

# Unlocking the Future: Paving the Way for Youth Sexual & Reproductive Health & Rights in Post-Pandemic Bogotá

15% of individuals



reported **reduced access to healthcare** due to resource diversion during the pandemic, affecting SRH services.

(Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean & UNFPA, 2020).

Young people aged 18-29 exhibited the highest need for SRH services, with 51% reporting such needs. (Sanchez et al., 2020).

Especially from low socioeconomic backgrounds (including sex workers), faced limited access to SRH consultations, impersonal care, and delays in healthcare.

A lack of guidance for voluntary termination of pregnancy and refusal to remove contraceptive devices added to the difficulties in accessing SRHR services.



\* 55% of migrants and refugees in Colombia reported insufficient funds to pay for health services during the pandemic. (IMMAP, 2021)

\* Young women in Bogotá struggled to allocate resources for menstrual hygiene products due to pandemic-induced financial constraints.

\* Changes in menstrual patterns, premenstrual symptoms and increased pain were reported post-vaccination, highlighting gender-blindness in vaccine evaluation.

During the lockdown, Colombia witnessed a significant increase in domestic violence cases, with Bogotá alone reporting 12,860 cases.

(Ortega Pacheco & Martínez, 2021)



“ I work in an official institution that attends SRHR services, in 2022 a woman entered to the institution wanting to interrupt her pregnancy, she told me that during pandemic she had a baby, during the procedure she asked for tubal ligation but the professionals told her that it was not a COVID-19 procedure so they could not do this medical procedure. FGD participant, Bogotá

\* Challenges led to unreliable sexual health information from peers and social networks, emphasizing the need for comprehensive sexuality education.

\* LGBTQIA+ youth encountered discrimination and difficulties accessing hormone treatment, negatively impacting their mental well-being.

“ I did not know about SRHR services for men and I did not know about free ITS testing given by public health system until this moment, in the pandemic I decided to ignore that aspect. FGD participant, Bogotá

## Recommendations

### 1. Access to SRHR Services:

- Adequately fund community groups, gender-focused, and feminist organizations providing SRHR services, which are trusted by young people, especially women and the LGBTQIA+ community.
- Actively involve these organizations in SRHR education and support to improve young people's experiences and inform youth-focused SRHR policies.

### 2. Tailored Regional Policy Implementation:

- Implement national SRHR policies that consider diverse regional needs, addressing economic disparities and geographical barriers.

### 3. Expand Telemedicine and Sexual Health Programs:

- Expand telemedicine for SRHR consultations and develop targeted sexual health programs for vulnerable areas.
- Provide free access to sexual health information in educational institutions and public spaces to empower youth with knowledge.

### 4. Access to Menstrual Health Services:

- Support affordable and hygienic menstrual hygiene products through legislation, including free or heavily subsidized access.
- Create educational tools and resources for menstrual health to

bridge the information gap, particularly among young people.

### 5. Contraception and Safe Abortion:

- Provide comprehensive training for health professionals on SRHR services, with a focus on gender sensitivity.
- Adopt a holistic approach to youth engagement, democratize access to information, and subsidize services to empower young people and address misconceptions.

### 6. Access to SRHR Information:

- Conduct community-based awareness campaigns to combat misinformation and stigma, tailored to the needs of vulnerable groups.
- Prioritize SRH during medical appointments to promote prevention, treatment, and control of STIs and early pregnancies.

### 7. Addressing Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV):

- Implement age-appropriate gender-based violence education and awareness programs in schools.
- Adopt a comprehensive approach to combat SGBV, addressing gender roles, domestic dynamics, and power imbalances, with trained justice institutions and support for victim-survivors.