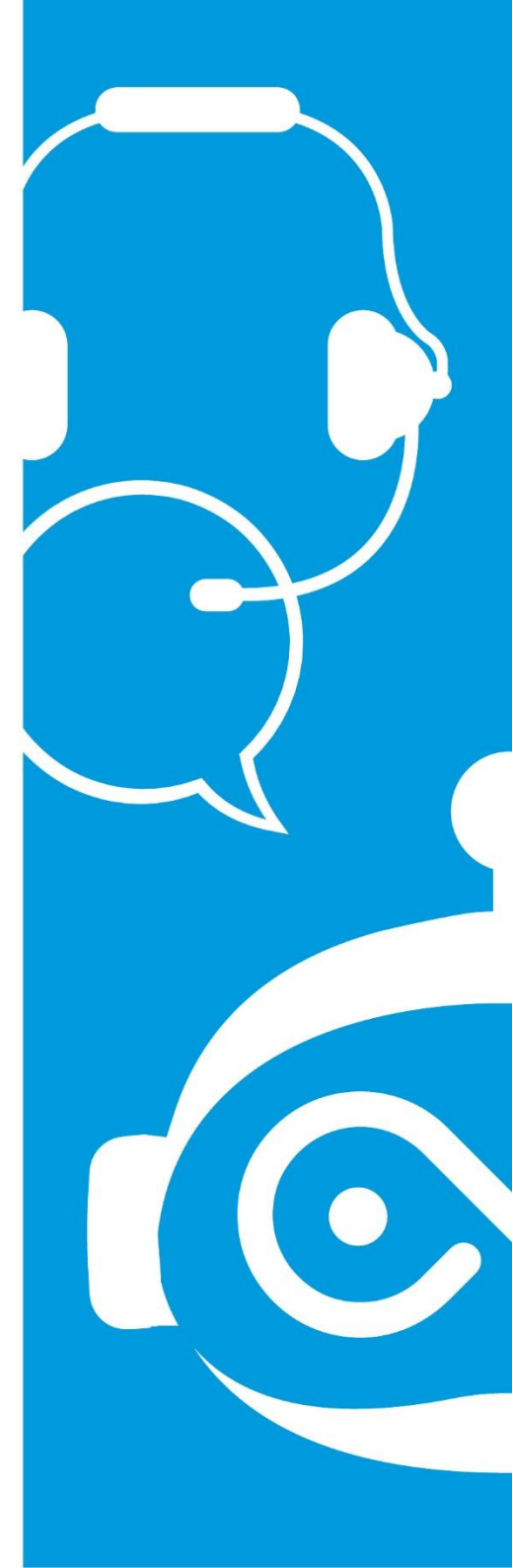




KNOW YOUR RIGHTS: ACCESSIBILITY OF PLATFORMS & MEDIA

What is it?

The prevalence of technology as well as the limitations of formal SRH programmes has resulted in more youth than ever turning to digital platforms and media to satisfy their queries about sex and relationships. Online accessibility is a **digital phenomenon** which allows users to easily navigate and understand the information they seek on websites and their devices; in this instance, information related to their SRH. This functionality is especially important for users with disabilities (cognitive, visual, auditory, motor), but it also streamlines the online experience of all users.

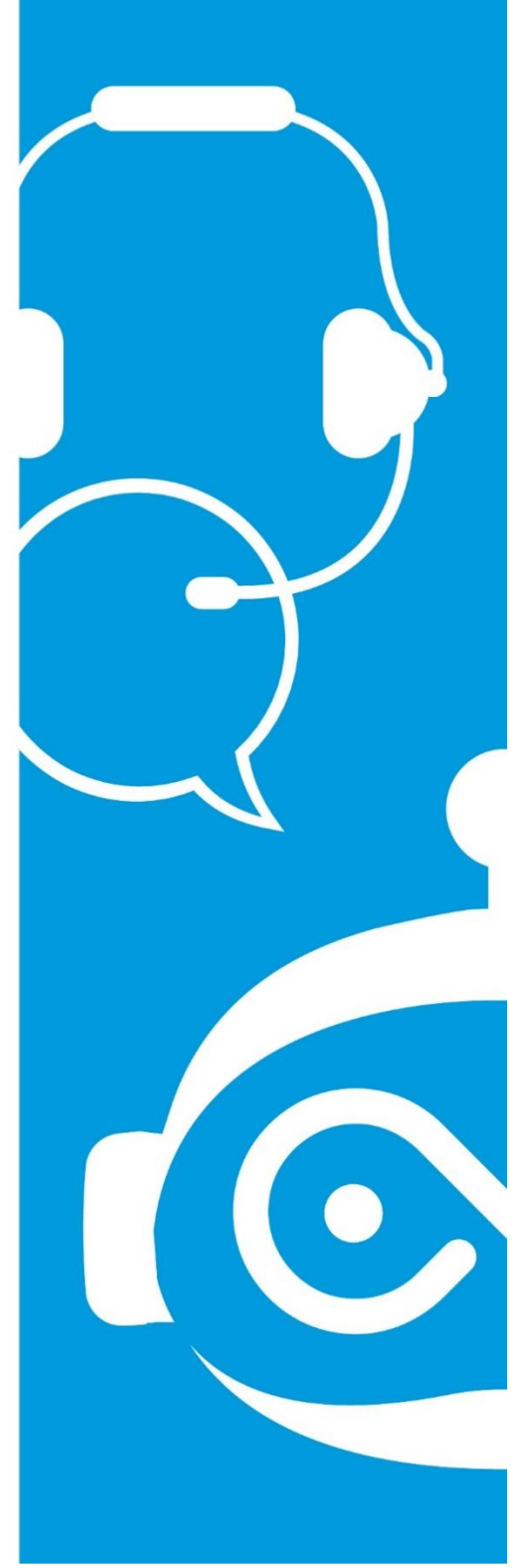


How can it impact the sexual and reproductive health of youth?

Being able to easily navigate and understand SRH-related content online is of the utmost important for marginalised groups whose issues have traditionally not been represented in formal sex education curricula, including girls, persons with disabilities, and LGBT youth. Creating and spreading accessible content online can fight stigmas and dispel myths, such as longstanding beliefs in society that persons with disabilities are asexual or fallacies concerning STIs among sexual minority groups.

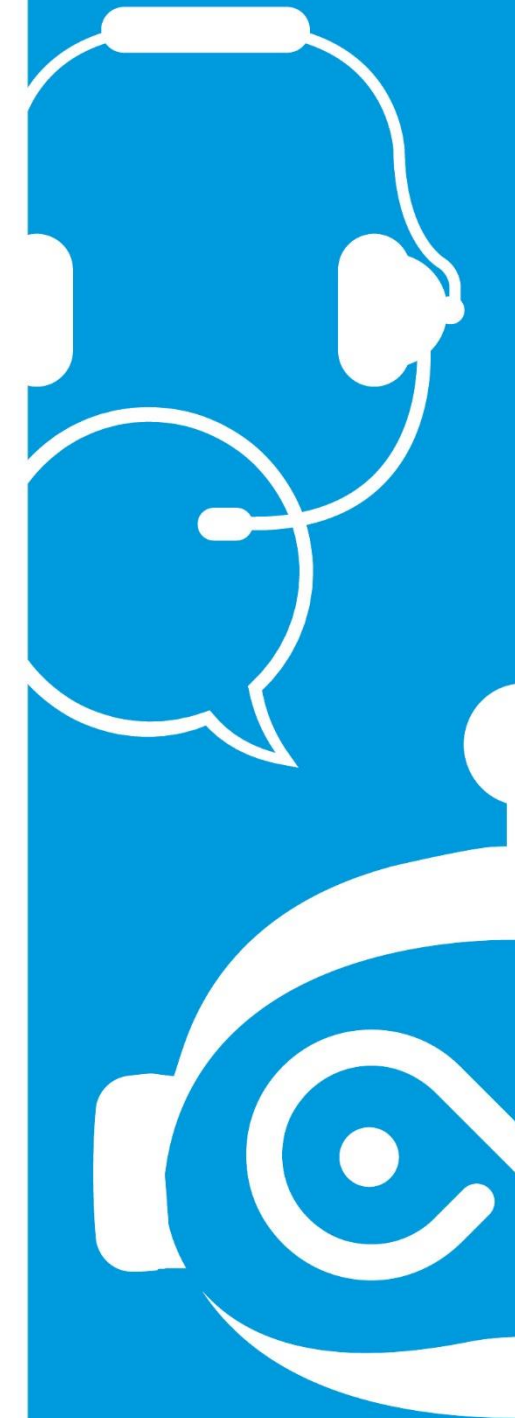
The general public can also reap the benefits of accessible SRH-related content online as it provides anonymity and confidentiality to discuss and read about topics that might be considered embarrassing or too intimate for in-person discussions. Relatedly, engaging in digital services can be a stepping stone to increased engagement with in-person services for youth that are too shy or nervous to contact physical healthcare services.

However, accessibility of services and content is not guaranteed online, and failing to design for accessibility and inclusivity presents barriers for youth seeking SRH-related information. This lack of accessibility stems from the way information is transmitted to users and the type of information transmitted. The way in which SRH information is transmitted must abide by principles of inclusive design in order to reach a wide scope of users –otherwise, users become frustrated with poorly understandable and hard to navigate content, and fail to get their questions answered.



Supporting youth's sexual & reproductive health in the digital age: BEST PRACTICES

This manifests as using too many words related to medical terminology to explain a topic or failing to account for users with disabilities that require accommodations to consume the content. The type of information presented online is inaccessible if users have concerns about the credibility and validity of the information they are reading online, which can be seen when the SRH-related information that is prioritised comes from a series of user-submitted opinions instead of verified sources.



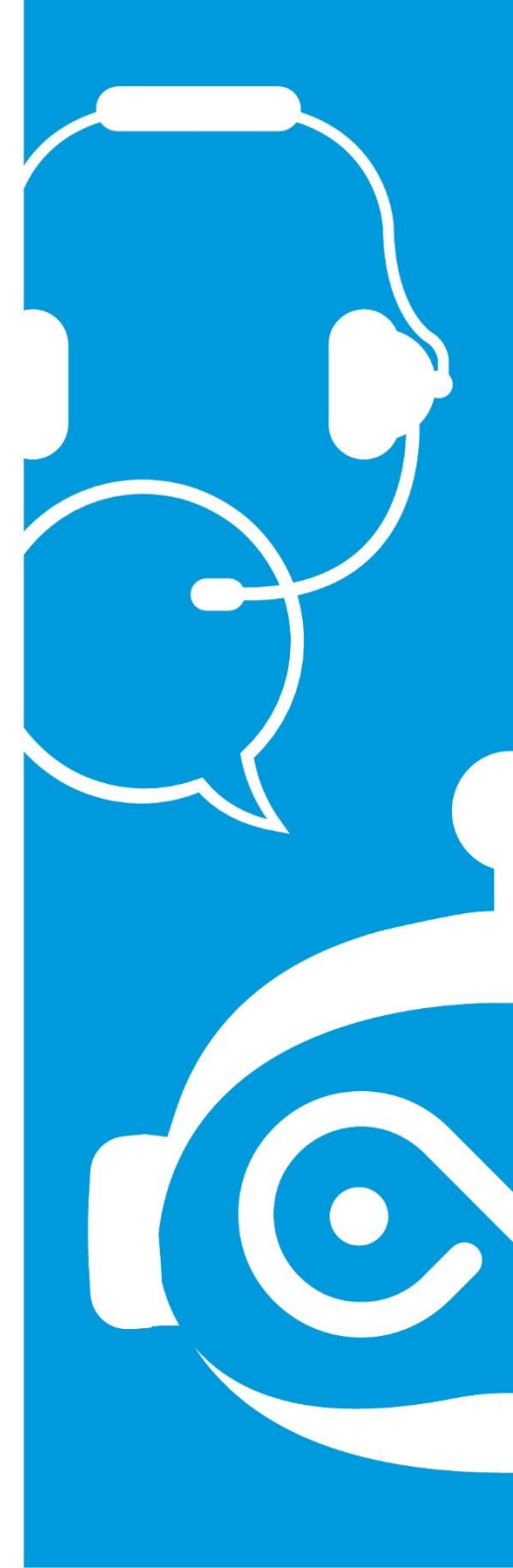
What are some ways in which youth can be supported?

- Ensure that the platforms and media accessed online present the perspectives and experiences of a large scope of people, accounting for differences in sex, race, ability, age and other factors that contribute to inclusivity.
- Prioritise the readability of SRH-related content: texts should use clear and understandable language instead of relying on medical terminology and jargon. All legal information that directly impacts user experience (such as Terms or Service) should also be in an easy-read format, so that users understand their rights regarding the privacy of any SRH-related data that they share.
- When in doubt regarding accessibility of content, refer to Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (<https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/>). Some commonly applied good practices are to add subtitles to all videos, use high colour contrast on web pages, create simple and clearly labelled navigation panes and provide multiple ways to access content (text and videos, for example)

Related digital phenomena/tools:

See sheets:

- SRH material online: User-generated content
- The presence of 'safe spaces' online for underrepresented groups
- Misconceptions & misinformation: About digital literacy



Further reading:

- Apea, Vanessa. "How Digital Services Can Define and Address Inequities in Sexual Health." Preventx, October 11, 2022. <https://www.preventx.com/blog/2022/10/11/how-digital-services-can-define-and-address-inequities-in-sexual-health/>.
- Flinn, Clodagh, Christina Koretsidou, and Finiki Nearchou. "Accessing Sexual Health Information Online: Content, Reasons and Practical Barriers in Emerging Adults." *Youth* 3, no. 1 (March 2023): 107–24. <https://doi.org/10.3390/youth3010007>.
- Humphries-Waa, Karen. "Accessible and Inclusive Digital Solutions for Girls with Disabilities." UNICEF Gender and Technology, 2022.
- Initiative (WAI), W3C Web Accessibility. "WCAG 2 Overview." Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI), n.d. <https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/>.
- Urwitz, Molly. "The Importance of Digital Literacy to Access Sexual and Reproductive Health Content via Mobile Internet." *Mobile for Development* (blog), January 21, 2021. <https://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/programme/connected-women/the-importance-of-digital-literacy-to-access-sexual-and-reproductive-health-content-via-mobile-internet/>.

