

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE
HEALTH AND RIGHTS IN THE
GENERATION EQUALITY FORUM'
ACTION COALITION ON



ECONOMIC JUSTICE & RIGHTS



IPPF/Hannah Maule-Ffinch/Palestine

Countdown 2030 Europe (C2030E) is a consortium of European NGOs advocating to ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and family planning (FP) in developing countries through holding European governments to account on their international policy and financial commitments on SRHR. To achieve this mission, amongst other activities, the consortium provides inputs to intergovernmental negotiations and policy processes. **This factsheet aims to inform the Action Coalitions on the interlinkages between SRHR and various elements of gender equality related to economic justice.**

The objective of the Generation Equality Forum (GEF) is to build a new momentum to advance gender equality worldwide. To do so, Action Coalitions must avoid silos and must instead explore synergies between them, complement one another and focus on gender-transformative interventions. This series of factsheets done by Countdown 2030 Europe and IPPF EN aims at building bridges between Action Coalitions to bring about an actual change in the lives of women and girls worldwide and to show how access to SRHR is gender-transformative and is essential to achieve gender equality.

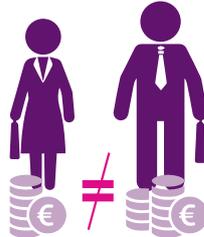


WHY

SHOULD SRHR BE INCLUDED IN THE ACTION COALITION ON ECONOMIC JUSTICE AND RIGHTS?

The realisation of SRHR is a necessary precondition for achieving economic justice.¹ A number of different components together form the basis for economic justice. These components include safe and decent work with equal and fair pay, equal access to resources and opportunities, social protection systems, as well as the right to peaceful assembly. SRHR is often not included in these discussions while it can provide basic solutions to prevailing economic inequality. It is therefore of great importance that SRHR is given priority as an integrated topic in the discussions on economic justice, especially in the light of the growing resistance towards SRHR as well as the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and its grave implications for achieving SDG 5.

SRHR IS A NECESSARY PRECONDITION FOR ACCESS TO WORK/ THE LABOUR MARKET



Besides patriarchal systems as well as detrimental gender norms, **women's lack of agency and bodily autonomy and society's dependence on women's unpaid care work is one of the greatest barriers to women entering the labour market**, with women spending three times as many hours as men on care and domestic work each day.² Women's care and child bearing responsibilities are among the most pervasive of the constraints that curtail women's ability to participate in the labour market.³ There is therefore a greater concentration of women in forms of work that are compatible with discharging these responsibilities, but carry poorer remuneration, such as: part-time, casual, irregular, seasonal and home-based work.⁴ In addition to the care burden and the lack of access to SRHR, women face additional gender-specific constraints which limit their access to, and roles in the labour market.⁵ Such factors include occupational sex segregation as well as legal, regulatory, and social restrictions.⁶ Occupational sex segregation itself is rooted in gender norms which keep women in feminized jobs such as the public, health, education, and other social sectors.⁷ It is perpetuated by stereotypes such as "women are not good at math, and are not suited for highly technical fields such as aerospace engineering, etc."⁸

Research also suggests that providing women with access to jobs without access to support mechanisms, such as parental leave, childcare, **access to SRHR, including family planning and contraceptives** and equal opportunity policies, does not lead to economic empowerment.⁹ On the contrary, failure to ensure these policies causes women to remain in the informal or agricultural sectors, where they are more vulnerable to poverty, ill health and precariousness.

Violence and harassment in the workplace also affects women's ability to exercise their labour rights.¹⁰ Women are paid less than men for equal work and face equal or higher gender pay gaps in the informal economy.¹¹ One consequence of this is that there is a wide gender pension gap.¹² These structural inequalities that limit women's participation in the labour market cannot be solved by only alleviating immediate poverty or allowing women to make partial income. **Instead an enabling environment that confirms women's right to work, to safety, to bodily autonomy and freedom must be established for women to have true agency over their lives and actually be able to participate in the labour market.**¹³

SRHR AND EDUCATION ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE SOLUTION



Investing in gender equality, including SRHR, has been called "smart economics"¹⁴ and research has shown that "reductions in gender inequality boost growth and development".¹⁵ Promoting access to SRHR and gender equality is also cost-effective:

as every



invested in family planning

▶ Can **SAVE** governments UP TO **\$62**

▶ And **YIELDS** as much as **\$60 - \$100** in long-term benefits from economic growth.¹⁶

Education is a powerful tool to ensure that economic justice can be achieved. Access to education and information including comprehensive sexuality education which reinforces equitable roles and relationships, including on SRHR itself, is an important part of the solution. Including gender-sensitive curricula which focuses on gender equality and challenges social and gender norms, along with training girls in non-traditional fields can combat occupational sex segregation and steer girls into areas which are in high-demand.¹⁷ **SRHR information is increasingly being integrated into school curricula to counter harmful gender norms and stereotypes, which can in the long term contribute to overcoming the challenges described above in this factsheet.**¹⁸ In the context of COVID-19, increases in women and girls' unpaid and domestic care work, such as caring for the sick, will negatively affect girls' educational prospects.¹⁹ It is therefore of vital importance that member states ensure that measures are put in place to safeguard girls' educational prospects and their SRHR.

HOW

SHOULD SRHR BE INCLUDED IN THE ACTION COALITION ON ECONOMIC JUSTICE AND RIGHTS?

The Action Coalition Blueprint must underscore that **SRHR, specifically access to family planning, to SRH-services and to comprehensive sexuality education, the realisation of sexual rights of ALL people and the elimination of gender based violence**, is a necessary precondition for achieving economic justice.

The Action Coalition on Economic Justice and Rights should address the root causes of economic inequality where **gender inequality and the lack of access to SRHR are pivotal factors to include**. Emphasizing SRHR as an integral part of economic justice highlights the basic problems and the reasons why economically unjust conditions arise from the beginning. **Ensuring SRHR is a critical prerequisite for individuals to be able to decide for themselves and contribute to the development of society** in general, both politically and economically.

The members of the Action Coalition should ensure that the cross-cutting issues that will shape the discussions within the various GEF coalitions, should **highlight the relationship between SRHR and economic justice**, in particular the following: “addressing intersectional discrimination”, “transforming gender norms” and “law and policy reform”.²⁰

Particularly in the context of COVID-19, **expanding health, including SRHR, social and economic protections for women in the informal sector is crucial**. Any commitments aiming to enhance progress towards economic justice after the pandemic should therefore **include SRHR as a critical component**. Access to SRHR is essential during the COVID-19 pandemic, and SRHR-specific concerns must be addressed to hold onto the progress that has been made in terms of gender equality, and by extension, economic justice.

The Action Coalition must recognize that focusing on economic aspects of empowerment is too limited, because this fails to address the **social norms and structural power relations** that keep young women poor and distanced from genuinely profitable paid work.²¹

Marginalised groups who face barriers in accessing SRHR will also have greater challenges in accessing the job market and education. **SRHR is necessary to ensure we leave no one behind in the effort to realize economic justice**.

This factsheet is part of a series of factsheets by Countdown 2030 Europe on the inclusion of SRHR in the various Action Coalition (AC) of the Generation Equality Forum - to ensure an integrated and inclusive approach across the ACs with particular attention to SRHR throughout.

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