

# POSITION ON SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS (SRHR)

### ABOUT ACT CHURCH OF SWEDEN:

Act Church of Sweden is the Church of Sweden's international aid and development organisation. Together with other churches, organisations and volunteers, we work to alleviate poverty, fight against oppression and injustice and respond quickly in the event of disasters. Thanks to our extensive network and close collaboration with local organisations, we are efficient and powerful. Together in faith and with knowledge, we must fight for everyone's right to a dignified life!

Act Church of Sweden is a member of the ACT Alliance, a worldwide network of churches and grassroots movements. This means we can act quickly in the event of a disaster and that we have a powerful common voice.

### QUALITY CONTROL OF OUR FUNDRAISING AND WORK

Act Church of Sweden is controlled by the Swedish Fundraising Control (Svensk insamlingskontroll), and a member of Donate Sweden (Giva Sverige) that works with quality assurance and competence development and promotes transparency, ethics and professionalism. Act Church of Sweden is also on Swedish Donor Guide's (Givarguiden) list of approved charities. The Donor Guide, which is run by Charity Rating, assesses fundraising organisations from a donor perspective. Organisations are evaluated according to democracy, economy and transparency.

All of Act Church of Sweden's work including humanitarian aid, development aid, global advocacy and inter-church relations is certified against the [Core Humanitarian Standard](#) (CHS), certificate number ACTCOS-CHS-16-01. This independent, external verification demonstrates the high quality of Act Church of Sweden's work and our focus on accountability to rights holders. As a member of the ACT Alliance we have signed up to ACT Alliance's [Code of Good Practice](#) for organisations which details membership obligations, including having a staff Code of Conduct. In addition, we are a member of the [CHS Alliance](#).

**actalliance**

**90** SVENSK  
KONTO INSAMLINGS  
KONTROLL

**giva**  
SVERIGE

**CHS Alliance**



### ACT CHURCH OF SWEDEN

Postal address: 751 70 Uppsala  
Visiting address: Sysslomansgatan 4  
givarservice@actsvenskakyrkan.se  
018-76 96 00

svenskakyrkan.se/act

### DONATE:

Swish: 9001223  
Plusgiro: 90 01 22-3  
Bankgiro: 900 1223

## SUMMARY

Act Church of Sweden is committed to promoting sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR), as it is fundamental to the human experience, to social relations, and is a human right.

1. Act Church of Sweden promotes universal access to sexual and reproductive health services.
2. Act Church of Sweden promotes universal access to comprehensive sexuality education.
3. Act Church of Sweden is committed to a respectful and mutual dialogue and strategic alliances on religious and cultural understandings of gender, gender identity, sexuality, sexual and reproductive health and rights.
4. Act Church of Sweden opposes cultural and religious practices and norms that are harmful for bodily integrity and autonomy.
5. Act Church of Sweden recognises that there is a connection between power, sexuality and reproduction.
6. Act Church of Sweden is committed to advocating for SRHR and those defending these rights.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

The aim of Act Church of Sweden's work is to strive towards a healed world where every individual can enjoy well-being at all levels: physically, mentally, spiritually and socially. This includes being capable of deciding on one's life without discrimination or coercion. Our understanding of the human being is based on a biblical affirmation of creation where every human being is created in the image of God and is unconditionally loved by God. Sexuality is part of God's creation. It is a gift for all humanity for creating relations and mutual love. It can be considered a precondition of the survival of the whole humankind.<sup>1</sup> Sexuality, sexual health and well-being is integrally connected to the quality of life and the caring of social relations and concerns the most intimate relations a person might have in their relations and family life. These relations create both the safest and the most

vulnerable situations for individuals. It is important that the rights relating to sexual and reproductive health are respected so that every human being has the possibility to uphold health in areas of sexuality and reproductive life. Everyone must have the opportunity to exercise these rights free from coercion and violence. Act Church of Sweden's commitment to sexual and reproductive health and rights (hereby shortened to SRHR) is also expressed in its Position on Gender Justice and Gender Equality<sup>2</sup>. Our position reflects our vocation to witness to God's justice and our consequent commitment to the advancement of human rights for all. The position paper will guide Act Church of Sweden's work in areas addressing SRHR.<sup>3</sup> This position paper replaces an earlier Church of Sweden position paper on SRHR (2013).

# 2. POWER AND VULNERABILITY

Sexual and reproductive health concerns some of the most sensitive issues in the lives of individuals, couples and communities. The fact that sexuality is connected to life-threatening practises and spreading of potentially deadly illnesses adds a dimension to the responsibility we have for how we deal with our sexuality and sexual relations as well as love, reciprocity, trust and equality.<sup>4</sup> There are a variety of factors that intersect

with SRHR which may help or hinder an individual's possibility to attain SRHR. Any form of marginalisation or discrimination on the basis of sex, age, ethnicity, race, sexuality, sexual orientation, gender identity, migration status, disability, economic status, and cultural, religious or political affiliation can increase vulnerability.<sup>5 6</sup> The social determinants of health,<sup>7</sup> the systems, policies, and norms that inform the

conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age, produce and sustain access or inequitable access to sexual and reproductive health and rights. The social determinants of health are influenced by the degree to which people have access to social protection.<sup>8</sup>

One of the main factors increasing vulnerability is gender. “Gender” refers to socially constructed roles, restrictions and attributes and opportunities, associated with biological sex in a given context and deals both with the understanding of “femininities” and of “masculinities”.<sup>9</sup> A wide range of traditions, practices, norms and laws attached to sex, sexuality, reproduction and gender in many contexts especially disempower and discriminate women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and intersex persons (LGBTQI).<sup>10</sup> Addressing the non-realisation of rights must take into consideration the circumstances that put<sup>11</sup> individuals or groups in a vulnerable situations and must be addressed together with those living in vulnerability.<sup>12</sup> The way in which Christian and other religious communities interpret their religious convictions and practise them is a significant factor affecting vulnerabilities. Religious experiences, beliefs and practises in conjunction with theological interpretation inform decision-making both on individual and on

communal levels. This can lead to the inability to discuss and recognize, and therefore address, issues dealing with sexuality and reproduction. Cultural norms can guide our understanding of social relations and family life and are often connected to institutionalised religious beliefs. Education and health care systems in various parts of the world are sustained by faith communities. Religious actors are therefore in a position of power and can be effective agents of change in addressing vulnerabilities in their context.<sup>13</sup>

Contextual theological reflection has led us to recognise two historical biases of power: gender bias and cultural colonial bias. The explicitly patriarchal and hierarchical structures of churches have given privileged access to positions of theological authority to only some men, creating a gender bias. Act Church of Sweden promotes equal access to theological discernment, challenging unjust gender roles and diversifying our understanding of embodied humanity. Cultural colonial bias has led to the ignorance of the relationship between power and authority in creating knowledge. Historically, the understanding of Christianity has excluded the voices that were deemed less powerful, whether by construct of gender, sexuality, age, race, ethnicity or other.

### 3. A THEOLOGY OF EMBODIMENT

This position outlines the general theological framework of our work which emphasizes contextual and life-empowering theological interpretation, the inherent dignity of every person and commitment to learn in dialogue.<sup>14</sup> Act Church of Sweden’s work is informed by contextual theology, which considers both our ecclesial and theological tradition and the lived reality of what it means to be a church in today’s world. To be true to our faith, we must dare to let the experiences of lived life affect our theology and interpretation of the Bible. At the same time, we must allow the witness of the biblical narratives to challenge our societies and ideological structures in a prophetic way.

We challenge ourselves to let our analysis of the contextual realities and existing power relations to interrelate with our theological reflection, so that we in situations in which life is under threat and people are oppressed can take a stand to empowering and affirming life and hope for the future. In the core of Christian faith is a God who became a human being.

A God that came into the world as the Son of God, as an infant child into the arms of a young woman, displaced without a proper shelter, excluded and vulnerable. God became fully human, flesh and bone. The reality of incarnation, God becoming a human being, demands a positive recognition of bodily reality against the tendency to focus on spiritual ideals and deny the body. Our understanding of being a human must include humanity’s bodily reality in the same way as our understanding of God includes God’s bodily reality. Christianity has often cultured religious ideals which have denied bodily realities or subjected them under the control of the rational mind. Churches have preached the resurrection of the body by way of denying the body. Often churches have been unable to talk earnestly about embodied experiences, such as sexuality, reproduction, power relations or pleasure without detaching them from contextual realities. Our emphasis on life embodied is significant to our topic in various ways. It calls for serious engagement with

sexuality and reproduction and their inclusion into our understanding of what it means to be a human – the fullness of which God chose to become. It also reminds us that body is not only about sexuality but also about the vulnerabilities of ill health, hunger, poverty, our fragility and interconnectedness in relation to others<sup>15</sup> that affect us as human beings.

The Christian understanding of humans being is based on the belief that every individual is created in God's image. This can be interpreted in various ways. Our interpretation emphasizes two elements, the inherent dignity and relational character of human beings. We acknowledge that just as there is an essential desire within the persons of the Triune God to draw towards the other, in the same way there is a passion for the other within every human being. In addressing sexual and reproductive health and the associated rights churches must affirm and support a positive understanding of relatedness and sexuality as fundamental to our being. We remain incomplete if this aspect of creation is not allowed to be realized.<sup>16</sup>

The situations where individuals lack sexual and reproductive health and rights is also a moral and ethical issue. When we enter discussions on morality, we do so without claiming to have the one true answer nor

claiming that all within a religion think alike. Morality is also whether we allow moral agency to humans to make their own decisions about their bodies and their lives and allow them to live with those choices – even when those decisions are complex.<sup>17</sup> Sexual and reproductive health and rights take place in larger social contexts, i.e. in relationships, families, societies and in governmental policies. This cannot be isolated from its contextual realities. In addressing societal structures, we take guidance from biblical stories of Jesus' engagement with individuals and the society of His time. From every walk of life Jesus met people eye to eye, with respect and compassion, restoring those who were ill and affected and vehemently challenging those societal and religious structures that created inequalities, pushed people into the margins of the society and increased their vulnerability. Our understanding is that God in Christ shares people's joys and sorrows, chooses the path of solidarity, opposes everything that is destructive and paves the way for a living hope. The starting point of our work is a life-empowering theology.<sup>18</sup> These perspectives calls us to work towards the full realization of the rights relating to sexual and reproductive health for all.

## 4. SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

The concept of sexuality is not a simple one to define and the word also has different meanings in different languages and in different cultural contexts. The broad working definition of the World Health Organization proves helpful: *Sexuality' is understood as a core dimension of being human...is complex and includes biological, social, psychological, spiritual, religious, political, legal, historic, ethical and cultural dimensions that evolve over a lifespan.*<sup>19</sup> Sexual health can be described both as the development and existence of a healthy state of an individual. By "health" we refer to the complete physical, mental and social well-being of a person not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.<sup>20</sup> Reproductive health is essentially connected, and defined by the global community at the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo 1994 as: *a state of physical, mental, and social well-being in all matters relating to the reproductive system, at all stages of life.*<sup>21</sup> Sexual health connects to reproductive health

but are nevertheless distinct from them. Sexuality is an integral factor of almost all reproductive decisions but is however fundamentally an aspect of the human experience irrespective of reproduction.<sup>22</sup> Sexual rights include expressive, associational and participatory elements and a deeply connected to bodily integrity, self-sovereignty orientation and identity.<sup>23</sup>

Sexual and reproductive health is not limited to the well-being of the individual and cannot address questions of health only. The interconnectedness between SRHR to other rights and development issues has grown, as seen in the Agenda 2030 for sustainable development.<sup>24</sup> Lack of access to SRHR is seen as a driver to poverty and ensuring its access also a key contribution to poverty alleviation. Ensuring universal access to SRHR not only saves lives and empowers people but lead to significant economic gains for individuals, families and countries. Essential sexual and reproductive health services should be accessible to all

people without exposing them to financial hardship as part of universal social protection.<sup>25</sup> Act Church of Sweden ascribes to the Guttmacher-Lancet Commission's which presents a more integrated, broad and comprehensive and updated definition of SRHR from 2018.<sup>26</sup> This definition integrates the full range of peoples' needs and services including sexual well-being, personal autonomy and bodily integrity and also encompasses the recommended access to services that ensures these rights are upheld. Essential sexual and reproductive health services includes contraceptive services, maternal and newborn care, prevention and treatment of STIs including HIV/AIDS, safe abortion

care<sup>27</sup>, prevention, detection and counseling for gender based violence, detection and treatment of infertility and counselling for sexual health and wellbeing as well as comprehensive sexuality education.<sup>28</sup> As it involves a life cycle approach it includes access to menstrual hygiene products<sup>29</sup> as well as issues extending beyond the reproductive years, such as prevention of reproductive cancers. The commission states that those marginalised should be prioritised and build on previous international agreements and human rights principles<sup>30</sup> to address the needs of all individuals.

## 5. THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Achieving the highest level of sexual and reproductive health is not possible if rights associated with sexual and reproductive health are not defined, protected and realized. At the moment there is no international agreement on the full acronym of SRHR, particularly sexual rights. Discussions around these concepts, their meaning and the rights related are subject to polarized political discussions.<sup>31</sup> The lack of agreement on what constitutes sexual rights means there is less ways to monitor their realization and ensure accountability.<sup>32</sup> A provisional description can be formulated based on other already existing rights relating to the integrity of the body, freedom from violence and coercion and non-discrimination based on gender or gender identity, for example the right to privacy, the rights to freedom of opinion and expression, the right to an effective remedy for violations of rights, the rights to the highest attainable standard of health and right to social security among many.<sup>33 34 35 36 37</sup>

Human rights are universal, inalienable; indivisible; interdependent and interrelated. Non-discrimination underlies all human rights protection and promotion of human rights. There is a growing consensus that sexual health cannot be achieved and maintained without respect for, and protection of, certain human rights, already recognized in international and

regional human rights documents and other consensus documents and in national laws.<sup>38 39</sup>

Human rights defenders working for sexual and reproductive health and rights are operating in an increasing shrinking democratic space<sup>40</sup>. Human rights defenders in many parts of the world are particularly under threat, to their organisations or their lives, when engaging on SRHR issues, moreover so if they are women and or LGBTIQI persons.

This also includes religious actors working for these issues. Act Church of Sweden recognises the duty of states to ensure just and equal realisation of rights for all. Equal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights assumes legal frameworks and policies that enforce the realisation of human rights. While states are legal duty bearers bound by international agreements, there are also moral duty bearers, such as religious communities or other actors, who have the moral duty to work towards the realization of rights. Churches have an ambiguous history with human rights even though human rights are generally consistent with the Christian understanding of equal worth and dignity of all. Religions play an important part in the interpretation and acceptance of the human rights framework especially when it comes to the questions of morality which underlie the legal human rights framework.

## 6. THE ROLE OF ACT CHURCH OF SWEDEN

Act Church of Sweden is committed to the inherent dignity and preciousness of every human being manifested in biblical narratives and therefore chooses to work together with other actors towards the realization of human rights for all. Act Church of Sweden especially emphasises the listening of God's call for justice in the yearning of those who are pushed to the margins. We also recognize that, as a church, we are called to speak up for justice and work toward just relationships between all humans and within the whole creation. Act Church of Sweden ascribes to the full definition of SRHR and use it to the full but also recognise that contextual realities might render language around rights difficult.

Act Church of Sweden strives towards a change in societal norms and attitudes for mutual learning and a realisation of SRHR. We acknowledge that questions relating to sexuality and reproduction are complex, can cause discomfort and difficulties and touch the core of our personal and societal value systems. We acknowledge that we often lack the language or skill-sets to be able to address these issues effectively,

rendering silence and rights violations the ultimate consequence. We are therefore committed to dialogue and mutual learning in order to build political, social and cultural consensus for the defence and fulfilment of sexual and reproductive health and rights. By stating our position, we want to show our commitments so that a meaningful dialogue can take place. We believe that, as a church, we have a special responsibility and a unique possibility to work on issues relating to sexual and reproductive health and rights. We believe that theology enables us to hold complex realities and complex questions. We believe that our relationship with these matters is not fixed nor static but in constant conversation. Finally, we echo what the World Council of Churches stated in 1994 in their statement to the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development that: *among the churches within the fellowship, there is a wide spectrum of approaches to these issues. While respecting these differences, we are seeking to encourage and maintain an open, constructive dialogue on them, both among ourselves and with other churches and people of other faiths.*<sup>41</sup>

## 7. ACT CHURCH OF SWEDEN'S POSITION ON SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

### THE ACT CHURCH OF SWEDEN'S OVERALL POSITION IS:

**Rights to sexual and reproductive health are fundamental to the human experience and to social relations.** Right to sexual and reproductive health is a human right.<sup>42 43</sup> Sexual and reproductive health *incorporates the right of an individual to take decisions regarding his or her own body, sexuality, cohabitation, maternal health and reproductive choices.*<sup>44 45</sup> While states are the primary duty-bearers in respecting, protecting and fulfilling human rights other actors can also be held accountable as moral duty bearers for their actions and omissions affecting the enjoyment of sexual and reproductive health and rights.<sup>46</sup> Religious actors have a moral duty to contribute to the realization on sexual and reproductive health and rights.

### THIS OVERALL POSITION IS SUPPORTED BY THE FOLLOWING STRATEGIC POSITIONS:

1. **Act Church of Sweden promotes universal access to sexual and reproductive health services.** Sexual and reproductive health care services include a variety of services that allow individuals to enjoy a healthy sex life, uphold good personal hygiene including menstrual hygiene, make conscious and safe choices including on the number and spacing of children and deliver a healthy infant. Access to services include contraceptive services, maternal and new-born care, STIs and to HIV/AIDS related services, detection and treatment of reproductive cancers, detection and counselling on sexual and gender-based violence and access to safe and legal abortion.<sup>47</sup> Prevention, treatment, care and support, must be

universal and without any form of discrimination.<sup>48</sup> Access to universal SRHR services must also be secured during humanitarian interventions.<sup>49</sup> Recognizing the primary responsibility of states to fulfill the rights of sexual and reproductive health and other social protection for all people, churches and faith based organizations provide health services for people living in vulnerable situations. They are also moral duty bearers and have a pivotal role advocating, informing, monitoring and holding duty bearers accountable to ensure universal access to health for all.

- 2. Act Church of Sweden promotes universal access to comprehensive sexuality education.** This includes education and counselling on sexuality, sexually transmitted infections including HIV, contraception, and safe, legal abortions. Age appropriate and context specific comprehensive sexuality education and access to information is imperative to empower individuals and couples and especially adolescent youth to make free and informed decision regarding reproductive choices and on all aspects of their sexuality including the choice of partner, voluntary choice in marriage, consensual sexual relations, the decision on whether or not or when to have children.<sup>50</sup> Comprehensive sexuality education is key for prevention in general including against sexual and gender-based violence.<sup>51</sup> Access to comprehensive sexuality education must also be secured during humanitarian interventions.
- 3. Act Church of Sweden is committed to a respectful and mutual dialogue and strategic alliances on religious and cultural understandings of gender, gender identity, sexuality, sexual and reproductive health and rights.** Religious and cultural understandings, practices, norms and legislation have significant effect on the lives of individuals, families and entire societies. We are committed to dialogue and mutual learning with all actors in order to build political, social and cultural consensus for the defence and guarantee of sexual and reproductive rights for all. Cultural and religious differences have significantly hindered the international community from realizing consensus on SRHR in general and specifically sexual rights as human rights in a legally binding way. Without binding international agreements governments cannot be held legally accountable

for not respecting, protecting and upholding these rights.<sup>52</sup> Shying away from questions of sexuality and reproduction is not an option.

- 4. Act Church of Sweden opposes cultural and religious practices and norms that are harmful to bodily integrity and autonomy.** The right to be protected from all forms of violence and harm is a human right. Sexuality-related harm includes both violence and abuse of a physical, verbal, psychological, economic and sexual nature and violence against individuals because of their sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital status, sexual history or behaviour.<sup>53</sup> Religious actors are in a position of power when it comes to harmful practices and norms such as Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C), early and forced marriages and unwanted /unintended pregnancies. All these practices violate the inalienable dignity and integrity of a person and cannot be accepted.
- 5. Act Church of Sweden recognises that there is a connection between power, sexuality and reproduction.** We recognise that there are many cultural or religious practises which are being used to justify abuse of power over those in vulnerable positions. Those in vulnerability often include women, girls, those that are pregnant, those in poverty, those with disabilities, migrant people, individuals in humanitarian crisis and LGBTQI persons. Act Church of Sweden opposes any abuse of power and works towards equitable power relations.
- 6. Act Church of Sweden is committed to advocating for SRHR and those defending these rights.** Many of those engaging in SRHR program and advocacy work are operating under difficult conditions and within a shrinking civic and democratic space. Human right defenders in many parts of the world are particularly under threat when engaging on SRHR issues, moreover so if they are LGBTQI persons and or women. This also includes religious actors working with these issues. Act Church of Sweden is committed to advocating for these rights and those defending them.



## 6. REFERENCE LIST AND ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> The Church of Sweden et al., Vad gör vi nu? Bemötande och förebyggande av sexuella övergrepp, 2011, 16

<sup>2</sup> The Church of Sweden International Department, Position on Gender Justice and Gender Equality in the Church of Sweden's International Work. first adopted by the Commission for International Mission and Diaconia on 24 April 2012 and then again in 2015. Sexual and reproductive health and the related rights are addressed in the position no. 4: *The Church of Sweden operates in accordance with the principle of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) . SRHR incorporates the right of an individual to take decisions regarding his or her own body, sexuality, cohabitation, maternal health and reproductive choices. Theologically and ecclesiologically , the dignity of every individual and our responsibility to be an inclusive church is the guiding principle in the Church of Sweden's view on SRHR. Gender justice and gender equality also has implications in terms of the Church of Sweden's view of marriage and the affirmation of diversity in sexual orientation and gender identity. It is also important in relation to our attitude towards HIV.*

<sup>3</sup> The position is closely interlinked with Act Church of Sweden's Position on Gender Justice and Gender Equality in the Church of Sweden's International Work, 2012, and the joint position paper Human Rights, HIV / AIDS Prevention and Gender Equality, 2008. It also relates to A Pastoral Letter from the Bishops of the Church of Sweden About HIV from a Global Perspective, 2007. In this document the Swedish bishops urge Swedish agencies and political decision-making bodies to increase international aid to projects aimed at protecting and strengthening the sexual and reproductive health and rights of everyone.

<sup>4</sup> The Church of Sweden, A Pastoral Letter from the Bishops of the Church of Sweden About HIV from a Global Perspective, 26

<sup>5</sup> ENRECA HEALTH, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights: Agreements and Disagreements, 28; UNAIDS, Expanding the Global Response to HIV/AIDS through Focused Action: Reducing Risk and Vulnerability, 1998, 6–8; WHO, Defining Sexual Health. Report of a Technical Consultation on Sexual Health, 10–12

<sup>6</sup> WHO, Defining Sexual Health. Report of a Technical Consultation on Sexual Health, 11

<sup>7</sup> WHO, definition of social determinants of health. [https://www.who.int/social\\_determinants/sdh\\_definition/en/](https://www.who.int/social_determinants/sdh_definition/en/)

<sup>8</sup> Act Church of Sweden, Position paper on the right to social protection– a precondition for equality, equity and empowerment

<sup>9</sup> The Church of Sweden International Department, Position on Gender Justice and Gender Equality in the Church of Sweden's International Work, 6.

<sup>10</sup> *LGBT in development, a handbook on LGBT perspectives in development cooperation*, RFSL 2009, p. 20.

<sup>11</sup> WHO, Universal Health Coverage [https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/universal-health-coverage-\(uhc\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/universal-health-coverage-(uhc))

<sup>12</sup> See ENRECA HEALTH, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights: Agreements and Disagreements, 45 for description of UNFPA priority concerns. For examples of the negative impact of lack of sexual rights to development see SIDA, Sexual Rights for All, 6.

<sup>13</sup> 5 The need to create a favorable environment in which everyone may enjoy all sexual rights is central to achieving the realization of sexual and reproductive rights. See Sexual Rights: An IPPF Declaration, principle 1. A recent report from UNESCO identifies religions as having major influence also school curriculums and individuals' behavior. Therefore "any efforts to address sexuality and SHR services will [...] need to view religious leaders as an integral part of the solution if they intend to succeed". Young People Today. Ready for Tomorrow? 96–97.

<sup>14</sup> The Church of Sweden International Department, Our Theology: A Life-Empowering Faith as Our Driving Force (Uppsala, 2013).

<sup>15</sup> See e.g. The Church of Sweden, *A Pastoral Letter from the Bishops of the Church of Sweden About HIV from a Global Perspective*, 23–25.

<sup>16</sup> 3 Patricia Sheerattan-Bisnauth and Philip Vinod Peacock, eds., "Created in God's Image. From Hegemony to Partnership. A Church Manual on Men as Partners: Promoting Positive Masculinities" (Geneva: WCC, 2010), 79; Bispemöte i Den norske kirke, Sammen (Oslo, 2013), 16; The Church of Sweden, A Pastoral Letter from the Bishops of the Church of Sweden About HIV from a Global Perspective, 24–28.

<sup>17</sup> "When life does not turn out like we expected"– Pastoral Guidance for women who consider or have completed abortions and men in their lives, 2004. Church of Sweden.

<sup>18</sup> The Church of Sweden International Department, Our Theology: A Life–Empowering Faith as Our Driving Force.

<sup>19</sup> The working definition and conceptual framework on Sexuality, by the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization, 2000; WHO, 2006a as stated in the Technical Guidance on Sexuality Education from 2018, published by UNESCO, UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women and WHO

<sup>20</sup> United Nations, "Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development," in Report of the International Conference on Population and Development. (Cairo, 1994), para. 7.2. The notions of "health" and "healthy" are fluid in various ways. What is considered "healthy" varies between different cultures and contexts and "health" can be differently described even when attached to the same person at different points of their life. The same applies to "sexuality". WHO, Defining Sexual Health. Report of a Technical Consultation on Sexual Health, 2002, 4–5; International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS, "Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Briefing 1" no. 2005 (2008); IPPF, Sexual Rights: An IPPF Declaration, 2008; SIDA, Sexual Rights for All, 2010, 2

<sup>21</sup> 9 Report of the International Conference on Population and Development from the United Nations' Conference on Population and Development, in Cairo 1994. This report includes sexual health within the concept of reproductive health. United Nations, "Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development," para. 7.2. The conference adopted a 20–year Programme of Action, with focus on individuals' needs and rights. Gender equality, eliminating violence against women and ensuring women's ability to control their own fertility were recognized as cornerstones of population and development policies

<sup>22</sup> 4 IPPF, Sexual Rights: An IPPF Declaration; SIDA, Sexual Rights for All, 4.

<sup>23</sup> IPPF, Sexual Rights: An IPPF Declaration, principle 1.

<sup>24</sup> See Goal 3 targets 3.1., 3.3. 3.7–3.8; Goal 5 targets 5.1.–5.3 and 5,6; Goal 4 targets 4.1,4.5., 4.7; Goal 6 target 6.2.; Goal 8 target 8.5., Goal 10 targets 10.2–10.4. and Goal 16, targets 16.1.–16.3.

<sup>25</sup> International Labour Organization, recommendation 202 social protection floor on essential health services; [https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEX-PUB:12100:0::NO::P12100\\_ILO\\_CODE:R202](https://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEX-PUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:R202)

<sup>26</sup> Guttmacher and Lancet Commission, 2018 <https://www.guttmacher.org/guttmacher-lancet-commission/accelerate-progress-executive-summary#>

<sup>27</sup> The Church of Sweden synod has discussed questions relating to abortion on several occasions, most recently in autumn 2013. The Synod has repeatedly decided, due to the complexity of the issue, not to formulate a single principle opinion on abortions but has instead emphasized the church's pastoral task relating to the decision to undergo an abortion. Both the 2009 and 2013 statements emphasize that there is no one, singular, Christian viewpoint on abortion. This statement indicates that while the Church of Sweden recognizes the inalienable value of each individual there can exist a variety of opinions on the ethical dilemma that abortion poses. The dilemma should be taken seriously, and the church should offer pastoral assistance to those individuals that have gone through or have been affected by an abortion. See: Kyrkomötet (The Church of Sweden Synod), Solidaritet med det ofödda barnets rätt till liv som en egen skyddsvärd individ, 2013:15; Kyrkomötet (The Church of Sweden Synod), Aborter, 2009:10; Kyrkomötet (The Church of Sweden Synod), Sexualitet och mänskliga rättigheter, 2007:13; Kyrkomötet (The Church of Sweden Synod), Kyrkomötesuttalande i abortfrågan, 2003:3; Kyrkomötet (The Church of Sweden Synod), Kyrkan och pornografin, 2002:3. The Church of Sweden affirms the current Swedish legislation regarding abortions. Women's legally protected right to choose to undergo an abortion is considered to protect women from the serious risks to health that illegal abortions pose. Svenska kyrkan, När livet inte blir som vi har tänkt oss, 2005, 11

<sup>28</sup> There is clear evidence that CSE has a positive impact on SRHR, notably contributing towards reducing sexually transmitted infections, HIV and unintended pregnancy. A significant body of evidence shows that CSE enables children and young people to develop: accurate and age appropriate knowledge, attitudes and skills; positive values, including respect for human rights, gender equality and diversity, and, attitudes and skills that contribute to safe, healthy, positive relationships (see *Section 4 – The evidence base for comprehensive sexuality education*). CSE is also important as it can help young people reflect on social norms, cultural values and traditional beliefs, in order to better understand and manage their relationships with peers, parents, teachers, other adults and their communities”. (UNESCO. 2018. *International technical guidance on sexuality education, an evidence-informed approach*).

<sup>29</sup> <https://www.fsg.org/publications/advancing-gender-equity-improving-menstrual-health>

<sup>30</sup> The first international agreement that created a common human rights language on SRHR moved the issue of SRHR from an issue of population control to an issue of rights, was the Programme of Action of the ICPD (Cairo 1994) This agreement was affirmed and expanded by the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995 where SRHR was linked to a wider gender justice and established that women had the right to decide on their sexuality, including sexual and reproductive health, free from coercion, discrimination and violence.

<sup>31</sup> Discussion and problematisation of the concepts of sexual and reproductive health in international agreements see: ENRECA HEALTH, *Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights: Agreements and Disagreements*, 2011, 3–6.

<sup>32</sup> The international conferences, such as the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing (1995) and Cairo Conference on Population and Development (1994) are not binding and therefore not ratified in national legislations in the same way as human rights are. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and several human rights treaties do embrace sexual rights even though they are not explicitly stated. SIDA, *Sexual Rights for All*, 1. The implication of this is e.g. that since the human rights treaties are not explicit about homosexuality it is difficult to argue that universal human rights treaties accept the right of sexual orientation. ENRECA HEALTH, *Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights: Agreements and Disagreements*, 30–31

<sup>33</sup> A number of rights are related beyond those mentioned, the right to the highest attainable standard of sexual health, including access to sexual and reproductive health care services; seek, receive and impart information related to sexuality; comprehensive sexuality education; respect for bodily integrity; choice their sexual partner; decide to be sexually active or not; consensual sexual relations; consensual marriage, *the right to equality in and at the dissolution of marriage*, decide whether or not, and when, to have children; and pursue a satisfying, safe and pleasurable sexual life etc. Such description with explication of supporting principles can be found in IPPF, *Sexual Rights: An IPPF Declaration*. See also World Health Organisation, *Defining Sexual Health. Report of a Technical Consultation of Sexual Health (Geneva, 2002)*, 5. The Declaration and Platform for Action from the UN Conference on Women in Beijing state that women’s rights include the right to have control over their own sexuality and the right to freedom from all forms of coercion and violence, including sexual violence. The Swedish Foreign Ministry policy from 2006 has a slightly narrower description focusing on non-discrimination, right to one’s own body and sexuality. *Sexuell och reproduktiv hälsa och rättigheter*, 2006, 8.

<sup>34</sup> World Health Organisation, [https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/sexual\\_health/sh\\_definitions/en](https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/sexual_health/sh_definitions/en)

<sup>35</sup> Guttmacher and Lancet Commission, 2018 <https://www.guttmacher.org/guttmacher-lancet-commission/accelerate-progress-executive-summary#>

<sup>36</sup> Starrs et al., “Accelerate Progress—sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights for All: Report of the Guttmacher–Lancet Commission,” 2644.

<sup>37</sup> The Yogyakarta Principles address a broad range of human rights standards and their application to issues of sexual orientation and gender identity. The Principles affirm the primary obligation of States to implement human rights. Each Principle is accompanied by detailed recommendations to States. The experts agree that the Yogyakarta Principles reflect the existing state of international human rights law in relation to issues of sexual orientation and gender identity. They also recognise that States may incur additional obligations as human rights law continues to evolve. [http://yogyakartaprinciples.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/principles\\_en.pdf](http://yogyakartaprinciples.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/principles_en.pdf) and [http://yogyakartaprinciples.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/A5\\_yogyakartaWEB-2.pdf](http://yogyakartaprinciples.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/A5_yogyakartaWEB-2.pdf)

<sup>38</sup> The right to sexual and reproductive health, “the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health”, is stated in article 12 of the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights “International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Adopted and Opened for Signature, Ratification and Accession by General Assembly Resolution 2200A (XXI) of 16 December 1966 Entry into Force 3 January 1976, in Accordance with Article 27,” 1966, para. 12, <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199217908.003.0001>.

<sup>39</sup> 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs) (2015), The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and its subsequent reviews, United Nations’ Conference on Population and Development, Cairo (1994) and its subsequent reviews, The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1979), Security Council Resolution 1325, Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (1993), UN General Assembly Resolution A/Res/67/146 Intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilations (2012).

<sup>40</sup> United Nations Human rights Office of the High Commissioner: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Women/WRGS/Pages/HRDefenders.aspx>

<sup>41</sup> Statement of the World Council of Churches at the UN World conference on population and development Cairo 5-13 September 1994 [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/94-09-08\\_Statement\\_of\\_World\\_Council\\_of\\_Churches.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/94-09-08_Statement_of_World_Council_of_Churches.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> The human rights relating to sexuality are enumerated in IPPF, Sexual Rights: An IPPF Declaration, 16–21

<sup>43</sup> Guttmacher Lancet Commission SRHR definition from 2018,, <https://www.guttmacher.org/guttmacher-lancet-commission/accelerate-progress-executive-summary#>

<sup>44</sup> The Church of Sweden International Department, Position on Gender Justice and Gender Equality in the Church of Sweden’s International Work, 8.

<sup>45</sup> The Yogyakarta Principles address a broad range of human rights standards and their application to issues of sexual orientation and gender identity. [http://yogyakartaprinciples.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/principles\\_en.pdf](http://yogyakartaprinciples.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/principles_en.pdf) and [http://yogyakartaprinciples.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/A5\\_yogyakartaWEB-2.pdf](http://yogyakartaprinciples.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/A5_yogyakartaWEB-2.pdf)

<sup>46</sup> IPPF, Sexual Rights: An IPPF Declaration, principle 7.

<sup>47</sup> Guttmacher and Lancet Commission, 2018 <https://www.guttmacher.org/guttmacher-lancet-commission/accelerate-progress-executive-summary#>

<sup>48</sup> IPPF, principle 3.

<sup>49</sup> Minimum Initial Service Package (MISP for reproductive health, a part of the Sphere minimum standards is a series of crucial actions required to respond to reproductive health needs at the onset of every [humanitarian crisis](#). The MISP is not just kits of equipment and supplies; it is a set of activities that must be implemented in a coordinated manner by appropriately trained staff. This tool was developed through the [Inter-Agency Working Group on Reproductive Health in Crises](#). MISP training is available here: <http://iawg.net/minimum-initial-service-package/> The MISP calculator is available here: <http://iawg.net/resource/misp-rh-kit-calculators/> <http://iawg.net/areas-of-focus/misp/>

<sup>50</sup> Technical guidance on CSE: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000260770>

<sup>51</sup> Technical guidance on CSE: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000260770>

<sup>52</sup> Sexual rights are implicit in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Convention of the Rights of the Child. Also the Millennium Declaration and the Yogyakarta Principles encompass these rights. SIDA, “Sexual Rights for All,” 2010, 1.

<sup>53</sup> IPPF, “Sexual Rights: An IPPF Declaration”, principle 5.

**act**  
Church of Sweden 