

# HEALTH TECH & INNOVATION

THE FUTURE OF EQUAL AND  
EQUITABLE SEXUAL AND  
REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND  
RIGHTS FOR YOUNG GIRLS AND  
WOMEN?



PlanBørnefonden, Maternity Foundation and AIDS-Fondet invite you to join a cross-sectoral discussion on opportunities, pitfalls, and potential partnerships for advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights for women and girls in the global South through science, technology, and innovation.

Speakers and panelists include the Minister of Development Cooperation, Flemming Møller Mortensen, impact startups, funders, academia, and NGOs. Political commentator and journalist Søs Marie Serup will moderate the event, which will be held in English.

**12 OCTOBER 2021**

**08:30 - 13:00**

**Maternity Foundation's office**

**Forbindelsesvej 3, 2nd Floor**

RSVP to [johanne@maternity.dk](mailto:johanne@maternity.dk)



# PROGRAMME

08:30 - 09:00	<b>Arrival, coffee &amp; croissants</b>
09:00 - 09:05	<b>Welcome</b> Anna Frellsen, Maternity Foundation
09:05 - 09:15	<b>Intro &amp; Agenda</b> Søs Marie Serup, journalist and political commentator
	<b><i>PART 1: POLITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON HEALTHTECH FOR SRHR IN DANISH DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION</i></b>
09:15 - 09:25	<b>Advancing SRHR Through HealthTech in Danish Development Cooperation</b> Flemming Møller Mortensen, Minister for Development Cooperation
09:25 - 09:40	<b>Three to Tango: The Nexus between HealthTech, SRHR and Development?</b> Sarah Seddig, Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS)
09:40-09:55	<b>Political Commitment in Practice: Barriers to Break in Leaving No One Behind</b> Lars Christian Østergreen, AIDS-Fondet
09:55-10:30	<b>Panel Debate: Future Pathways to HealthTech for SRHR</b> Danish Member of Parliament, The Global Fund, International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI), and Techvelopment Denmark
10:30-10:45	<b>Sum Up &amp; Reflections</b>
10:45-11:00	COFFEE/TEA
	<b><i>PART 2: PERSPECTIVES FROM DEVELOPERS AND USERS</i></b>
11:00-11:15	<b>From Development to Rollout: The Dapivirine Vaginal Ring</b> Leonard Solai, International Partnership for Microbicides (IPM)
11:15-11:50	<b>Lightening Round: Hacking Health without Harm</b> Lulu Lab, Real Relief, Africa Design School
11:50-12:00	COFFEE/TEA
	<b><i>PART 3: MYTH OR MISSION? SUSTAINABLE HEALTHTECH FOR SRHR</i></b>
12:00-12:15	<b>Scaling HealthTech Sustainably</b> Anna Frellsen, Maternity Foundation
12:15-12:30	<b>Partnerships for HealthTech</b> Anne Smith Petersen, PlanBørnefonden
12:30-13:00	<b>Goodbye &amp; sandwiches</b>

# CONTEXT

**Each day, 800 women and girls die** from complications in pregnancy, and nearly 232 million women and girls currently lack access to modern contraceptives.

Each week, approximately 6,000 young women aged 15–24 years become infected with HIV, and AIDS continues to be the leading cause of death for women aged 15–49 years globally. The COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated existing SRHR inequalities and inequities as evident from the significant increase in unwanted pregnancies, gender-based violence, and maternal and newborns deaths alongside the disruption of life-saving HIV services. This presents a health crisis, a rights crisis and for Denmark, a political challenge and opportunity.

**Gender equality and SRHR** have constituted a core priority in Danish development cooperation since the mid-1980s. This longstanding commitment continues in Denmark's new strategy for development cooperation, *Fælles om Verden* (The World We Share), launched in June 2021, in which gender equality and the rights of women and girls cut across the three strategic areas of migration, (human) rights, and climate. The strategy posits that Denmark will continue to lead the way in the global fight for gender equality and protection of girls' and women's rights with a particular focus on SRHR and will support gender equality and SRHR initiatives locally and during humanitarian crises. While the positioning of gender equality and SRHR as crosscutting priorities in Danish development cooperation is highly welcomed and needed, the commitment is hardly reflected in the government's Finance Act proposal for 2022, in which the financial support for gender equality and SRHR remains the same as before.

**Science, technology, and innovation** present a new frontier in SRHR initiatives locally and during humanitarian crises through mobile phone messaging, social media, apps, voice, and video messaging, as well as telemedicine. The science, technology and innovation underpinning these initiatives fall under the umbrella term, 'HealthTech.' HealthTech offers wide coverage and reach in the delivery of SRHR information and support, alongside hands-on insights into communities and healthcare systems on the ground. This increases the accessibility and agility of SRHR services during a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. However, even within HealthTech, girls and women risk being left behind. In Africa specifically, women are 50 percent less likely than men to use and have access to the Internet. According to the Danish TechDevelopment strategy, bridging the digital gender divide – meaning the gap between men's and women's access to and benefit from technologies – requires the empowerment of women and girls to enable them to partake in the development of new technologies.

**HealthTech** provides a promising opportunity for Denmark to follow through on its promise to lead the way in the global fight for gender equality and protecting the rights of girls and women. However, without political will, adequate and consistent resourcing, and localization of rollout and uptake, it will become a lost opportunity. This event brings together representatives from the government, profit and non-profit tech and innovation organisations, academia, as well as civil society to discuss concrete ways to ensure equal and equitable SRHR for girls and women.