



**Stepping up to ensure SheDecides**

*Narrative proposal to the Government of Belgium*

*for support to the SDSU 2021-2022*

## SheDecides 2017-2020

The Government of Belgium has been a crucial stakeholder in and supporter of the SheDecides movement from its very beginning. After hosting the initial SheDecides conference in Brussels on 2 March 2017, then Minister De Croo became one of the first Champions. Ever since the SheDecides support unit (SDSU) was hosted by IPPF Central Office in November 2018, the Belgian Government has generously provided financial support, along with other donors. Moreover, Belgian diplomatic missions have actively supported local activists and hosted various annual SheDecides Day events. As a result, the movement has grown wings and roots:

- SheDecides currently has 43 Champions acting either in their institutional or personal capacity (nine new Champions were announced in 2020).
- There are two generations of 25 young organisers from 25 countries (the so-called 25x25), who were born in the landmark years [1994](#) (Cairo) and [1995](#) (Beijing) and who shaped and presented their vision to the +25 conferences.
- In 27 countries collectives and organisers are working with SheDecides to press for positive change. The SDSU provides Spark grants to help them to take action.

The need for a strong movement FOR bodily autonomy is as big as ever. Even though the Global Gag Rule – the initial spark of the movement - has been repealed in early 2021, the challenges for women’s bodily autonomy remain formidable. The COVID-pandemic has exacerbated the problems (increased GBV, reduced access to CSE, contraception, safe abortion) and it has put an enormous strain on resources (both domestic and international). At the same time, conservative forces that want to deny women their inalienable right to decide about their bodies are gaining ground. People all over the world, and young people in particular, **stand up and speak out** to claim their right.

The annual report for 2020 shows how the SDSU team prioritised the movement’s needs in these challenging times by helping people to stay safely connected and creating opportunities to come together, share in-country experiences, build solidarity and speak with a unified voice. Work in 2020 was guided by two crucial insights: (a) *by the movement, for the movement* – centering SheDecides activists and organisers in the conceptualisation and design of all content, activities, campaigns; and (2) *inwards cohesion; outwards fruition* – focusing on the need of the movement to strengthen internal unity in order to stand up and speak out whilst guaranteeing activists’ safety and wellbeing.

### Strategic direction

Simultaneously, the SDSU, activists, organisers and Champions from across the movement collaborated to build a sound foundation able to explain the rationale for and the intended impact of the SheDecides movement. The resulting [Theory of Change](#), resting on solid assumptions, is built around three key concepts: movement – narratives - power. It describes how the story of **self** (individuals’ awakening and stories create personal power), and the story of **us** (connecting to shape collective power and narratives) contribute to the story of **change** (interventions with the power to transform).

To help counter a conservative opposition that is well-organised and well-funded, SheDecides is systematically and deliberately **organising a global movement for bodily autonomy**, supporting people from all walks of life to stand up and speak out. With its **unique hybrid model of diversity** (leaders with positional power and grassroots activists and organisers are part of the same movement), its **strong and fresh core message** and brand that **appeals to new people**, it is an integral and essential part of the **rich ecosystem** of people and institutions that are passionate about this goal. **Collaborating** and connecting, thus co-creating that transformative power, lie at the core of SheDecides.

The departure of the former lead in April 2021, coupled with a leadership transition in the Guiding Group have led to some delays in translating the ToC into a strategy. In the third quarter of 2021 a new Lead of the SDSU will join and the SDSU will work with the Guiding Group, the Youth Accountability Panel and others to turn the new Theory of Change into a strategy for the movement (2022-2027) and subsequently into a fully costed longer term workplan for the SDSU. The on-going and planned activities presented in this proposal are geared towards developing and testing approaches within the ToC, a crucial component of a learning journey to uncover how social change happens. The process of translating the ToC into strategy may lead to an adjustment in the activities that are presented here.

### ***Our workplan***

The activities in 2021 and 2022 are organised around the three substantive domains in the Theory of Change. The attached budget shows long-term, medium-term and short-term outcomes, outputs as well as activities and their costs. In this narrative proposal we elaborate on the domains and the associated outputs. The fourth area of the budget contains all the activities and costs to make progress in the three domains possible.

### **STORY OF SELF**

#### ***Joining the movement, becoming an activist, organizer, champion***

The SheDecides **Story of Self** is the domain that “recognises that joining the movement, at any level, in any moment and in any capacity involves a moment of awakening, in which an individual connects their personal history and experience to the political context. This is critical to both movement building, and to creating new narratives in that it centres an individual’s capacity to identify the changes they wish to make.” (SheDecides Theory of Change, 2021: 17).

This domain has two outputs that support that moment of awakening: the journey of participation and the playground.

The ***journey of participation*** refers to the mapping and identification of entry points for various stakeholders as they join the SheDecides movement. The journey details the various levels of engagement and kinds of activities they would do. It also refers to the work that the SDSU engages in order to onboard stakeholders to the movement – i.e. the conversations and information sharing that stakeholders need in order to engage with SheDecides.

The **playground** refers to the activities designed and/or coordinated by the SDSU to build the capacity of the movement to organise; develop their own narratives and address power inequalities.

## STORY OF US

Connecting & organising, promoting narratives, taking disruptive collective action

The SheDecides **Story of Us** domain is focused on building collective power. In Story of Us, the aim is to support “movement actors to grow their awareness of their collective power, situate it within the broader political context and plan how to navigate and influence that context using impactful narrative statements. This intervention supports movement actors with tools that will help them analyse political contexts and design compelling narrative content, with a strong emphasis on collaboration”. (SheDecides Theory of Change, 2021: 17).

In the workplan, the domain of Us is supported through three outputs: network; circles, and spark grants.

The **network** speaks to all work – including necessary internal systems – needed to know and understand who our stakeholders (friends, activists, organisers and Champions) are. Information gathered through the network feeds into the journey of participation – and will enable us to better define how we serve the movement.

**Circles** are the smallest unit of organising at SheDecides. Their purpose is to convert friends into activists. They can be focused regionally, nationally, or even locally, enabling SheDecides activists to test organising methods. Circles may also be focussed on an issue – decriminalisation of abortion, for instance. Or they can be thematic: a conversation around the Beijing+25 process.

**Spark grants** are small grants to facilitate organising at country level.

## STORY OF CHANGE

Collaborating with allies, subverting gender norms, creating and gaining spaces of power

The *Story of Change* domain focuses on “using the collective power of the movement to disrupt spaces of power and subvert gender norms. The interventions within it are designed to harness the skills, alliances and resources of the movement to take actions that shatter stereotypes and defy conventions in an attempt to establish new norms and shift power in favour of women and girls.” (SheDecides Theory of Change, 2021: 17).

There are three outputs in the domain of Change.

**Collaborations** refers to the strategic collaborations with allies outside the movement, key to build our role in the ecosystem and gain access to spaces of power.

**Roundtables** refers to those activities that either create disruptive spaces, or disruptive participation in existing spaces to share narratives and ensure that women and girls are setting the terms of the debate in their own terms.

***SheDecides Now*** is the campaign and communications arm of our work, where the focus is on sharing narratives that can change mindsets. Although communications are intrinsic to everything we do, this particular output is very much focused on the campaign element needed to disrupt spaces of power and subvert gender norms.

### ***Monitoring, evaluation and learning***

Attached is an overview of the interim quantitative and qualitative indicators for the Theory of Change. This is a work in progress: the SDSU is currently working with Kore Consulting to finetune outcomes and indicators. The aim is to further develop a gold standard monitoring and evaluation framework, able to convey the nuances that characterize social change and in particular the role of social movements therein. The SDSU and Kore Consulting are committed to using feminist methods that will enable the team to report not only on results, but also help advance knowledge on what works when it comes to social movements and change. Monitoring and evaluation plans include a strong learning component, and plans for an annual learning retreat to enable us to collectively test the assumptions of the theory of change and course correct as needed to ensure impact. and design the testing of the assumptions that underpin the Theory of Change.

### **A note on the budget**

Once the Theory of Change has been translated into a strategy for the movement, the SDSU will be able to develop its fully-costed, multi-annual workplans for the coming years (latest end of Q1 in 2022).

It is possible that in the course of this process activities and/or their costing may be revised. Revised workplans will be submitted to the Guiding Group for discussion and approval and will then be discussed in the Donor Advisory Group. A representative of the Government of Belgium is the current chairperson of the DAG and as such will be closely involved in this review process.

The overhead of 10% consists of the hosting fee that was agreed in a Memorandum of Understanding between IPPF and the Guiding Group in 2018.

To date, the SDSU has had a changing group of four donors providing core funding to the SDSU. These donors meet biannually in the Donor Advisory Group<sup>[1]</sup>. In the future, we aim to have 5-6 donors cover our budget mostly through multi-annual contributions. A proposal for \$ 250,000 has been submitted to the Packard Foundation in July 2021. We are having promising conversations with Canada, Norway, Denmark and France. Sweden has also expressed interest, but will only be able to come on board in Q2 in 2022.

<sup>[1]</sup> The role of the DAG is to (i) optimally harmonise donor support, (b) ensure a broad donor base, (c) streamline discussions between donors and SDSU and (d) share donor opinions about the direction of travel