

Answer by **BELGIUM** on the integration of the human rights approach to eliminating preventable maternal mortality and morbidity follow-up to the Council resolution 11/8

Regarding the promotion of right to the highest attainable standard of health, including mental health, Belgium is convinced that all rights are interdependent and that the right to health is an essential part of the fight against poverty and inequality as well as part of the right of everyone to human dignity and full human potential.

Belgium promotes primary health care as the first point of entry for sexual and reproductive health, via holistic networks of health centres and hospitals, accessible for the whole population. Extensive prevention campaigns and curative care are an integral part of the fight against pregnancy complications and maternal mortality.

In this regard, the rights based approach plays a crucial factor: the legislative framework, education, decent work, clean and safe drinking water, sanitation and shelter each cover a component of good reproductive health care services so that all women and men can take informed decisions about the number, timing and spacing of their children.

In practice this means that the Belgian development cooperation pleads for the expansion of a network of accessible health care structures, first line and second line, through multilateral and bilateral aid. Accessible and quality sexual and reproductive health care for women is a core task of all health care systems.

Law on the Belgian international cooperation (25/05/1999)

Article 7 states that primary health care, with the inclusion of reproductive health, should be one of the 5 sectors on which Belgium should focus.

Policy documents Belgium

- Starting point main policy note '**The right to health and health care (2008)**': access to quality healthcare is an inalienable right and an essential element in the fight against poverty and inequality' (see website Belgian Development Cooperation:

http://diplomatie.belgium.be/en/policy/development_cooperation/topics/basic_healthcare/)

- Millennium Development Goals mentioned, especially MDG4,5 and 6 (p16,17).

- Plea for a holistic approach from the health sector, problems in related to maternal health considered as a symptom of wider health-related problems facing development countries
 -women and poorest of the population need to have their voices heard (p20, in § on strengthening ownership)
- The policy note: '**Belgian development cooperation in the domain of sexual and reproductive health and rights (2007)**' is the expression of the political will to remain engaged in this field:

"Belgium's policy must contribute to respect for human rights, basic freedoms and the fight against all forms of discrimination. Sexual and reproductive rights are part and parcel of human rights and basic freedoms and are based on international treaties and conventions ratified by Belgium."

"An approach based on the human rights of sexual and reproductive health has three essential components: legal framework; programmes and services; and participation. Legal framework implies that the law and regulations and the mechanisms for following up on their implementation guarantee the sexual and reproductive rights of all citizens (including the weakest and most vulnerable) and protect them against exploitation, harmful practices, violence, discrimination and exclusion. Programmes and services must be available for information, education, care and assistance. They must be accessible to all, financially affordable, of good quality, suited to the age of those concerned and the cultural environment, and capable of maintaining confidentiality. Participation means that men, women and Young people have the right to be informed in an objective manner and to educate themselves so that they can make their own free choices – with regard to sexual and reproductive matters, for example – and actively participate in the programmes and services."

http://diplomatie.belgium.be/en/binaries/policy_paper_sexual_and_reproductive_health_tcm312-65632.pdf

Implementation

- Multilateral: WHO,UNICEF, UNAIDS, UNFPA,UNIFEM
- Bilateral:
 - Direct: present in the health sector in 14 of the 18 partner countries of Belgium
 - Indirect: many NGOs involved in the health sector, some have an explicit human rights approach (e.g. MSF).