

Right Here Right Now

A global partnership where young people strengthened their voice, claimed their rights and advanced sexual and reproductive health and gender justice.

youth leadership

Rutgers





Young people's rights are under pressure

Around the world, young people continue to face barriers to making informed decisions about their bodies, relationships and futures. In many contexts, restrictive social norms, shrinking civic space and growing opposition to gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) make it difficult for young people to access information, speak openly or influence the decisions that affect their lives.

Without accurate and inclusive information about sexuality, consent, relationships, mental health and gender equality, young people are left without the tools they need to protect their health, wellbeing and rights.

But information alone is not enough. Young people also need supportive communities, responsive institutions and the freedom to participate in public life. Where stigma, discrimination and political resistance persist, claiming rights can come with real risks.

Our partnership

The Right Here Right Now partnership (2021–2025) built on the first Right Here Right Now partnership that strengthened young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights and gender justice in increasingly restrictive environments.

Working across Bangladesh, Benin, Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Indonesia, Morocco, Nepal, Tunisia and Uganda, as well as regionally and globally, the partnership brought together young people, civil society organisations, feminist groups, media actors and advocacy networks to advance rights-based change.

The consortium consisted of Rutgers, ARROW, AMPF, CHOICE for Youth and Sexuality, Reproductive Health Uganda and RNW Media, implemented in collaboration with IPPF Africa Region and more than 70 local partner organisations.

The partnership worked on four interconnected goals:

- strengthening young people's ability to make informed decisions about SRHR and claim their rights
- shifting social norms and public discourse around SRHR and gender justice
- strengthening laws, policies and accountability mechanisms that support young people's rights
- building stronger, more resilient and more inclusive civil society coalitions

Central to Right Here Right Now was the belief that young people are not passive beneficiaries, but rights-holders, advocates and change agents. Young people shaped programme design, led peer education and advocacy, and engaged directly with policymakers and communities.

In 2025, an independent end evaluation assessed the programme's achievements, contribution to change and lessons for the future. Here's what it found.



What difference did Right Here Right Now make?

Right Here Right Now showed that even in restrictive and politically challenging contexts, young people and civil society can drive meaningful progress on sexual and reproductive health, rights and gender justice when they are informed, organised and supported.

Across ten countries, the programme contributed to measurable changes in young people's knowledge, confidence, public dialogue, policy environments and civil society resilience.

Young people participating in the programme became:

- more informed about SRHR and gender justice: 89% reported improved knowledge and understanding of SRHR topics, including consent, mental health, comprehensive sexuality education and gender inclusivity
- more confident in making decisions about their SRHR and gender-related issues: 89% felt very confident making decisions because of their participation
- more active in influencing others: 88% reported taking action through peer

The programme also reached over 118 million people through combined offline mobilisation, media engagement and digital outreach, helping to normalise discussion on topics often considered taboo, including menstruation, contraception, consent and gender diversity.

At policy level, Right Here Right Now contributed to the adoption, maintenance or safeguarding of 14 laws and 55 policies and strategies related to SRHR and gender justice, while also contributing to 36 changes that protected or advanced global norms and standards.

14 laws

55 policies and strategies

36 changes

Behind these numbers lies a deeper shift: young people increasingly saw themselves as rights-holders with the confidence and legitimacy to speak up, organise and influence the systems shaping their lives.

How our partnership got these results

We reached millions of young people with SRHR information and education

Over the course of the programme, more than 100 million young people were reached through online and offline SRHR information and education initiatives.

+100M
young people were reached

Right Here Right Now combined sexuality education, peer learning and digital engagement to ensure young people could access accurate, inclusive and age-appropriate information in ways that reflected their realities.

Young people gained stronger understanding of topics such as consent, sexual health, gender equality, mental health and bodily autonomy. Many described accessing this information for the first time in safe and non-judgemental environments.

The programme created youth-friendly physical and digital spaces where young people could ask questions, discuss sensitive topics and build confidence without stigma or fear. These spaces became especially important in contexts where open discussion about sexuality and gender remained restricted, particularly for marginalised young people who often face additional stigma, discrimination and barriers to accessing information and support.

Peer-to-peer education played a central role. Young people acted as educators, facilitators and advocates, helping information and confidence spread through trusted social networks. This approach proved particularly effective in restrictive environments, where peer credibility increased trust and participation.

The programme also demonstrated the importance of sustained engagement. Young people who participated over longer periods were more likely to translate knowledge into action – speaking with family members, supporting peers, joining advocacy initiatives and engaging local leaders.

“After joining Right Here Right Now, I grew more confident and bolder about SRHR. In my community, young people now openly talk about contraception, condoms, and consent without shame – and teachers even invite me to schools to speak. Local leaders started asking me for advice on youth-friendly policies! For me, it has been a heart explosion of growth, purpose, and connection – and I’m just getting started!”

– young person from Uganda

We helped shift norms and public conversations

Information alone cannot create lasting change if stigma and restrictive norms continue to silence young people.

That is why Right Here Right Now combined community engagement, media outreach and digital campaigns to create more open and supportive public conversations around SRHR and gender justice.

Through mobilisers, influencers, media actors and community dialogues, the programme had a reach of up to 118 million people each year.

Evidence from surveys and qualitative research showed reduced stigma around issues such as menstruation, contraception, consent and gender

inclusivity. Young people and community members reported that conversations about SRHR became more open in families, schools and communities.

Offline engagement proved especially important for building trust and legitimacy, while media and digital strategies amplified messages and increased visibility at scale. Together, these approaches helped normalise discussions that were previously considered taboo.

The evaluation also highlighted that social norm change requires long-term commitment. One-off campaigns can increase awareness, but durable change depends on continued engagement, follow-up and protection against backlash.



Future pro
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We strengthened civil society and coalitions

Right Here Right Now invested heavily in coalition-building, organisational strengthening and mutual learning.

By the end of the programme:

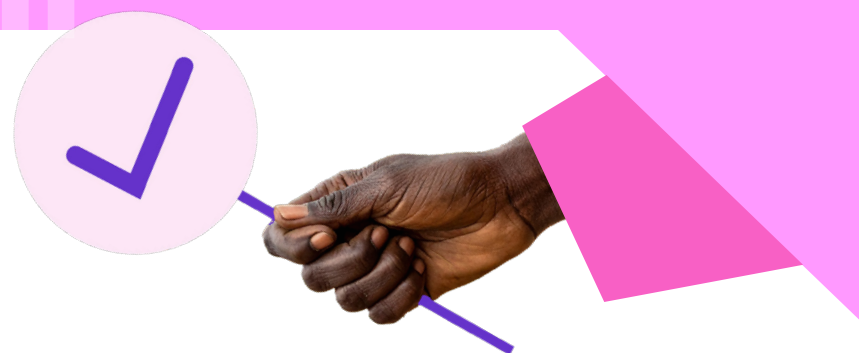
- 79% of staff from country partner organisations felt that civil society organisations had become much more connected and organised
- 72% felt that civil society had become more resilient in the face of growing opposition to SRHR, gender equality and shrinking civic space.

National coalitions strengthened governance structures, clarified roles and improved coordination, moving from parallel activities towards more collective and strategic ways of working.

The programme also strengthened organisational capacities in advocacy, safeguarding, evidence use, financial management and gender-transformative practice.

Youth-led organisations, LGBTQIA+ groups, disability-focused organisations and minority-language groups gained greater visibility and influence within coalitions, helping civil society become more inclusive and representative.

Importantly, collaboration also strengthened resilience. By working together, organisations were better able to share risks, support each other and respond collectively to backlash and restrictions.



What made the difference?

Right Here Right Now demonstrated that youth-centred, coalition-based approaches can deliver meaningful change even in complex and restrictive contexts.

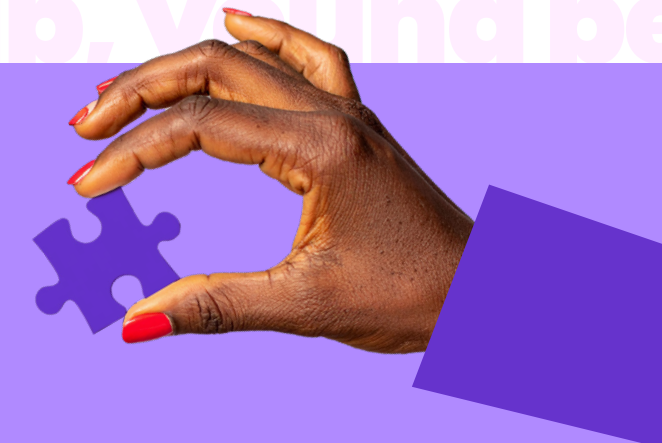
The programme achieved this by:

- placing young people at the centre as rights-holders and change agents
- combining community-level action with national, regional and global advocacy
- strengthening coalitions and mutual learning between civil society actors
- creating safe and inclusive spaces for participation and dialogue

- investing in peer-led approaches and youth leadership
- using both offline engagement and digital outreach to increase reach and legitimacy
- embedding flexibility and adaptive strategies to respond to backlash and shrinking civic space



How we can keep making progress



The programme highlighted important lessons for future SRHR and gender justice initiatives.

Among the clearest insights was the importance of investing in young people not only as beneficiaries, but as advocates, educators and decision-makers. Meaningful youth participation strengthened programme relevance, credibility and sustainability.

The evaluation also showed that coalition-based approaches increase both resilience and impact. Collaboration enabled organisations to learn from

one another, coordinate strategies and respond collectively in difficult political environments.

At the same time, the programme reinforced that scale must be matched with depth. Reaching millions matters, but sustainable change depends on trust, safe spaces and long-term engagement.

Future programmes will also need to continue planning for resistance by embedding risk mitigation, collective protection mechanisms and adaptive ways of working from the outset.

Looking ahead

While Right Here Right Now has ended, its lessons and foundations remain highly relevant.

The programme demonstrated that rights-based SRHR work is still possible, and necessary, even where civic space is shrinking and opposition is growing. With sustained investment, strong coalitions and meaningful youth leadership, young people can continue to shape more just, inclusive and supportive societies.

Future progress will depend on continuing to strengthen youth-led movements, reinforce civil society collaboration and connect local realities to national and global advocacy efforts.

Integrated approaches that combine safe spaces, peer support, digital engagement and policy advocacy will remain essential to advancing young people's rights and wellbeing.

As one young participant reflected:

"The programme enhanced my ability to understand political issues surrounding sexual and reproductive rights and motivated me to closely follow public debates on these topics so that I can actively participate in them in the future."

— Youth programme participant from Benin

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