

Joint meeting of Dutch and Belgian SRHR platforms reveals country-specific approach to SRHR

On 8 June, the Dutch and Belgian SRHR platforms organized a joint meeting in Brussels to learn about their priorities and activities and about the SRHR policies of Belgian and Dutch development cooperation.

The Belgian working group on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and HIV of Be Cause Health and Share-Net International, the Dutch network on sexual and reproductive health and HIV want to advance Belgium's and the Netherlands' leading role in the promotion of SRHR worldwide.

Diversity of stakeholders

Representatives from Dutch and Belgian development organisations, universities, the private sector, consultants, researchers and civil servants gathered to share experiences, good practices, challenges and obstacles in promoting SRHR and HIV worldwide.

Similarities and differences

Although there are many similarities and areas of collaboration, e.g. within the Commission on Population and Development or the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board, the meeting showed the Belgian and Dutch development cooperation take a different approach to SRHR. Belgium acknowledges the importance of a multi-sectoral approach to SRHR and HIV and seeks to integrate aspects of SRHR and HIV in sectors other than the health sector and Belgium tends to prioritize the promotion of SRHR through strengthening health systems. In the Netherlands SRHR as such, is considered as one of its overall priorities.

Mainstreaming versus advocacy

Activities of the Netherlands and Belgium in the Great Lakes region were discussed. Share-Net international developed and supports a knowledge node in Burundi, one of the most important partner countries for the Belgian Development Cooperation, where it is active in the health sector. The Belgian development Agency (BTC) gave a presentation on a BTC supported programme with the Ugandan Ministry of Health that aims at the effective delivery of an integrated Uganda National Minimum Health Care Package. Throughout the result areas in the health programmes SRHR indicators are mainstreamed as tracers.

In promoting SRHR worldwide the Netherlands put a lot of emphasis on supporting advocacy initiatives. The Dutch SRHR Alliance for example supports local organizations in various partner countries in advocacy matters, showcasing this approach is key in addressing opposition and creating support for SRHR at the national and local level.

Other issues raised

There were a number of issues raised which, due to time pressures, could not be discussed in detail. These included:

- The challenges and strategies needed to reach diplomats, particularly those working in local Embassies who will move on after 3 or 4 years.
- How to effectively link broader population development issues to SRHR eg. Climate change, water, migration.
- The growth of political and cultural challenges to SRHR and HIV work in partner countries. Examples include, the recent murders and attacks on human rights and LGBTI activists in Bangladesh and campaigns against CSE programmes in Uganda and Kenya.
- New strategies and partnerships needed to work across the SDG's. Both Platforms agreed to organize a follow-up meeting to further discuss these issues and explore possibilities for collaboration.

Presentations:

Introducing Share-Net and the Be Cause Health WG SRHR / HIV

- Colin Dixon, Coordinator Knowledge Platform SRHR
- Karel Gyselinck, president of Be Cause Health
- Dirk Van Braeckel, coordinator Working Group on SRHR.

How the Netherlands and Belgium promote SRHR worldwide

- Mr Mark Van de Vreken, policy advisor at the the cabinet of the minister of Development Cooperation, Belgium
- Ms Elly Leemhuis, Policy officer DGIS/DSO, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

Obstacles, challenges and lessons learned in promoting SRHR

- Marleen Bosmans, SRHR expert, Belgian Development Agency
- Rineke van Dam, SRHR expert, Rutgers

Next steps

- Circulate contact details of attendees (see below).
- Short report developed and shared.
- Plan follow up meeting within 6 to 9 months.

Attendees

Name	Organisation	e-mail
Colin Dixon	Share-net International	c.dixon@kit.nl
Elly Leemhuis de Regt	Dutch MoFa	Elly.leemhuis@minbuza.nl
Thérèse Delvaux	ITM / ITG	tdelvaux@itg.be
Denise van Dijk	Female Health Company	denisevand@thefemalehealth.co.uk
Trudie Gerrits	University of Amsterdam	g.j.e.gerrits@uva.nl
Emilie Peters	Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition	Epeeters@rhsupplies.org
Kristien Michielsens	ICRH Ghent University	Kristien.michielsens@ugent.be
Karel Gyselink	Belgian Development Agency BTC	Karel.gyselinkc@btcctb.org
Marleen Bosmans	Belgian Development Agency BTC	Marleen.bosmans@btcctb.org
Abby Buwalda	Choice	abby@choiceforyouth.org
Odette Hekster	PSI	ohekster@psi.org
Liesbet Vangeel	FOS	Liesbvet.vangeel@fos-socsol.be
Rineke Van Dam	Rutgers	r.vandam@rutgers.nl
Billie de Haas	Independent Consultant	billiedehaas@gmail.com
Meike Stieglis	Share Net NL	m.stieglis@kit.nl
Dirk Van Braeckel	ICRH Ghent University	Dirk.vanbraeckel@ugent.be
Ignace Ronse	DG-Development	Ignace.ronse@dipobel.fed.be
Wim Van de Voorde	Sensoa	wim.vandevoorde@sensoa.be

Additional reading following Rineke van Dam's presentation

- Results of **Operational Research** within the ASK Alliantie programme:
<http://www.rutgers.international/how-we-work/research/operational-research-ask>
- Essential Packages Manual – a comprehensive guide for successful SRHR programmes for young people: <http://www.rutgers.international/our-products/tools/essential-packages-manual>
- advocacy brief Bangladesh:
http://www.rutgers.international/sites/rutgersorg/files/PDF/Advocacy_Bangladesh_0.pdf
- advocacy brief Kenya:
http://www.rutgers.international/sites/rutgersorg/files/PDF/Advocacy_Kenya_0.pdf
- advocacy brief Malawi:
http://www.rutgers.international/sites/rutgersorg/files/PDF/Advocacy_Malawi_0.pdf
- advocacy brief Pakistan:
http://www.rutgers.international/sites/rutgersorg/files/PDF/Advocacy_Pakistan_0.pdf
- advocacy brief Tanzania:
http://www.rutgers.international/sites/rutgersorg/files/PDF/Advocacy_Tanzania_0.pdf
- advocacy brief Uganda:
http://www.rutgers.international/sites/rutgersorg/files/PDF/Advocacy_Uganda_0.pdf