

About RFSU

RFSU stands for *Riksförbundet för sexuell upplysning*, which translates to the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education. Founded in 1933 by pioneering journalist Elise Ottosen-Jensen, it is a prominent Swedish non-profit, politically independent membership organization. It works extensively within Sweden and internationally to promote Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) through education, mobilization, and advocacy.

Their mission is to contribute to a world where everyone is free to enjoy and make decisions about their own bodies and sexuality. RFSU infiltrates countries based on their highly unmet SRHR needs, the level in which their local civil societies can assist in the propagation of their agenda, and their funding efficiency and security/operational feasibility.

In short, they target countries that are against SRHR or have a highly weak infrastructure for it; thus, they are least likely to have a strong presence in countries that already have a solid SRHR structure. RFSU's strategy emphasizes deeper, long-term partnerships in fewer countries rather than broad coverage, this is seen in their regional outreaches in East and Southern Africa.

List of Countries in Africa with the Presence of RFSU

1. Kenya

Kenya is one of RFSU's active hotspots today. They fund, train, and provide technical support for Kenyan organizations, with a special target for feminist and youth-led organizations. Such organizations include the Centre for the Study of Adolescence (CSA); Feminists for Peace, Rights, and Justice Centre; HIAS Kenya; the Kenya Legal & Ethical Issues Network on HIV and AIDS (KELIN); the Kenya SRHR Alliance; and the Zamara Foundation. They are also involved in a queer initiative and KAZ Entertainment. RFSU's activities in Kenya are directed at advocacy for curriculum reform (via the Pleasure Project, aimed at incorporating "positive pleasure-based approaches" alongside traditional risk and disease prevention messages), SRHR outreaches in informal settlements, countering backlash on their activities, feminist festivals, legal pushes on abortion and sexual rights, and broadening their policy influence through alliances.

2. Uganda

RFSU is no longer active in Uganda but has had several projects in the country. They have partnered with Reproductive Health Uganda (RHU) and the Naguru Teenage Information and Health Centre (NTIHC). These projects were aimed at integrating a gender perspective into clinical work while advocating for SRHR. Uganda has also been a beneficiary of other multi-country initiatives by RFSU, which include the International Planned Parenthood Foundation's (IPPF) project to strengthen LGBTQ+ work and implement sexual rights declarations, and the Young Men as Equal Partners Project that targeted boys and young men with information on SRHR, gender equality, and HIV prevention and testing. RFSU's direct, active presence and major projects in Uganda largely ended in the mid-to-late 2010s.

2. Zambia

RFSU's involvement in Zambia spanned from the mid-1990s to 2013. Their goal was to garner support for sexuality and co-existence education both in and out of schools. They partnered with the Planned Parenthood Association of Zambia (PPAZ) for access to youth clinics and service access and the Youth Vision Zambia (YVZ)— or access to young people, teachers, and parents.

3. Ethiopia

There is no particular presence of RFSU in Ethiopia; however, Sweden, through their international development assistance (SIDA) under their Ministry of Foreign Affairs, seeks to increase gender equality and the use of SRHR as a strategy for their development cooperation in line with the principles of aid and development effectiveness, the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and the Paris Agreement.

4. Malawi

RFSU's direct engagement with Malawi was mainly in the 2000s–2010s. They worked primarily with the Malawi Red Cross to train staff, teachers, and youth educators in gender-sensitive sexuality education methods. It was also a beneficiary of RFSU's regional efforts in Eastern Africa.

5. Mozambique

There is no particular presence of RFSU in Mozambique; however, Sweden, through their international development assistance (SIDA) under their Ministry of Foreign Affairs, seeks to

increase gender equality and the use of SRHR as a strategy for their development cooperation in line with the principles of aid and development effectiveness, the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and the Paris Agreement.

6. Ghana

Ghana is a priority country in RFSU's current strategy. RFSU supports local civil society organizations working on sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), with a focus on Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE), access to contraception and youth-friendly services, advocacy for policy change, and the rights of youth, women, and LGBTQ+ persons. They address teenage pregnancy, limited comprehensive sex education, gender-based violence (GBV), unsafe abortion, and uneven access to services. RFSU collaborates with the following organizations: Curious Minds, Planned Parenthood Association Ghana, and Youth Harvest Foundation Ghana

7. Liberia

Liberia is another priority country for the RFSU. They established a dedicated office in Monrovia in 2022 and supported the Liberian civil society movement for SRHR. Key activities include coordinating the Amplify Rights Network (ARN) a coalition of 10 local organizations working on advocacy, training, and service delivery; capacity building, grant management, and technical support for partners; advocacy for policy change (e.g., the controversial Public Health Bill and safe abortion access); and supporting LGBTQ+ persons and other marginalized groups. RFSU collaborates with the following organizations in advancing their agenda: Community Healthcare Initiative (CHI), West Point Women for Health and Development (WPWHDO), and the Rural Women and Girls Rights Foundation (RWGRF).

8. Tanzania

RFSU's active presence in Tanzania was primarily project-based, spanning from the mid-2000s to the early to mid-2010s. Their engagement included Tanzanian Men as Equal Partners (TMEP) and related initiatives, which focused on engaging men and boys in SRHR, gender equality and HIV prevention, and SRHR Education and Training.

9. Democratic Republic of Congo

The DRC's partnership with the RFSU began in the 2000s and concluded in 2010. They had a project with Association des Animateurs Sanitaires – Uvira (AASU) to improve health

through the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, via information and sexuality education.

Countries with Recent Progress or Active Efforts Toward Greater LGBT Rights

1. Full Equality (Marriage is Legal): Only **one** country in Africa allows same-sex marriage, adoption, and full legal protection:

- **South Africa**

2. Homosexuality is Legal (But Marriage is Forbidden): In these countries, you will **not** go to jail for being gay, but you cannot get married or get a civil union:

- Angola
- Benin
- Botswana
- Cape Verde
- Central African Republic
- Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast)
- Democratic Republic of Congo
- Djibouti
- Equatorial Guinea
- Gabon
- Guinea-Bissau
- Lesotho
- Madagascar
- Mauritius
- Mozambique
- Namibia
- Republic of the Congo
- Rwanda
- São Tomé and Príncipe
- Seychelles

List of Lobbyists that Lobby Parliaments around Africa to alter their policies and accommodate hyper-sexualization in Schools

1. **Réseau Africain de l'Education pour la Santé (RAES):** Operates across West Africa (including Senegal, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Niger). They actively engage Ministries of Education and parliamentarians to formally integrate CSE into national secondary school programming.
2. **Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana (PPAG):** Lobbies the Ghanaian Parliament and the Ministry of Education. They advocate for the formal adoption of the national CSE guidelines, which have faced severe pushback from religious groups over modules concerning gender diversity and sexual rights.
3. **Family Health Options Kenya (FHOK):** Actively lobbies the Parliament of Kenya and County Assemblies. They push for the passage of the Reproductive Healthcare Bill, advocating that adolescents must have legal access to stigma-free information regarding contraceptives, safe abortion care, and diverse sexual health identities.
4. **Planned Parenthood Association of Zambia (PPAZ):** Engages Zambian lawmakers to ensure the national school curriculum integrates the full spectrum of sexual health education, aiming to dismantle taboos around adolescent sexuality and sexual orientation.

Regional and Pan-African Lobbying Coalitions

Because local NGOs often face heavy domestic backlash, they frequently form large regional coalitions to lobby governments at the continental level, such as the African Union (AU) or the Southern African Development Community (SADC):

1. **The African Sex Workers Alliance (ASWA) & Coalition of African Lesbians (CAL):** These regional networks lobby pan-African political bodies and domestic ministries. They advocate for the inclusion of LGBTQ+ inclusive language, gender identity education, and rights-based sexual health modules in regional youth frameworks.
2. **The Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) Africa Trust (SAT):** Operating heavily across Southern Africa (including South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Malawi), SAT lobbies regional policymakers and parliamentarians. They advocate for policy overhauls that ensure adolescent girls and young people receive explicit education on abortion rights and bodily autonomy within public school systems.

3. **Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE):** While heavily focused on girls' education, FAWE lobbies ministries of education across more than 30 African nations to implement gender-responsive pedagogy. This includes advocating for comprehensive reproductive health education to reduce high drop-out rates from teenage pregnancies.

Domestic Legal and Advocacy Non-Profits

In some nations, legal advocacy groups use a combination of strategic litigation and direct parliamentary lobbying to force the integration of these topics into the school system:

- **Section27 (South Africa):** A well-known public interest law center that lobbies the Department of Basic Education and parliament. They advocate for the strict implementation of South Africa's *Life Orientation* curriculum, ensuring it remains robust, scientifically accurate, and actively protective of LGBTQ+ student rights and comprehensive reproductive choices (including abortion).
- **Action Health Incorporated (AHI - Nigeria):** AHI historically lobbied federal and state ministries of education in Nigeria to create and implement the *Family Life and HIV Education (FLHE)* curriculum. While the final adopted curriculum was heavily compromised due to local cultural and religious pressures (removing explicit references to masturbation and LGBT identities), AHI continues to advocate for rights-based, comprehensive youth education.

The tension surrounding sexual health programs and LGBTQ+ advocacy in African legislatures centers on a deep clash between global health frameworks and local conservative movements.

The Conflict Over Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)

- Advocacy for CSE: Global bodies like [UNFPA](#) and [UNESCO](#) campaign for Comprehensive Sexuality Education to equip youth with scientifically accurate information regarding reproductive health, consent, and gender equality.
- Local Opposition: Conservative African political and religious leaders argue that these curricula serve as a vehicle to promote LGBTQ+ identities to young children, calling them an assault on traditional family structures.

Parliamentary Backlash and Legislation

- **Legislative Pushback:** Across several nations, parliamentarians have actively introduced highly restrictive bills to counter sexual diversity advocacy and protect what they define as "family values".

Key Regional Actions:

- **Ghana:** The 4th African Regional Inter-Parliamentary Conference on Family Values and Sovereignty in Accra brought together lawmakers from over 20 African nations to draft a continent-wide anti-LGBTQ+ charter. Lawmakers continue to push for the strict Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill.
- **Uganda:** Following the passage of the 2023 Anti-Homosexuality Act, leadership explicitly banned CSE in schools, claiming it targets the innocence of children.
- **Other Nations:** Countries like Burkina Faso and Mali have recently updated their legal frameworks to officially criminalize same-sex relations, citing the defense of cultural norms against external ideological pressure.

Drivers of the Movement

- **Transnational Networks:** Local legislative efforts are frequently amplified by alliances with conservative legal and religious organizations based in the United States and Europe.
- **Political Leverage:** Analysts note that focusing on the protection of children from perceived external moral threats serves as a powerful unifying message for governments during periods of economic or social stress.

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