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**SHEDECIDES**  
AT LOCAL LEVEL

**She**  **Decides.**

# A GUIDE TO CREATING NATIONAL AND REGIONAL SHEDECIDES MOVEMENTS.



## 1. Purpose of this guidance

Since the global SheDecides movement emerged in January 2017, it has become clear that as well as making big change globally – shifting the narrative and social norms, and demonstrating global solidarity – there needs to be a strong emphasis on achieving change where the agenda has most direct impact: at a local and regional level. In many places, the energy behind the bold and ambitious vision of SheDecides is sparking national and regional movements that are starting to identify pressing policy changes and other transformative developments for their specific contexts. Strong and forceful local movements can make real change happen – shifting social norms; adapting laws, policies and procedures that block access to rights; holding governments to account for their promises; and unlocking resources for quality services. They also have important roles to play in strengthening and propelling the global movement and serving as models for similar efforts in other regions and countries.

This document seeks to provide clarity on key considerations for starting, co-creating, supporting and sustaining SheDecides movements at national and regional levels. It discusses some overarching principles that are intended to guide the establishment of local movements in any country or region. This basic guidance has three main purposes:

- To help ensure that **local movements align their strategic approach** (e.g. messages, intentions, participants and structures) within the growing global movement. This is important for consistency, clarity, to maximise the impact of each individual movement's efforts and because SheDecides is a global movement with a common vision and shared Strategy;

- To **clarify the relationship and links between the global movement and any local ones created**. It is particularly important to emphasize the flexibility and high degree of autonomy of any local movement, including in terms of priority issues to focus on within the broad SheDecides Strategy and vision – and at the same time to recognise that SheDecides is a global movement;
- To provide **information on where and how to obtain support** in sparking, supporting and sustaining a local movement, including from the global movement's Support Unit.



## 2. Background and context: SheDecides Strategy and goals

As discussed in greater detail on the global movement's website, SheDecides was initially created as an urgent response to US President Donald Trump's reinstatement and dramatic expansion of the Global Gag Rule – also known as the Mexico City Policy – in [January 2017](#). The rule prevents non-governmental organisations (NGOs) outside the United States from receiving money from the US government if they provide safe abortions or information about abortion.

The SheDecides Manifesto is the bold and ambitious Vision of the movement and sets the agenda for strong and powerful commitment. It is the non-negotiable entry point to SheDecides. Only individuals and organisations who can agree to the full scope of the Manifesto can join the movement; and all who sign the [Manifesto online](#) and agree to take action become a Friend of SheDecides.

The [SheDecides Strategy](#) creates the framework for the movement. It describes an ambitious agenda of advancing the fundamental rights of girls and women everywhere to make their own choices, to enjoy their bodies and have access to comprehensive sexuality education and the full range of quality care (including safe abortion) that unite all parts of her sexual and reproductive life and health. At a minimum, this means access to a full range of essential services for their sexual and reproductive health, including safe abortion, contraception, and treatment and care for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Obstacles that stand in the way of this better world for women and girls include restrictive legal, social, cultural and political regimes; forced marriages and child marriages; and all forms of violence against women and girls, including female genital cutting, mutilation and sexual violence used as a weapon of war.

The movement seeks to drive momentum for change by igniting energy and bringing diverse people together – including leaders, policy makers, young leaders, activists, artists and service providers, among many others – within and across countries and regions.

The Strategy's three goals are central to all efforts to achieve the vision outlined in the Manifesto:

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- **Stand Up. Speak Out.** The goal is to change narratives in order to change norms that stand in the way of the freedom, rights and dignity of women and girls.
- **Change the Rules.** The goal is to change laws, policies and procedures so that they actually support the freedom, rights and dignity of women and girls – and to hold governments accountable for implementing them and respecting each individual's rights to take the decisions only she should take.
- **Unlock Resources.** The goal is to unlock the resources necessary for women and girls everywhere in the world to exercise all of their rights and have access to all the services they need.



### 3. Key expectations for all national and regional movements

Listed below are some key principles and conditions that any local and regional movement should understand and take into consideration when adopting and adapting the SheDecides vision and approach. Of course, most have been sparked by immediate issues and the need to respond to priorities emerging within local or regional realities. All local and regional movements reflect and build on the core vision of the global SheDecides movement, which has been designed to be flexible, agile and inclusive.

#### What a SheDecides movement IS:

- ✓ A movement united in the belief in the fundamental right of every girl and every woman to make the decisions about her body that only she should make.
- ✓ A political movement driving change, fuelled by actions in communities, with young people at its heart.
- ✓ Focused on taking action to achieve the vision of the SheDecides Manifesto (the entry point for engaging with the movement) and meet the three goals of the Strategy.
- ✓ Comprehensive in scope as well as inclusive of all core services and rights articulated in the SheDecides Manifesto and Strategy. National movements should not ignore or refrain from stressing the fundamental right of access to safe abortion, comprehensive sexuality education, access to services for young people, or other issues that are often avoided or neglected. At the same time, it is expected that each national or regional movement will focus on issues that are most relevant to the local context – and respecting that priorities will likely change over time.
- ✓ A space where diverse actors come together as equals to break down barriers and push the vision of the Manifesto. These actors can include long-time activists and emerging leaders, artists and service providers, political leaders and academics, organisations, policy makers and young leaders within the country or across countries in the region.

- ✓ A mix of energies that amplify existing voices and lift up new ones – particularly young people, many of whom have new ideas and approaches that could lead the way to a better future.
- ✓ Local representatives of all global Champions should always be invited to be part of the movement. The SheDecides Support Unit can help make these connections.
- ✓ Embracing diversity. Partners in the movement include but are not limited to those working on policy and advocacy, youth-led and youth serving organisations, government, political leaders, artists, organisations working on communication and behaviour change, development partners in country, SheDecides Champions, members of parliament, etc.



#### What a SheDecides movement **IS NOT**:

- ✗ An NGO
- ✗ A global federation (or other structure) with local branches.
- ✗ A project run by one organisation or any other single institution or group
- ✗ A one-off activity, event or campaign (for fundraising, policy change etc)
- ✗ A fund or grant-making initiative
- ✗ An initiative composed of or driven by a single category of people (e.g., exclusively by or for NGOs), or focused on a single issue only (e.g., contraception)
- ✗ An initiative that does not include young people
- ✗ An initiative that does not engage with politicians or political change
- ✗ A movement spearheaded by one individual (e.g., a coordinator)
- ✗ An initiative funded, directed or led by the SheDecides Support Unit, IPPF, UNFPA, or any other single stakeholder

## 4. Core components of SheDecides participation and approach

As highlighted in the Strategy, SheDecides is a global political movement driving change, fuelled by actions in communities, with young people at its heart. Three main components of this description should be understood and taken into consideration in local or regional movements:

### A political movement driving change

Political change is crucial because it engages all parts of society – not only governments and parliamentarians. Politicians are equal members of the movement and stand in parity alongside young people, activists and others who associate themselves with SheDecides. Politicians and parliamentarians are not just a group of decision makers who are the target of advocacy, but instead are directly helping to achieve the vision and goals of SheDecides.

SheDecides was started by politicians in response to a political act. Political change does not and should not rely solely on politicians. It needs the full engagement of a broad range of people and organisations. Policies, laws and funding decisions change when political leaders are convinced of the demand for change. This is why political engagement is important across all three goals: changing social norms, policies and unlocking resources.

In some contexts, the changes can be controversial not only at a political level, but also from social, cultural and religious perspectives. A united front is vital for success. And young people play a central role, as the leaders and voters of tomorrow and today – it is their futures that are at stake.

In local or regional movements, individual friends and organisations come together to agree on the key issues within the broad SheDecides agenda that they will focus on. Messages aimed at building momentum for policy change should be as clear, consistent and easy to understand as the desired policy changes themselves. And while politicians are essential for change, priority SheDecides political actions should not be dominated by them.

Ministers and other politicians, including parliamentarians, as well as senior officials, are essential members of the overall movement. Wherever possible, as many politicians as possible should be involved from the very beginning. This could include government ministers, political party leaders (including from opposition parties), members of national and subnational parliaments, and appointed government representatives on human rights commissions and other influential groups and institutions. It's important to maintain high levels of engagement and leadership from politicians after changes in administration or government (e.g., following elections).

## **Fuelled by actions in communities**

Communities of individuals and organisations act together, standing alongside one another and bringing together their diverse talents, knowledge, resources and commitment to change, so as to achieve the vision of the [SheDecides Manifesto](#). Commitment to the Manifesto is important, but commitment alone is not sufficient. Action is what drives the movement; all Friends of SheDecides are expected to take action to advance the agenda and achieve the goals. The organisational Friends of SheDecides, including the local representatives of global Champions are already taking action to advance the Manifesto. By working together, and taking action in the context of SheDecides they start to “take the noise and turn it into a signal”. The solidarity, unity and shared action across diversity makes it possible for organisational Friends of SheDecides to achieve so much more by acting together.

Change in societies, laws and policies often relies on effective community action to drive and underpin shifts in social norms, understanding and political will. Politicians are part of the larger group of individuals and organisations from various sectors and backgrounds – civil society, human and women's rights activists, academics and researchers, etc. – who agree to ‘take action’ and act jointly to achieve the priority changes within the SheDecides vision and goals.

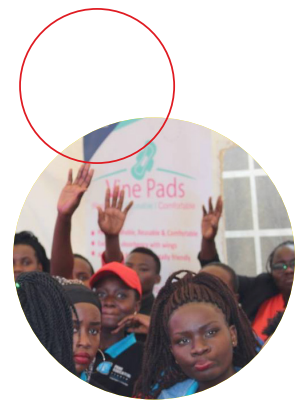


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Community takes place at all levels, including high-level advocacy (e.g., at the national level) and raising awareness and support for change at local and community levels.

SheDecides is grounded on inclusivity and diversity, and so the most successful movements crowd in numerous groups from varied geographies, from different ethnic, social, religious, and economic groups, and from organisations that tackle the broad range of issues covered within the SheDecides Manifesto. Broad-based momentum and support from a full range of Friends is a core strategic approach to achieve the goals of SheDecides: shifting social norms, making policy changes and unlocking resources. Grassroots and other locally focused groups and individuals play central roles in explaining and describing the SheDecides movement and its priorities to the broadest range of people, and they have a vital role helping to hold local officials and institutions accountable for their actions (or lack of actions).



## **With young people at its heart**

Young people are central to co-creating, leading and shaping the direction of the movement at all levels: globally, regionally and nationally. They should be given the space and support to bring their unique and powerful influence and energy into the movement.

Young people lead the global SheDecides movement, as equals to politicians and other global leaders. This approach should be the same across national and regional movements. Young people play an increasingly influential role in the politics, policy making and advocacy efforts of many countries already, and their engagement at national and regional level will sustain the momentum of this and other movements for years to come.

A first step toward greater inclusion is to consider which youth groups, networks, platforms, organisations, young leaders, activists, artists or advocates are at the forefront of related efforts, such as comprehensive sexuality education, abortion rights, HIV activism, women's rights and human rights at national and regional level. A next step is to assess where and how they should be approached to spark their interest in giving time, enthusiasm and dedication to the movement.

Once involved, young people should be given adequate voice and space to help shape the movement. Their views and opinions should be brought into planning processes and given equal consideration and weight, with the opportunity to take leadership roles as often as possible, especially with issues that affect them and their peers most significantly.

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## 5. Engagement of the SheDecides Support Unit

The SheDecides Support Unit (SDSU) has no formal or direct roles or responsibilities regarding any national or regional movement, but actively encourages them to grow and supports engagement with all local Champions and Friends. The SDSU does not control or direct the actions of local movements, but it does seek to maintain contact with local movements and connect them, with each other so that they inspire and learn from each other, and with global Champions so that they can leverage and realise the power of the movement. The SDSU also encourages local movements to reflect the ambition, inclusivity and focus of the global movement. Guidance on how to do this is included in “SheDecides: Style and Identity” which describes how to advance the core aspects of the movement, and includes information regarding the use of the SheDecides name, logo and other visual and style aspects of promoting the identity of what the movement means when we say SheDecides.

Each local movement has the flexibility and ability to devise whatever support structures or hubs that are desired or necessary to support and sustain their work. There is no expectation that any support structure is required or needed: any such decision will depend on the context. If a local movement decides that a hub or other support is needed they are strongly advised to keep this light touch and small, not becoming some massive infrastructure or an NGO.

SheDecides is a movement, not an organisation. Any movements supported at local level do not report to the global Support Unit. They can – like all parts of the movement – ask the SDSU to support their actions to advance the Strategy and vision of the manifesto. This will include:

- Support in connecting with the local and regional partners of global Champions and other key stakeholders (e.g. in the UN family)
- Design material for basic SheDecides collateral assets – e.g. Manifesto designs, t-shirt designs (but not actual T-shirts), etc.
- The guidance in “SheDecides: Style and Identity”
- Amplifying the voice, communications, actions taken and successes of local movements
- Support and encouragement to connect with other local movements to share learning and experiences across and within regions

*Additional guidance, information, advice and support about the global SheDecides movement and local movements may be found on the [SheDecides website](https://shedecides.com) or by contacting the SDSU directly at [info@shedecides.com](mailto:info@shedecides.com).*



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