

Every month RESURJ members will collectively share and reflect on some news highlights affecting sexual and reproductive, environmental and economic justice from the different regions and countries we work in... [read online](#)

Denial of young people's sexuality: A skewed approach to teenage pregnancy in Rwanda

By: Chantal Umuhoza

In Rwanda, [recent statistics show](#) there's an alarming increase in teenage pregnancy. In 2011, 614 teenage pregnancies in a survey covering a number of schools were reported and in 2013, 26 girls ranging from 14 to 17 years of age were found pregnant in a single school. In 2016, about 17,000 teenage pregnancies, for girls 16 to 19 years of age, were reported nationwide.

Efforts to address teenage pregnancies continue to focus on addressing the consequences and not the structural underlying causes of teenage pregnancy. The Ministry of Gender and Family [recently announced](#) punitive measures against absentee partners for teenage mothers to force them to take responsibility for their actions.

The overall debate continues to take a protectionist approach to teenage pregnancy i.e. assuming all young people below 18 have no agency and have no say in their sexuality and all they need is protection from "perpetrators". There is an over-reliance on effective implementation of the Gender-Based Violence Law and child protection policy as main solutions. There's complete silence on the need for young people's SRH services in and out of schools. Accessibility of condoms in school continues to be a taboo and emergency contraception is still not included on the list of essential medicine subsidies by the government of Rwanda.

The danger of not questioning the structural causes of teenage pregnancy makes prevention efforts of teenage pregnancy unsustainable and focuses attention mostly on the criminalization of "perpetrators", who also include teenage girls'

boyfriends and not necessarily rapists. In a society that is both conservative and religious, young people's sexual rights are often denied and not tolerated and the blame is entirely shifted onto the teenage mother.

This is an abridged version from an article published on the [South Feminist Voices blog](#). To read the full article, click [here](#).

The State of Freedom of Speech and the political correctness of development work in Senegal

By: Diakhoumba Gassama

As a human rights defender of all the rights of all humans, I am finding it more and more difficult to do just that in my national context. I am confronted daily with fellow "activists" or INGO representatives who encourage me to "measure what I say and where I say it", "not stigmatize people especially when they can feel attacked in their religion and culture", "talk about abortion only from the perspective of the consequences of unsafe abortion on the health of a mother and her child and not from a choice and rights perspective" "leave issues of comprehensive sexuality education and sexual orientation to foreigners" to quote just a few things I've heard.

The latest incident was about me mentioning on national TV that child marriage was a form of pedophilia. I was instantly attacked by all "allies" around me who were adamant about the fact that this was too harsh of a word to use in advocacy in a campaign to say no to child marriage.

The truth is, I now realize what is so obvious but took time to sink in: the very people in charge of protecting the lives of the most vulnerable among us have developed two terrible diseases: cowardice and self-censorship based on some paternalistic

views that villagers or Africans have values that condone the daily rape and all other forms of physical and emotional violence that child brides go through.

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Online Sex Ed in Sri Lanka: For Whom and To What End?

By: Sachini Perera

The introduction and implementation of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) for young people in and out of school is [making extremely slow progress](#) in Sri Lanka, in [an otherwise well developed education system](#), including a [youth literacy rate of 97.7% \(2008-2012, UNICEF\)](#). These delays are due to various reasons including conservative attitudes in society and among policymakers, cultural barriers, pressure from religious groups and leaders, and most importantly, lack of political will.

Results of such delays are hard to miss. Studies show that knowledge on SRH is poor among adolescents, who comprise 19% of the total population. The country has a National School and Adolescent Health Programme. The low level of SRH knowledge, [the incidence of adolescent pregnancy \(5.3% of registered pregnancies\)](#) and various other factors such as [high levels of stigma and discrimination around HIV](#) and incidence of [gender-based violence and attitude towards women](#) show that implementation of the programme is less than satisfactory.

It is in this context that it is interesting to note that in the past few years, there has been a propagation of various online platforms providing sexuality education. National and international NGOs produce these platforms, often in partnership with various state institutions. [The latest such platform](#) is being promoted as “Sri Lanka’s first self-learning comprehensive sexuality education website”.

The availability of accurate information on sexual and reproductive health (SRH) is never a bad thing but it is time we take a more critical look at these platforms in the context of state obligation to provide access to SRH information to young people, management of resources for CSE, lack of cohesion

in sex education programming, access to the Internet (especially for girls), and privacy and protection of user data.

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UK: Why sometimes in politics, losing is actually winning – the shifting politics towards a just society

By: Mari-Claire Price

The recent UK general election has seen one of the biggest slides towards the left in recent memory. The results of the election read on paper like a win for the Conservative government, who arrogantly called for the election hoping to strengthen their position and validate their plans of a hard approach to Brexit. They won the most seats, the most votes, and now have a minority government with support from the Northern Irish Democratic Unionist Party.

However, this was not a win. It was in fact a massive loss. They failed to even win the majority that they entered the election with, or anything close to a minimum they would have expected. They thought they would win some seats, but they ended up losing 32 seats, many of which were Conservative strongholds, and 25 of which went to Labour. The share of votes went from Labour 29% / Conservative 36% in 2010, to Labour 40% / Conservative 42% in 2017.

So why was this a win for justice?

In an [analysis of the EU referendum result](#) in 2016, we shared the very complex nature and context of the results, the rise of nationalism, xenophobia, right wing media bias, but also something that was generally missed out of the mainstream analysis, the push back against the neo-liberal agenda:

30 years of war has been waged by the Tories and the establishment: profit over people, demolishing of industry and jobs, crushing austerity, welfare reform, and cuts to and privatization of public services. The poor, working class, disabled people, migrants, refugees, women, and people of colour have seen their concerns and experiences ignored and placated for decades.

Never has this been more evident than in this general election.

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