



SEIZING MOMENTUM

to Further **Canada's**
Global Leadership on
Sexual and Reproductive
Health and Rights

FUTURE PLANNING INITIATIVE REPORT ON THE
SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS
Strategic Convening June 29 and 30, 2022



FUTURE PLANNING INITIATIVE

ADVOCATING FOR CANADIAN LEADERSHIP ON SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

Seizing Momentum to Further Canada's Global Leadership on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

Future Planning Initiative Report on the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
Strategic Convening June 29 and 30, 2022

Prepared by the Future Planning Initiative

The Future Planning Initiative is a coalition of six Canadian civil society organizations working globally and domestically to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights. Member organizations include: Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights, Canadian Partnership for Women and Children's Health, Cooperation Canada, Inter Pares, Global Canada and Oxfam Canada.

Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights gratefully acknowledges the traditional and unceded territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin nation where Action Canada's central office is located. Action Canada team members live, work, and organize on the unsundered and treaty territories of many Indigenous nations; nations who have, and continue to, steward the land known as Canada from time immemorial. It is vital that we centre our work towards reproductive justice in reconciliation and decolonization.

Thank you to our note taker Insiya Mankani, our facilitator Nora Sheffe, and our volunteer breakout group leaders and note-takers.

Please note that recommendations contained in the report summarize discussions held during the June 29 and 30 meeting and do not necessarily represent the views of all participants.

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BACKGROUND

The Future Planning Initiative (FPI) is a coalition of six Canadian civil society organizations (CSOs) working globally and domestically to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Member organizations include Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights, Canadian Partnership for Women and Children's Health, Cooperation Canada, Inter Pares, Global Canada and Oxfam Canada.

The 6th FPI retreat brought stakeholders together from across government and the global health, human rights, feminist, and development sectors (in Canada and globally) to address two broad goals:

- » to take stock of Canada's SRHR commitment and assess implementation, accountability and ramp-up; and
- » to consider strategies to strengthen Canada's global SRHR commitment and leadership.

Over two half-day in-person sessions, participants shared knowledge, discussed gaps and barriers, developed strategies to advance accountability, and identified further opportunities for Canadian leadership and advocacy on SRHR. This was a valuable moment to rebuild the connective tissues of the network of champions pushing forward the SRHR agenda across government and civil society in Canada and globally after two years of virtual-only convenings because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

SITUATING THE CONVERSATION

In early 2022, a draft decision of the Supreme Court of the United States was leaked that foreshadowed the official decision to repeal *Roe v. Wade*, which had federally protected the right to abortion in America for over 50 years. Amidst this repeal, we continue to see a rise in anti-rights organizing by various state and non-state actors¹ which impacts community-level, national, and multilateral systems that serve to protect and defend human rights and the right to bodily autonomy in countries around the world.² The decision in the US will no doubt embolden anti-rights actors and reminds Canada of the critical importance of maintaining a supportive and bold posture internationally in support of SRHR. Despite rising challenges, activists and human rights supporters globally continue to carve out space and make innovations. The World Health Organization (WHO) released newly updated abortion guidelines in early 2022 which took an important step forward by clearly framing abortion care as essential for the provision of fundamental human rights. The guidelines provide a substantive range of policy and legislative recommendations in support of the full and accessible provision of abortion care.³

Expert presenters at the convening from the WHO and the Guttmacher Institute reaffirmed the importance of implementing SRHR programming within a human rights framework and situating comprehensive SRHR as part of universal health coverage (UHC) investments and approaches.⁴ It was noted that we have seen significant evolution of human rights language in guidance and reference documents on the provision of contraceptive care,⁵ abortion care,⁶ and comprehensive sexuality education,⁷ showing a growing consensus on approaching sexual and reproductive health beyond a focus on individual health to one more broadly in support of achieving human rights.

In tandem with this positive policy framing, the evidence made clear the continued gaps in implementing this theory into practice: the lack of focus and investment on the neglected areas globally and the inequities of access and service by the most disadvantaged populations across and within countries. Canada's investment in this context plays a critical role in shining a light on lesser supported areas of SRHR and building a strong approach to programming in these areas.

- 1 Neil Datta (2021), Tip of the Iceberg: Religious Extremist Funders against Human Rights for Sexuality and Reproductive Health in Europe 2009 – 2018 <https://www.epfweb.org/sites/default/files/2021-08/Tip%20of%20the%20Iceberg%20August%202021%20Final.pdf>
- 2 AWID (2021), Rights at Risk Observatory on the Universality of Rights Trends Report https://awid.org/sites/default/files/2022-01/RightsAtRisk_TimeForAction_OURsTrendsReport2021.pdf
- 3 World Health Organization (2022), Abortion Care Guideline <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/349316>
- 4 World Health Organization (2022), Critical considerations and actions for achieving universal access to sexual and reproductive health in the context of universal health coverage through a primary health care approach <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240052659>
- 5 World Health Organization (2014), Framework for ensuring human rights in the provision of contraceptive information and services <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789241507745>
- 6 World Health Organization (2022), Abortion Care Guideline <https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/349316>
- 7 UNESCO, UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNICEF, UN Women Joint Publication (2018) International technical guidance on sexuality education An evidence-informed approach <https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/ITGSE.pdf>

GAPS IN SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

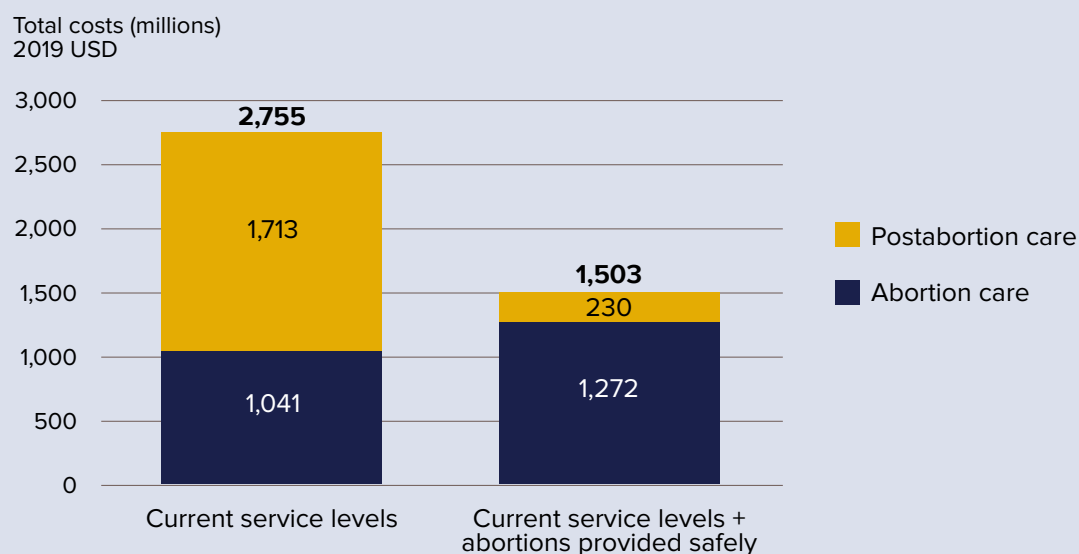
NEGLECTED AREAS: safe abortion care, adolescent SRHR, comprehensive contraceptive care, and advocacy

INEQUITIES PERSIST ACROSS COUNTRIES AND WITHIN COUNTRIES: Need is greatest among the most disadvantaged groups (adolescents, LGBTIQ+, refugees and displaced peoples etc.)

Leadership and advocacy on abortion is critical now more than ever

Evidence presented also made clear the significant cost savings of both the provision of contraceptive services and the provision of safe abortion services. While on the whole contraception investments yield a \$3 savings for every \$1 invested, a rights-based approach to abortion related services could result in a 45% reduction of health care costs by dramatically reducing the amount of post-abortion care investment required due to unsafe procedures.⁸

A rights-based approach reduces annual costs of abortion-related services by 45%



Source: Sully EA et al., *Adding it Up: Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health 2019*, New York: Guttmacher Institute, 2020.

8 Sully EA et al. (2020) *Adding It Up: Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health 2019*, New York: Guttmacher Institute www.guttmacher.org/report/adding-it-up-investing-in-sexual-reproductive-health-2019

The world continues to navigate COVID-19 response measures and the transition to a post-pandemic environment where pandemic preparedness, health system investments, and economic recovery are key priorities. In this context, building and sharing evidence of the positive impact of SRHR investments is critical. For example, right now Canada and other countries have been challenged to mount responses to the geopolitical context of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the compounding effect it has had on the growing hunger crisis that has been years in the making. As such, evidence that outlines the impact of investing in SRHR is tantamount to protecting support for this area. While these crises have significantly impacted Canada's work, positively it has not displaced existing SRHR investments and champions continue the important work of making clear how SRHR is both linked to and underpins overall development and the attainment of many fundamental rights.⁹

In discussions on the landscape, participants raised the importance of safeguarding current investments amid rising global challenges, the need to demonstrate clear links between SRHR and the overall positive health system impact it provides, the importance of maintaining a human rights-based approach to SRHR programming and advocacy, and the challenge of health and education privatization on the delivery of SRHR priorities.

Now more than ever, investments and global political support for SRHR must be not only locked in but bolstered. They are critically important policy and financial choices that hold the line on fundamental human rights and support a pathway of equitable development for women, girls, and their communities at large.

9 UNGA (2021) Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health <https://undocs.org/A/76/172>

CANADA'S COMMITMENT AND PROGRESS SO FAR

Taking Stock of Progress Towards the Implementation of the Ten-Year Commitment

In June of 2019, Prime Minister Trudeau announced a ten-year commitment of \$700 million annually to SRHR, “focusing on the most neglected areas of this field” in order to “empower 18 million women and girls in developing countries by 2030.”¹⁰ The size and scope of this ring-fenced commitment makes Canada a significant donor in the SRHR landscape. Showcasing the implementation and rollout of this commitment and its subsequent impact remains a clear priority.

Participants discussed the accountability framework for the ten-year commitment (10YC) which supports informed decision-making, stronger accountability and transparency, and improved monitoring and evaluation. The report includes subsector coding to track investments in the neglected areas beyond what was previously possible using only the Development Assistance Committee codes of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. The new coding and accountability framework will provide essential clarity on whether Canada is meeting identified targets in the rollout of spending and where attention needs to be paid to ensure investment across the neglected areas of abortion, contraception, adolescent SRHR including CSE, and advocacy for SRHR.¹¹

An initial overview of the current spending requires more data to know whether spending is on track to reach the target of \$700 million towards SRHR by 2023. An overview of existing investments in the neglected areas in FY19-20 and FY20-21 reveals unbalanced investments across the neglected areas, with abortion and CSE being the most neglected of the neglected. It was noted that there was a difficult political environment that existed around the implementation of CSE programming and a recognition that this resulted in lower levels of spending in this area. Discussion was held on the role of multilaterals in scaling spending, with the recognition that attention and advocacy are key to prioritizing balanced spending regardless of the mechanisms used. Ensuring investment across all neglected areas remains of key importance.

10 Prime Minister Trudeau makes an announcement at the Women Deliver 2019 Conference: <https://pm.gc.ca/en/videos/2019/06/04/prime-minister-trudeau-makes-announcement-women-deliver-2019-conference>

11 Future Planning Initiative (2019) Addressing Neglected Areas in Sexual & Reproductive Health and Rights: Principles and Effective Practices <https://www.actioncanadashr.org/sites/default/files/2021-05/FPI%20Report%20-%20addressing-neglected-areas-in-SRHR-EN.pdf>

Related to spending, it was noted that clarity will need to be sought in Canada's long-term institutional support for multilateral institutions, ensuring proper alignment between what is understood as broader health investments and more specific investments in the neglected SRHR areas. Discussions around the recognition of the importance of maintaining investment in gender-based violence (GBV) appeared throughout the conversations and further follow-up should be undertaken to ensure a shared understanding of how essential GBV investments cooperate with the distinct SRHR neglected areas investments.

Unpacking Canada's Leadership Potential

Canada's 10YC has made the country one of the world's most significant SRHR donors. Combined with the political and policy support for SRHR as directed through the Feminist International Assistance Policy (FIAP), Canada is very well positioned to catalyze further global support and investment. Canada has broadly maintained visible political support for SRHR globally, however participants noted the critical need for Canada to not only continue its global presence but to scale up bold and unwavering positions publicly in key global arenas. A review of the levels of leadership framework noted that there have been ebbs and flows in how visible SRHR has been as an anchor issue for the government. It was identified that Canada appeared to be slipping in the public leadership role it has stepped up to play in terms of global advocacy, and that in the current context, it would be valuable for Canada to increase its presence again.

Throughout the levels of leadership discussions there was a collective feeling among participants that progress had been made in the departmental leadership to support the effective implementation of the 10YC. Participants noted the significant absence of private sector and philanthropic partners in the SRHR community in Canada and noted that continued work should be done to engage and bring those actors into the community of champions. There was recognition that collaboration between departmental, civil society, and political leadership would be of value in bringing these actors into the fold. Abortion access was recognized as a timely and important theme to engage further, and that attention should be paid to ensuring sustainability of the SRHR advocacy agenda in accompaniment with the existing 10YC.

The next section discusses ideas identified throughout the conversation which surfaced as opportunities to build on the foundation in place and seize the existing momentum to strengthen Canada's leadership on SRHR.

Strengthening Canada's Leadership

Thought Leadership and Innovation

Participants noted that there was an opportunity for Canada to demonstrate thought leadership and innovation through the documentation and analysis of the rollout of 10YC programming. The creation of an annual accountability framework that provides a platform for exchange and dialogue with civil society is itself a positive model to showcase. There was a feeling that there was potential to increase collaboration and coordination with existing Canadian funded SRHR research (such as through the International Development Research Center) and that there

was potential in exploring further mechanisms through which experts could more closely be involved in providing guidance and leadership to both departmental and advocacy priorities. The ideas of an expert advisory group and an SRHR ambassador were both raised in this context. There was an appetite for Canada to make visible national and global linkages and connect local and grassroots Canadians working to support SRHR advocacy with grassroots SRHR advocates globally.

Advocacy Leadership

There was a consensus that Canada has much to celebrate and showcase about its existing commitment and programming to the Canadian public and global actors. Participants noted that key to understanding and amplifying this will be consistent and regular engagement with civil society organizations to ensure a shared understanding of our successes and challenges and to strengthen opportunities to demonstrate the positive impact of the 10YC. People shared the opinion that parliamentary engagement across parties was important to ensure that SRHR could be better understood and supported as an essential development investment. Significant conversation centered around potential opportunities for Canada to claim more space globally. Participants discussed the value of this as having three elements: the ability to support and influence the international conversation on SRHR; the importance of embedding SRHR as a Canadian priority within the global community; and the value of building Canadian understanding of the importance and value of SRHR, which is further discussed in the section below. Specific opportunities noted worthy of further exploration included the creation of an SRHR ambassador, inspired by the successful women peace and security model; Canadian leadership on a global safe abortion convening which is currently a gap in the global landscape; recognizing international safe abortion day on September 28; continuing presence and support for existing global advocacy platforms such as She Decides and FP2030; and ensuring supportive language in forums such as the United Nations General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, the G7, and other multi-stakeholder bodies. It was further recognized that 2023 will be a key year as Canada meets its benchmark goal of scaling up funding and that celebrating this milestone will play an important role in marking Canada's global leadership.

SRHR within Canada's Feminist Identity

Participants recognized that broadly the public across the country may not have visibility of Canada's full range of undertakings in support of SRHR. The group noted that building cross parliamentary and broad public support for SRHR was critical to implementing the Feminist International Assistance Policy. Using a feminist approach to global advocacy as laid out in the FIAP supports longer-term, whole-of-government approaches to SRHR and specifically to the neglected areas. There was recognition that telling success stories and showing the real-life experiences that are impacted by support for SRHR would go a long way in building public support. Finally, it was noted that increased engagement abroad at the country level and through diplomatic channels could help to make visible and embed SRHR priorities in Canada's presence around the world so as to echo Canada's global presence and shine a light on our programming successes.

Opportunities for Future Exploration

Right now, we are within a new window of opportunity to build public support for and global commitment to advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights. With this context in hand, the following opportunities were raised throughout the sessions as consideration for future exploration:

- » Explore identified global advocacy opportunities for Canada to increase their presence and impact, including:
 - Canada's leadership on a regular global safe abortion convening that brings together donors, researchers, philanthropic and private supporters, activists, and local NGOs and highlights country best practice from around the world;
 - The creation of an SRHR ambassador; and
 - Increased engagement in key SRHR advocacy forums, specifically but not exclusively She Decides and FP2030.
- » Publicly recognize and celebrate the 2023 benchmark of funding scaleup and the impact of Canada's 10YC
- » Foster whole-of-government and cross-parliamentary support for Canadian advocacy and support of SRHR through parliamentary forums such as the Canadian Association of Parliamentarians on Population and Development, cross-departmental advocacy, and support to senior champions
- » Build strong diplomatic champions at the country level in support of Canada's SRHR agenda
- » Build regular engagement and reflection between civil society and the department around the publication of 10YC accountability framework results with the purpose of maintaining a shared understanding of how funding rollout is taking place and where supports and adjustments need to be made to strengthen and improve programming
- » Maintain a strong human rights framing on all SRHR approaches and build this into both programmatic and advocacy priorities, building on existing departmental guidance, civil society expertise,¹² and supporting global actions which reinforce this
- » Explore the idea of further integrating research expertise and collaborating with existing researchers on SRHR
- » Clarify expectations around the allocation of funding commitments withing the 10YC, specifically in relation to multilateral spending and the housing of GBV commitments

12 Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights (2022) Neglected Areas Toolkit <https://www.actioncanadashr.org/node/1370>

