EXPLORING YOUNG PEOPLE’S PERSPECTIVES
ON EMPOWERMENT, RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUAL CHOICES
RESEARCH & REPORTING
Avance Impact, Amsterdam

DATA COLLECTION
Dance4Life would like to thank the following organisations and researchers for their excellent work:

Russia
Focus Media, Zhenya Alexeeva, Oxana Barkalova, and from Moscow High School of Economy (HSE), Julia Skokova

Indonesia
Rutgers Indonesia, Amala Rahmah, Erni Agustini, Ely Sawitri, Trisa Triandesa

Kenya
Enhance INTERCONSULT LTD, Francis Omondi, Kennedy Oulu, SRHR (Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights) Alliance Kenya

The Netherlands
Avance Impact, Elise Griede, Veerle Lambert, Lizzy Eilbracht

SPECIAL THANKS TO
A special thank you goes out to all the young people in the countries who were willing to participate in the research. These young people inspire us with their honesty, ideas and drive to make their dreams come true.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Dance4Life

DESIGN
Copyright Dance4Life

PHOTOGRAPHY
Dance4Life is grateful to the photographers who made the portraits in this report:
/ Annelies Damen
/ Jesaja Hizkia
/ Suzanne Liem
Testimonials on the portrait photographs: Dance4Life.

INFORMATION
For more information about the research, please contact Kari Postma, International PR & Communications, kari@dance4life.com. For technical and methodological questions, please contact Marina Todesco, Coordinator PMEL, marina@dance4life.com
#IDECIDE 4MYSELF

EXPLORING YOUNG PEOPLE’S PERSPECTIVES ON EMPOWERMENT, RELATIONSHIPS AND SEXUAL CHOICES
WITH YOU, WE CAN MAKE A POSITIVE CHANGE AND IMPACT TOGETHER.
DEAR READER,

Dance4Life believes that change comes from within.

We consider sexual development as an integral part of a young person’s journey into adulthood. This holistic view on sexual behaviour and sexuality education forms the basis of the Dance4Life Empowerment Model, aiming to promote personal empowerment in a supportive and enabling environment.

Therefore, our innovative curriculum: the Journey4Life is designed to trigger a process of personal transformation and growth in young people. A journey in which they increase their confidence and feel empowered to make healthy choices about their sex lives and relationships.

But what does ‘empowerment’ mean exactly? Used by many professionals and explained by a range of definitions, it has become a buzz word, but we don’t know what young people themselves think and feel. In the underlying report we present a unique international study to unpack the concept of empowerment.

We interviewed almost 2500 young people from The Netherlands, Indonesia, Kenya and Russia. Questions included: What does empowerment mean to young people in different cultural and economic contexts? Do they feel empowered themselves? And which aspects of empowerment are important for them when making relational and sexual choices?

The outcomes offer interesting insights. For example, all young people find empowerment important and think of themselves as quite empowered. They think that boys and girls have equal chances to be empowered. Key aspects of empowerment in all countries are ‘being confident about yourself’ and ‘having goals and plans’. But the study also shows differences between countries. Particularly which aspects of empowerment play a key role in sexual decisions, or the extent to which they are happy with whom makes decisions regarding their lives. This shows us that taking into account the cultural and religious context in which young people are living, is crucial. But even more important, is that we realise how important the skills are that young people need in this world: social and emotional skills that help them making healthy sexual choices and decide for themselves.

Dance4Life hopes to contribute to this and aims to support all young people worldwide to shape their own future. By sharing the insights with you, we can make a positive change and impact together.

Jael van der Heijden,
Executive Director Dance4Life
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY BY DANCE4LIFE

This explorative and quantitative study, commissioned by Dance4Life and executed by Avance Impact, explores the connection between empowerment, relationships and sexuality among nearly 2,500 young people in four countries from different continents.

Unprotected sex is the greatest health risk facing young people worldwide. Many young people live in a society in which sex and sexuality continue to be surrounded by taboos and stigmas. In addition, the issue of seriously inappropriate or aggressive sexual behaviour is becoming ever more visible in the Netherlands and elsewhere. Dance4Life believes in encouraging openness about all aspects of sexuality and wishes to gain a better understanding how personal empowerment, self-confidence, and the social and emotional skills that enable young people to make responsible choices about all aspects of their lives, are interconnected.

Dance4Life asked Avance Impact to do an explorative study on the concept of empowerment – a key foundation on which our work is build. The research questions were: what does empowerment mean to you (I), do you feel empowered yourself (II), and which aspects of empowerment help you in making choices in relationships and regarding sexuality issues (III)?

Between October to November 2018, the researchers surveyed 2,434 young (age between 15 and 21 years old) people about the concept of empowerment: 574 from The Netherlands, 602 from Kenya, 667 from Russia and 591 from Indonesia.

The results of this explorative study give a unique first insight in how young people think about empowerment and in what they find important in making (sexual) choices.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS

The term empowerment is not commonly known by young people

Empowerment – described as ‘being able to decide for yourself to realize your dreams and ambitions’ - is very important to young people in all countries. Results however show that most young people do not know the term empowerment. It is important for the development sector and programs working on empowerment, to use language that is understandable for young people targeted by these programs. For example, using a local term or description of empowerment that speaks to young people.

Empowered young people are able to make healthier choices

Highly empowered young people more easily recognise and value strategies for making responsible sexual and relational choices. Therefore, it can be easier for them to make positive and healthy choices. This supports the
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

principle of why working on empowerment can eventually lead to a healthy and responsible choices on life, sexual and relations choices. This study therefore also underpins the vision behind Dance4Life’s Empowerment Model, that is based on motivating young people to believe in their own potential and strength to make their own choices. Dance4Life views this study as a first indication for the foundation of the vision behind Dance4Life’s Empowerment Model, that is based on motivating young people to believe in their own potential and strength to make their own choices.

Contextualisation of SRHR programs and campaigns is key
The study provides useful insights and guidelines for developing and implementing Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights programs and campaigns. It shows the differences in how young people from four diverse cultural backgrounds estimate aspects of empowerment. When developing and implementing SRHR programs and campaigns, the differences in how young people estimate aspects of empowerment should be kept in mind. Adjusting the focus of both programs and campaigns to the target group and cultural context according to the specific findings in this study, could increase their impact.

KEY FINDINGS

WHAT DOES EMPOWERMENT MEAN TO YOUNG PEOPLE?

Empowerment considered highly important
When asked about the importance of being able to decide for yourself, to realize dreams and ambitions, almost all young people participating in this study think empowerment is (very) important (88%). This shows, even though many young people don’t know the concept itself, that the explanation and the competencies associated with empowerment are considered very relevant and important by the young people in the participating countries.

The importance of being confident and having goals and plans
When asked about the key aspects of empowerment, young people in all countries name ‘being confident about yourself’ and ‘having goals and plans’ in their top 5. This indicates that these competencies are recognised throughout all contexts as important assets for empowerment. However, there are also some different views on what empowerment entails.

Difference in individual and social competencies
Young people in the Netherlands and Russia mention only competencies that are individually focused, such as self-confidence and motivation. Young people in Indonesia and Kenya also mention competencies that are more focused on their social environment.

Education is a key factor for empowerment
In all countries, young people think that educated people are more likely to become empowered, as compared to non-educated people. This view is supported by results of this study; young people who are going to school score significantly higher on a self-report empowerment scale (0-100), than young people who are currently not in school.

Influence of gender on empowerment
According to young people in all countries, boys and girls have equal chances to be empowered. This is in line with the self-reported empowerment scores in the Netherlands, Kenya and Indonesia, since there is no significant difference between boys and girls. It could be that their answer reflects how they ‘think it should be’ rather than ‘how it currently is in their society’ but this was not further explored. However, in Russia, the self-reported empowerment scores of boys are significantly higher than those of girls.

Religion and empowerment
Young people in Kenya and Indonesia indicate that they think it is very likely for religious people to be empowered. In Indonesia, religion is even regarded as conditional for empowerment as Indonesians indicate that for a non-religious person it is very unlikely to be or become empowered. In Russian society religion is important as well. Dutch youth, on the other hand, indicate that religion has no influence on empowerment.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOUNG PEOPLE FEEL EMPOWERED?

Level of empowerment among young people very high
The self-reported level of empowerment is remarkably high in all countries (average of 74 out of 100). As there is no existing and validated ‘measure’ of empowerment, there is no benchmark or other reference available to position or compare these scores with. However, we see that this high score is consistent across the various countries. Also, most young people feel they ‘decide for themselves’ and have most of the decision-making power over choices in their lives (71%).

Highest levels of decision-making power in the Netherlands and Russia
Compared to the other countries, Dutch and Russian young people report high levels of decision-making power. In the other two countries, a relatively higher percentage of young people indicate that family is making life decisions for them. In Kenya, a relatively large group compared to the other countries, indicate that friends influence their life decisions. Looking at the level of satisfaction with who is making the decisions, in the Netherlands, Russia and Kenya, young people are largely happy. Only in Indonesia more than half of the young people report to be unhappy with who is making the decisions in their life. It would be interesting to further investigate why Indonesian young people are remarkably less happy with who is in control over important life decisions.

WHICH ASPECTS OF EMPOWERMENT ARE IMPORTANT IN MAKING SEXUAL AND RELATIONAL DECISIONS?

Due to the sensitive nature of asking direct questions about sexuality or relational topics in some countries, respondents were not asked about their own sexual or relational behavior. Instead, they were presented with short scenarios in which their friend needed help to make a choice on six different sexual and relational issues: condom use, partner choice, getting tested for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), staying in school, saying no to unwanted sex, speaking up about sexual violence.

In Kenya and Indonesia: future
When comparing the four countries, an overlap is seen between Kenya and Indonesia, as well as between Russia and the Netherlands in what young people find important when making decisions in different (sexual or relational) situations. Both Kenyan and Indonesian youth, find the future most important for making decisions in sexual or relational dilemmas. Self-management, on the other hand, is the least important consideration for Kenyans and Indonesians for most of the sexual or relational choices.

In the Netherlands and Russia: self-management and self-confidence
In Russia and the Netherlands, self-management and self-confidence are relatively important for making sexual and relational decisions.

Social-awareness is valued least important
Social-awareness is least often valued as the most important for making different sexual or relational choices. There are three exceptions: social awareness is most important for Russians when ‘bringing up condom use’, and for Indonesians when deciding on ‘getting tested for STIs’ and when ‘choosing a partner’.

Photo: Suzanne Liem
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Condom use sensitive topic in Russia
The social-awareness advice for bringing up condom use to a friend was formulated as: ‘Think about the best way to bring condom use up without embarrassing your partner’. The fact that Russian youth finds this the most valuable advice points out that bringing up condom use in Russia is still a very sensitive topic for young people, in which embarrassment can play a decisive role. Unprotected sex is a highly important challenge in Russia.

Opinion of family and friends important in Indonesia
The social-awareness advice for the ‘getting tested for STIs’ situation was: “Think about people you know; they also want you to be healthy and get tested”. The high value given to the social-awareness advice points out that the choice of getting tested for STIs highly depends on social considerations for young Indonesians. For the partner choice scenario, the advice formulated was: “It will be necessary that your family (and friends) accept him/her”. The fact that this was higher valued than the other advices tells us that when it comes to partner choice, the opinion of family and friends plays a decisive role for young Indonesians, more than one’s ‘own judgement’.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings in this study provide recommendations for both practitioners and researchers working in the field of youth, empowerment and sexual reproductive health rights. Within Dance4Life, we will use the results to guide our ongoing (PhD) research on this topic. The study explores some vital dimensions of our own Empowerment Model, and gives our internal (academic) research further depth and direction. Dance4Life will also reflect and adjust its interventions in different countries where relevant.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCH

Investigate the relation between empowerment and sexual behavior
The self-reported empowerment scores of the young people in this study were quite high. This raises the question how to position these high scores. It is important to keep in mind that this

Investigate the relation between empowerment and sexual behavior
The self-reported empowerment scores of the young people in this study were quite high. This raises the question how to position these high scores. It is important to keep in mind that this

in only an indication of the self-reported empowerment levels of the respondents. They were asked to indicate how empowered they feel on a scale of 0 to 100. It is possible that a social desirability bias caused respondents to score themselves higher than they actually felt. Further research is needed to identify the relation between young people's level of empowerment and their sexual behavior.

Further explore gender differences in different countries
Young people in this research did not indicate a difference in likeliness to be empowered between boys and girls. This shows that young people might not be consciously aware of the gender inequalities that are present. It would be worthwhile to dive deeper into the perceptions of young people in different countries regarding gender differences in empowerment and in (sexual/relational) choices, especially in Russia, where a gender difference in the level of empowerment was found.

Conduct a qualitative study to investigate sexual behavior in different situations
This study gives a first insight into whether empowered young people can make healthier sexual choices than less empowered young people. To further investigate this, it is advised to conduct a qualitative study in the participating countries, in which semi-structured interviews are held with the target group. Then it would be possible to ask young people, in a suitable context, about their (sexual) behavior in different types of situations. Currently, Dance4Life’s senior researcher is performing a PhD on the impact of the Empowerment Model and the Journey4Life, in which these countries also are included.

Build and develop a standardized validated scale for measuring youth empowerment
Finally, this study has also contributed to further clarification of the concept of empowerment. With its explorative character, it can be used to build on to develop a standardized validated scale to measuring empowerment of young people worldwide.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

All interventions should take into account religious and cultural norms
Building on the recommendation above and based on the results, we recommend that all interventions working on empowerment should take religion and cultural norms into account when adapting the programme to the local context. Failing to do so, will make a programme less effective or relevant in contexts where young people themselves regard religion as an important aspect of empowerment and in their lives.

Focus on further developing skills and competencies of young people
The (self-reported) level of empowerment is high, and young people find it important to be empowered. This helps them in choosing the right strategies to make better healthier sexual choices. This means that Dance4Life should emphasize and invest on further development of the skills and competencies that form the fundament of empowered young people.

Pre-test various elements of interventions in co-creation with young people
Since we have seen that several aspects of empowerment are valued differently across the four countries, it is important to realize that every intervention should be contextualized to the realities of young people in the countries. It is recommended to not only pay attention to cultural aspects of the intervention, but also to pretest the various elements of the intervention (for example the language used) in co-creation with young people.
INDEX

01 INTRODUCTION 12

02 METHODOLOGY 15

03 FINDINGS PER COUNTRY 18
   The Netherlands
   Kenya
   Russia
   Indonesia

04 COMPARISONS, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS 40
01. INTRODUCTION

Dance4Life’s work on sexual reproductive health through empowerment

Dance4Life considers sexual development to be an integral part of a young person’s journey into adulthood, connected to their social, emotional and physical development. This holistic view on sexual behaviour and sexuality education forms the basis of the Dance4Life Empowerment Model, aiming to promote personal empowerment in a supportive and enabling environment.

In its work with young people in 14 countries worldwide, Dance4Life employs its intervention ‘Journey4Life’, designed to trigger a process of personal transformation and growth in young people. The underlying assumption is that working on empowerment with young people, and on the social and emotional skills needed for empowerment, will enable young people to make responsible choices in all aspects of their lives, including sexual health and relationships.

Photo: Jesaja Hizkia
THE LINK BETWEEN ‘EMPOWERMENT’ AND ‘SEXUAL HEALTH BEHAVIOURS’

In the coming years, part of Dance4Life’s research and development strategy is to further explore and clarify the link between ‘empowerment’ and ‘sexual health behaviours and choices’. The concept of empowerment however is very broad and it is widely used without clear definitions or contextual specification. Therefore, Dance4Life initiated this explorative international study to further unpack the concept of ‘empowerment’. Key questions that have been explored were: What does empowerment mean to young people in different cultural and economic contexts. How do they define empowerment? How do they perceive their chances to become (more) empowered? And which aspects of empowerment are important for them when making life choices, including sexual choices?

This exploration is conducted in four countries that are particularly relevant for Dance4Life: the Netherlands, Russia, Kenya and Indonesia. These countries all work with implementing partners and therefore have a huge reach.

RELEVANCE AND SCOPE OF THIS STUDY

The relevance of this study is threefold.

1) A deeper understanding of what empowerment means to young people themselves will help Dance4Life in their concept development, campaigning and communication initiatives in various countries.

2) Its findings will inform the design and implementation of more effective interventions, which are optimally adapted to the local context. These insights will not only benefit Dance4Life, but by sharing these findings Dance4Life also wishes to inspire other organisations involved in young people welfare and sexual health.

3) The findings of this explorative study can inform further research on the empowerment and healthy sexual behaviour of young people.

This explorative study was designed to further clarify and understand the complex concept of empowerment and to assess young people’s perceptions on decision making and sexual health. Therefore, this is not an effect study measuring the impact of an intervention, nor an explanatory study showing causal relations between level of empowerment and healthy choices in sexual behaviour. These types of studies can be conducted once the concept of empowerment has been further clarified, and ideally led to the development and a standardised, validated scale developed, to measure empowerment of of young people world-wide.
01. INTRODUCTION

WHAT DID WE EXPLORE?

The following research questions were formulated to explore the concept of empowerment in four countries: Russia, Kenya, the Netherlands and Indonesia.

(RESEARCH QUESTION 1)
WHAT DOES EMPOWERMENT MEAN TO YOUNG PEOPLE?

/ What are the most important aspects of empowerment for young people in different countries?
/ How important is it for young people to be empowered?

(RESEARCH QUESTION 2)
WHAT EXTENT DO YOUNG PEOPLE IN FEEL EMPOWERED?

/ What is the self-reported level of empowerment for young people in the four selected countries?

External factors
/ To what extent do young people feel it is possible for them to become empowered in their environment?
/ To what extent are young people’s life choices made by themselves or by others and what is the level of contentment about this?

(RESEARCH QUESTION 3)
WHICH ASPECTS OF EMPOWERMENT ARE IMPORTANT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN MAKING SEXUAL AND RELATION DECISIONS?

Respondents were presented with six short scenarios in which their friend needed help to make a choice about a sexual and relational issue. The respondents were asked how useful they found four different advices, each representing a main dimension of empowerment.

ISSUES
• Condom use
• Partner choice
• Getting tested for STIs
• Staying in school
• Saying no to unwanted sex
• Speaking up about sexual violence

ADVICES- EMPHASIS ON
• Future-orientation
• Self-management
• Social awareness
• Self-confidence
02. METHODOLOGY

The concept of empowerment is widely used. However, it is defined differently in different contexts, social domains and for different target groups.

In the context of its work, Dance4Life uses the following definition of empowerment:

‘EMPOWERMENT IS THE PROCESS OF PERSONAL CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION THAT HELPS YOUNG PEOPLE TO GAIN POWER OVER THEIR OWN LIVES, ENVISION THEIR DREAMS AND MOVE TOWARDS THEM.’

Power is gained by developing personal competencies and is influenced by the person’s physical, social, and cultural environment. Empowerment is a difficult and unfamiliar concept for most young people, and it is hard to translate in most languages.¹ In order to assess the perspectives of young people, first we had to decide on how to explain and use the concept of empowerment in the study. Based on the Dance4Life definition², empowerment was operationalised as:

‘TO BE ABLE TO DECIDE FOR YOURSELF TO REALISE DREAMS AND AMBITIONS.’

Since there is no existing validated (universal) measure of empowerment, we explored young people’s level of empowerment by asking the respondents to what extent they are able to ‘decide for themselves to realise their dreams and ambitions’. We also asked them to score themselves on various personal competencies that are associated with empowerment (see the table below). Since it is assumed that personal competencies coupled with other characteristics (e.g. gender, level of education) influence individuals’ level of empowerment, we also asked respondents to rate the empowerment (see the table below) levels of various groups (for example educated versus non-educated young people, and boys versus girls).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERSONAL COMPETENCIES</th>
<th>DEFINITION²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-awareness</td>
<td>Ability to accurately recognise one’s own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behaviour. The ability to understand one’s self.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of agency</td>
<td>The feeling of control over one’s own actions and their consequences.²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confidence</td>
<td>A positive belief that (in the future) one can generally accomplish what one wishes to do. / An individual’s belief in their ability to achieve a goal.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-management</td>
<td>The ability to successfully regulate one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviours in different situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social awareness</td>
<td>The ability to take the perspective of and empathise with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. The ability to understand social and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Healthy) relationship skills</td>
<td>The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible decision-making</td>
<td>The ability to make constructive choices in personal behaviour and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns and social norms.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ From the four countries, in Kenya a sound translation exists of the term in Kiswahili (Uwezeshaji). In Russia, besides the word empowerment, a Russian equivalent is used (Самовластье или).² Definitions used from D4L empowerment model and CASEL.³ Moore, J. W. (2016). What is the sense of agency and why does it matter? Frontiers in psychology. 7, 1272.
DATA-COLLECTION

To investigate the views of a large number of young people worldwide, it was decided to develop an online survey, with an offline (paper) option for regions with limited internet connectivity.

Young people involvement
For the recruitment of respondents to participate in the research, young people from Dance4Life’s network have been helpful. They also pilot tested the questionnaire.

Important qualifications were accessibility, understandability and conciseness for the target group - young people between 16 and 19 years old. We would like to redirect you to report 2 for a detailed description of the research design, methodology and survey design. You can find the surveys on our website www.dance4life.com.

SURVEY CHARACTERISTICS

- Short +/- 10 minutes
- +/- 25 questions
- Online (mobile device compatible)
- Paper version if needed
- Culturally sensitive
- Pilot tested by young people

Photo: Jesaja Hizkia
03
FINDINGS PER COUNTRY
THE NETHERLANDS, KENYA, RUSSIA, INDONESIA
RESULTS

THE NETHERLANDS

FINDINGS PER COUNTRY
03. FINDINGS PER COUNTRY - THE NETHERLANDS

THE NETHERLANDS

Religion and (sexual) education in the Netherlands

Research shows that the Netherlands stands out relatively as having positive developments regarding SRHR (Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights).

Most young people use contraception when having sex, and the number of young people that have their sexual debut before the age of 14 is declining, compared to previous years. There is also a slight decrease in the number of young people who experience sexual violence.*

Despite these positive developments, there are still topics in both sexuality education and in the public debate that require continued attention, for example condom use, sexual violence, sexual diversity, pleasure & sex, and more recent developments such as sexting.

Sexuality education is common, but not for all Dutch young people

92% of the Dutch young people are currently in school at the time of the study. Almost 6 out of 10 of the Dutch young people say they have attended sexuality education, consisting mostly of a couple of lessons given at school (both primary and secondary school).

Religion is not important for 6 out of 10 Dutch young people

Over half of the respondents indicate that religion is not important to them (62%), the rest indicates that it is moderately important (19%) or very important (19%) to them. Analysing this further, we see that Muslim young people have the largest proportion finding religion very important (93%). Among Christian young people 36% finds it very important. 41% moderately important, and 24% not important. Almost all of the non-religious young people find religion unimportant (87%).

(RESEARCH QUESTION 1)
WHAT DOES EMPOWERMENT MEAN TO DUTCH YOUNG PEOPLE?

Looking at the familiarity of the concept, only a quarter of Dutch respondents knows the term ‘empowerment’. When asked to give an example of when they felt empowered (formulated in other words), situations related to educational performance or choices were named most often. Examples are: “when I graduated from high school” and “when I chose what I wanted to study”.

Dutch sample in this study

N= 574
Male: 35% Female: 65%
Age: 16-19, m=17
Currently in school: 92%
No religion: 60%
Christians: 30% Muslim: 8%

Dutch cultural background

20% of the population is between 16-19 years old⁶
50.7% no religion, 38.5% Christian, 5.1% Islam, 5.6% other⁶ 42.7% males and 51.7% females did not use a condom⁷ 16.5% of males and 26.5% of females got tested for an STIs⁷, 7.7% of males and 33.3% of females experienced sexual violence⁹

† http://statline.cbs.nl/Statweb/publication/?DM=SLNL&PA=7461BEV&D1=0&D2=a&D3=1-27%2c101-105%2c131&D4=i&HDR=T%2cG3%2cG1&S=B=G2&VW=T
‡ Percentages of religion of people older than 15 in the Netherlands in 2017. (CBS. Statistische trends. Wie is religieus en wie niet?)
§ Percentages for 15-24-year-olds, for the last time they had vaginal sex with a random partner. (https://www.rutgers.nl/sites/rutgersnl/files/PDF-Onderzoek/condoomgebruikenetestgedrag1.PDF)

20
The research clearly shows that young people in the Netherlands find empowerment important. For almost 9 out of 10 Dutch young people it is important or very important to be empowered, while for only 1 out of 10 it is neutral or not important at all. To deepen this exploration of empowerment, we asked young people what they think are key aspects for empowerment, looking at both personal competencies and at external factors that can promote or hinder empowerment (figure 1). Looking at this top five choice of competencies needed for empowerment, we see that all are personal competencies or skills with an individual focus, rather than a relational focus. The findings show that the young people who are currently not going to school score significantly lower on empowerment than those currently going to school. This is in line with what Dutch young people themselves indicate: that being educated is the most important condition for empowerment.

Dutch young people do not consider being religious or non-religious, living in urban or rural area or gender as factors influencing or determining chances for empowerment. According to the respondents, wealthy people are more likely to be empowered. However, ‘Being rich’ was also one of the least named requirements for empowerment. According to Dutch young people, having money is not a precondition for empowerment, but it does increase your chances.

(Research Question 2)
To what extent do young people in the Netherlands feel empowered?

On average, young people in the Netherlands rate themselves quite high on empowerment, giving themselves a score of 75 out of 100. This corresponds with their high self-rating on personal competencies associated with empowerment. Taking a closer look at the distribution of the scores, they show a range from 5 to 100, indicating that many young people in the Netherlands feel very empowered, with some exceptions scoring very low.

Dutch young people decide for themselves
Most young people in the Netherlands (84%) feel like they themselves have most control over their life decisions, whereas 10% indicate that their family has the most control. Almost everyone is happy with who is making the decisions in their lives (96%). Among the respondents who are not happy with who is making the decisions, 75% would prefer to be in control themselves.
In relations, Dutch young people have a strong sense of agency; they decide for themselves who will be their friends and who they start a relationship with. Decisions about their future and education appear to be slightly more influenced by others. A possible explanation is that for Dutch parents and young people, relational choices are typically regarded as individual choices with a lot of freedom, while choices about future or education need more guidance, mostly from family or parents.¹¹

An interesting gender difference is that in all life domains girls report making life decisions significantly more often by themselves than boys do.

There is also a significant difference between respondents who attended sexuality education and those who did not. Young people who had sexuality education reported more often to make decisions by themselves than those without sexuality education. This supports the assumption that sexuality education positively influences the young people’s sense of agency (see graph 2).

**GRAPH 2**
Differences in decision-making between young people who did/did not attend sexuality education.

---

¹¹ Lusse, M., Kuijpers, M., & Strijk, M. Ouderbetrokkenheid bij studiekeuze en loopbaanoriëntatie (2016).
03. FINDINGS PER COUNTRY - THE NETHERLANDS

(RESEARCH QUESTION 3) WHICH ASPECTS OF EMPOWERMENT ARE IMPORTANT FOR DUTCH YOUNG PEOPLE IN MAKING SEXUAL AND RELATION DECISIONS?

Self-confidence is the most important aspect of empowerment in making sexual choices
When presenting Dutch young people with choices on six issues on relations and sexuality, self-confidence is most often rated as useful when making decisions. Self-confidence is also named as the most important ingredient of empowerment. So, for Dutch young people, being empowered means having self-confidence, and self-confidence is regarded as very important for making healthy sexual choices. Next to self-confidence, self-management is also regarded as important for making sexual or relational decisions.

Social awareness is the least important aspect of empowerment in making sexual choices
Social awareness on the other hand is regarded as least important for Dutch young people when making sexual or relational decisions. In this outcome we can see a confirmation that social awareness is an aspect of empowerment that is less valued in individualistic cultures, such as that in the Netherlands.

How else is empowerment related to making healthy life choices?
To be able to say something about the relationship between empowerment and the ability to make healthy sexual and relational choices, we looked at whether Dutch young people with high versus low scores of self-reported empowerment value the ‘empowerment advices’ differently. All advice options were sensible, each representing a key aspect of empowerment. We wanted to test the assumption that more empowered young people are better able to recognise and value sensible advice on sexual and relational choices. The findings show that the suggested advice was indeed rated significantly higher among young people with high self-reported levels of empowerment, as compared to those with lower levels. More specifically, this was the case for advice related to partner choice, condom use, staying in school, and speaking up about sexual violence.

BOX 1
Shows which competencies are most often rated as useful by young Dutch people in making decisions in different situations when aiming to improve healthy behaviour in different situations.

PARTNER CHOICE
The research shows that Dutch young people see self-management and self-confidence as the most influencing factors when deciding on a partner.

CONDOM USE
When it comes to condom use, the research shows that Dutch young people see self-confidence as an important competency to have when having to bring up condom use.

GETTING TESTED FOR STIs
When it comes to getting tested for STIs, self-management is considered most important in making this decision. Also, the future is considered an important argument. Self-confidence on the contrary is least valued for this decision (compared to self-management, the future, and social considerations).

STAYING IN SCHOOL
When it comes to staying in school, self-confidence and the future are most important for making a decision.

SAYING NO TO UNWANTED SEX
When it comes to saying no to unwanted sex, self-management and self-confidence are the most important to young people in saying ‘no’.

SPEAKING UP ABOUT SEXUAL VIOLENCE
When it comes to speaking up about sexual violence, the future and self-confidence are the most important considerations to speak up about it.

Specific percentages available upon request.

In addition, especially advice related to ‘thinking of future implications of this choice’ was highly valued among young people with self-reported high levels of empowerment.

¹² For operationalisation research question 3, see methods
¹³ Highly empowered young people valued the future advice significantly higher in relation to condom use, staying in school, and sexual violence scenario than lower empowered young people.
Highly empowered young people better recognise strategies for making healthier choices

Through this finding, it was confirmed that highly empowered young people more easily recognise and value strategies for making responsible sexual and relational choices. Therefore, it can be easier for them to make healthy choices. This supports the principle of why working on empowerment will eventually lead to healthy and responsible life, sexual and relational choices.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study show that an empowered Dutch young person is self-confident, motivated, and self-aware. They take their confidence and self-management skills into account when making sexual, relational and future decisions. Furthermore, empowered Dutch young people are better able to see and appreciate advice on responsible life choices, although this study cannot inform us as to whether these perceptions also influence their behaviour. Looking at the type of competencies young people in the Netherlands think are needed for empowerment, it stands out that they all have an individual focus, rather than a relational or social focus. This could be explained by the dominance of an individualistic culture in the Netherlands. Self-confidence stands out as the most important competency for Dutch young people, as it is both considered the most important ingredient for being empowered, and a very important consideration for making sexual choices.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE NETHERLANDS

The findings of this study can be used to inform future campaigns or programmes addressing sexual or relational decision-making among young people. For example, any SRHR (Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights) programmes should include addressing the competencies Dutch young people find important in making sexual choices, such as self-confidence and self-management skills. Other findings that can be interesting to consider for future programme development or research are:

Sexuality education

In the Netherlands, secondary schools are obliged to include sexuality and sexual diversity as topics in their curriculum. This raises the question why only 6 out of 10 people indicated to have attended sexuality education. An explanation could be that sexuality education is often part of compulsory subjects such as biology, and that respondents did not recognise this as sexuality education.

However, since we found support for the assumption that sexuality education positively influences the sense of agency of young people, this could imply that these young people indeed are less informed. Therefore, this study supports the need and importance of sexuality education, also in the Netherlands. The relation between aspects of empowerment and sexual and relational choices could be an interesting angle to approach and inform sexuality education.

Religion

Religion is not important for most of the young people in the Netherlands, except for young Muslim people who do find religion very important. It would be very interesting to further study whether Dutch Muslim young people also have different views on empowerment and how this influences their decisions. Since this sample only included 42 young Muslims, no statistical analysis could be performed on this matter. A larger study comparing young people with a Muslim background to young people with an other or no religion could be very interesting for SRHR (Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights) organisations.

High empowerment levels

Dutch young people consider themselves to be quite empowered. In this survey respondents were asked to indicate how empowered they feel in general on a scale of 0 to 100. Self-report is always difficult and can cause a social desirability bias.

In this research it was decided to use a self-report question, because it is a relatively accessible way to gain an insight in young people’s empowerment level, without having to use very lengthy and complicated questionnaires. Hence, the results of this study should be interpreted and used given the limitations described above.
RESULTS
KENYA
FINDINGS PER COUNTRY
Kenya

Religion and (sexual) education in Kenya

Kenyan young people are religious and educated, but sexuality education is often of inadequate quality. Most respondents are still going to school at the time of the survey (83%). Almost half of the young people who are not going to school have finished primary school, about half have finished secondary, and 4.5% finished further education.

Only 20% of the Kenyan young people attended sexuality education, consisting mostly of a couple of lessons given by school or church. For most Kenyan young people, religion is very important (68%), or a little important (24%). Only 9% does not find religion important. All young people who are not religious find religion not important. Most Christians find religion very important (69%) or a little important (25%).

(Research Question 1)

What does empowerment mean to Kenyan young people?

A relatively high number of respondents (56%) knows the term empowerment or its equivalent in Swahili. Interesting to note is that those who are familiar with the term also score significantly higher on empowerment.

About 8 out of 10 young people find it (very) important to be empowered, 8% is neutral about this, and 10% finds this not important. When young people are asked to give an example of when they felt empowered, school-related situations are named relatively often. For example, “Choosing my subjects and determining my career path in high school”. Another quote that reflects the social dimension that Kenyan young people associate with being empowered: “When we work together and help each other like brothers and sisters”.

FIGURE 3

Kenyan young people defines empowerment in terms of individual competencies.

KEY ASPECTS OF EMPOWERMENT FOR KENYAN YOUNG PEOPLE

- Having goals and plans
- Doing well in school
- A good relationship with your parents
- Being confident about yourself
- Being able to cooperate with others

CONCEPTS LEAST NEEDED FOR EMPOWERMENT ACCORDING TO KENYAN YOUNG PEOPLE

- Empathy for others
- Being rich
- Having friendships

---

Kenyan sample in this study

N = 602 Male: 50% Female: 50%
Other (N=1)
Age: 15-20, m=17
Swahili: 21% English: 79%
Currently in school: 83%
Christians: 89% Muslim: 6%
No religion: 3%

Kenyan cultural background

24% of the total Kenyan population is young.¹⁴
Urgent SRHR (Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights) issues: teenage pregnancy, condom use, and HIV
Inadequate quality of sexuality education ¹⁵
Gender inequality
Christians: 84.8%. Muslim: 9.7% ¹⁶

---

¹⁴ According to Kenya’s Ministry of Health factsheet.
¹⁵ In CSE (Comprehensive Sexuality Education) the main problems are: inadequate weight given to CSE when integrated into other programmes, insufficient adaptation of curricula to local contexts, and limited stakeholder participation in curricula development.
¹⁷ For operationalisation research question 3, see methods.
03. FINDINGS PER COUNTRY - KENYA

Being religious, educated and rich are the most important external influences on empowerment. Being educated is seen as the most important external condition for empowerment. This is supported by other results in our study, as Kenyans going to school score significantly higher on empowerment than those who are not going to school. Being religious and being rich are also regarded as increasing your chances on empowerment. Gender however is not seen as a determining factor, which is confirmed by rather equal empowerment scores of Kenyan boys and girls. Young people in Kenya think it is just as likely for people living in the city as for people living in rural areas to be empowered. However, results of the research do not endorse this view, showing a significantly higher empowerment score for urban young people. A possible explanation could be that young people are not fully aware of the inequalities that exist between young people living in the city and young people living in rural areas.

(RESEARCH QUESTION 2)
TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOUNG PEOPLE IN KENYA FEEL EMPOWERED?

On average, Kenyan young people rate themselves quite high on empowerment, giving themselves 73 out of 100 points. This corresponds with their high self-rating on personal competencies associated with empowerment.

Young people in Kenya decide for themselves on relations, friends and future
Over half of the young people in Kenya indicate that they themselves are in control over the decisions in their lives (58%), followed by family (29%), friends (5%) and partner (2%). Of the 6% using the open answer option, most mention a combination of themselves and family members, some named their boyfriend or partner, and some said God, Allah or Jesus Christ. The majority (80%) is happy with who is making the decisions in their lives. Of those who are not happy, 81% would like to make the decisions themselves.

The extent to which young people report that life decisions are made by themselves or by others differs per domain (see figure 4). There is more sense of agency when making decisions about relationships, friends and the future. When making decisions about education, others seem to have most influence on this.

(RESEARCH QUESTION 3)
WHICH ASPECTS OF EMPOWERMENT DO KENYAN YOUNG PEOPLE FIND IMPORTANT IN MAKING (SEXUAL AND RELATIONAL) DECISIONS?

Future orientation is an important aspect of empowerment in making sexual choices. When making choices on different sexual and relational dilemmas, Kenyan young people regard the future most often as a useful consideration.

After this, self-confidence, self-management, and social awareness are important when making sexual and relational choices. It is interesting that self-confidence is regarded less important for the decision to get tested for STIs or to speak up about sexual violence, while it is ranked as a (very) useful asset for the other topics.

FIGURE 4
The lower scores indicate that Kenyan young people feel higher self-control on deciding on relationships: 23.15, friends: 24.02, future: 24.79. When making decisions about education (34.21) others have more influence.
PARTNER CHOICE
The research shows that Kenyan young people see self-confidence and the future as the most influencing factors in deciding on a partner.

CONDOM USE
Kenyan young people regard self-confidence and (thinking of) the future as the most important in bringing up condom use.

GETTING TESTED FOR STIs
(Thinking of) the future and self-management are the most important for (deciding to) get tested for STIs for Kenyan young people.

STAYING IN SCHOOL
When it comes to staying in school, the future and the self-confidence are most important for making a decision.

SAYING NO TO UNWANTED SEX
When it comes to saying no to unwanted sex, (thinking of the) the future and self-confidence are the most important factors for saying no.

SPEAKING UP ABOUT SEXUAL VIOLENCE
(Thinking of) the future and social awareness are the most important aspects for Kenyan young people to speak up about sexual violence.

Specific percentages available upon request.

How else is empowerment related to making healthy life choices?
To be able to say something about the relationship between empowerment and the ability to make healthy sexual and relational choices, we analysed whether Kenyan young people with high self-reported levels of empowerment valued the ‘empowerment advices’ differently, as compared to those with low levels of empowerment. All advice options were sensible, each representing a key aspect of empowerment. One could argue that the more empowered young people are, the better they will recognising and valuing sensible advice on sexual and relational choices. This was true for four out of the six topics. Highly empowered young people value the advices significantly more than the less empowered young people. This was the case on the following topics: condom use, getting tested for STIs, saying no to unwanted sex, and speaking up about sexual violence. No difference was found between the higher and lower empowered young people in their value of advice on the topics of ‘partner choice’ and ‘staying in school’.

Higher empowered young people find social awareness less important when choosing a partner than lower empowered young people
We further explored the differences in valuing advice between higher and lower empowered young people. Interestingly, we found that higher empowered Kenyan young people values social awareness significantly less than their lower empowered peers in the partner choice scenario. The advice was formulated as: ‘It will be necessary that your family (and friends) accept them’. This could mean that higher empowered young people in Kenya decide more for themselves on who will be their partner and find family acceptance less important than their lower empowered peers. This is confirmed by results showing that higher empowered young people indicate they significantly decide more for themselves than lower empowered people.

When deciding on a partner, more highly empowered young people value the future and self-confidence as more important than lower empowered young people. This is interesting for empowerment and/or SRHR (Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights) programmes, when dealing with the topic of partner choice, it is better to focus on self-confidence and the future, than on social awareness.

In all the choices, except for ‘staying in school’, highly empowered Kenyans value the future consideration (significantly) more than lower empowered Kenyans. This confirms that the future is regarded as an important consideration by Kenyan young people in making sexual decisions.
03. FINDINGS PER COUNTRY - KENYA

CONCLUSIONS

Kenyan young men and women regard themselves as equally empowered, and view empowerment as a mixture of personal and more relational assets, rather than being defined only by personal competencies. Being religious and educated play an important role in the chance to be empowered according to Kenyan young people, and we see that urban young people are likely to be more empowered than rural young people. Empowered Kenyan young people more easily recognise and value advice or strategies for making responsible sexual or relational choices. Thus, it could be easier for them to make healthy choices. This finding supports the principle of working on empowerment healthy and responsible sexual choices.

RECOMMENDATIONS & CONSIDERATIONS FOR KENYA

Certain findings about young people in Kenya are interesting to take into consideration for future programme development:

Friends are important for young people in Kenya
In Kenya, friends seem to have a larger influence on young people’s lives than in other countries. Relatively more young people in Kenya indicate that friends (partly) determine their decisions. Family also has a strong influence on young people’s lives. This is congruent with the more social perspective on empowerment that Kenyan young people expressed.

However, having friendships was also named as one of the least important aspects of being empowered and social-awareness is seen as a less important aspect in making sexual decisions. All in all, not a completely consistent picture arises. As a next step it would be worthwhile investigating the relations Kenyan young people have with their friends and family and how this influences their sexual and relational choices and their empowerment.

Future orientation is a key aspect of empowerment in the Kenyan context
It is a highly valued and important consideration for young people when making life, sexual and relational choices. This can inform both campaigning or communications initiatives and sexual or life skills interventions to specifically include and address ‘the future’ perspective in their approach – along with self-confidence as another important factor for Kenyan young people in making sexual and relational decisions.

Photo: Annelies Damen

I’ve had two unplanned pregnancies, and I’m struggling to survive. I want to make sure that other young girls don’t end up in my situation. So I’m organising sessions in my area to give them advice about contraceptives.
– Marcy (22), Kenya
RESULTS
RUSSIA
FINDINGS PER COUNTRY
RUSSIA

Religion and (sexual) education in Russia

Russian young people are mostly out of school and sexuality education is largely lacking. A large group of the Russian respondents is currently not going to school at the time of the study (66%), most of this group most likely already finished school. Most of the people who are currently going to school are in secondary school (94%).

About half of the Russian respondents (56%) indicate to be Orthodox Christian, 35% do not have a religion. Religion is not important (52%), or a little important (40%) to most of the respondents. Only 7.5% of the young people has had sexuality education.

When asked about the kind of sexuality education they attended, Dance4Life is mentioned 5 times, others mention biology lessons at school or ‘life safety lessons’. Sexual education in most cases consisted of one or a few lessons (88%), rather than a longer programme.

(Research Question 1)

What does empowerment mean to Russian young people?

Almost 90% of the Russian young people does not know the term empowerment. However, almost 9 out of 10 find it important to very important to be empowered though, while only 1% indicates to find empowerment not important (at all), and 10% is neutral. When asked for examples of empowerment, Russian young people often named situations in which they started being independent. “When I moved to live separately from my parents”, and “When I started making money by myself”.

Key aspects of empowerment for Russian young people

- Being confident about yourself
- Having goals and plans
- Being motivated
- Having problem solving skills
- Feeling control of your own actions

Concepts least needed for empowerment according to Russian young people

- Doing well in school
- Having a good relationship with your parents
- Controlling impulses

Remarkable in this top five aspects for empowerment is that all competencies of skills have an individual focus, rather than a social or relational focus.

Russian sample in this study

N= 667
Male: 44% Female: 56% ²¹
Online: 64% Paper: 36%
Age: 16-20. m=17.5
Currently in school: 34%
Orthodox Christian: 56%
No religion: 35%
Urban: 92.5% Rural:7.5%

Russian cultural background

9.5% of the population is between 15-24 years old ³⁸
Christian: 73.3%. Muslim: 10%. No religion: 16.2% ³⁹
SRHR (Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights) issues: HIV ⁴⁰, risky sexual behaviour. No institutional (school) attention for developing social emotional skills and/or making responsible decisions, such as resisting peer pressure or negative adult examples (alcoholism, addiction, unsafe sex) ⁴¹

¹⁸ https://www.indexmundi.com/russia/demographics_profile.html
²⁰ An increasing number of HIV cases having more advanced stages of infection are registered among 25-35-year-olds. Indicating they have been infected at a younger age, but their status was not revealed.
²¹ In Russia we did not add the option ‘other’ because our partners there indicated that this would be a sensitive topic.
²² 66% of the people not going to school finished 9-12 years of school, and 30% finished 13-16 years of school.
²³ Information provided by Focus Media, our Russian partner in research.
Russians think it is possible for anyone to become empowered, but boys score themselves higher than girls on empowerment

In general, young people in Russia see chances for everyone to be empowered, whether you are rich or poor, religious or non-religious, educated or uneducated a boy or a girl, from the city or countryside. There are some nuances though. Being rich and educated enhance your chances on empowerment according to Russian young people. This is interesting, because on self-reported empowerment, boys rate themselves significantly higher than girls (78.2 versus 71.0). So, while Russian young people estimate the chances of empowerment for boys and girls to be equal, results show a sex difference in their (self-reported) level of empowerment.

(RESEARCH QUESTION 2)
TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOUNG PEOPLE IN RUSSIA FEEL EMPOWERED?

The average score on self-reported empowerment in Russia is 74.2 with a range of 0 to 100. Russian young people also rate themselves quite highly on different personal competencies that are associated with empowerment. The young people who score above average on empowerment, also score themselves significantly higher on these separate personal competencies.

Russian young people decide for themselves on relationships, friends and future, boys more than girls

76% of Russian young people indicate they themselves have the most control over the decisions in their lives, followed by their family (17%). Most of the Russian young people are happy with who is making the decisions (89%). Of those not happy with who is making the decisions, about 80% would like to make the decisions themselves.

“WHEN I HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO DECIDE SOMETHING FOR MYSELF. GETTING OLDER, I REALISED THAT THIS IS MY LIFE, AND NO ONE HAS A RIGHT TO DECIDE FOR ME”

There is a greater sense of agency when making decisions about relationships, friends and the future. Decisions about education seem to be more influenced by others.

There is also a sex difference in the sense of agency that Russian young people report: Russian boys decide more for themselves on relationships, friends and future than girls. There is no sex difference for sense of agency in educational choices. The difference in self-reported empowerment and sense of agency on certain topics² between boys and girls show that Russian boys consider themselves more empowered than Russian girls. However, they do not recognise these differences themselves, as they think it is just as likely for girls to be empowered as for boys.

FIGURE 6
0 meaning total self-control, 100 meaning total control by others. The low scores (close to 0) indicate that Russian young people feel quite high self-control on the following life domains: relationships: 11.59, friends: 12.32, future: 16.19, Education: 23.42.
03. FINDINGS PER COUNTRY - RUSSIA

(RESEARCH QUESTION 3)
WHICH ASPECTS OF EMPOWERMENT DO RUSSIAN YOUNG PEOPLE FIND IMPORTANT IN MAKING (SEXUAL AND RELATIONAL) DECISIONS?

Self-management is important for making (sexual) decisions of Russian young people

Overall, self-management is highly valued by the Russian young people for making sexual and relational choices, be it a partner choice, getting tested for STIs, condom use, staying in school, saying no to unwanted sex or speaking up about sexual violence.

For certain choices (on condom use, staying in school, and speaking up about sexual violence) more empowered young people value self-management even more highly than young people with lower self-reported levels of empowerment.

Social awareness is only important when it is about condom use

Overall, social-awareness is regarded as the least important (aspect of empowerment) when making decisions on sexual and relational topics, except for bringing up condom use. Here, social-awareness is the most important consideration for young Russians.

The social-awareness advice for bringing up condom use was formulated as: 'Think about the best way to bring this [condom use] up without embarrassing your partner'. To explain the importance of this advice, one could argue that for Russian young people, bringing up condom use is still an issue that can easily evoke a sense of embarrassment.

How else is empowerment related to making healthy life choices?

In Russia, higher empowered young people value all advices significantly higher than lower empowered young people on the issues of condom use, getting tested on STIs, and speaking up about sexual violence. What this could tell us is that empowered young Russians more easily recognise

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion we can say that Russian young people view empowerment as a combination of individual competencies and skills such as self-confidence, motivation and problem-solving skills. Russian young people think it is possible for everyone to be empowered, with a slight advantage for rich and educated young people.
However, despite their own estimation of equal chances for boys and girls to be empowered, the study shows that Russian boys report themselves to be more empowered than Russian girls.

Furthermore, self-management as a key aspect of empowerment, is a highly valued and important consideration for Russians in making life, sexual and relational choices.

**RECOMMENDATIONS & CONSIDERATIONS FOR RUSSIA**

Certain findings about young people in the Russia are surprising and would be interesting to further explore:

**Differences between boys and girls**
Empowerment scores show that Russian boys feel more empowered than girls, and that boys also decide more for themselves about friends, future and relationships. It would be interesting to further investigate these gender differences, in order to better explain them. A follow up with qualitative data would be an interesting option.

**Condom use is a sensitive topic**
Condom use is still a sensitive topic in Russia, condom use is even associated with increasing the risk of HIV infection, because the availability of condoms would encourage young people to have sex. The use of condoms in Russia is found to be low. The sensitivity of this subject is confirmed by the results showing that Russian young people finds social awareness to be the most important consideration when deciding about condom use. Action should be taken in both programmes, campaigns or communication initiatives to address the importance of condom use. However, the sensitivity of this topic should be taken into account.

Since self-management is key when it comes to empowerment, emphasising this competency in empowerment and/or sexuality education programmes would be a good way to attract and engage Russian young people.

---

RESULTS
INDONESIA
FINDINGS PER COUNTRY
INDONESIA

Religion and (sexual) education in Indonesia

Most of the respondents are Muslim (77%), 9% of the respondents is Christian, and 13% Hindu. Most of the respondents find religion very important (98%). In Indonesia, recruitment of respondents mostly took place through schools, so only 2 respondents are currently not in school as they already finished secondary school. Out of 10 Indonesian young people, four have had sexual education, consisting of one or a few lessons (89%).

(RESEARCH QUESTION 1)
WHAT DOES EMPOWERMENT MEAN TO INDONESIAN YOUNG PEOPLE?

Almost everyone (94%) in Indonesia thinks it is important or very important to be empowered, nobody thought it was not important.
We explored whether certain sub groups (e.g. urban or rural young people, male or female, in or out of school) thought it was more important than others, but this was not the case.

When asked to name a situation in which they felt empowered, Indonesian young people relatively often mention religion. For example, one respondent said: “I will try my best to control myself. Obey Allah and pray diligently, that’s my way to control my life”. The examples also show that family is important: “I already decide my dream with approval from my family and myself. Because parents’ prayer is the most important thing in my life”.

It is interesting that of the top 5 of the most important aspects of empowerment according to Indonesian young people, three are relational or socially focused. This reveals that the view of Indonesian young people, think of an empowered person as someone with good relations, cooperation skills, and respect for others, besides being self-confident and future oriented.

KEY ASPECTS OF EMPOWERMENT FOR INDONESIAN YOUNG PEOPLE
- A good relationship with your parents
- Having goals and plans
- Being able to cooperate with others
- Having respect for others
- Being confident about yourself

CONCEPTS LEAST NEEDED FOR EMPOWERMENT ACCORDING TO INDONESIAN YOUNG PEOPLE
- Being able to control impulses
- Having empathy for others
- Understanding your own feelings

N= 591
Male: 28%  Female: 72%
Online: 28% Paper: 72%
Age: 16-20, m=17
Currently in school: 99%
Muslim: 77% Hindu: 13%
Urban: 56% Rural: 44%

17% of the total population is between 15-24 years old ²⁶ Muslim: 87.2% ²⁷, Christian: 7%, Hindu: 1.7% ²⁸ SRHR (Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights) issues: Gender based violence; 18% of women experienced physical or sexual intimate partner violence ²⁸

²⁶  https://www.indexmundi.com/indonesia/demographics_profile.html
²⁷  The influence of fundamentalist Islam on the society has increased in the last couple of years, leading to intolerance against certain sects and Christian minority (APAC Country Report Indonesia 2018).
²⁸  http://evaw-global-database.unwomen.org/en/countries/asia/indonesia
03. FINDINGS PER COUNTRY - INDONESIA

**Being religious and educated are conditional for empowerment according to Indonesian young people**

Chances on empowerment are not evenly distributed according to young people in Indonesia. Religion and education are both seen as conditional for empowerment. Indonesians think it is extremely unlikely for an individual to be empowered when you are not religious, versus extremely likely to be empowered when you are religious, and the same goes for education. Being wealthy is seen as an advantage for empowerment but being poor does not exclude you from being empowered.

**Indonesian young people see no difference in chances on empowered between boys and girls**

Most young people think it is likely for both girls and boys to become empowered. This is in line with results showing that there is no significant difference between boys and girls in their degree of self-reported empowerment. This is an interesting finding when taking into consideration the social and cultural context, in which gender inequality is a current issue.³⁰ It must be noted, however, that the sample for this study consisted of a relatively high proportion of girls (72%).

Indonesian young people also estimate the chances on empowerment to be equal for those living in country side or for those living in the city. However, other results reveal a difference here, as people from urban areas score significantly higher on self-reported empowerment as than young people from rural areas.

**RESEARCH QUESTION 2**

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOUNG PEOPLE IN INDONESIA FEEL EMPOWERED?

On average, Indonesian young people rate themselves quite highly on empowerment: 74 out of 100 points. This corresponds with their high self-rating on personal competencies associated with empowerment. However, this is remarkable when looking at the relatively low level of contentment with ‘who is making decisions’ in their lives: many Indonesian young people are not so happy about who is deciding for them, as described in the paragraph below. So, despite this discontentment, there is still quite a high sense of self-reported empowerment among respondents.

**Most of the Indonesian young people decide for themselves on friends and future**

66% of the respondents indicate that they themselves have most control over the decisions in their lives, followed by their family (28%). A remarkable finding is that more than half of the young people say they are not happy with who is making the decisions now (57%). Of this ‘unhappy’ group, only a small proportion of the respondents answered the consecutive question about who they would want to be in control.²⁹ This could be due to misunderstanding or overlooking the question, or because the question is sensitive in Indonesia.

There seems to be a greater sense of agency when making decisions about friends and about the future. In decision making about relationships, and education, others have more influence on this. There are no differences between boys and girls in these findings.

**FIGURE 8**

0 meaning total self-control, 100 meaning total control by others. The scores indicate that Indonesian young people report highest self-control when deciding about friends: 18.42, followed by future: 22.65, relationships: 26.36, and education: 38.34.

²⁹ Unfortunately, only a small sub-sample answered the successive question related to who they want to be in control over life decisions. 85 people answered this question, and out of these, 44 people want to be in control themselves, and 33 want their family to be in control.

³⁰ Information provided by Rutgers Indonesia, our Indonesian partner in research.
03. FINDINGS PER COUNTRY - INDONESIA

(RESEARCH QUESTION 3)
WHICH ASPECTS OF EMPOWERMENT DO
INDONESIAN YOUNG PEOPLE FIND
IMPORTANT IN MAKING
(SEXUAL AND RELATIONAL)
DECISIONS? ³¹

The future is considered most important when making (sexual) choices
Across the various sexual and relational choices to be made (see box 4), taking the future (having goals and plans) into account is most important for Indonesian young people. This is followed by self-confidence. Self-management, however, is considered least important for deciding on these topics. Generally, social awareness rated as one of the least useful considerations except for partner choice and getting tested for STIs, then it was considered as the most useful.

Looking more closely at the different aspects of empowerment, we see that young people who consider themselves, to be empowered, often value the future consideration and self-confidence as more important for decision-making, as compared to those who are reportedly less empowered.

How else is empowerment related to making healthy life choices?
Higher empowered young people also showed higher overall appreciation of the advice given on the topics saying no to unwanted sex and speaking up about sexual violence¹, that young people with lower levels of empowerment. What this could tell us is that empowered young people more easily recognize and value advice or strategies for making responsible choices regarding these topics. Since sexual violence is a highly sensitive topic in the Indonesian context, it is interesting to see that more empowered young people do recognize and appreciate the ‘empowerment advice’ for these topics more positively, as compared to lower empowered young people. Working on these competencies could help young people in making decisions in these kinds of situations.

³¹ For operationalisation research question 3, see methods.
CONCLUSIONS

Indonesian young people see an empowered person as someone with good relations, cooperation skills and respect for others- besides being confident and future oriented. This shows that Indonesian young people define empowerment in terms of relational and social competencies and skills, rather than solely in terms of individually focused competencies. Besides socially focused competencies, being religious and educated are necessary conditions for empowerment according to Indonesian young people. Across the various sexual and relational choices to be made, taking the future - having goals and plans - into account, is most important for Indonesian young people. This is followed by self-confidence.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS FOR INDONESIA

Religious beliefs
Programmes and campaigning should be aligned with religious beliefs, as being religious is very important aspect of life for the majority of Indonesian young people. Failing to do so will undermine or weaken the relevance of a programme. The future aspect is especially valued by most Indonesian young people when making sexual or relational choices. Empowerment programmes should therefore address the future aspect when urging young people to make responsible sexual and relational choices.

Differences between boys and girls
No difference is found between empowerment scores of boys and girls, which is rather surprising given the existing gender inequality in Indonesia. This finding could be explained by the disproportionate number of girls in the sample, all of whom were going to school.

From the qualitative data it appears that as long as girls are in school, they can still enjoy ‘relative freedom’ to have their own dreams and ambitions. But once they are married, this is traded for the role of ‘being a wife’, and many ambitions are hampered. An example of what Indonesian young women say is: ‘After marriage my husband forbid me to work and tell me to become a housewife, whereas I want to be a career woman after marriage.”

Unhappy with who decides
Furthermore, a large proportion of the sample indicates not to be happy with who was in control over the decisions in their lives.

Of the people who were not happy with who was in control, almost 70% were girls. In the Indonesian sample, the boys-girls ratio was 28-72. This may explain the high level of discontentment with who is making decisions, as girls in Indonesia are faced with a lot of family influence over their lives and their choices. It is revealing that they opened about their discontentment in this anonymous survey.

However, also more than half of the boys indicated not to be happy with who was making decisions in their lives. This would be a very interesting issue to further investigate. Discontentment about the control of the family is represented in the following quote. “In my opinion, what made it difficult for me to make my own decisions is my parents”.

Many people are condemning me and telling me that I don’t have a future because I made my girlfriend pregnant. I disagree. I’m going to work hard and prove them wrong.

– Fajar (21)
COMPARSIONS, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS
COMPARING VIEWS ON EMPOWERMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN FOUR COUNTRIES

Empowerment is important for young people

When asked about the importance of being able to decide for yourself, to realising dreams and ambitions, almost all 2,434 young people participating in this study think empowerment to be (very) important (88%). This shows, even though many young people don’t know the concept itself, that the explanation and the competencies associated with empowerment are considered to be very relevant and important by the young people in the participating countries.

When looking closer into what young people think empowerment entails, we find similarities, but certainly also differences between the countries in:
- The key aspects of empowerment;
- How empowered young people feel;
- How empowerment is related to different sexual and relational choices.

In this chapter we discuss similarities and differences between the four countries, and present the main conclusions and recommendations from this study.
04. COMPARISONS FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

(RESEARCH QUESTION 1)
WHAT DOES EMPOWERMENT MEAN TO YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE FOUR DIFFERENT COUNTRIES?

The figure below explains what empowerment means to young people in the four countries, by showing the key competencies considered important for being empowered, as well as the external variables that influence empowerment.

FIGURE 9
Young people's competencies and the external factors that can enhance their empowerment.

NETHERLANDS

COMPETENCIES

1. Confidence
2. Motivated
3. Having goals + plans
4. Optimistic
5. Knows strengths and limitations

EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

- Education
- Being Rich

KENYA

COMPETENCIES

1. Having goals + plans
2. Does well in school
3. Good relation parents
4. Confidence
5. Able to cooperate with others

EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

- Education
- Being religious
- Being rich

RUSSIA

COMPETENCIES

1. Confidence
2. Having goals + plans
3. Motivated
4. Having problem solving skills
5. Feeling in control of own actions

EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

- Being rich
- Being educated
- Gender

INDONESIA

COMPETENCIES

1. Having good relationship with parents
2. Having goals + plans
3. Able to cooperate with others
4. Have respect for others
5. Confidence

EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

- Education
- Being religious
- Being rich

(Boys score higher on self-reported empowerment than girls)
04. COMPARISONS FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Being confident and having goals and plans are important in all countries
When asked about the key aspects of empowerment, young people in all countries name ‘being confident about yourself’ and ‘having goals and plans’ in their top five. This indicates that these competencies are recognised throughout all contexts as important assets for empowerment. However, there are also some different views on what empowerment entails. Young people in the Netherlands and Russia only name competencies that are individually focused, such as self-confidence and motivation. Young people in Indonesia and Kenya also name competencies that are more focused on their social environment, such as ‘having a good relationship with your parents’ and ‘being able to cooperate with others’.

Education is a key factor for empowerment according to young people in all countries
In all countries, young people think that educated people are more likely to become empowered, than to non-educated people. This view is supported by the results of this study; people who are going to school score themselves significantly higher on a self-report empowerment scale (0-100), than people who are currently not in school. 

Influence of gender on empowerment
According to young people in all countries, boys and girls have equal chances to be empowered. This is in line with the self-reported empowerment scores in the Netherlands, Kenya and Indonesia, since there is no significant difference between boys and girls. However, in Russia, the self-reported empowerment scores of boys are significantly higher than those of girls. It may be a somewhat surprising finding that young people from countries where gender inequality is prevalent, estimate the chances of empowerment between boys and girls as to be equal. It could be that their answer reflects how they ‘think it should be’ rather than ‘how it currently is in their society’ but this was not further explored.

Religion and empowerment
In both Indonesia and Kenya, religion is seen as an important factor that enhances empowerment. Young people in these countries indicate that they think it is very likely for religious people to be empowered. In Indonesia, religion can even be regarded as conditional for empowerment as Indonesians indicate that for a non-religious person it is very unlikely to be or become empowered. For young people in both Indonesia and Kenya, religion is very important, which can be explained by the large role religion plays in these societies. Dutch young people, on the other hand, indicated that religion has no influence on empowerment, which is explained by the smaller role religion plays in Dutch society.

In Russian society religion is important as well. However, results from this study showed that for nearly half of the respondents, religion is not important. Possibly religion is less important for the younger generation, but this potential explanation was not further explored.

Based on these results, we recommend that all interventions working on empowerment and/or SRHR (Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights) with young people should take religion and cultural norms into account when adapting the programme to the local context. Failing to do so will make a programme less effective or less relevant in contexts where young people themselves regard religion as an important factor of empowerment and in their lives.

* People who are currently going to school have on average a significantly higher empowerment score than people who are not going to school. Specified per country, significant differences are found in the Netherlands and Kenya. In Russia no significant difference was found, this could be explained by the fact that most of the respondents who are not in school, already finished secondary or further education and thus finished education. Nearly all the Indonesian respondents attended school, so no comparison could be made.
04. COMPARISONS FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

(RESEARCH QUESTION 2)

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOUNG PEOPLE FEEL EMPOWERED?

The self-reported level of empowerment is remarkably high in all countries (average of 74 out of 100). As there is no existing and validated ‘measure’ of empowerment, there is no benchmark or other reference available to position or compare these scores with. What we do see however is that this high score is consistent across the various countries. We also see that most young people (71%) feel they ‘decide for themselves’ and have most of the decision-making power over choices in their lives. Hence, we can conclude that young people think they are quite empowered. Two notes can be placed with the high scores; it is self-report, so not an objective display of the level of empowerment of young people, and it represents a one-time (‘snapshot’) measurement, not a series of measurements across time. For further research, it would be interesting to measure over time, and thus monitor the development of (feelings of) empowerment among young people.

Compared to the other countries, in the Netherlands and Russia, young people report high levels of decision-making power. In the other two countries, a relatively higher percentage indicate that family is making life decisions for them. In Kenya, a relatively large group compared to the other countries, indicates that friends influence their life decisions.

Respondents were asked to choose who had most ‘decision making power’ over decisions in their lives, choosing between themselves, family, friends, partner or ‘other’. When the option ‘other’ was chosen, respondents indicated to making decisions ‘together’ - they themselves with family members. The following quotes illustrate the type of answers given ‘I talk with my parents, get some advice, and I decide’ (Indonesia), ‘I decide for myself, but my parents also have something to say’ (The Netherlands) In Kenya and Indonesian ‘God’ or ‘religion’ were also mentioned. For example: ‘I can decide, but God will determine everything’ (Indonesia).

Looking at the level of contentment with who is making the decisions, in the Netherlands, Russia and Kenya, young people are largely happy. Only in Indonesia more than half of the young people report to be unhappy with who is making the decisions. It would be interesting to further investigate why Indonesian young people are remarkably less happy with who is in control over important life decisions. A quote from Indonesia: “Sometimes the environment also gives choices / shakiness to our decisions. For example, you want to determine the direction you want to study in college, definitely from your family, friends, teachers, neighbors and others will give a different opinion. So, what makes decisions difficult is the impact that will occur, the ability, and judgment of the environment”.

GRAPH 5

In the Netherlands, Kenya and Russia, most young people are happy with who is making the decisions.

No significant differences between countries in self-reported empowerment scores.
04. COMPARISONS FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Deciding for themselves in different life domains

SENSE OF AGENCY
To explore whether young people feel more empowered in certain situations than in others, we asked them about their sense of agency in four important life domains: relationships, friends, education, and their future. Respondents indicated to what extent they decide for themselves in each domain, and to what extent others decide for them. Scores closer to 0 mean that young people decide more for themselves, while scores closer to 100 mean their decisions are more influenced by others.

In general, Dutch and Russian young people decide most by themselves overall, while Kenyan and Indonesian young people indicate significantly more influence of others.

Education
FIGURE 10  Scores of sense of agency are shown per country for decisions about education.

In all countries, decisions about education are most influenced by others, as compared to decisions about other topics. Per country, Dutch young people decide most for themselves, followed by Russians, Kenyans, and then Indonesians.

Relationships
FIGURE 11  Scores of sense of agency are shown per country for decisions about relationships.

When making decision about relationships, there is no significant difference between Dutch and Russian young people; they both decide for themselves about their relationships. There is also no significant difference between Indonesian and Kenyan young people. There is however a difference between the two pairs of countries, showing that Russian and Dutch young people significantly decide more by themselves about relationships than Indonesian and Kenyan young people do.
04. COMPARISONS FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

**Future**

FIGURE 12 Scores of sense of agency are shown per country for decisions about their Future

When making decisions about future, there is no significant difference between Dutch and Russians; they both decide for themselves. Also, there is no significant difference between Indonesian and Kenyan young people. There is however a difference between the two pairs of countries, showing that Russian and Dutch young people significantly decide more by themselves about future than Indonesian and Kenyan young people do.

**Friends**

FIGURE 13 Scores of sense of agency are shown per country for decisions about their Friends

Dutch and Russian young people also decide about friendships mostly by themselves, there is no significant difference between the two countries. There is however a significant difference with Indonesian young people, and an even larger difference with Kenyans, for whom decisions about friendships are more influenced by others.

This again highlights the more social approach in decision making by Kenyan and Indonesian young people, and the more individual perspective of Dutch and Russian young people.
04. COMPARSIONS FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

(RESEARCH QUESTION 3)
WHICH ASPECTS OF EMPOWERMENT DO YOUNG PEOPLE FIND IMPORTANT IN MAKING (SEXUAL AND RELATIONAL) DECISIONS?

OPERATIONALISATION OF RESEARCH QUESTION 3

Due to the sensitive nature of asking directly about sexuality or relational topics in some countries, respondents were not asked directly about their behaviour. Instead, they were presented with short scenarios in which their friend needed help in order to make a choice on six different sexual and relational issues. The respondents were asked how useful they found four different advices. Each advice represented a main dimension of empowerment. All the advices could be considered a good option (there were no ‘bad advices’). The value given to the different advices tells us something about which aspects of empowerment are key when faced with choices in different sexual or relational dilemmas.

ISSUES
- Condom use
- Partner choice
- Getting tested for STIs
- Staying in school
- Saying no to unwanted sex
- Speaking up about sexual violence

ADVICES- EMPHASIS ON
- Future-orientation
- Self-management
- Social awareness
- Self-confidence

Similarities between young people in Kenya and Indonesia, and in the Netherlands and Russia
When comparing the four countries, an overlap is seen between Kenya and Indonesia, as well as between Russia and the Netherlands in what young people find important when making decisions in different (sexual or relational) situations. Both Kenyan and Indonesian young people, find the future most important for making decisions in sexual or relational dilemmas. Self-management, on the other hand, is the least important consideration for Kenyans and Indonesians for most of the sexual or relational choices. In Russia and the Netherlands, self-management and self-confidence are relatively important for making sexual and relational decisions.

Young people find social-awareness only important for specific (sexual) choices
Social-awareness is least often valued as the most important for making different sexual or relational choices. There are three exceptions: social awareness is most important for Russians when ‘bringing up condom use’, and for Indonesians when deciding on ‘getting tested for STIs and when ‘choosing a partner’.

The social-awareness advice for bringing up condom use was formulated as: ‘Think about the best way to bring this [condom use] up without embarrassing your partner’. The fact that Russian young people finds this the most valuable advice suggests bringing up condom use in Russia is still a very sensitive topic for young people, in which embarrassment can play a decisive role. Unprotected sex is one of the problems Russia still struggles with. The social-awareness advice for the ‘getting tested for STIs situation was: “Think about people you know; they also want you to be healthy and get tested”.

The high value given to the social-awareness advice suggest the choice to get tested for STIs highly depends on social considerations for young Indonesians. For the partner choice scenario, the advice formulated was: ‘It will be necessary that your family (and friends) accept them’. The fact that this was more highly valued than the other advices tells us that when it comes to partner choice, the opinion of family and friends plays a decisive role for young Indonesians more than one’s ‘own judgement’.

³⁴ All differences are significant p<.05, except from the difference between Indonesia and Kenya.
SEXUALITY EDUCATION IN THE DIFFERENT COUNTRIES

In all of the countries, sexuality education is given to young people in some that or another, however, the quality of education differs. In the Netherlands, secondary schools are obliged to include sexuality and sexual diversity as topics in their curriculum.\(^3^5\)

In Indonesia there is no national policy on sexuality education, it is optional and does not completely reflect international standards.\(^3^6\)

In Kenya, there is a mandatory life skills curriculum. Research shows however that the quality of sexuality education is lacking. Inadequate weight is given to sexuality education when integrated into other programmes, there is insufficient adaptation of curricula to local contexts, and there is limited stakeholder participation in curricula development.

In Russia there is no national policy on Comprehensive Sexual Education (CSE). When sexuality education is given, it is integrated into mandatory subjects, and it does not reflect international standards.

There is no regular programme that aims at young people acquiring the skills necessary for successful adulthood and preservation of healthy, addressing the ability to resist pressure, coping with emotions, or the ability to understand social norms.

The proportion of young people who have attended sexuality education is highest in the Netherlands (60%). In Indonesia, 40% of the young people attended sexuality education, in Kenya this was 20% and in Russia 7.5%.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this research confirm that empowerment has different meanings to young people in different contexts and situations. There are also some recurring trends we see over the different countries. Self-confidence and having goals and plans are vital aspects of empowerment in all countries, and education is a key condition for all young people to be empowered.

Differences between the countries

For example, empowerment in individualistic cultures such as the Netherlands is less influenced by social relations and social considerations, and more determined by individual competencies or skills. Empowerment for young people in countries such as Indonesia and Kenya, are more determined by the social and religious environment, whereas less focus and value is placed on individual competencies and considerations.\(^3^6\)

In general, all young people find empowerment important, and estimate themselves as quite empowered.

But also, between countries, differences are found, such as the level of control young people perceive in making decisions about friends, their partner, their education and their future. And in different sexual or relational decisions, different aspects of empowerment play a key role. Knowing which aspects of empowerment are important to young people in each country for making healthy (sexual) choices, can help programmes finetune their intervention to focus on the aspects that are important in their country.


\(^{3^7}\) A more detailed description of what empowerment means for young people per country is available in the country chapters.
Local adaptations of SRHR (Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights) programmes and campaigns is key
When developing and implementing SRHR (Sexual and Reproductive Health & Rights) programmes and campaigns, these differences should be kept in mind. Adjusting the focus of both programmes and campaigns to the target group and cultural context, based on the specific findings of this study, could increase their impact.

The term empowerment is not commonly known by young people
Empowerment – described as ‘being able to decide for yourself to realise your dreams and ambitions’ – is very important to young people in all countries. Results however show that most young people do not know the term empowerment. It is important for the development sector and programmes working on empowerment, to use language that is understandable for the young people targeted by these programmes. For example, they can look for a local term or description of empowerment that speaks to young people.

CONSIDERATIONS + NEXT STEPS
This research gives an insight into how young people in the Netherlands, Kenya, Russia and Indonesia view empowerment; what empowerment entails, and which competencies, skills and external conditions could help them to be(come) empowered. Also, we got a first impression of how different aspects of empowerment play a role in making sexual and relational decisions.

There are some findings that need further exploration to confirm them or increase our understanding. The self-reported empowerment scores of the young people in this study were quite high. This raises the question of how to position these high scores. It is important to keep in mind that this in only an indication of the self-reported empowerment levels of the respondents. They were asked to indicate how empowered they feel on a scale of 0 to 100. It is possible that a social desirability bias caused respondents to score themselves higher than they actually felt.

The results of this study give a unique first insight into how young people think about empowerment and in what they find important in making (sexual) choices. Further research is needed to identify the relationship between young people’s level of empowerment and their sexual behaviour.

Young people in this research did not indicate a difference in likeliness to be empowered between boys and girls. This shows that young people might not be consciously aware of the gender inequalities that are present. It would be worthwhile to dive deeper into the perceptions of young people in different countries regarding gender differences in empowerment and in (sexual/relational) choices, especially in Russia, where a gender difference in the level of empowerment was found.

This study gives a first insight on how empowered young people can make healthier sexual choices than less empowered young people. To further investigate this, it is advisable to conduct a qualitative study in the participating countries, in which semi-structured interviews are held with the target group. This would make it possible to ask young people, in a suitable context, about their (sexual) behaviour in different types of situations.

To gain a better insight in the effects of the Journey4Life intervention, it would be interesting for Dance4Life to perform a pre- and post-test study. In this way the (sexual) behaviour of young people before the intervention, can be compared to their (sexual) behaviour after the intervention.
‘DON’T GIVE UP QUICKLY, THINK ABOUT YOUR FUTURE AND CONTINUE YOUR LIFE SO YOU CAN MAKE YOUR DREAM COME TRUE’.