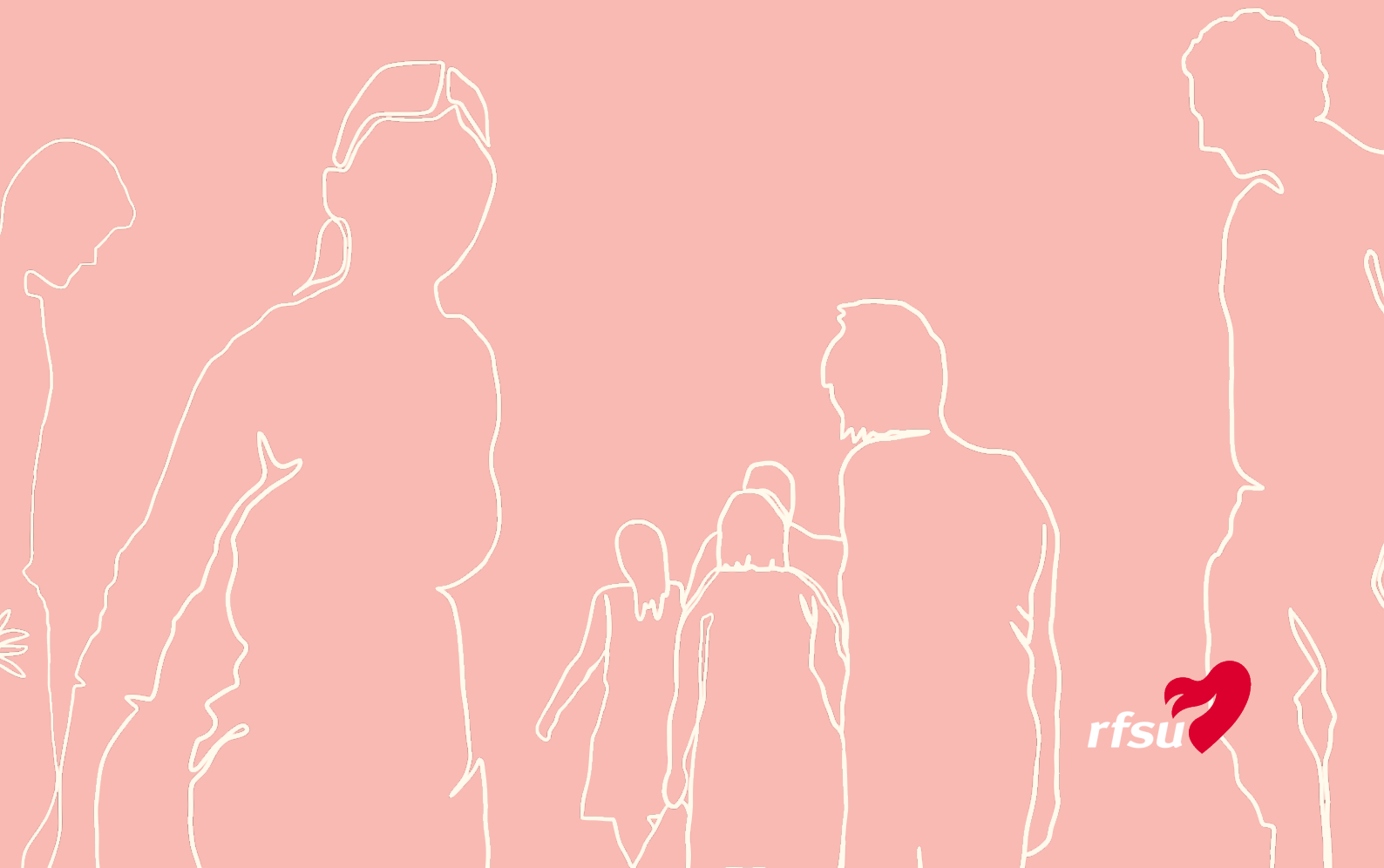


CHALLENGING POWER, PRIVILEGE AND OPPRESSION

RFSU's Framework for advancing SRHR for all
through intersectional feminist approaches



INTERSECTIONAL FEMINISM AND SRHR: RFSU'S APPROACH¹

This framework briefly presents RFSU's on-going work with intersectional feminist approaches to SRHR. This work is envisaged to strengthen capacity and learnings with and from partners and allies that bring know-how and expertise from applying intersectionality within SRHR work.

Implicit in RFSU's vision – a world in which everyone is free to make decisions about their own bodies and sexuality – is a commitment to address the unequal distribution of power and resources that limit access to SRHR for certain categories of people more than others.

Inequalities in access to power and resources are tied to social categories such as race, gender, class, nationality, (dis)ability, sexual orientation, migration status and other markers of difference. Such inequalities interlock and co-constitute one another, creating compounded forms of discrimination, exclusion and deprivation of resources.

The notion of intersectionality – a critical theoretical perspective grounded in social justice activism – sheds light on the effects of such overlapping forms of exclusion. Guided by its vision, RFSU has committed, in its strategic framework the Sextant, to adopting intersectional feminist perspectives in all its work in order to “call on and counteract the hierarchies of power that limit marginalized groups’ access to SRHR.”

TRANSLATING COMMITMENT INTO PRACTICE

- Being explicit about whose needs and priorities are de facto addressed by an intervention, and acknowledging power differences within broad categories of people, such as “women” or “youth”.
- Actively seeking collaboration with organisations and movements led by persons who face intersecting forms of discrimination and oppression, learning from their experiences and activism and sharing spaces in solidarity.
- Joining hands with broader social movements to address SRHR as a social justice issue.

¹ See RFSU's Position Paper Intersectional Feminist Perspectives, 2023

INTERSECTIONALITY & SRHR: KNOW-HOW

Since 2015, RFSU has worked on translating intersectional feminist perspectives (IFP) into practice together with partners and allies. This work has included:

- A pilot program in Latin America with Fós Feminista, Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir (CDD) Bolivia, and ProFamilia in Colombia. The organisations explored ways of taking intersectional feminist perspectives seriously internally in their organisations as well as in external programs.
- The design and execution of study circles **study circles** and in-depth **courses** on intersectional feminist perspectives on SRHR for partners and RFSU staff.
- Around 20 **tailor-made coaching** processes for partners expressing an interest in such support.
- Adjusting RFSU's internal steering documents to ensure that intersectional power dynamics are considered in assessments of funding applications and projects. In addition, intersectional feminist and anti-racist perspectives have been integrated in RFSUs steering documents, e.g. The Sextant.
- Provision of seed funding to partner organisations wishing to develop intersectional feminist work
- Supporting partners to reflect on their intersectional feminist practice through documentation of case studies and learnings, and production of studies and other knowledge material.

Based on an analysis of RFSUs and partner organisations' practice, we observe that adopting intersectional feminist perspectives is an explorative process, informed by the specific context in which the work takes place, by each organisation's own history, as well as the developments in the broader feminist and SRHR movements. RFSU acknowledges that there is no one right way, nor a comprehensive checklist or protocol for incorporating intersectional feminist perspectives in our daily work.

We give more **importance to honouring the activist origins of intersectionality** – in black feminist and social justice struggles – and its ultimate aim of ensuring that multiple marginalised groups, whose experiences are often rendered invisible, are present and have influence in decision-making spaces.



This framework builds on existing RFSU work and practice from and with partners since 2017. Moreover, the framework extends support to other RFSU entities and explores new strategies and ways of working, including engagement with external allies and stakeholders. RFSU organises this work into three workstreams:

1. Intersectional Feminist Perspectives for Organisational Change

RFSU follows a **hands-on approach to both learn from, and provide support to strengthen, partners' technical capacity** by creating the space for **exchanging partners' expertise** and/or providing **tailor-made coaching** in areas of work pre-identified by partners. RFSU does NOT provide unsolicited capacity building on intersectionality. Our approach departs from the **know-how of partners** and is designed in close consultation with and buy-in from partners.

In addition, the **RFSU e-learning platform** offers a course on **intersectionality & SRHR**, including three modules, i.e. Introduction to Intersectionality and SRHR, Sexual and Reproductive Justice and Intersectionality in Practice. The course aims to provide partners and allies with an ample breadth of knowledge (e.g. social movement practice, methods & tools, concepts) and stimulate discussion and knowledge sharing in open seminars and workshops with participants. Furthermore, regular **workshops with external and like-minded allies** are organised, to discuss tools, methods and practice for incorporating intersectionality into SRHR-work.

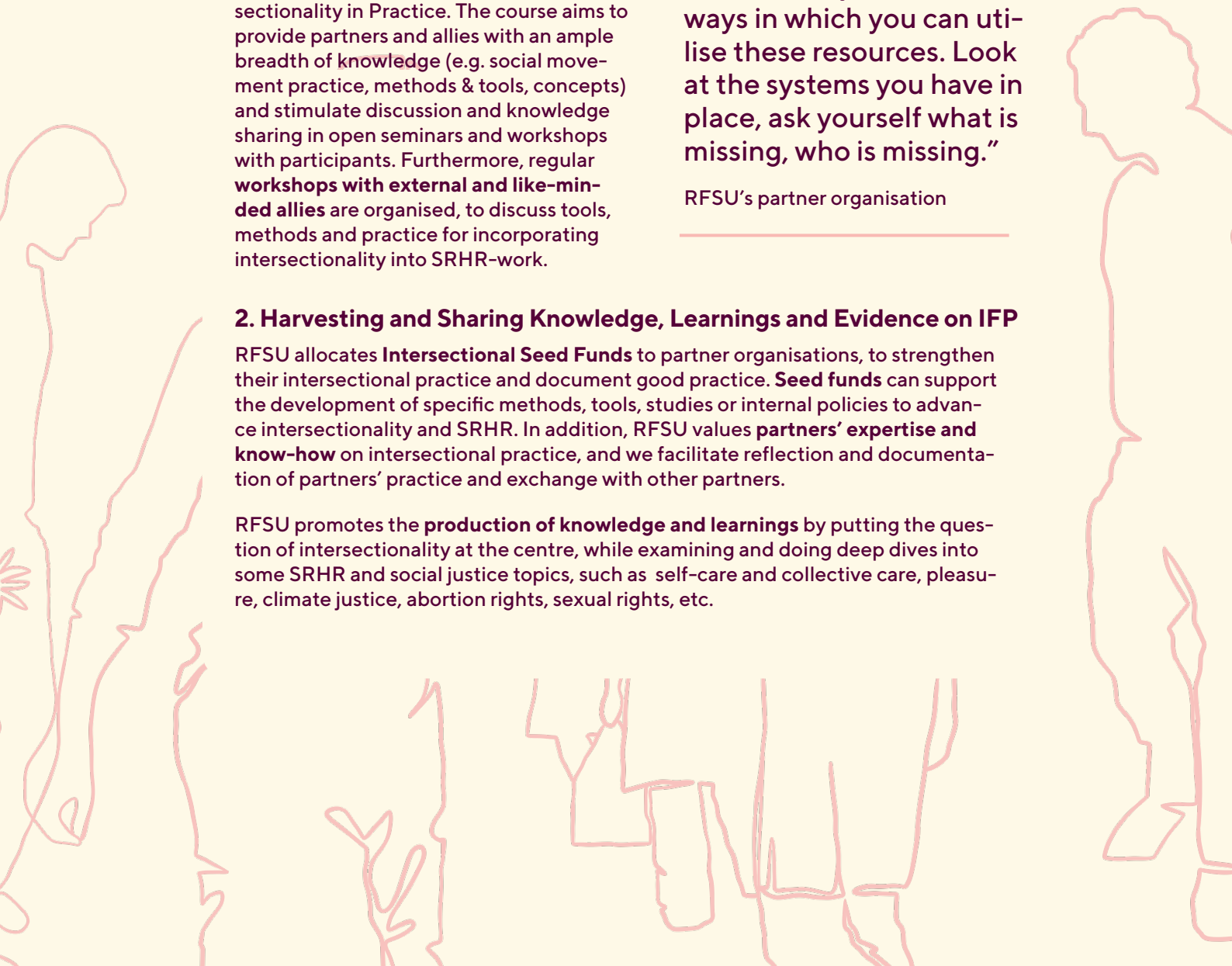
"Reflect on the context you work in, the resources available to you, and the ways in which you can utilise these resources. Look at the systems you have in place, ask yourself what is missing, who is missing."

RFSU's partner organisation

2. Harvesting and Sharing Knowledge, Learnings and Evidence on IFP

RFSU allocates **Intersectional Seed Funds** to partner organisations, to strengthen their intersectional practice and document good practice. **Seed funds** can support the development of specific methods, tools, studies or internal policies to advance intersectionality and SRHR. In addition, RFSU values **partners' expertise and know-how** on intersectional practice, and we facilitate reflection and documentation of partners' practice and exchange with other partners.

RFSU promotes the **production of knowledge and learnings** by putting the question of intersectionality at the centre, while examining and doing deep dives into some SRHR and social justice topics, such as self-care and collective care, pleasure, climate justice, abortion rights, sexual rights, etc.



3. Programme sustainability and collaboration

In a context of shrinking civic space, where diversity and gender equality work is under threat, RFSU sees it as even more important to recognise the value of adopting intersectional perspectives as a way of promoting movement building and solidarity around SRHR.

This programme framework is designed to be used as an entry point for engagement and dialogue with partners and allies on **intersectionality in practice linked to SRHR**, and to explore collaboration with external stakeholders for joint initiatives towards program sustainability and resource mobilization.

RFSU aims to increase collaboration with SRHR actors, social justice movements and other stakeholders. RFSU will leverage and expand on existing spaces for collaboration globally, with international and national partners.

“Intersectionality gives us an awareness of how the matrix of oppression operates, and how it manifests itself in the lives, bodies and communities of women (human rights) defenders.”

IM Defensoras,
RFSU’s partner organisation



LEARNING QUESTIONS

RFSU sets specific learning goals to showcase progress and challenges in adopting intersectional feminism in practice in SRHR work and movement building. The learning pivots around three guiding questions to facilitate dialogue with:

A) PARTNERS AND ALLIES: the dialogue with partners and allies focuses on the positive impact of applying intersectionality in practice at organisational and programmatic level, as well as for SRHR-movement strengthening and solidarity. Progress and challenges will be discussed and reflected on with partners and allies to create and/or adapt ways of working, bring new perspectives, innovations and tools to the table.

B) RFSU: The dialogue focuses on our partner portfolio through the inclusion of dialogue questions on intersectionality with partners and RFSU entities. The composition of the partner portfolio, focus areas, underfunded issues and inclusion of rights holder will be evaluated. This will be done during the portfolio assessment, and through the Keystone partnership survey for the international program.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What efforts have been taken in order to enhance the practice of intersectionality at organisational level? Reflect on the positive impact and the challenges/difficulties in applying these perspectives.
- How have intersectional approaches supported your organisation's activism and alliance building with other movements and organisations?
- Is the portfolio diverse and inclusive in terms of what movements, organisations and communities are represented? Does it address areas of SRHR and stakeholders where the greatest challenges have been identified?



THEORY OF CHANGE

