

Strategy for sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in Africa 2022–2026



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Ministry for Foreign Affairs**1. Direction**

The objective of Sweden's international development cooperation is to create opportunities to improve the lives of people living in poverty and oppression. Development cooperation is based on the principles of aid and development effectiveness, the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement. The strategy will apply in 2022–2026 and provide a total of SEK 3 500 million. The strategy governs the use of funds under appropriation item 1:1.9 'Africa' in the appropriation directions for Sida for each budget year.

Activities will contribute to the following objectives.

Human rights, democracy, the rule of law and gender equality

- Increased respect for and enjoyment of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) for all
- Social norms that promote SRHR
- Strengthened conditions for increased accountability for SRHR

Ministry for Foreign Affairs**Health equity**

- Increased access to rights-based SRHR initiatives

2. Regional context

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a negative impact on the human rights situation and exacerbated the vulnerability of people at risk. Displacement effects due to the pandemic have aggravated an already serious SRHR situation. The adverse consequences are extensive as people in vulnerable situations are hard hit when health promotion, prevention and care programmes are negatively impacted. In recent years, democratic backsliding in many countries in the region has contributed to a shrinking space for civil society. Although regional SRHR commitments are ambitious, national implementation has often been poor due to a lack of knowledge and political engagement.

In the humanitarian context in Africa, unmet SRHR needs are significant. With the COVID-19 pandemic hampering economic growth, conditions for adequate financing of SRHR have also deteriorated further. Africa is the continent with the youngest population in the world, with 20 per cent of the population aged between 15 and 24. To contribute to sustainable development, this group needs health care, education and jobs.

Where SRH services are offered, maternal care dominates, while initiatives to

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prevent and respond to sexual and gender-based violence, access to modern contraceptives, safe and legal abortion and efforts to promote the SRHR of young people are virtually non-existent. This situation is compounded by weak national health and education systems. Complex and ineffective legislation and regulations for the authorisation and registration of health care products are additional barriers. Under the leadership of the African Union, work is now underway to harmonise existing regulations and support national medicines agencies at regional level.

The supply of quality health services at a reasonable cost is often inequitable and inadequate, not least with regard to SRH services, due to insufficient resources. Women, young people and LGBTIQ people belong to the categories that often lack access to legitimate SRHR initiatives. Access to health care can also be a challenge for refugees and migrants. Attitudes to and ignorance about HIV contribute to the risk of discrimination against people living with HIV in terms of access to health care. Access to modern contraceptives, safe and legal abortion and comprehensive sexuality education has deteriorated, and child marriage and

genital mutilation have increased. Major challenges regarding financing, well-qualified health workers, health care products and health information often lead to health care costs being borne by the individual, which can exacerbate existing social inequalities.

Ministry for Foreign Affairs**3. Activities**

Sida will carry out, monitor and report on activities in accordance with the Government's guidelines for Swedish development cooperation and humanitarian aid strategies. The guidelines state that activities must be actively directed towards achieving the objectives and that actual performance must be monitored based on those objectives. The annual strategy report will be comprehensive and include an account, analysis and assessment of the results of the activities in relation to the stated objectives. Performance information will be used for decision-making, learning and accountability, and for ensuring transparency towards the general public. Monitoring will produce reliable and useful performance information in both the short and long term by using both qualitative and quantitative information where possible.

Sweden's development cooperation contributes to sustainable development based on the 2030 Agenda, the financing for development commitments in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Agreement. The activities' contribution will be particularly relevant to the following sustainable development goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda: good health and well-being (SDG 3), quality education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5) reduced inequalities (SDG 10) and peace, justice and strong institutions (SDG 16). Strategy reports to the Government will include references to how activities contribute to implementation of the 2030 Agenda in relation to the strategy's priorities. Sweden's development cooperation as a whole will promote

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poverty reduction in the region, democratic development and increased respect for human rights and the rule of law.

The starting point for the strategy's activities will be regional added value, for example through a regional approach that enhances the impact of regional policies and guidelines at national level, promotes knowledge management and development and experience exchange and learning between countries and actors in Africa, contributes to regional integration to increase effectiveness and equality or when regional initiatives or functions are deemed more effective.

Activities will contribute to greater respect for and enjoyment of SRHR and may comprise support to strengthen the capacity of African institutions and human rights actors to fulfil their commitments, including following up SRHR violations and abuses. Activities will build on an evidence-based and holistic view on SRHR that contributes to improving health and strengthening human rights.

Activities should also strengthen implementation of, and compliance with, international and regional frameworks, guidelines and commitments related to SRHR, and improve knowledge and regional knowledge management. Cooperation will work to change discriminatory social norms, attitudes and behaviours, not least among SRH service providers. To promote positive masculinity norms, this work should include boys, men, girls, women and LGBTIQ people. Cooperation should also contribute to increasing provision

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of and access to SRH services, but also the demand for them. Activities will also enhance accountability for SRHR. Cooperation should promote increased use of statistics, including sex-disaggregated statistics and evidence-based information, and counter corruption, including in the health sector.

Activities will contribute to increasing access to SRHR through support to stimulate resource mobilisation and innovative financing solutions. Swedish agencies and the broader Swedish resource base may be important cooperation partners in the implementation of the strategy. Dialogue and exchange with Swedish actors can in particular be used to promote a rights-based approach. The integration of initiatives in the areas of SRHR, HIV and gender-based violence in national systems should be supported through a multi-sectoral approach.

Activities should also contribute to more effective use of available resources for SRHR. This may include support for increased availability of SRH services, not least for young and marginalised individuals and other vulnerable people in at-risk situations.

The triple nexus approach should be applied and linkages between long-term development cooperation, humanitarian aid and peacebuilding should be harnessed. Sweden will promote coherent and effective development and aid coordination, not least with the EU as a key development policy actor and with the multilateral system. Opportunities for cooperation and synergies with other donors and actors will therefore be sought. Based on the “Team

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Europe' approach, Sweden will work to promote the effective implementation of the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – 'Global Europe'. Sweden's development cooperation will be relevant and effective. Synergies will be sought between the strategy areas and with activities within the framework of other relevant strategies for Sweden's development cooperation, including the strategy for Sweden's development cooperation with Africa, the regional strategy for the Middle East and North Africa and the humanitarian aid strategy. To achieve a greater impact, activities should complement bilateral, regional and global support. Cooperation with an SRHR focus should be actively sought within the framework of European cooperation.