

XARI AFRICA

BEGINNERS GUIDE TO SRH ADVOCACY FOR #LEARNTOSHARE FELLOWS



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Dear Fellow,

Congratulations on being part of the first-ever cohort of the XariAfrica #LearnToShare Youth SRHR Fellowship. This makes you a special part of history, and we are glad to have you with us as we pioneer this transformative program.

Thank you for committing your time, energy, talents and resources to support the work we do to improve the quality of life for thousands of teenage girls across Africa.

We recognize the heart of service it requires to make an impact, so we salute you.

We are confident that with you, our goal to ensure access to Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights and Services for girls in Africa, will be accomplished. We hope that the time we spend together will be rewarding and fulfilling for you as a person and for us as an organization.

Welcome once again,
Let's make impact through SRH advocacy.

Efe Johnson
Founder,
Xari Africa.

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Introduction

Advocacy for Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) is a powerful tool for creating lasting change in communities. It bridges the gap between policy, education, and action, ensuring individuals, especially marginalized groups, can access their fundamental rights to health and dignity.

As a #LearnToShare Fellow, you are uniquely positioned to champion SRH causes. This guide provides an in-depth roadmap to help you navigate SRH advocacy, drawing on the principles of education, collaboration, and sustainability. You have a unique opportunity to address critical social issues and empower your community.

Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) advocacy is a cornerstone for creating a healthier, more equitable society. This guide provides detailed steps and practical insights to help you make a tangible impact through SRH advocacy.

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Xari Africa

Xari Africa is a youth-led organization dedicated to advancing the rights and well-being of women and youth in Africa through innovative approaches to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). By leveraging technology, Xari Africa has built Africa's first online SRHR Academy, simplifying access to information and resources for women and youth. The organization also emphasizes community-driven solutions, working at the intersection of media, social impact, and grassroots advocacy.

Although so much has been done, there is still a huge gap in delivering SRH education and resources to adolescents in Africa. The Youth SRHR fellowship is an important next step for Sexual and Reproductive Health education in Africa.

The program, conducted in multiple cohorts, will train and certify 1,000 young Africans as SRHR advocates. Fellows will receive the necessary tools, support, and resources to help them become advocates and achieve our goal of providing universal access to SRHR education and services for 1 million adolescents across Africa. Our goal is for each one to reach one, creating a ripple effect until every girl has the information and tools to take control of her future.

Through initiatives like #LearnToShare, Xari Africa equips changemakers with the tools and knowledge to address SRH challenges, ensuring that advocacy efforts are impactful and sustainable.

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SRH

Sexual and Reproductive Health refers to the physical, emotional, mental, and social well-being in all matters relating to sexuality and reproduction. It is not merely the absence of disease but the ability to have a safe and satisfying sexual life, decide freely on matters of reproduction, and access necessary healthcare services.

Key components include:

Access to contraceptives and family planning services.

Prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV.

Comprehensive sexual education for young people.

Addressing issues like menstrual health, maternal health, and gender-based violence.

SRH advocacy is critical for achieving multiple Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including health, gender equality, and poverty reduction. It:

- Reduces maternal and infant mortality by promoting access to safe childbirth and prenatal care.
- Empowers individuals, especially women and youth, to make informed choices about their bodies.
- Challenges harmful cultural norms that perpetuate stigma, discrimination, and inequality.

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As an advocate

1. How does SRH advocacy aligns with your personal goals and the needs of your community?.
2. How is education and economic equity tied to reproductive health outcomes?
3. Apart from menstrual hygiene and contraceptives, what are other non-obvious aspects of SRH often overlooked in your community?

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Ethical advocacy

Ethical advocacy ensures that your work respects the dignity, privacy, and rights of the people you aim to support. Upholding ethical standards builds trust and credibility in your advocacy efforts.

- **Informed Consent:** Always seek permission before taking or sharing photos, videos, or stories of individuals. Ensure the person understands how their image or story will be used, and document their consent.
- **Respect Privacy:** Avoid sharing sensitive personal information without explicit permission. Anonymize data or stories where necessary to protect identities.
- **Cultural Sensitivity:** Be aware of cultural norms and practices in the communities you engage with. Avoid actions or language that may be perceived as disrespectful or intrusive.
- **Non-Exploitation:** Avoid using images or stories in a way that sensationalizes or exploits people's struggles. Focus on empowering narratives rather than portraying individuals as victims.
- **Ethical Fundraising:** Be honest about how funds will be used and ensure transparency in financial reporting. Avoid guilt-based or manipulative fundraising tactics.

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As an advocate

1. Reflect on UnEthical advocacy practices you've noticed in the past.
2. Decide on personal strategies and commitment to be ethical in your advocacy journey and respect the dignity and privacy of others.

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Localise advocacy

.Advocacy must be rooted in the realities of the communities you aim to serve. Understanding local challenges ensures your efforts are relevant and impactful.

Reflect on how SRH advocacy aligns with your personal goals and the needs of your community. Explore how education and economic equity are tied to reproductive health outcomes

How to identify challenges:

1. Research Local Issues

Explore common SRH challenges in your area, such as:

- Limited access to menstrual products.
- Unsafe abortions due to restrictive laws or lack of services.
- High rates of adolescent pregnancies.
- Misinformation about sexual health.

Explore how SRH intersects with education, economic equity, and gender equality. Reflect on how these issues manifest in your local context.

2. Engage local communities

Organize community discussions, focus groups, or surveys to understand their experiences and needs. Speak directly with affected individuals to hear their stories and understand their needs.

3. Document evidence

Data is a powerful tool in advocacy. Collect statistics, case studies, and personal stories to back your campaigns. For example, highlight how access to menstrual products increases school attendance rates for girls.

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As an advocate

1. What data or statistics about SRH in your local community is available?
2. What is the biggest SRH challenge currently faced by adolescents and young women in your local community?
3. How can you start small to create change in your local community?

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Advocacy campaigns

Campaigns are the backbone of advocacy. They bring your message to life and mobilize action.

- Be specific about what you want to achieve. For example, do you aim to increase access to contraceptives, promote comprehensive sex education, or reduce stigma around menstruation?

- Use Diverse Channels. Combine digital and in-person methods. Social media is powerful for awareness, but don't overlook in-person methods like community workshops, health fairs, or school programs. For instance

- Social media campaigns to reach younger audiences.

- Community workshops for direct engagement.

- Radio programs to reach rural populations.

- Tell Compelling Stories. Humanize your campaign by sharing real-life stories that resonate with your audience. Sharing real-life experiences can make your campaign relatable and impactful. For example, a young girl's story of how access to pads improved her education can inspire donors and policymakers.

Campaigns should be strategic and goal-oriented to drive real change.

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As an advocate

1. What aspect of Sexual and Reproductive Health is most important to you?
2. What type of advocacy, social media or community based will be most effective for you advocacy journey?
3. How can you start? Set a SMART goal for an advocacy project.

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Build Expertise

Advocates must be well-informed to earn trust and credibility. Advocacy is most effective when grounded in credible information and continuous learning.

Educate yourself

Take advantage of free courses, webinars, and resources from organizations like UNFPA, WHO, and XariAfrica's SRHR Academy to deepen your understanding of key topics like family planning, menstrual health, and gender-based violence. Learn about local laws and global policies, such as the Maputo Protocol or the SDGs. Follow recent developments in SRH, such as breakthroughs in contraception or changes in government policies. Partner with healthcare providers, teachers, and community leaders who can offer technical knowledge and insights.

An informed advocate is a credible advocate. Knowledge equips you to address misinformation, counter opposition, and design effective solutions.

Collaborate

Collaboration amplifies impact by bringing together diverse expertise and resources.

- **Engage Key Stakeholders.** Partner with local clinics, NGOs, and schools to create programs that address community needs.
- **Involve the Community** co-design solutions with community members to ensure cultural sensitivity and relevance. For example, involving women's groups can improve the acceptance of menstrual health campaigns.
- **Leverage Your Network.** As a #LearnToShare Fellow, you have access to a network of changemakers. Collaborate with other fellows to broaden your reach and share resources.

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As an advocate

1. What new trends or policies have arisen within the last 12 months in the SRH space locally and internationally? What key lessons can you take from them?
2. What is the religious or cultural context of your local community? How can you ensure mutual respect while disseminating important information on reproductive health?
3. What organizations, individuals, or stakeholders can you partner with at grassroot, state, or national levels to ensure success?
4. What available courses or resources can you leverage to grow in knowledge and expertise?

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Youth centred approach

Youth and gender equity are at the heart of SRH advocacy. Always prioritise a youth centred approach to SRH advocacy.

- **Promote Youth Participation:** Involve young people in decision-making processes, project design, and implementation, as they are directly affected by SRH policies.
- **Challenge Norms:** Address harmful cultural practices, such as child marriages or female genital mutilation, by promoting gender-sensitive policies. Grassroots advocacy must cover all interconnected aspects of gender equality and reproductive health.
- **Advocate for Education:** Push for comprehensive sex education in schools and local communities to empower young people with knowledge and confidence and help break the stigma associated with sexual and reproductive health.
- **Engage young people in underserved grassroots communities** as advocates and agents of change. Empower them to carry the message to their peers and create a ripple effect.

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As an advocate

1. How can you find and engage young people in your local communities to become co-advocates?
2. What are the laws on consent for engaging minors in advocacy activities including sharing of photos and other private information?

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Project management

Effective advocacy requires structured planning and management to achieve your goals and sustain your impact. Project management principles can help you organize resources, timelines, and stakeholders.

- **Define Clear Objectives:** Establish specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals. Determine what success looks like for your advocacy project.
- **Conduct Needs Assessment:** Identify the key issues and challenges in the community or area you are advocating for. Use surveys, interviews, or focus groups to gather data and insights.
- **Create a Detailed Plan:** Outline activities, timelines, and responsibilities. Include risk assessments and contingency plans to address potential challenges.
- **Build a Strong Team:** Assign roles based on team members' skills and expertise. Foster collaboration and clear communication within the team.
- **Allocate Resources Wisely:** Budget for all aspects of the project, including materials, personnel, and outreach efforts. seek funding through grants, sponsorships, or community contributions.
- **Evaluate and Reflect:** Assess the impact of your advocacy efforts through surveys, feedback, or data analysis. Identify lessons learned and areas for improvement for future projects.
- **Sustain and Scale:** Plan for long-term sustainability by identifying ongoing funding or partnerships. Scale successful initiatives to reach larger audiences or address additional issues.

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As an advocate

1. Define what success looks like to you as an advocate.
2. Think of three advocacy projects you can execute in your local community and leveraging digital tools.
3. Identify your "why". What is your reason for being interested in SRH advocacy? Is it a personal story or experience? Or a random passion?
4. How will you sustain your drive for SRH advocacy even when the going gets tough?

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Conclusion

Advocacy, especially in Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH), is a powerful tool for driving systemic change and improving lives. It is a long-term commitment that requires perseverance. To be effective, it must combine ethical principles, strategic planning, and resilience.

As #LearnToShare Fellows, you are equipped with the tools and knowledge to lead transformative advocacy. By combining ethical practices, strong project management, and a commitment to inclusivity, you can create meaningful change in your communities.

Our challenge to you: Advocate with integrity, plan with purpose, and act with persistence. Your voice and efforts can inspire others to join the movement for a healthier, more equitable world.

THANK YOU!

