



POSITIONING PAPER

"SRHR"

# SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS (SRHR)

Solthis' mission is to improve the health of populations in countries with the lowest coverage of health needs by strengthening the capacity of health systems to meet the needs of populations in terms of quality, access to care and equity. In order to address the sexual and reproductive health (SRH) needs of individuals, Solthis aims to implement interventions that both strengthen individuals' access to their sexual and reproductive rights and improve access to comprehensive, quality SRH services. The organization recognizes the importance of a holistic and integrated approach to support people sexual and reproductive health throughout their lives, with each SRH service being part of a set of interconnected components.

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## DEFINITIONS

### **Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)**

As SRHR incorporates the full range of individual needs and takes into account services that are still too often neglected, Solthis has decided to adopt the Lancet-Guttmacher Commission 2018 definition.

*“Sexual and reproductive health is a state of physical, emotional, mental, and social wellbeing in relation to all aspects of sexuality and reproduction, not merely the absence of disease, dysfunction, or infirmity. Therefore, a positive approach to sexuality and reproduction should recognise the part played by pleasurable sexual relationships, trust, and communication in the promotion of self-esteem and overall wellbeing. All individuals have a right to make decisions governing their bodies and to access services that support that right”*

Drawing on various international treaties and agreements and human rights principles, it reflects an emerging consensus on an essential package of interventions and services needed to meet the sexual and reproductive health needs of individuals.

This definition highlights the inextricable links between sexual and reproductive rights and SRH, with the full achievement of sexual and reproductive rights being an essential prerequisite to access SRH.

<sup>1</sup> Guttmacher-Lancet Commission Report, Accelerating Progress, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights for All, 2018

These rights are fundamental human rights stemming from the rights to freedom, equality, privacy and autonomy, integrity and dignity.

International conventions do not explicitly refer to sexual and reproductive rights, but these are rooted in universal human rights, which are reflected in various commitments made by the international community and agreed by countries.<sup>2</sup>

### **Sexual and reproductive health / Maternal and newborn health**

Maternal and newborn health is defined by the WHO as taking into account all aspects of a woman's health from pregnancy to childbirth to postpartum (42 days after delivery) and that of the newborn up to 28 days. The concept of sexual and reproductive health and rights is broader than just maternal and newborn health and takes into account all of a woman's sexual and reproductive needs, not just her maternity-related needs. This concept also integrates the response to men's SRH needs, which are often neglected in interventions.

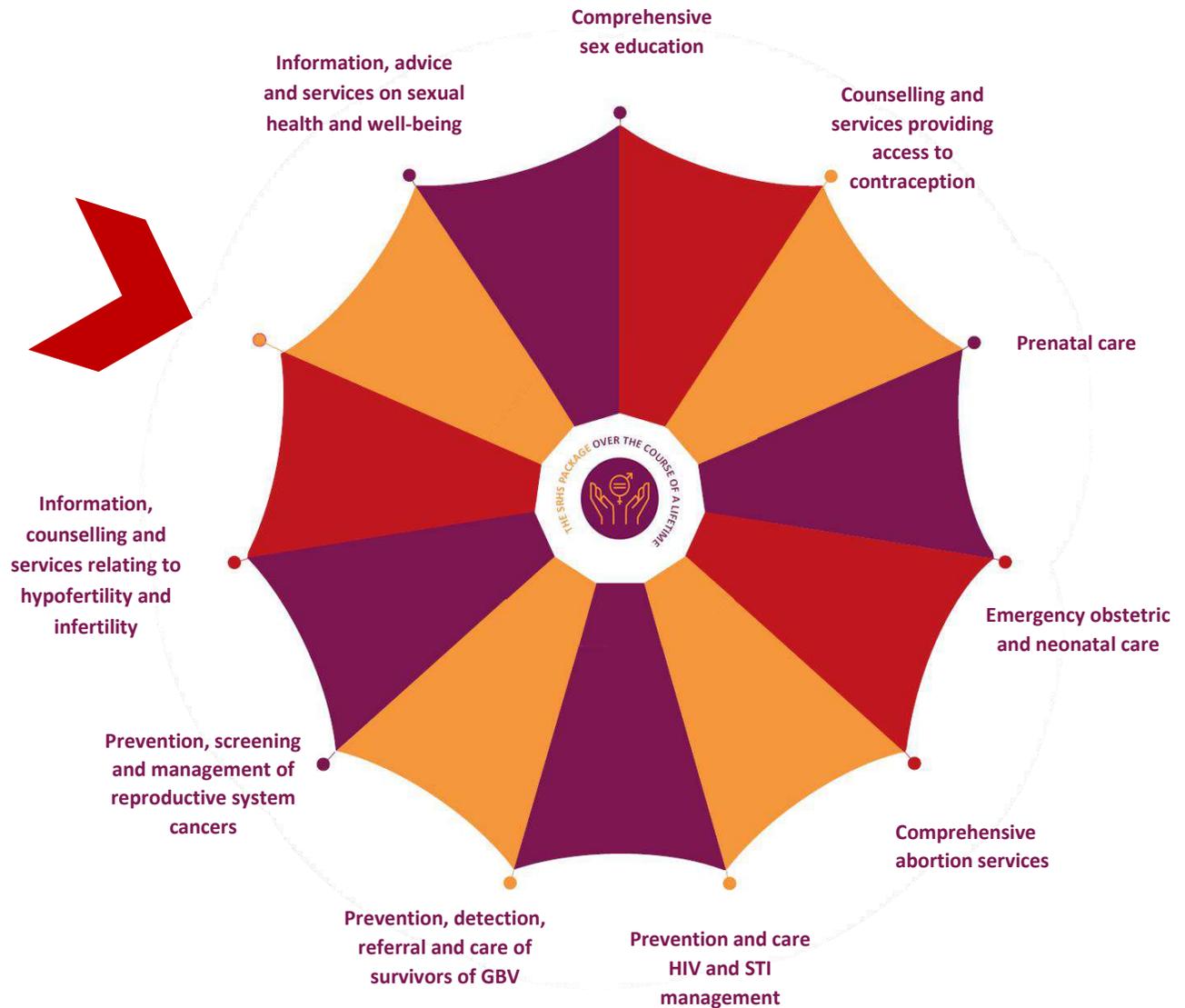
**SRHR is therefore an inclusive concept that includes sexual, reproductive, maternal and newborn health.** Adopting this terminology does not take away from the importance of maternal and newborn health and comprehensive maternal and child care.

<sup>2</sup> List of the main documents available in the annex

**THE CORE PACKAGE OF SRHR SERVICES**

In order to ensure a quality response to the different sexual and reproductive needs of individuals, the implementation of an essential package of services and interventions is necessary. This package combines the common components of sexual and reproductive health services with services that are still too often neglected. It covers:

Solthis recognizes the importance of the entire essential package of services. Due to its expertise, experience and resources, the organization focuses its work primarily on Primary Health Care interventions. Depending on the priority needs identified in the areas of intervention, the resources available and the operational capacity, Solthis aims at strengthening one or more services. Where possible, the organization aims at building partnerships and implementing coordination mechanisms in order to contribute to facilitating people's access to holistic service provision.



TheSHRHServices Package	Components
<b>Comprehensive sex education...</b>	...which involves an educational process with contents adapted according to age and stage of development. It aims at providing children and young people the factual knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable them to develop in a way that respects their health and well-being, to establish respectful social and sexual relationships, and to understand and defend their rights throughout their lives.
<b>Counselling and services providing access to contraception...</b>	...which includes health education, counselling to enable informed decision-making and the provision of contraceptives, including emergency contraception.
<b>Prenatal care...</b>	...provided throughout pregnancy by a trained professional with the aim of reducing perinatal mortality and promoting a positive maternity experience.
<b>Emergency obstetric and neonatal care...</b>	...which is a package of preventive and curative care provided during labour, delivery and the immediate postpartum period to the mother and newborn with the aim of early detection and appropriate management of potential complications.
<b>Postnatal care...</b>	...given to the mother up to 42 days after delivery and to the newborn up to 28 days of life. This promotes comprehensive care for the mother and her child to reduce the risk of complications.
<b>Comprehensive abortion services...</b>	...which corresponds to a package of care provided by a qualified health professional: pre-abortion consultation, medical abortion, post-abortion care whether it is a spontaneous or induced abortion or post-abortion contraception.
<b>The prevention and management of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections...</b>	...which includes counselling and information, testing and care, and prevention of parent-to-child transmission of HIV (PPTCT).
<b>Prevention, detection, referral and care for survivors of GBV...</b>	...including sexual violence. The provision of a medical certificate at the request of the victim is an integral part of the services.
<b>The prevention, screening and management of reproductive system cancers, ...</b>	...especially cervical cancer, which are ideally integrated with other SRH services.
<b>Information, advice and services...</b>	...concerning hypofertility and infertility; but also <b>sexual health and well-being</b> , which can be integrated in a cross-cutting way within the other SRH services, and in particular contraception and STI prevention and management services.



## MAIN EXPECTED RESULTS

Evidence shows that access to SRHR anticipates and improves individual health and well-being, promotes gender equality, increases household income, but also provides multi-generational benefits by improving the health and well-being of children.

Through the implementation of its interventions in the field of SRHR, Solthis aims to contribute to **improving access to comprehensive and quality SRH services and to comprehensive access of individuals to sexual and reproductive rights**, and play a role in

- Reducing maternal and neonatal mortality and morbidity;
- Reducing the rate of unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions;
- Reducing the rate of sexually transmitted infections;
- Reducing the impact of all sexual and reproductive health issues on the well-being and social and economic life of individuals;
- Reducing gender inequalities and in particular reducing GBV and its consequences in the short, medium and long term;
- Improving the well-being, social empowerment and ability of girls and women to freely make decisions about their bodies.



## SOLTHIS' VISION

In order to meet the SRHR needs of individuals, Solthis aims at implementing interventions that both strengthen their ability of individuals to exercise their sexual and reproductive rights and improve access to comprehensive, quality SRH services. The organization recognizes the importance of a holistic and integrated approach to supporting people in their sexual and reproductive health throughout their lives, with each SRH service being part of a set of interconnected components.

Because adolescents and young people represent a group whose needs are not sufficiently taken into account, Solthis supports the implementation of services adapted to their specific needs.



Similarly, the organization sets out to promote access to services that meet the needs of particularly vulnerable and/or marginalized populations, such as people living with HIV, sex workers, or LGBT+ people.

Solthis is committed to supporting its national partners to implement an essential package of quality services, enabling individuals to access throughout their lives the information, services and support necessary to access their sexual and reproductive rights, without coercion, exploitation, or violence and without any form of discrimination, particularly in relation to age, marital status, sex, sexual orientation or gender identity.

**Solthis also recognizes the importance of empowering people to take action in relation to their own health.** The organization asserts its commitment to the right of people to freely define their own sexuality and for their bodily integrity, privacy and autonomy to be respected. Each person should have control over his or her own body and have safe sexual experiences. Each person should be able to decide if and when to be sexually active, with whom, and to freely decide if, when and with whom to marry, have children, the number of children and the spacing between each birth. To achieve this, Solthis recognizes the importance of access to comprehensive sexuality education programmes, effective contraceptive services, GBV management services and comprehensive abortion care services.

## **APPROACHES IMPLEMENTED BY THE ORGANIZATION**

There are many different barriers to accessing quality SRH services and comprehensive access to sexual and reproductive rights by individuals: legal, financial, geographical, socio-cultural determinants, health system weaknesses, etc. In order to contribute to overcoming some of these barriers, Solthis considers it is crucial to implement complementary approaches.

### **A public health and health systems strengthening approach**

Health problems related to SRH are important issues because of their prevalence, severity and wide-ranging consequences. Globally, approximately 303,000 women die each year from pregnancy-related causes. 214 million women would like to delay pregnancy but do not have access to effective contraception. Unsafe abortions result in 31,000 deaths and health-related issues for 8 million women. 266,000 women die from cervical cancer <sup>3</sup>.

Most maternal deaths would be preventable if health systems were strengthened as a whole. In contexts where health systems remain fragile due to a lack of resources and organizational issues, Solthis is working to provide a meaningful and sustainable response

which is part of the health systems approach. Solthis develops its expertise around the health systems building blocks developed by WHO. Strengthening each of the components makes it possible to obtain results in terms of access to quality services for all while ensuring the best efficiency for health systems. In this context, it is essential that the entire package of essential services and interventions be strengthened in an integrated manner, in particular certain components that are still too often neglected, such as comprehensive sexuality education programmes, the management of GBV, comprehensive abortion care and the response to men's SRH needs. SRH services cannot be strengthened in isolation, but must be considered as a whole, with links between each service to ensure an appropriate response to people's needs.



<sup>3</sup> WHO, Maternal Mortality, Key Benchmarks, 2020

**○ An approach based on human rights, empowerment of individuals and fighting gender inequalities**

Access to sexual and reproductive rights is an essential prerequisite for SRH. It is therefore not only about meeting identified health needs but also about enabling people to make informed choices. The multidimensional nature of the rights-based approach targets different levels to encourage changes in social norms and structures to ensure better access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The aim is to promote the empowerment of individuals and communities and to strengthen their knowledge and capacity. In this context, Solthis believes it is crucial to position individuals to take control over their own health. The organization's community mobilization and health promotion strategy aims at enabling people to define their own needs and actions to take in order to qualitatively improve access to care. Solthis prioritises working with people, developing their power to act through the implementation of collaborative actions, and providing them with ongoing support to express and promote their needs and rights.



**Because gender inequalities profoundly affect access to SRH services and the ability for individuals, particularly women, to fully express their rights, it also seems essential for Solthis to integrate an approach to fight against gender inequalities into its work.** This is formalized by the organization's gender strategy. In this way, improving access to quality SRH services necessarily implies working on making social gender norms evolve.

The emancipation of women is conditioned by guaranteeing their sexual and reproductive rights. Changes must be made among young people, men and women, but also in their environment: families, teachers, caregivers, communities and more broadly at the institutional level. Solthis also recognises that it is crucial to involve men, who are still often not sufficiently involved in SRHR issues.

**Because the full expression of sexual and reproductive rights by individuals and access to holistic services often requires laws and public policies to evolve,** Solthis develops partnerships with other organizations and works to complement national, regional and international networks to promote the implementation of coherent advocacy strategies. Solthis' advocacy work is "evidence-based" and based on documented facts thanks to the organization's dual focus on scientific and field knowledge.

### ○ An approach to enhancing and strengthening the skills of national civil society stakeholders

In order to work towards removing all barriers to accessing SRHR, it is crucial to be able to support the development of attitudes and representations around SRH, norms and social structures. Because these changes cannot take place without national civil society, the organization's work includes helping to structure civil society, who represent health service users' experiences. Solthis upholds a non-substitution approach and therefore focuses its work on supporting local facilities and stakeholders, by strengthening their skills and their operations, in order to

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*"Comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information and care enable young people to make informed choices about their health. »*

A.K, PEER EDUCATOR

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promote their empowerment and the sustainability of interventions. Civil society stakeholders are essential allies to assess and factor in socio-cultural determinants when coherently developing proposed interventions with regard to local contexts, and ensuring that activities developed by communities are supported and accepted.





**Photo caption:** Niamey - JADES project for the promotion of sexual and reproductive health of young people and adolescents in Niger: awareness raising activity on sexual and reproductive health

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