work on individual priorities and working in silos.

4.c. What is the perceived diversity and inclusivity of the RHRN platforms?

The lack of inclusiveness in decision-making, which is observed by some, is probably not caused by lack of diversity of the platforms themselves. The organisational background of the respondents, gives an indication that the platforms are quite diverse, with relatively more LGBTI-organisations in the Latin American platforms and more youth organisations in African and Asian platforms. It was not established if the ‘dominance by one or two members’ of some platforms, as mentioned in the conclusion of question 5.b, was based on (or caused by) the diversity of its membership.

4.d To what extent did the outcomes of the RHRN advocacy platform have a positive effect on the target groups (women, young people, LGBTI)

This evaluation question in essence refers to results on impact level. Assessing the impact level falls outside of the scope of this evaluation, as impact at societal level in the long term cannot be assessed yet after five years of programming.

But, based on the responses of the platform member organisation representatives, their advocacy work had a positive effect on the lives of young people and women, and to a lesser extent also of LGBTI. In Africa, there seems to be more attention for young people whereas Latin America focused a bit more on LGBTI and women, and Asia on all three target groups. The integration of LGBTI organisations in the platforms – which was not always easy and takes time – can be considered a good step towards more visibility for and acknowledgement of LGBTI.

Interaction between national, regional and international level

Evaluation question 5. How have the national, regional and international level reinforced each other and especially how have the regional and international levels supported the national level outcomes? What are lessons learned?

The interlinking of the international, regional, and (sub)national levels is one of the strengths of the RHRN strategy. The work on regional and international level notably contributed to the effectiveness of national level advocacy. Pressure (including peer pressure) from the international level legitimised and reinforced the advocacy efforts from the RHRN platforms. International partners also directly strengthened national platforms, e.g. by providing resources and expertise. Also valuable was the fact that on the international and regional level, national platforms could meet, exchange experiences and strengthen capacities.

5.a. To what extent have the national, regional and international levels reinforced each other, and how? And to what extent has the work of the national RHRN platforms been supported by the regional and international RHRN partners, and how?

International processes – like for example the SDGs and the agreements made on regional level, like the Southern African Development Community (SADC) – make national governments more accountable to SRHR issues that are included in the international frameworks. The evaluators have encountered several examples where national platforms capitalise on the international agreements by participating actively, both on national and international level, in these processes. The participation of CSOs in the national processes to comply with international standards, constitutes in many cases also a notable increase of civic space: allowing civil society actors to engage with government in a meaningful way and to speak out on relevant topics on a relevant platform. Yet, it was also found that civic space for RHRN advocates was often bigger at the regional or international level, and that at national level unawareness among government actors about international processes and/or conservative norms sometimes made it difficult for RHRN CSOs to follow-up at the national level.

Limitations that were captured by the evaluators include the fact that the results of the international processes and the gained knowledge are not always shared among all members of the network. It also seems that the

possibilities of participating in the international processes is limited to a relatively selected group of individual platform members.

On the national level, the evaluators encountered few examples of cooperation with the eighth consortium member: the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Engaging with Dutch embassies might have provided leverage, for example, in establishing a dialogue with otherwise reluctant government officials. Likewise, we did not witness national platforms engaging in the Dutch initiative 'She Decides', designed to counterbalance Trump's Mexico City Policy (a.k.a. the Global Gag Rule).

Validity of the Theory of Change

Evaluation question 6. How did change occur within the RHRN platforms and how does that relate to the RHRN Theory of Change and the strategic lenses? What can be said about the validity of the Theory of Change?

By and large the outcomes that can be clearly plotted along the four pathways of change identified in the Theory of Change. The ToC tree is a healthy specimen, with a fairly logical and realistic flow from roots, to trunk, and via the main branches and twigs up to the leafy crown. As an instrument for planning, monitoring and evaluation, the RHRN ToC is, overall, fairly well designed.

That being said, some footnotes can be placed.

The relationship between the ToC and the so-called 'strategic lenses' is not clearly strategised. In many instances, instead of the ToC, the strategic lenses were used as a planning tool. This made the ToC less relevant to some platforms.

The change pathway capturing public support culminates, according to the ToC, in societal changes regarding the support for SRHR advocacy. Following the logic of the ToC, such changes should be placed as a long-term outcome level at the top of the tree, as the wording (societal change) implies impact-level change, thus changed in the everyday lives of people. On the other hand, seeking support for the advocacy agenda from the 'public' to put pressure on decision makers could be regarded as a valid campaign strategy, and could also be added to the list of interventions implemented to achieve policy change.

The change logic also dictates that outcomes of political will and policy outcomes should be differentiated. The 'political will' outcomes can be moved down the pathway to the early level, which is a more appropriate place, because political will outcomes can, at times, be achieved quite early on. That implies that the policy adoption outcomes can also be moved one level down, from long-term outcome level to intermediate outcome level, and will therefore fall within RHRNs sphere of influence. Actual policy implementation can be kept at long-term outcome level.

The assumptions underlying the ToC are incomplete and not clearly incorporated. In the visual ToC two assumptions are mentioned, but the verbal explanation of the ToC refers to other assumptions. In the ToC analysis of the evaluators, underlying assumptions are deducted, that are implied in the change pathways.

Sustainability

6.a What is the perceived sustainability of changes influenced by RHRN?

The impressive number of outcomes related to laws and policies that are adopted or adapted, by nature contribute to a sustainable change. Formally established laws and policies that are favourable to SRHR are essential for holding duty bearers accountable. In addition, the official agreements and commitments made in international spaces to which RHRN contributed have a long-term effect, as they stay in place beyond the lifetime of RHRN, and lay out a foundation for future progressive SRHR advocacy.

At the same time, for a programme like RHRN, achieving sustainable outcomes will always be challenging. Most issues regarding SRHR are quite sensitive and opinions are deeply ingrained in individual's belief systems. Changing beliefs is a long-term process, stretching way beyond the horizon of the RHRN Strategic Partnership.

Many platforms dedicate time and efforts on changing the narrative on SRHR, for example by involving the media and individual journalists. This can be considered as working on long-term changes. Sustainability of the work on sensitising media can be notably increased by establishing long-term relationships with journalists and media outlets (both old and new).

RHRN programme members often have a personal dedication to advocating for SRHR in their country and will continue to find ways to fight for their objectives, even after the RHRN programme ends. The capacity and more importantly, the solidarity and relations that were built as part of the programme will support organisations and individuals in that. Through the RHRN platforms, bridges have been built between organisations and between issues that previously were addressed in silos. This stronger movement will likely continue in the future. The challenge for the programme is to make sure knowledge is not lost with staff turnover and that members also have the know-how and the means to monitor and follow-up longer-term changes. Time will tell whether the members (particularly from the LAC countries) that will not continue in the next programme will be able to sustain momentum and build upon achievements made.

4.2. Recommendations

On effectiveness

- > Public support for SRHR advocacy has mainly been intervened on at national level (see left branch of the ToC tree). It is worthwhile to create more international coverage, and thus public international pressure, for the fulfilment of SRHR globally. Ideally, such stories could be backed up by sharing 'lived experiences' from the contexts and realities that the platforms are operating in (only if this can be done in a safe way). Furthermore, it could be worthwhile to have a closer look at the context and conditions under which working with influencers is likely to contribute to an increase of public support, and develop a more elaborate and contextualised strategy on this.
- > The RHRN platforms' cooperation, engagement and alliance building with a larger variety of stakeholders, like religious leaders, media, academia, parents, influencers etc. is commendable. Increase efforts to strengthen the role of the media in creating public support for SRHR. This requires a long-term strategy, building networks and contacts with influential journalists and media outlets, next to developing and training a pool of 'front-fighter' journalists who are knowledgeable on and receptive to progressive SRHR. Local media partners could even become a member of the RHRH platform. It is recommended to also look at 'new' media (social media, audio-visual, digital media and art) as ways to change the narrative on SRHR for young people.
- > In situations of limited civic space, it can be worthwhile making use of the space of others. Often foreign bilateral donors (e.g. Dutch embassies) and international organisations negotiate with governments in all kinds of working groups. Securing a place at the table within such platforms could provide useful advocacy opportunities. When deciding whether or not to apply this strategy, a trade-off should be made between opportunities and potential risks, as such engagements might also be counter-productive and put the advocates at risk.
- > Several respondents indicated that their platform was dominated by one or two strong organisations. As a result, decision making was not always considered 'inclusive'. As a wide internal support base for platform organisations is vital, it is recommended to continue internal dialogues around governance issues, and offer even more support on inclusive and participatory techniques, e.g. Deep democracy, Liberating Structures.
- > The evaluators saw inspiring examples of how youth are capacitated to participate in committees and delegations. However, meaningfully involving a central target group like youth is not always effectuated fully,

and particularly more grassroots youth have stayed under the radar. It should be noted that 'youth' is not a homogenous group and there will always be representation issues. For youth participation to be more meaningful, discussions or consultations should be included among various youth on SRHR issues and integrating these discussions into all stages of interventions. Organise elections among youth for seats on national or international committees or delegations. Youth should also be facilitated to fill their place to their maximum capacity. Include a focus on youth-adult partnership and invest in knowledge and skills building of both youth and adults. Build capacity of youth at grassroots level. When there are visa issues prohibiting international travel for some young people, seek help from the Dutch Embassy.

- > Since 'on-the-job learning' has been a major factor in increasing capacities, it can only be recommended to continue such informal learning processes (e.g. informal training, co-creation, mentorship, coaching, peer-to-peer support) while jointly implementing the platform activities. In addition, cross-learning and joint activities between countries could be facilitated a bit more. Formal methodologies (workshops, trainings) can continue to be offered additionally, and it should be monitored that these events are accessible for all actors within the platform (e.g. through an open and transparent application mechanism).

On relevance

- > The phase of policy implementation requires a different advocacy strategy than RHRN's current one, and would imply a stronger focus on changing social norms and attitudes, and direct lobby, collaboration and awareness raising specifically focused on the lower government levels such as district and community level who are mainly responsible for implementation. For this, a complementary approach with all relevant sectors (e.g. health, education, security) and collaboration with other actors (both at CSO and governmental level) is recommended. In addition, follow-up activities can be designed that stimulate implementation (e.g. advocacy for increased budgets of implementing agencies).
- > The same goes for the follow-up of changes in political will: secure follow-up of outcomes regarding increase of political will. Make sure political promises and other expressions of political will are repeated and confirmed on higher platforms, lobby for concrete deadlines, push for accompanying budgets.
- > The Netherlands plays an important stimulating role in addressing SRHR in global platforms. The RHRN Strategic Partnership is ideally placed to accompany this role with the push for changes in countries where sexual and reproductive health and rights are suppressed. Possibly there is more added value to be achieved here.

On sustainability

- > RHRH can rightfully boast about a substantial number of policy outcomes. But in the end policies will only contribute to lasting change in practices and realities for the lives of target groups when policy changes are implemented. Sustainability issues are mostly found in unclear follow-up of results. Therefore, continuing attention for, and monitoring of implementation is called for. In the annual plans, there could be more attention for follow-up activities when targeting policy and legislation outcomes.
- > Already in the stage of policy formulation, implementation concerns must be weighed. Monitor implementation, assess the performance of implementation agencies, identify blockers and enablers of implementation are all essential in this respect. Within RHRN, there could be more attention for sufficiently defining this issue of implementation, and be explicit about what can and cannot be expected from the platforms in this respect. This also includes sufficient attention and support for platforms to follow-up at the national level what has been achieved at the regional and international level.

On ToC, M&E and Outcome Harvesting methodology

- > On the Outcome Harvesting efforts, the evaluators have a number of specific recommendations:

- Develop and share distinct, well defined, meaningful and useful definitions of the categories, and monitor the usage of those definitions in order to create a database that is consistently categorised;
 - Describe OH titles SMART (one or two sentences only) and pay attention to describing the change (the 'before' and 'after', or describe what would likely have happened 'otherwise')
 - Register specifically whether an outcome is unexpected or not (as this was not included in the current database);
 - Next to classifying the outcomes, also categorise the contribution descriptions. Useful categories could for example be related to the extent to which outcomes were achieved in collaboration with allies, and whether capacity strengthening efforts were a contributing factor;
 - Organise internal learning sessions where causally-related outcomes per platform are mapped into pathways, so processes of change and (lack of) progress over time become more clear and are contextualised. This enables the platform to further prioritise influencing certain pathways throughout programme implementation, and serves as a good basis for including causality between outcomes in a mid-term and end-term evaluation.
- > In the ToC, a more explicit distinction could be made between 'changes in policies and legislation' and the *implementation* of changed policies. As successful implementation is considered the last stage of change, this could be placed higher in the ToC tree (long term outcomes). Moreover, since a lot of effort often goes into developing, changing, and adopting laws and policies in the first place, such outcomes can better be qualified as intermediary outcomes.
 - > The outcome harvesting process also revealed outcomes related to 'relationship building', which is considered an important element of advocacy and influencing processes. Therefore, it is recommended to add strengthening relations with allies such as civil society actors or other consortia as a 'type of change' to a future Theory of Change, and also include this as a category in the OH process.
 - > In future programming, assumptions underlying the link between advocacy processes at national versus regional/international level could be clarified a bit more. Further light could be shed on how global processes are expected to be supportive at national level and/or vice versa.
 - > Train partners in storytelling and in describing the outcomes and results in a way that makes them understandable to a wider audience.

Youth advocate Maha Islam (Pakistan) plunges into the High Level Political Forum

'I'm sure that our voices were heard'

The interaction of RHRN Pakistan with the Parliamentary task force on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), resulted in the presence of the young advocate Maha Islam at the High Level Political Forum in New York, in July 2019. In her statement, Maha called upon her government to break gender stereotypes, and to promote anti-discrimination legislation. In a Zoom-session from her current residence in Toronto, Canada, the youth advocate looks back at her presence in New York and what it means for the respect for sexual and reproductive health and rights in her home country, Pakistan. An Interview.

■ Outcome

On 29th April, 2019 in Islamabad, during a consultative meeting, the Parliamentary Task Force on the SDGs agreed to sign an MoU with RHRN Pakistan to enhance and promote collaboration on localising the SDGs in the lead up to the Voluntary National Review (VNR) submission and presentation at the High-Level Political Forum 2019; this was the first time RHRN Pakistan interacted with SDGs committees and the Task Force.



What do you remember most from your visit to New York?

“The moment I remember most about my participation in the High Level Political Forum (HLPF) was, of course, my own speech before all delegates. I was chosen to speak on behalf of several Pakistani CSOs.”

Maha Islam (28) explains that, because her statement had to include all the views of the CSOs, it was quite difficult to reach consensus. “Everybody pushed to have their priority included in the statement. At the same time, we also needed to be strategic. We wanted to make a clear statement, but not be too critical about the government as that would be counter-productive.”



“Up until the last moment we discussed what we wanted to include in the text. I remember that we discussed about a sentence criticizing the government on its reluctance to really include enough CSOs in the process. Just a few minutes before my presentation, that sentence was deleted.

But I did confront the Pakistani government with a number of demands on issues that are important to RHRN. For example, about the need to break gender stereotypes, to adopt a firm anti-discrimination legislation protecting women, young people, religious and sexual minorities.

“I was really nervous. It was my first time to present such an important statement. I didn’t know what to expect”

HLPF during the presentation of Pakistan

Some topics would have been too controversial to mention during the presentation in New York. For example, raising the issue of the right to abortion would have been completely counter-productive. Of course there are organisations working on that issue in Pakistan, but it is too much a taboo to mention it in

the open. Let alone on a global stage like the High Level Political Forum in New York.”

How did you feel, giving a speech at such a high-level forum?

“I was really nervous. It was my first time to present such an important statement. I didn’t know what to expect. Fortunately, the RHRN people provided a lot of support. Especially Naz, from Arrow, and Evi, from Rutgers, stood by me and gave me lots of tips on how to deal with the situation. They helped me to connect to the right people and provided tips on advocacy. At first I was afraid to engage with people during the event. I was so much in awe about everything that was happening around me. But Naz and Evi convinced me to just do it. You have to make the opportunity, nothing will happen if you just stand there. So after a

lunch session – presided by Chelsea Clinton! – I decided to plunge in, and I later approached the former ambassador of Pakistan to the UN. Not a lot came out of my conversation with her, but it taught me that I could do it. For me it was very motivational. It was a learning experience.”

How did people respond to your speech?

“I got some reactions on my statement. Of course, the Pakistani task force mainly reacted by repeating the official position of the government on SRHR and defended what was already being done. But they also approached me and asked about my presentation, and they promised there would be a dialogue. I forwarded my statement and other documents to them, but unfortunately I didn’t hear back from them.”

“One can, of course, wonder what the effect is of the ‘circus’ in New York to the lives of ordinary people in Pakistan. I want to say that it changed a lot, but in reality I don’t know. I do think the whole SDG-process *can* have practical outcomes. Before the Forum in New York we as RHRN-organisations engaged with the SDG task force in Pakistan. We talked about our priorities regarding SRHR. That was in May, and by that time the SDG-review was already drafted by the government. So that couldn’t be changed, but I’m sure that our issues were heard. But when they talked with us, parliamentarians showed interest in what we had to say. I’m sure that at a later stage we can capitalise on this.”

With these comments, Maha seems to imply that had the RHRN been a little earlier in their engagement with the SDG task force, their priorities may have been integrated more.

What do you think the significance of the SDG process is?

“If we can resume our dialogue with the Parliamentary task force in the future, I hope we will be able to take it one step further. The SDG-process forces the government to discuss certain issues. Having these global goals, which the Pakistani government committed to, makes the government accountable for discussing the progress towards the goals. That is a huge advantage for CSOs working ‘on the ground’ in Pakistan. The global process obliges national governments to put things on the agenda, allowing CSOs to start a dialogue and to engage in advocacy.”

“And this has produced practical changes. During my work for the organisation AAHUNG in Karachi, I was very active on including Life Skills Based Education (LSBE) in school curricula. As a result of the SDG-

process, we were able to address the issue in public schools in Pakistan. I travelled to many parts of the country to speak to teachers, parents, and children, about how to deal with LSBE. LSBE is a culturally adapted version of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE). It was a huge advantage that we were able to work with the government on this. It is so important to teach children on SRHR. There are so many misconceptions on sexuality among young people in Pakistan. We have a long way to go. There still are plenty of schools where sections in textbooks that deal with sexuality are stapled together so that they can’t be accessed by the pupils.”

“I just hope that it can be empowering for women to see that a simple person like me can raise issues in an international platform in front of an official delegation of our country”

What does this work mean to you, personally?

“It is a cliché, but if my presence in New York and my participation in the whole process has made a positive impact in the life of just one person, then it will all have been worthwhile. Maybe a small change in a policy regarding sexual harassment that prevents someone from being a victim of gender-based violence. That would be enough. That is really my belief. Beyond that, I just hope that it can be empowering for women in Pakistan to see that a simple person like me can raise issues in an international platform in front of an official delegation of our country.”

Tiptoeing between visibility and security

Since 2016, campaigns on Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) have laid the groundwork for legislation on the Eradication of Sexual Violence (RUU P-KS) draft bill in Indonesia. However, the journey has been bumpy. RHRN member organisation Aliansi Satu Visi (ASV) experienced what can happen if you innocently use terms like ‘LGBTI’, ‘abortion’ and ‘contraception’ on your website: a smear campaign by ultra-conservatives, including thinly veiled threats. As a result, Aliansi Satu Visi felt obligated to tone down. But as one activist says: “Why bother campaigning for LGBTI rights – or for diversity in general – if we end up having to be ‘careful’?”

■ Outcome Indonesia

In March 2019, Love Family Alliance (AILA), a religious conservative group, used the ASV’s Strategic Plan as a propaganda tool to reject the Draft Anti Sexual Violence Bill (RUU P-KS) that led to a backlash against the online campaign conducted by ASV.

AWAS!!! (“BEWARE”) This draft bill leads to abortion services and free access to contraception for teenagers!!!”

The Facebook post of a university lecturer (see below) leaves little to the imagination. With an abundant use of exclamation marks, a member of the ultra-conservative Love Family Alliance (AILA) – makes it clear that she strongly opposes the Eradication of Sexual Violence draft bill (RUU P-KS). And she is not the only one. The anti-sexual-violence bill has provoked anger among conservative groups in Indonesia, as they believe the bill to be a guise for promoting abortion, contraception, and LGBTI activities.

This post spread like wildfire on social media. In January 2019 alone, the post gained 7,912 shares, 3,033 reactions, and 687 commentaries. Beside spreading the word, a petition was also set up to ‘Reject the Pro-Adultery Bill’. That petition had since been signed by 167.437 people. One of the petitioners commented, “I reject this bill because I have a family to protect.” This lecturer was not the first in initiating this online action, and she certainly wasn’t the last. An Instagram influencer with 183k followers, jumped on the bandwagon and claimed that the anti-sexual violence bill promoted ‘free sex’.



A petition by a university lecturer on Change.org to call-off RUU P-KS, January 27th 2019.

The lecturer, however, did not only agitate against the law intended to protect women. She also directly pointed fingers at the organisation Aliansi Satu Visi (ASV), a member of the RHRN platform, and one of the campaigners of the draft bill. Along with the post, she embedded screenshots from ASV's website where the organization states that it supports, '... access to contraception for teenagers', '... abortion services', and '... recognition of third gender'. Physical violence against the LGBTI-communities and against pro-choice activist is frequent in Indonesia. With this in mind, the postings became a thinly veiled threat.

Am Instagram influencer jumped the bandwagon.



The worst scenario

When the news first reached ASV's WhatsApp group, they received numerous questions from their fellow activists and other organizations. Several ASV members were contacted through their own family chat groups and asked to sign the petition. And when some ASV member organizations were mentioned in threatening posts, ASV realized that people could be in danger.

“The worst scenario was, of course, the possibility that our member organizations are raided”, a former ASV Advocacy Officer says. ASV itself is an alliance, home to 20 organizations working on various issues—

ranging from championing women's right within Islamic teachings, assisting victims of gender-based violence, providing safe-abortion and contraception services, conducting research on and advocating LGBT rights, to assisting HIV/AIDS survivors. “Before this happened, some of our members had experienced physical attacks. Those serving SRHR clinics had also dealt with the authorities. So the trauma lingers.” People fighting for sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in Indonesia know that they cannot count on the authorities to protect their safety. Asking for police protection usually ends up with the police ending a LGBTI-event rather than protecting it. Likewise, institutions like sexual health clinics bear the risk of being raided by the police.

First-aid measure

As a ‘first-aid measure’, ASV quickly closed down their website. However, this didn't stop the screenshots from circulating through social media. Eerily, the names of ASV's two most vulnerable member organizations—which had been removed from the site long before the attack—surfaced in the posts of the ultra-conservatives. Somehow, the attackers had found a way to retrieve the ASV archive.

“That was when we realized that our digital security was lacking,” said Igna, an ASV staff-member. ASV then approached the digital security expert Dhyta Caturani, to train them on developing a digital security protocol for the organization. The training itself was funded by fellow RHRN platform member, Hivos.

According to Dhyta Caturani there is no sure way of forecasting if and how sentiments in the digital sphere can spark concrete hate acts and violence in the real world. But it is far from unlikely it would happen.

“There have been enough precedents of that kind of physical attack,” said Caturani.

She applauded ASV's immediate action to shut down the website, as the safety of the members was at stake. The security expert also advised them to release a statement to counter the accusations, to explain the true intentions of the RUU P-KS bill in order to change the public perception. But that advice ASV chose not to follow.

“We thought about it,” said the ASV former Advocacy Officer. “But in the end we just didn't want to add fuel to the fire.” Fortunately, not long after, the fire did die out. The aggressive postings stopped.

Losing act

For ASV, the memory of those hectic and frightening days in 2019 lingers on. Looking back, not everyone in the platform, however, is on the same page about the


handling of this incident. Some members feel that closing down the website gave in too much to the threats of the conservatives.

“If we choose to retreat every time we get hit, what does that make us?”, one of the critics, asks rhetorically. A platform member herself, Riska is a part of the legal substance team of RUU P-KS. Riska recalls her own dealings with violence during that year’s Women’s March.

“Maybe the police were triggered by seeing so many rainbow flags”

A participant of the Women's March joined to proudly present her identity as a lesbian. But in a space where she thought she could express her sexuality, she found out that the organisers of the demonstration itself seemed to exclude her. She was asked to stand aside. Possibly, she thought, the rejection of the organisers of the march was due to police intimidation. “Maybe the police were triggered by seeing so many rainbow flags,” she says, with a smile. At first she obeyed the organiser’s request. But she refused to stand on the side for too long. After a short while she decided that enough was enough. She stepped forward and shouted, “Fellow LGBTIs, come on, let’s move forward. Enough with us standing in the background.” With the LGBTIs proudly participating, the demonstration went on smoothly. By the time the march ended, however, she was told to flee the scene as the police were looking for her. That night she didn’t come back to her own place, for her own safety.

Backlash

But that wasn’t the end of it. Later, she was reprimanded by members of the  N-platform. “I was told that I had jeopardized the movement by my act of ‘outing’ fellow LGBT+s in the demonstration,” said Riska. She continues with indignation, “How’s that an outing? My fellow LGBTIs stepped forward by themselves.”

And referring to the ASV-case, she contends: “Why bother campaigning for LGBTI rights – or for diversity in general – if we end up having to be careful?”

Concern for digital security has been etched into ASV’s strategies since the digital attacks. But what

have the other organisations in the RHRN platform learned from this ASV case? Not much, probably, since the aftermath of this incident was never really discussed within the platform.

ASV is one of the very few organisations already ‘woken-up’ to the importance of digital security, according to Dhyta Caturani. Caturani sees that the general awareness for digital security is still very low. That is a shame, she says, as digital security – coupled with a sound argumentation – could be the mitigation strategy for campaigning issues without having to resort to self-censorship.

The legislation process of RUU P-KS carries on, without a serious backlash from this incident. On the campaign forefront, however, this incident changed the whole game. Some words that may ignite anger among the ultra-conservatives – like ‘LGBTI’, ‘abortion’, ‘contraception’, ‘marital rape’, and ‘adultery’ – were deleted, or only marginally used, in campaign materials.

A former lead of the campaign team for RUU P-KS, remembers the ASV incident very well. Looking back on the tumultuous period of 2019 she reminisces, “It was wearisome, because we ended up answering to accusations. We became reactive instead of activists.” she adds with a wry smile, “We had enough of it by the end of 2019. No more responding to these accusations, and just focusing on mainstreaming the importance of RUU P-KS.”

From ASV’s case to her current work in the civil society coalition, she carried on the lesson of preventing backlash in campaign strategies. Thus, her current coalition never disclosed the name of its organisation members.

■ RHRN’s Role in the ASV Case

To a certain extent, the RHRN Indonesia platform managed to foster supportive interactions between the members. In ASV’s case, the platform enabled the organisation to receive individual moral support from their fellow platform members. That was important at that time. Due to networking formed by the platform as well, Hivos as one of the consortium members, could swiftly reach out to ASV and offer them their funding scheme as the mitigation effort.

On the other hand, the platform’s potential to be a ‘safe space’ for all of its members is still met with limitations. The aforementioned support came rather unintended by the platform, as they were individual initiatives—not a result from the platform’s formal discussion. In responding effectively to such spontaneous issues, the platform is yet to find an adequate form of coordination.