

She Decides.

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

SHEDECIDES SUPPORT UNIT



January - December 2020

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POLITICAL CONTEXT

Year 2020 was an unprecedented year for the entire globe, with particularly notable challenges with regards to bodily integrity. The push for further **expansion of the Global Gag Rule** in the U.S. Congress, the **near-total ban on abortion in Poland** and a **Beijing +25 political declaration** that excluded sexual and reproductive rights, proliferated in the context of Covid-19, which was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11 March.

Governments prioritised responding to the pandemic by reallocating resources and largely de-prioritising other policy issues. While Covid-19 affected everyone by straining health systems, creating shortages of medical supplies, disrupting global supply chains and restricting free movement of people, the pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on women and girls whose right to decide has been challenged by barriers in accessing contraceptives, antiretroviral medication and safe abortions. Lockdown policies and social-distancing measures have contributed to a mirror pandemic of gender-based violence, and the rates of teenage and unwanted pregnancies have increased exponentially. The pandemic has also disproportionately impacted marginalised groups such as the LGBTQI+ community, persons living with HIV and sex workers.

Amid lockdown restrictions, social justice movements at the local, national and international level have remained active by reimagining new ways of engaging and taking meaningful action both online and offline; from **protests held in Poland** against restrictive policies, to **art activism for LGBTQI+ rights in Lebanon** and the **#BlackLivesMatter** movement igniting international protests and policy reviews. The SheDecides movement has also adapted its advocacy and engagement during lockdown, responding to communities' urgent needs and speaking out on the need for sexual and reproductive care to be guaranteed as an essential service during Covid-19 and beyond.

SDSU RESPONSE TO COVID-19

During this unprecedented year, the SheDecides movement, supported by the Support Unit, radically transformed and adapted their plans, centering their engagement on the needs created and exacerbated by the pandemic. Whilst continuing to support SheDecides movements and activists, the Support Unit explored new ways of collaborating and facilitating collective action on bodily autonomy in spite of the pandemic's challenges.

After the WHO declared Covid-19 a pandemic, the SDSU sent a **survey** to **84 Movement Leaders¹**. It was **answered by 67 Movement Leaders (80%) from 35 countries**. It was further complemented by 57 Movement Building support calls over 6 weeks to offer additional feedback channels and further explore emerging insight as context changed. The SDSU asked Movement Leaders about their context, the shift in their work, their needs and expectations from the SDSU, preferred channels of communication, as well as prioritised areas of work and opportunities to take action.

The Movement highlighted that their critical concerns during the pandemic, with many countries having entered lockdown measures at the time, were the **increase in gender-based violence**, the **decrease in access to contraception and abortion**, and the **shift in policy priorities which diverted public attention from bodily autonomy and sexual rights**. The social groups that they were most concerned about were **adolescents, young people, sex workers** and the **LGBTQI+ community**. The Movement agreed that **staying safely connected was and continues to be more important than ever**, and that the SDSU could support them by creating opportunities to **come together, get to know each other better, share in-country experiences, gain solidarity support, learn together about advocacy and activism, access mental health support, and speak out with a unified voice**.

The image contains three infographics from SheDecides:

- Left infographic:** Research question 1: "What are the main bodily autonomy issues during Covid19?". It lists "WHAT" issues (Increase in Domestic Violence, Decrease in Access to Contraception, Decrease in Access to safe Abortion, Shift in Policy Priorities) and "WHO" groups (Adolescents & Young People, Women in rural areas, Sex workers, LGBTQI+).
- Middle infographic:** "Protecting Her Right to Decide: SheDecides activism during lockdown". It shows a timeline from April to June with activities like "#Curators", "Come together & share SheDecides Open Mics", "Come together & heal Mental Health Sessions", "Come together & Stand Up, Speak Out #SheDecidesNow", and "Come together & learn SheDecides Master Classes".
- Right infographic:** "Lineup today!". It lists "10 key facts" including "First art performance" (Poetry from The Rise Collective UK), "15 minutes: Breakout rooms" (Meet someone new one to one), "40 minutes of Open Mic" (Kickstarted by activist Lola Guerra), and "Introducing #SheDecidesNow" (Discussing what's next in our activism during lockdown).

¹ 2 people per movement with at least 1 being under 30-; 50 25x25 young leaders and 5 Champions.

With this insight the SDSU made 2 crucial decisions:

- 1 By the Movement, For the Movement** (Movement Centered Design Thinking): the SDSU developed **#SheDecidesCurators**, a **choice** that different members of the SheDecides Movement made, to **come together** and **collaboratively curate** content, activities, campaigns, and proposals to invite the rest of the SheDecides Movement to join. We designed the **“Protecting Her Right to Decide: SheDecides Activism During Lockdown”** in partnership with the first group of #SheDecidesCurators made up of diverse and dynamic young leaders from Lebanon, Mexico, Zimbabwe, Malawi, India and Portugal. A second group of Curators was convened to design **#SheDecidesNow** with leaders from Palestine, France, South Africa, Costa Rica, and Pakistan.
- 2 Inwards Cohesion, Outwards Fruition:** the SDSU focused on strengthening activists’ wellbeing, access to information, space for honest strategic thought about activism and connectivity before designing any collective action. **The SDSU understood that Standing Up, Speaking Out as a Movement would only be viable after strengthening internal unity and guaranteeing that we knew as much as we could about activists’ safety and wellbeing.**



KEY ACTIVITIES AND RESULTS

SheDecides Day

Before Covid-19 changed our reality, the world celebrated SheDecides Day on 2 March 2020. SheDecides Day is **a day of action and global solidarity**, to demonstrate individual and collective commitment to the rights of all women and girls to have control over their bodies, their lives and their future. Without question.



SheDecides Day 2020 was the third one commemorated, and was the most successful day of global action yet, with dozens of events taking place across the globe, huge online activity and media covering geographies from Zimbabwe to the United Kingdom. The theme for SheDecides Day 2020 was #NewNormal. The #NewNormal is a world where girls and women decide about their bodies, their lives, their futures. Without question. This year the decision was made not to host a flagship event but rather focus on supporting friends and local movements to arrange their own events.

SheDecides Day 2020 was celebrated throughout March, not just on the day itself, although most events took place within the first two weeks. In preparation for the Day, the SDSU produced a range of information to coordinate and encourage participation including a SheDecides Day toolkit, templates, content and assets that the movement could use. Additionally, regional online webinars were held for activists in the movement to explore opportunities within the campaign and connect activists working on similar issues.

Some of the highlights from SheDecidesDay 2020 include:

- **Events:** From festivals to policy discussions, marches to hikes, over 40 **events** were registered across the globe.
- **Press:** A total of 15 media pieces, more than doubling audience reach from 2019 to 2,092,931 reached. Publications reporting on SheDecides Day included Reuters, Huffington Post, The East African, and The Zimbabwe Herald, to name a few.
- **Social media activity:** A wide range of people and organisations posted about SheDecides Day on social media, including Ministers, U.N. agencies, Ambassadors, NGOs, and influential individuals such as Rep. Steven Horsford from the U.S. Congress. On the day, content for SheDecides Day resulted in 33,500 impressions on the SheDecides Twitter, whilst on Facebook 166,387 users were reached with 43,598 engagements.



Women protest against sexual violence in Malawi

LEZONINGWE (Thomson Reuters Foundation) - Dozens of women took to the streets of Malawi's capital on Monday to protest against sexual violence after a series of alleged police incidents on women last year.



Het Parool

Women are constantly intimidated when visiting an abortion clinic

The intimidation of pregnant women at abortion clinics in the Netherlands continues unabated and is even increasing in some locations.

Edwin Van Der Aa March 2, 2020, 7:13 am

Examples of SheDecides Day Actions Worldwide



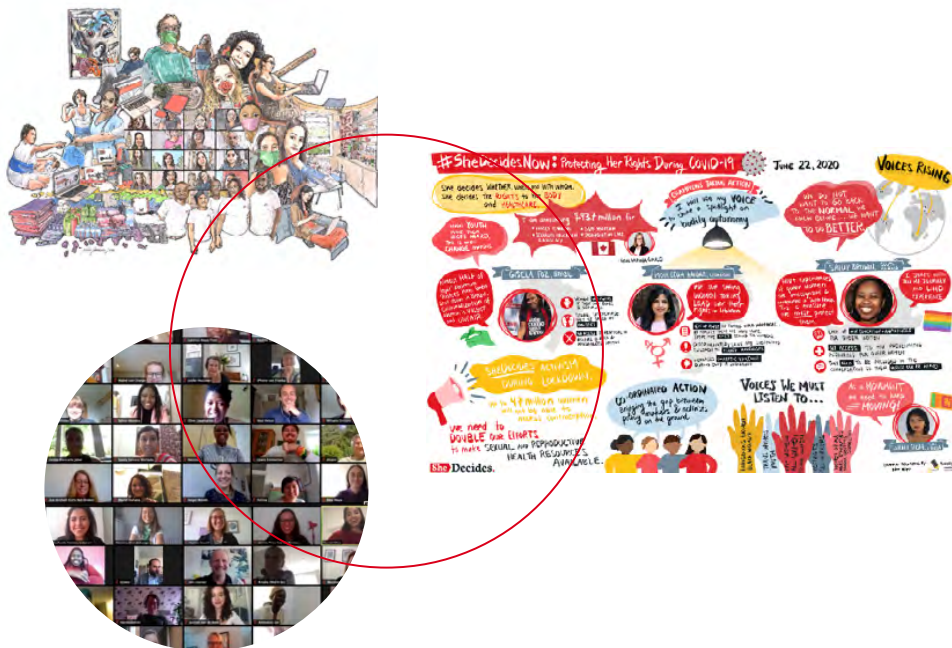
Protecting Her Right to Decide During Covid-19

The short-term implications of this global crisis on women and girls' lives have become increasingly evident, especially on young people, as restrictions imposed to contain the outbreak have curtailed access to life-saving healthcare services and commodities. In response, the SDSU created "Protecting Her Right to Decide During Covid-19" which included:

This included:

- **Safe Spaces** – for the movement to come together, share, learn and heal.
- **Unified Messaging** – for the Movement, through a toolkit.
- **Media Outreach** – Spreading information about the need and importance of protecting her right to decide despite Covid-19 through Op-Eds and press placement.
- **Amplifying the movement's work** – Highlighting the experiences, concerns and actions of SheDecides activists through the #SheDecidesNow campaign.

Under **Protecting Her Right to Decide**, the SDSU convened three global SheDecides Open Mics, four Mental Health Sessions, a Champions Webinar and a Champions Roundtable. Over 230 actors in the Movement participated in these spaces. Notably, **109 Activists** from **43 countries** in **all five regions** participated in the Open Mics and Mental Health sessions, with 70% participating in three or more activities. Positive feedback from the Movement during these activities reinforced the importance of creating safe, energising, creative, critical and celebratory spaces for activists.



PROTECTING HER RIGHT TO DECIDE SHEDECIDES ACTIVISM DURING LOCK DOWN

Come together & SHARE SheDecides OPEN MICS

Join SheDecides activists from around the world in this safe space to share in country experiences of protecting her right to decide during lockdown. We will kick off with an on performance and then open the mic to hear about your current experiences. What does activism look like during a pandemic?

Each Open Mic will admit up to 20 people

SIGN UP HERE: Friday 1 May
Thursday 7 May
Saturday 16 May

Come together & HEAL MENTAL HEALTH Sessions

Your wellbeing matters, and in one way or another this is truly a difficult time for everyone. As we continue to take action for her right to decide, it is important we also take moments to pause and heal. Join Dr. Leyla Hussein in these sessions to discuss mental health, wellbeing, and what we can all do to take care of each other and ourselves during the pandemic.

SIGN UP HERE: on Wednesday 27 April 2020
You'll receive the invitation in your inbox.

Come together & LEARN SheDecides MASTER CLASSES

By writing and learning from each other, our advocacy becomes stronger. As activists, we are used to dealing with new and ever-changing challenges - and this pandemic is no exception. Check out the SheDecides Master Class series with experts within the Movement to hear how you can continue to take action for her right to decide during lockdown and the months after.

SIGN UP HERE: on Wednesday 06 May 2020.
You'll receive the invitation in your inbox.

Come together & STAND UP & SPEAK OUT Protecting her Right to Decide TOOLKIT

As a tool like this, it is vital for us continue to stand up and speak out to SheDecides. How is her right to decide being affected by COVID-19 in your country and community? Use this toolkit to take action on and offline.

<https://www.shedecides.com/protecting-her-right-to-decide/>

She Decides.

This lineup is brought to you by [#SheDecidesCurators](#), a choice that different members of the SheDecides Movement make, to come together and collaboratively create content, activities, campaigns, and proposals to invite the rest of the SheDecides Movement to join. Movements, Champions, Friends and 25x25. Design by the Movement -> for the Movement.

Come together & share: SheDecides Open Mics

SheDecides activists from around the world participated in this safe space to share in-country experiences of Protecting Her Right to Decide during lockdown.

Come together & heal: Mental Health Sessions

The space was guided by leading anti-FGM activist and psychotherapist Dr Leyla Hussein to discuss individual and community mental health and wellbeing. This space also allowed activists to develop tools to support mental health awareness within the local spaces of activism that they lead in their countries. Anxiety, depression, overwhelming feelings of unsafety and uncertainty and reliving triggering experiences were among the pervasive issues concerning SheDecides activists.

Come together & Learn: SheDecides Master Classes

A safe space to connect and learn from experts and thought leaders within the movement on issues relating to bodily autonomy, including within the context of the global pandemic. The masterclasses were organised in partnership with Ted Talks. Seven masterclasses were held, attended by over 270 people from 51 countries. Though this initiative was started as a response to the need to come together and learn during the pandemic, it has proven to be a vital space to grow and connect the movement and will be carried forward and opened up to activists outside the movement in 2021.

"I will definitely use [the material shared in the MasterClass] to create content to the September 28th! We are planning to shoot some short videos with personal stories."

Come together & Stand Up, Speak Out: #SheDecidesNow

This was a dynamic online campaign that showcased the Movement, its people, and their work during the Covid-19 crisis. It highlighted activists in the movement taking action to protect her right to decide during lockdown. Through blogs and social media, the campaign also drew attention to the different ways that Covid-19 is having a gendered impact across different contexts. The campaign spotlighted diverse voices from communities not being heard, issues being ignored, and amplified the movement's varied concerns through the hashtag #SheDecidesNow. Over 20 activists were spotlighted, sharing stories on a range of issues, including access to safe abortion and contraception, gender-based violence and more.

The campaign culminated with the **#SheDecidesNow Champion Roundtable**, during which the Canadian government announced \$93.7 million funding towards sexual and reproductive health for the most vulnerable. The virtual roundtable was co-chaired by

Champions Sonali Silva and the Honourable Karina Gould, Minister for International Development, Canada. During the event, young activists from the movement spoke on specific bodily autonomy issues worsened by the pandemic, including access to abortion services, gender-based violence, and the challenges of living with HIV under lockdown. Over 65 attendees, including Ministers, policymakers and heads of organisations shared their perspectives, and welcomed the opportunity to engage with and hear from inspiring young activists. The #SheDecidesNow roundtable emphasised the power of collective voice and underscored the continued urgency of putting women and girl’s bodily autonomy at the top of the political agenda during this crisis.

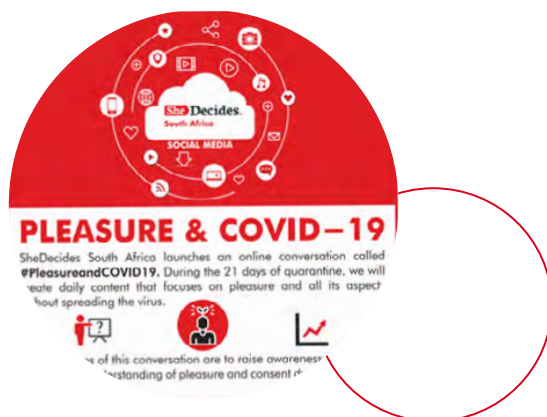
“The world changes when young people demand it. This shows why youth engagement matters and why your voice matters.”

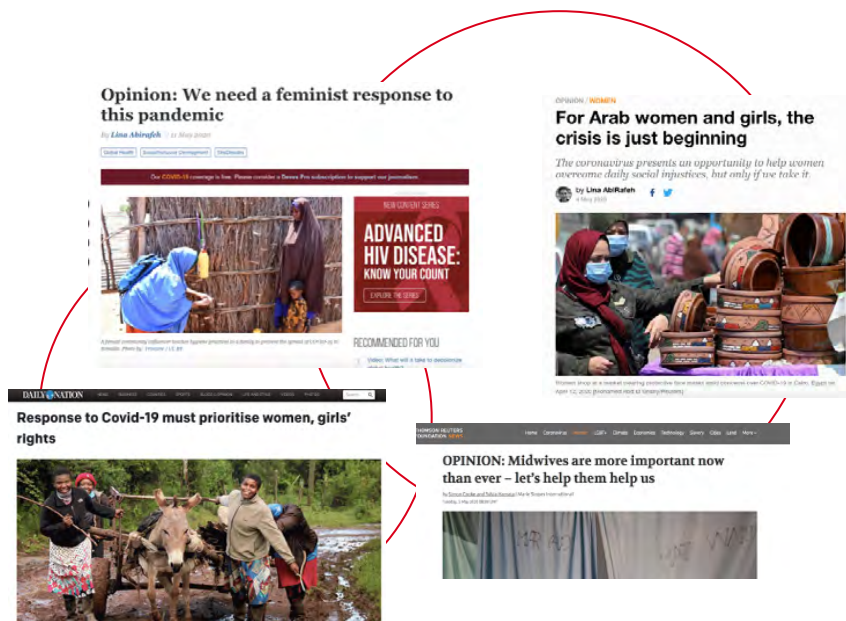
– SheDecides Champion Karina Gould, Minister of International Development, Canada

SheDecides Champions also came together virtually for a “Protecting Her Right to Decide during Covid-19” **Champions webinar**, where Champions from Amnesty International Argentina, MSI, Population Council, CIFF, YWCA Eastern Europe along with a representative of SheDecides Tanzania, shared how they were adapting their work to tackle the effect of the pandemic on women and girls worldwide.

Activists within the movement also **took action in their communities** to protect her right to decide, such as organising Open Mics and webinars with policymakers and Ministries of Health (SheDecides Kenya, Nigeria and Uganda), disseminating information on gender-based violence helplines and other resources (SheDecides Philippines), creating safe spaces for queer communities online (SheDecides India) and discussing pleasure and safety in the time of coronavirus (SheDecides South Africa)

SheDecides Champions from Sweden and South Africa developed a joint-statement Protecting Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and Promoting Gender-responsiveness in the Covid-19 crisis which 59 Governments including 11 SheDecides champions signed. Over 35 Champion organisations, individuals, young leaders and movements also signed on to a statement expressing concern over the U.S. call to remove language on bodily autonomy from the WHO Covid-19 Response Plan.





In total the SDSU facilitated **5 opinion pieces** that highlighted access to safe abortion during lockdown, protecting her right to decide in Kenya, and the impact of Covid-19 on women and girls in the Middle East.

#WhyAbortionWhyNow

Starting on International Safe Abortion Day on 28 September 2020, SheDecides took action and ignited six months of global activism and dialogue on the need for universal access to safe and legal abortion, under the banner #WhyAbortionWhyNow. Using #ArtsForAbortionRights as a powerful tool for change, the campaign connected the personal with the political and provided a unique way to bring people together. This campaign was in line with the movements' commitment to Stand Up and Speak Out on the right to safe and legal abortion, normalising discussion on abortion and positioning it as essential to bodily autonomy.

SheDecides movements took action in several ways, namely:

SheDecides **Bangladesh** held an #ArtsForAbortionRights competition. Three winners were selected for the category 'Artwork', and four winners were selected for the category 'Mini Stories'

SheDecides **India** hosted an art campaign and showcased how artists can Stand Up and Speak Out on why abortion matters.

SheDecides **Kenya** hosted a dialogue with women in the outskirts of Nairobi. The dialogue focused on access to safe abortion and the current reproductive health bill in Parliament, and included a free family planning camp. This was in partnership with the Centre for Reproductive Rights and Reproductive Health Network.



SheDecides **Malawi** held a closed session with faith leaders to discuss the Termination of Pregnancy Bill which will be tabled in Parliament in 2021. Young people then held a conference in support of the Bill, but also criticised its limitations such as when and why a woman can legally get an abortion.

SheDecides **Nepal** held an #ArtsForAbortionRights Open House, with interactive discussions, live musical performances and art. This was a safe space for young people to come together and share knowledge and experiences on access to abortion.



The SheDecides **Nigeria** movement officially launched on International Safe Abortion Day. The event included a vibrant roundtable and an Open Mic where activists shared their experiences, achievements and challenges on reproductive rights and needs in the country. The day was attended by government officials, civil society organisations, U.N. representatives, Embassy officials and activists.

SheDecides **Philippines** hosted an Open House that included live readings and artistic renderings of three real abortion stories. SheDecides Philippines, Philippines Safe Abortion Advocacy Network, Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights and Center for Reproductive Rights also launched a petition to decriminalise abortion in the country.

SheDecides **Senegal** hosted a webinar where they discussed how to reduce unsafe abortion among young people and how to ensure young people have access to safe abortion services.

SheDecides **Zimbabwe** hosted a #WhyAbortionWhyNow Open Mic to discuss abortion advocacy in the country. Over 50 people took part, including six parliamentarians. SheDecides Champion and parliamentarian Hon. Ruth Labode spoke out on the importance of young people talking about abortion in safe spaces as well as in public spaces.

SPOTLIGHT : NAMIBIA

The debate on abortion reform in **Namibia** has been ongoing for many years with activists lobbying to amend Namibia's Abortion and Sterilisation Act 1975, an apartheid-era law that restricts abortion in Namibia, except in cases of serious threat to maternal or foetal health or when the pregnancy is a result of rape or incest. In June 2020 activists within the Voices for Choices and Rights Coalition launched a petition to legalise abortion, gaining national attention through the #LegalizeAbortionNA hashtag and receiving over 60,000 signatures in support of abortion reform.

SheDecides supported the Voices for Choices and Rights Coalition, an informal queer-feminist collective, to connect with SheDecides Champions in Namibia - Dr Bernard Haufiku, Bience Gawanas and Sylvia Hamata - who used their platform to support calls for abortion reform. In September, SheDecides also supported VCRC with spark grant funding to explore different advocacy strategies to reform the 1975 Abortion and Sterilisation Act with four capacity-building workshops for coalition member organisations and 39 individual activists, exploring strategic litigation and court procedures in Namibia. Through the spark grant, activists were able to build networks with legal experts in Namibia and connected with South African litigation experts •

In the lead up to the **United States** periodic review at the Human Rights Council, the SDSU participated in advocacy in partnership with Planned Parenthood Federation of America **and IPPF, on lifting of the Global Gag Rule as well as domestic restrictions on abortion within the U.S. Several governments agreed to make these recommendations as part of the review.**

Impacted by the pandemic and emboldened anti-choice movements seeking to impose restrictions on accessing abortion, limiting her right to decide, the pushback on bodily autonomy required renewed attention and a coordinated response. On 2 December, SheDecides Champions came together to address the urgency of ensuring access to safe and legal abortion at the **#WhyAbortionWhyNow roundtable** – which also served as the Champions Annual Meeting. The roundtable focused on taking action. 31 Champions made commitments that spanned national and international spheres, advocacy around the Generation Equality Forums and the Action Coalitions within; youth amplifications and internal capacity building of organisations; commitments around the arts and media, service delivery and funding. The last roundtable of the year was a clear emboldening moment, where Champions stood together to take a bold stance against the rollback on abortion rights worldwide. It was the best attended Champions meeting to date.



Support to existing and new movements

There are currently **23 SheDecides Movements at different stages of development** (emergent, organizing, active) in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Arab Region and Europe. There is also interest in receiving SDSU movement building support in countries where collectives may not want to spark a SheDecides Movement, but find value in the support that joining SheDecides globally can give them in their local organizing.

As leaders and organizers from different Movements joined our Theory of Change design sessions, we identified the need to develop broader language to include different ways of organizing in country. As we develop that language collectively, we will be using the words collective and movement to refer to organizing structures in country. The SDSU's movement building and engagement work is focused on providing **Local Tailored Support**, strengthening **Regional Engagement**, and fostering **Global Connection**. This structure of support was sustained during the Covid-19 lockdown.



Locally tailored support included Vision Meetups with each of the movements to explore the vision of change and the movement's role in each country. As a result, 13 Movements were identified as priority Movements to receive Tailored Support. A Movements Essentials Checklist was developed to review all aspects of the Movements Guide. In addition to political and technical support, the SDSU provided seven **Spark Grants** (Senegal, Nigeria, Tanzania, Uganda, Malawi, Kenya, Namibia). Spark grants fund activities that spark engagement, allow opportunities for organizing and movement building and strengthen activism in a sustainable manner, supporting those key movement-building initiatives that are hard to fund through other channels, including hidden transactional costs of movement coordination. Most activities were constantly adapted and required special wellbeing support due to Covid-19.

Regional Engagement

This year the SDSU aimed to support development of **SheDecides in the Arab Region**. An initial roadmap was developed with **SheDecides Lebanon**, and the SDSU participated in the launch of IPPF's Movement Hub in **Morocco**. Since then, four virtual Regional Meetups were hosted by the SDSU to support solidarity and collective regional vision. They aimed at connecting Champions, Movement Leaders and 25x25, especially in the Arab Region and Latin America, the emerging regions in terms of SheDecides activism.



Global connection

Although global spaces for relevant political action were postponed until 2021, the SDSU continued to **strengthen connectivity** amongst SheDecides activists worldwide through the Protecting Her Right to Decide initiative detailed above.

25x25s

Over 140 applications were received for the new cohort of 25x25s – the Generation of Equality, and 25 diverse, dynamic young leaders from 25 countries were selected. Considering the Covid-19 pandemic, the decision was taken to cancel their onboarding workshop, which was scheduled to take place in Amsterdam in March. Nevertheless, the SDSU in collaboration with the 25x25s and several partners, was able to hold virtual regional meetings in the months after, orienting the young leaders and strengthening their capacity in communications and storytelling, and supporting them to develop their activity roadmaps. Ongoing lockdowns impacted the 25x25's ability to both plan and carry out their intended SheDecides activities; however, many participated in and led SheDecides virtual spaces in the later months.

Due to the Beijing+25 Generation Equality forums' postponement to 2021, the mandate of the 25x25s has been extended into 2021. Towards the end of the year, there was greater engagement of these young leaders with their country's SheDecides movements and collectives. As an example, in Ghana and Nigeria, Erica and Juliet respectively are now part of the core teams organizing in their countries, and they receive the support of fellow SheDecides activists to organize their spaces by connecting them with diverse actors who are already engaged with the movements

Support to Champions

In 2020 the SheDecides Champion base was diversified, with nine new Champions joining at the start of the year. Incoming leaders reflect the increasing importance of heterogeneity across the movement. In the past year, we have seen the first artist join the movement as a Champion, signalling plans to build on the prolific alliance between art and activism, as well as two new young Champions, one of whom had started her SheDecides activism as a 25x25. A Champion strategy was completed, as was a detailed workplan that mapped Champions' areas of interest, enabling the SDSU to better support building connections and collaboration across the movement.

Despite the challenges brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic, Champions have demonstrated their ongoing commitment to speaking out to ensure that women and girls everywhere can choose over their bodies and their futures. Throughout 2020 over 85% of Champions took at least one action – and two thirds of them took more than one.

New **SheDecides** Champions Announced



Anne-Birgitte Albrechtsen
CEO, Plan International

Goedele Liakens
Member of Parliament, Belgium

Lisa Russell
Independent Filmmaker, USA



Mariela Belski
Executive Director, Amnesty International Argentina

Memory Zonde-Kachambwa
Executive Director, FEMNET African Women's Development and Communication Network

Ruth Labode
Member of Parliament, Zimbabwe



Sonali Silva
Activist and Social Media Influencer, Sri Lanka

Sylvia Hamata
Young Midwife Leader, International Confederation of Midwives

Vera Syrakhvash
Advocate and Campaigner, Belarus

Many continued to stand up as SheDecides Champions and denounce how the pandemic severely impacts women and girls. Champion Dr Bernard Haufiku, the Special Adviser on Health to Vice President of Namibia, and the appointed architect of the Namibian Covid-19 response, was able to virtually participate in the AIDS2020 conference in July – highlighting the key role and responsibility of government officials in ensuring women and girls' autonomy over their bodies.

The changes in how we communicate and relate to each other have meant that Champions have collaborated with each other, with movements and young 25x25 activists. Despite social distancing, 80% of Champions collaborated across the campaign – once again highlighting that one of the strengths of SheDecides is in bringing diverse people together. Partnership with the ArtsxSDGs online Festival provided a platform to bring SheDecides activists together with artists who ignited fresh discussions about the power of art in advancing bodily autonomy, showcasing the work of

25x25s, filmmakers and hosting a storytelling Masterclass by Champion and award-winning filmmaker Lisa Russell. Champions have worked to bring SheDecides to diverse audiences – the ISNTD festival with artists and filmmakers being another such example, or the America's roundtable hosted by Canada and Mexico, bringing government Champions from the Americas together to reaffirm the importance of her right to choose.

In Argentina, newly appointed Champion Mariela Belski, the Executive Director of Amnesty International in the country, worked tirelessly amongst the *marea verde* to ensure that the right to safe and legal abortion became a reality in 2020, after decades of activism. Mariela's galvanising contributed to the widespread mobilisation that resulted in both Houses seeing it through before the end of year close. Champions across the movement joined Mariela on social media, calling on Senators to vote in favour of decriminalisation.

At the #SheDecidesNow roundtable Minister Karina Gould highlighted the need for all Champions to centre the perspectives and heed the recommendations of young activists across the movement – creating a space where Champions could listen and learn from activists within the movement. The centrality of incorporating youth voices was underscored at the Americas Roundtable organised by Minister Gould, where 25x25 Argerie Sánchez Mena from Costa Rica was invited to participate. Cross Champion/Movement/Youth Activist collaboration will continue to be a priority for SheDecides going forward.

Opposition Mitigation

This year saw an emboldened anti-choice and anti-gender movement exploiting the pandemic to launch coordinated campaigns against individual activists and movements. In March, CitizenGo launched a [petition](#) targeting SheDecides Kenya local champion and Member of Parliament Hon. Esther Passaris. The SDSU worked closely with SheDecides Kenya to counter this attack, including providing personalised communications support to Hon. Passaris and team. The petition was ultimately rejected by parliament.

In June SheDecides Champion and Parliamentary State Secretary Dr Maria Flachsbarth came under [attack](#) by conservative Catholic groups due to her role as a SheDecides Champion. The SDSU worked closely with Dr Flachsbarth's team on evidence-based communications and provided support and linkages to relevant resources.

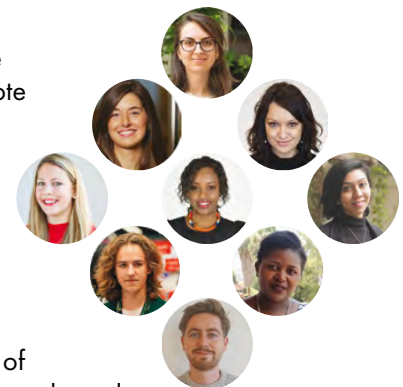
In October, the Polish Constitutional court tightened the already strict anti-abortion laws with a near-total ban on abortion throughout Poland, leading to a mass Women's Strike (Strajk Kobiet in Polish). The anti-choice groups have been strengthened by the support of the previous U.S. administration which together with 34 countries signed the Geneva Consensus Declaration a diplomatic alliance against Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights and Bodily Autonomy. The SheDecides Support Unit continued to monitor opposition developments, noting trends and providing a powerful counter-narrative at key campaign moments, [#WhyAbortionWhyNow](#), [#SheDecidesNow](#) and [#EndGlobalGag](#).

Governance and Management

The focus in 2020 was impact mitigation of Covid-19 on the SDSU's planned activities, adjusting the SDSU towards remote working arrangements, accelerating resource mobilisation, and developing a new Theory of Change for and with the movement. The SDSU also continued to strengthen various internal policies, including grant-making and crisis communications guidelines and undertook a light-touch review of the hosting arrangement with IPPF.

In early 2020, the SDSU concluded the recruitment process of regional movement builders for Africa and Asia, based in Rwanda and Bangladesh, respectively. A Policy Advisor also joined the London-based team in January. Two part-time consultants were retained to support the 25x25 and communications portfolios, bringing the total number of SDSU staff worldwide to ten, based in three regions.

The SheDecides Guiding Group met quarterly in 2020 to provide strategic support to the SDSU during the challenging year. The Guiding Group also welcomed four new members– namely Joshua Tabah (Canada, on behalf of the Minister), Memory Kachambwa (FEMNET), Sonali Silva (25x25, Sri Lanka) and Sylvia Hamata (young midwife, Namibia, International Confederation of Midwives).



Theory of Change

Over a six-month period, the SDSU worked with consultants Collective Discovery to develop the first Theory of Change (ToC) with and for the movement. The ToC was developed through an extensive participatory process that gathered evidence from interactive stakeholder workshops, Support Unit consultations, key informant interviews, case studies and a literature review. The process provided an opportunity to reflect on the movement's evolution and where the movement adds most value within the broader ecosystem working to achieve bodily autonomy.

The ecosystem analysis pointed to **a need for a globally connected movement of people who are willing to Stand Up and Speak Out on bodily autonomy**, in a context where those most affected need more access to decision making spaces, where movements need to be better connected, actors who support bodily autonomy need to be mobilised for coordinated and collective action, there is an urgent need to support the shifting of norms about girls, women and their bodies, and where girls and women need a new discourse that reflects their lived experience. SheDecides can respond, and has responded in the past, to these challenges, and is therefore well placed to play a unique role within the ecosystem, namely by:

- Leveraging the positional power that exists within the movement to build political will for full bodily autonomy and open doors / create spaces for girls and women to speak for themselves
- Connecting movements to each other and resources during critical moments such as the Covid-19 pandemic or around particular issues such as abortion rights
- Mobilising different actors on bodily autonomy, acknowledging the diversity in the ecosystem and opportunities for solidarity and coordination in the face of well-coordinated opposition
- Meaningfully engaging with, and leadership by, young people, who identify with the democratised, feminist organising and fresh narratives within the movement
- Subverting and disrupting the social norms through use of compelling narratives and ways of organising, creating spaces as well as occupying existing ones where decisions on bodily autonomy are made.

The ToC is therefore organised around 3 domains of change – Personal Power (The Story of Self), Collective Power (The Story of Us) and Transformative Power (The Story of Change).



LESSONS LEARNED

This unprecedented period has led to significant reflection on movement building and support, namely:

Movement-centred designed has proven to be essential, including through structured engagement opportunities such as Curators – By the Movement, For the Movement.

The **agility and flexibility** of the SDSU has been extremely beneficial during the Covid-19 crisis, allowing the Support Unit to be responsive to the changing needs and contexts of the movement(s) and an external environment which has fuelled new collaborations and progress, but also emboldened opposition groups who have rolled-back rights successfully.

We are witnessing a **shift in local organising** from collectives of mainly NGOs to a collective of activists interested in designing something different and impactful by coming together and sharing, learning, healing, and speaking out.

There is a need to facilitate movements **to imagine movement-building post-Covid-19** considering the de-prioritisation of bodily autonomy issues, unrelenting opposition campaigns, shrinkage in funding and overwhelmed public health systems.

Movement building work can be **supported from anywhere across the globe**, provided teams enjoy remote and collaborative working. This allows us to broaden the extent to which we think of teams of collaborators, including networks of support like designers, translators, trainers, artists and more.