

It is fundamental that at this juncture we carry out coordinated actions with allied organizations to produce and distribute informative material that has clear arguments about reproductive health as an essential service. This is necessary to counteract the strategies of groups that are opposed to women and LGBTI persons having access to their sexual and reproductive rights. This guide offers tools and key information to create narratives that promote access to sexual and reproductive health.

The increase in media consumption during the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the dissemination of false information about sexual and reproductive health, becoming viral and leading to confusion and fear in the general public.

When structuring the information it is important to keep in mind:

- Who we are addressing, the channels that we are going to use and the message that we want to communicate
- We recommend looking for social, academic, scientific and reporting cross references to accompany our campaign
- Our pictures and messages should be backed by figures, data or quotes from health professionals disseminating the need to guarantee access to reproductive health
- Design presentations or exhibitions with didactic clarity, anchored in appeals to shared knowledge, common narratives or commonly used metaphors in the field of reference
- Appeal to citizens of ages and socio-geographical situations similar to the audience we are trying to reach so that they interact and feel represented by the pictures and messages

REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

To face the disinformation strategies against the World Health Organization, the United Nations and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights we must affirm these elements:



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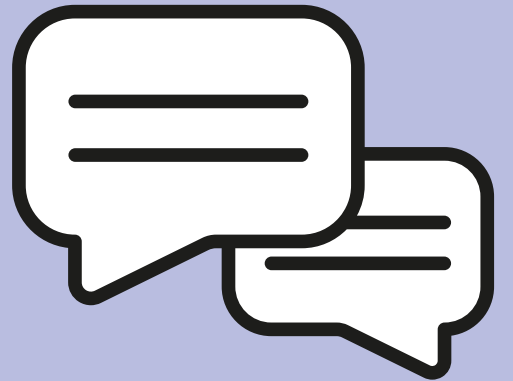
- International conventions on human rights, that involve the United Nations system, are binding for signatory states and have been incorporated into the constitutional texts of each country
- Recommendations from the WHO are guidelines based on scientific evidence and human rights standards for laws, policies and health practices
- The World Health Organization works to coordinate the efforts and understanding of all countries regarding COVID-19. That is why their recommendations are relevant
- In resolution 1/2020 “Pandemic and Human Rights in the Americas Today” the States are called upon to guarantee the availability and continuity of sexual and reproductive health services during the crisis of the pandemic (cons.54)

GUIDELINES



Do not respond to allegations by directly confronting or introducing any negative expression such as: **“It’s not true that x”**. By doing so we replicate and amplify the disinformation or negative views

Use expressions with a gender sensitive focus that do not duplicate the terms used by opposers of sexual and reproductive rights, not even to reference non-existence or inaccuracy



Do not use terms such as: **“Anti-rights Groups”** or **“Anti-gender Groups”** in public statements. Favor expressions such as organizations that oppose women’s rights or that hope to curb the advances related to women’s and human rights

We underscore that the recommendations that we offer come from groups of experts, doctors and scientists, that base themselves on research. Appeal to the advances in scientific knowledge, particularly in doctors because of their significant social recognition



The global health crisis caused by the coronavirus outbreak should not be used as a pretext to move backwards and hinder the advances on sexual and reproductive rights in countries.

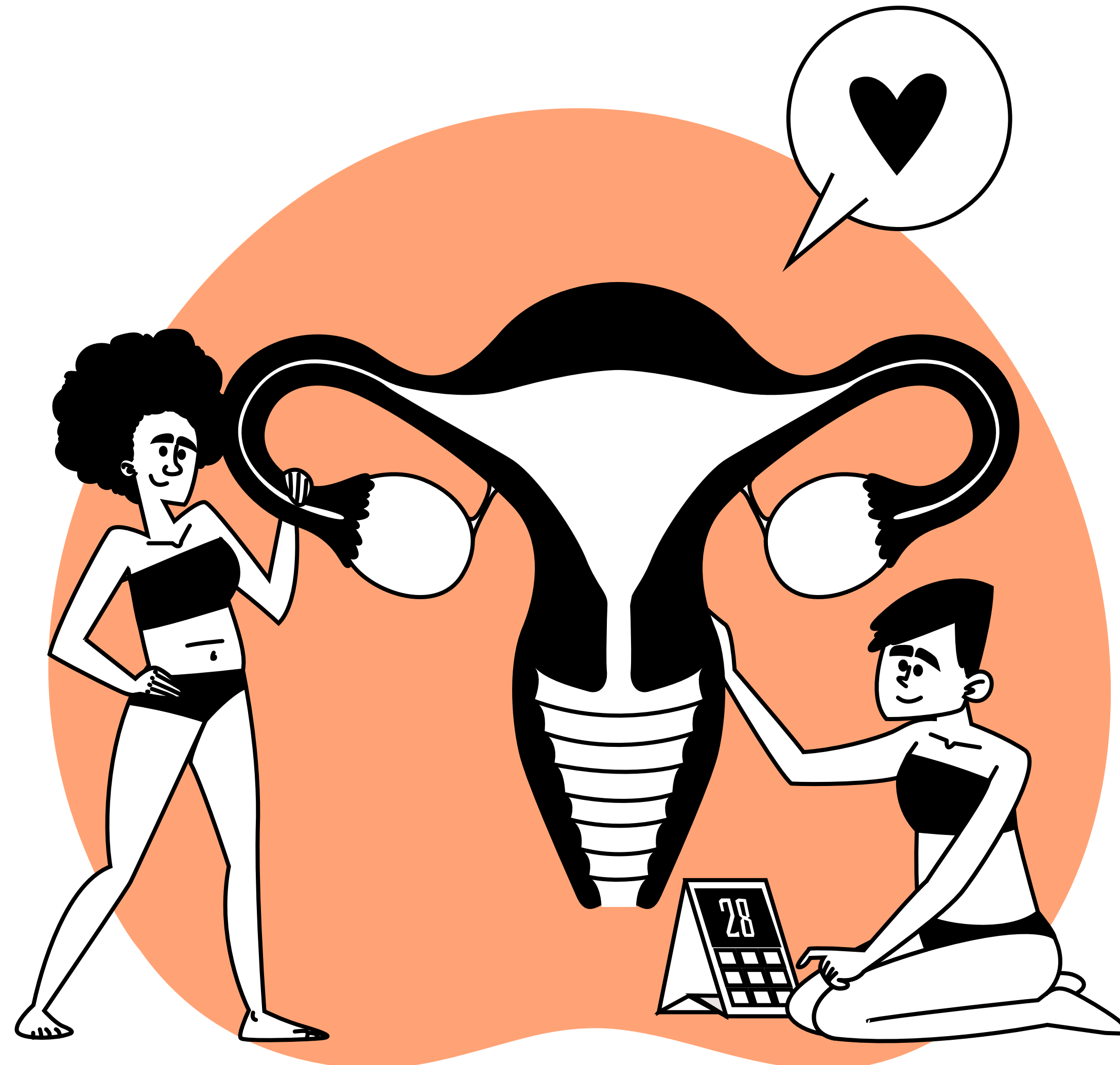
In the midst of so much disinformation, it is necessary to guarantee access to sexual and reproductive health for women and LGBTI persons during the COVID-19 pandemic. We have to be clear that:

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH IS ESSENTIAL AND URGENT

Access to reproductive health must be guaranteed in order to avoid an increase in maternal and neonatal mortality and morbidity, as has happened during other health crises and pandemics around the world.

According to the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, adopted in 1994, reproductive health is understood as a general state of physical, mental and social wellbeing, and not the merely the absence of disease or infirmity in all matters relating to the reproductive system and its functions and processes.

ARGUMENTS FOR PROMOTING ACCESS TO SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH



SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS

The International Conference on Human Rights in Teheran affirmed in 1968 the “basic right of parents to determine freely and responsibly the number and the spacing of their children”.

In 1997, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights introduced reproductive rights as a comprehensive part of human rights and this recognition was strengthened in the Belém do Pará Convention in 1994.

ALL PEOPLE HAVE THE RIGHT TO HAVE ACCESS TO SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH SERVICES

Age, race, color, sex, language, religion, political opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, economic position, disability, or any other condition, should not be reason to deny access to sexual and reproductive health services.

ALL PEOPLE HAVE THE RIGHT TO MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS ABOUT THEIR SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

For people to be able to make decisions in an informed and autonomous manner, timely access to information on the matter of sexual and reproductive health such as the state of health and the available options is paramount. This information should be conveyed and expressed in a suitable, precise way free from conditions or biases.

THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE WHO AND THE UN ARE RELEVANT GIVEN THAT THEY WORK TOWARDS COORDINATING EFFORTS AND KNOWLEDGE SHARED BY THE COUNTRIES FACING THE HEALTH EMERGENCY

During the pandemic, the WHO published a document with guidelines to help countries maintain quality essential health services for the whole population and to mitigate the risk of collapse of the system; reproductive health is included in these services.

The recommendations given by these organizations are based on scientific evidence and human rights standards for laws, policies and practices in the field of health. You can see these recommendations in the following link:

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/covid-19-operational-guidance-for-maintaining-essential-health-services-during-an-outbreak>

TELEMEDICINE STRATEGIES SHOULD BE ADOPTED DURING THE PANDEMIC

Telehealth services have been proven to be a highly effective and safe way to get care for early termination of pregnancies with mifepristone and/or misoprostol, counseling about contraceptives and sexuality or pregnancy checkups during social distancing.

STATES HAVE THE OBLIGATION TO GUARANTEE ACCESS TO SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH DURING THE PANDEMIC

States must guarantee effective fulfillment of essential services, without declines, delays or constraints; and therefore must take measures to ensure adaptation of sexual and reproductive health services under quarantine and their provision in an adequate and timely manner.

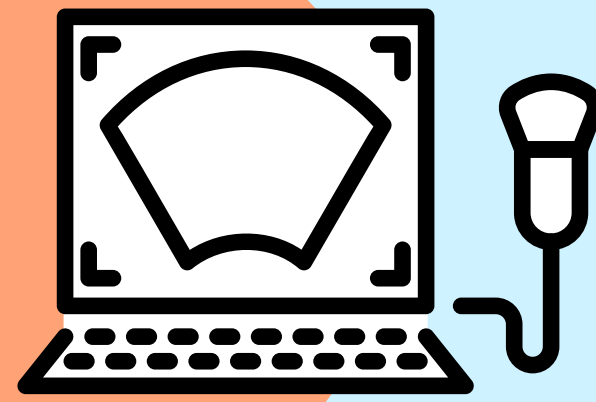
To that effect it is essential that they broadcast adequate messages to the health systems so that they guarantee attention, the necessary staff and supply of consumables and medications.



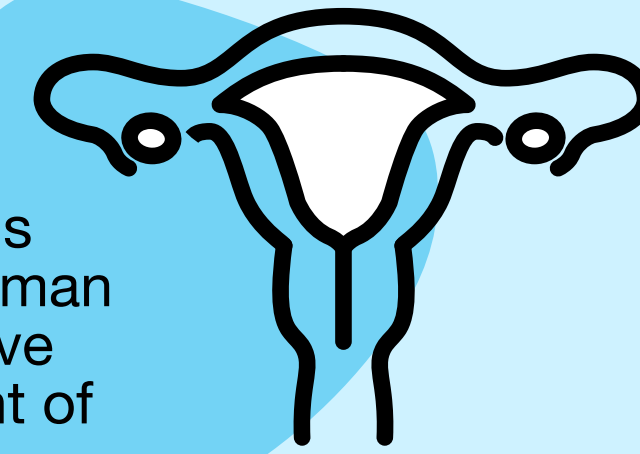
HUMAN RIGHTS

In building arguments it is important to keep in mind that sexual and reproductive rights are a part of human rights and, therefore, the States must ensure their compliance. The communications strategies should keep in mind that:

The State has the obligation to act as a guardian to the right to health that is included in the constitutional texts of the region and the international agreements



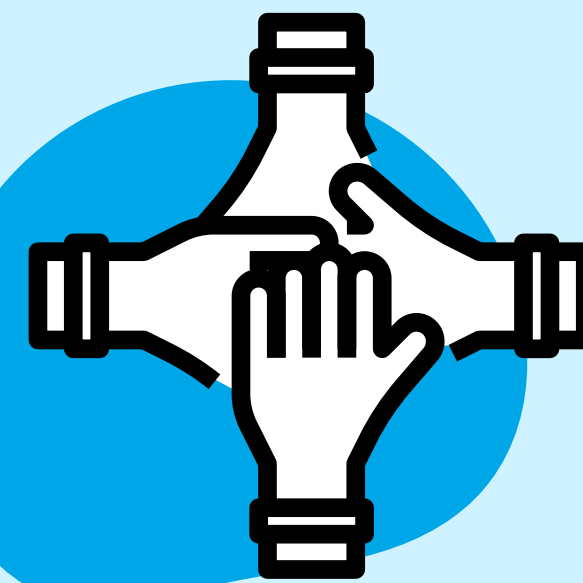
The right to health is understood to be a human right and reproductive health a basic element of health from a comprehensive approach



To impede or to hinder access to reproductive health services is an explicit infringement on human rights



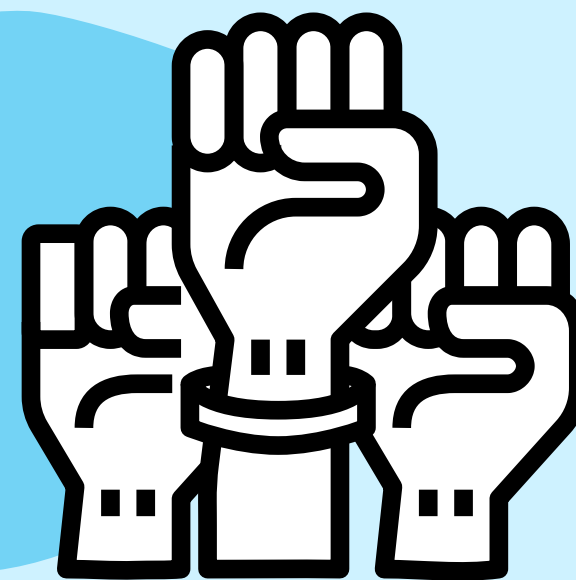
A focus on human rights as a political principal and narrative framework is favored



Abortion care is essential to prevent maternal mortality and morbidity, protecting the right to live with dignity, and should therefore remain available



The human rights branches of the UN affirm that access to abortion care is a human right



Emphasize on attending the needs of population groups who have had their rights violated the most or find themselves in a situation of greater vulnerability under conditions such as the ones found during the pandemic



REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AS AN ESSENTIAL SERVICE

It is crucial to recover the conceptualization of health from a holistic perspective where reproductive health is understood as an essential service and therefore must be guaranteed.

To that effect, it is important to develop arguments that beckon people to make decisions freely and with autonomy over their bodies and, furthermore, that they relate access to reproductive health services to the enjoyment of a wide range of human rights such as the right to health, livelihood, dignity and equality.

Reproductive health is essential to the comprehensive care of women's health and, therefore, the State must guarantee reproductive health even at this juncture. Even more so, when the means for it do exist and are available.

Essential health services are those components that are indispensable in order to guarantee the enjoyment of the best level of health possible in emergency contexts. The WHO has identified as essential services related to reproductive health care:

- Prenatal care, during birth and postpartum care
- Guidance and provision of contraceptive methods
- Treatment for sterility
- Safe abortion services

To that end we must keep in mind:

- Reproductive health includes sexual health
- Reproductive rights must be thought of as connected to human rights
- Reproductive rights include the right to “reach the highest level of sexual and reproductive health”
- Early and timely interventions in everything related to reproductive health allows us to prevent complications and actual damage to the comprehensive health of women
- Reproductive health is a necessary condition and constitutes a necessity to guarantee the health and wellbeing for girls, teenagers and women; especially in the social distancing and pandemic context
- Continuity of these services prevents the growth of maternal and neonatal mortality and morbidity
- Abortion is an urgent procedure that should not be postponed or limited. Measures that restrict access to this procedure force women into looking for unsafe or late services during pregnancy that put their lives and health at risk

