

Rutgers vision on Sexual and Gender diversity in SRHR

Rutgers believes that people are free to make sexual and reproductive choices, respecting the rights of others, in supportive societies. To achieve this objective, equal rights, opportunities and access to enjoy sexual and reproductive health and its related information and services are necessary, free from stigma and discrimination.¹

Our mission

Our mission is that Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) programmes are inclusive to *all people*. Since many societies are homophobic and transphobic, or at least heteronormative, special attention is needed to make to acknowledge and realize that SRHR is inclusive to sexual and gender diversity. Sexual and gender diversity refers to the broad variation of sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions and sex characteristics.

Mainstreaming

We aim to mainstream the needs and rights of LGBTQI+² people in our research, comprehensive sexuality education, service provision, community mobilization, lobby and advocacy programmes. According to Rutgers, mainstreaming as a pathway to change is a strategy to create enabling environments. Successful mainstreaming focuses on SRHR organisations and programmes as well as sensitised professionals.

This means that explicit attention is given to sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) when needed to ensure that SRHR programmes, information and services are beneficial to the sexual and reproductive health of LGBTQI+ people. This also includes freedom of partner choice and acknowledging relational diversity. With equality and inclusivity as important principles of Rutgers, in mainstreaming sexual and gender diversity in our SRHR programmes we focus on the transformation of restricting attitudes, reducing heteronormativity, creating awareness of non-binary thinking and addressing harmful norms on sex, gender and sexual orientation. Empowering and equipping LGBTQI+ people and their communities and organisations is another important pathway of change, which is complementary to mainstreaming.

Ways to address sexual and gender diversity in various contexts

In mainstreaming, several angles may be used to address sexual and gender diversity to foster change and impact on individual, professional, programmatic and organizational levels: human and sexual rights, no violence principle, public health, gender transformative approach (see whitepaper for more information), family equality and sex-positive approach.

From principle to practice

Rutgers has a history of working with local organisations in Europe, Africa and Asia that fight for equal rights for youth, including girls and LGBTQI+ people, and promotes recognition and openness on the topic of sexual and gender diversity. Despite the fact that many mainstream SRHR organisations feel sympathetic towards the principle of LGBTQI+ people deserving equal treatment, their experience and technical capacity is often limited. To pursue inclusive educational and health care environments, we consider that Rutgers, all other SRHR organisations and all SRHR service-providing professionals must be equipped with basic knowledge and be capable to communicate non-judgmentally on sexual and

¹ Rutgers' strategy for 2017-2020 (<https://www.rutgers.international/sites/rutgersorg/files/PDF/Rutgers-Strategy-map.pdf>)

² LGBTQI+: lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and other marginalized sexual and gender orientations/identities

gender diversity and treat LGBTQI+ people in an affirmative way. Similar to most competencies in the area of social change, successful sensitisation and capacity strengthening on sexual and gender diversity require a combination of positive attitudes and adequate knowledge and skills. We use a positive sexual health model that applies a positive and holistic perspective on sexual health.

In conclusion

Rutgers upholds the right of everyone to enjoy a healthy sexual and relational life and to experience their own sexuality in a positive, safe way, free of coercion, discrimination, stigma and violence. We fight for the recognition and implementation of inclusive SRHR, respecting SOGIESC, sometimes in highly politicised societies and contexts. In more tolerant societies, we address subtle prejudice and the impact of heteronormativity on people's SRHR in their lives. By implementing these strategies in our work as leader and member of alliances on SRHR worldwide, Rutgers aims to create enabling environments and access to SRHR information and services for *all* people.