

## **Rutgers' Vision on Culture, Religion and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights**

Rutgers embraces the vision that people should be free to make sexual and reproductive choices, respecting the rights of others, in supportive societies. Therefore we have the mission to empower people through education and improved access to information and services and strengthen professionals, organizations and societies.

Rutgers activities strive for culture-sensitivity and respect for different cultural and religious beliefs, as long as the sexual rights of people are not violated. We do take a stand, when it comes to the right of people to have access to contraceptives, to safe abortion, to protection from sexual violence and to information and education. Moreover, we address restrictive social norms that obstruct gender equality and expressions of diverse sexual and gender identities. However, we recognize that there are many paths to achieve this goal and the only effective way forward is by working together with people and NGO's on grassroots level on the one hand and by strengthening the capacities of states as well as professionals such as health care workers and teachers on the other hand.

Rutgers works in contexts where traditional cultural, religious values and convictions often collide with our own rights-based agenda. But also in conservative countries, there are always local deviations from that ideology, and allies to be found. Community building has been shown to be possible and fruitful, also in sex conservative settings, provided it is implemented with tact and care (e.g. Chandra-Mouli et al. 2018; Denno et al. 2015). Our strategies demand continuous reflexivity, monitoring and flexibility.