

2 SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS



Goal: Women and girls exercise #VoicandChoice over their bodies through the full attainment of **Sexual and Reproductive Health** for all.

Specific objectives

- Lobby and advocate for universal Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) as part of the #Voice andChoice campaign spearheaded by the Southern African Gender Protocol Alliance and local councils in 10 Southern African countries.
- Lobby for the development, funding and implementation of Adolescent SRHR (ASRHR) policies in 16 Southern African countries in line with the Maputo Protocol, Southern African Development Community (SADC) Protocol on Gender and Development and the SADC SRHR Strategy 2019-2030.
- Build a robust Young Women's Movement in the Southern Africa Gender Protocol Alliance and provide a platform for adolescent girls' to contribute to ASRHR policies and practices.
- Strengthen ASRHR responses and services at local level with a special emphasis on mitigating the impact of COVID-19.
- Advocate for safe abortion policies, the domestication of the SADC Child Marriages Law and effective teenage pregnancy policies.
- Build women's agency and economic power as a strategy to improve women's and girl's SRHR and prevent gender-based violence.

What we have achieved

- **SRHR Article in the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development:** The Alliance successfully advocated for a standalone Article on SRHR in the

updated SADC Gender Protocol (2016). The Article cross references provisions in the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). The Alliance also worked with health NGOs to advocate for the SADC SRHR strategy adopted by Health Ministers in November 2018. This includes a colour-coded score card with 20 indicators that governments have committed to track.

- **A strong Sexual and Reproductive Rights (SRHR) network as part of the Southern African Gender Protocol Alliance:** In 2019, Gender Links produced the inaugural #VoiceandChoice Barometer that measured 100 indicators on SRHR in the region, including those drawn from the gender attitude survey. The 2019 Barometer served as the first civil society shadow report on the SADC SRHR strategy score card adopted by SADC member states in November 2018. Out of the 20 indicators identified by governments, the Alliance found 12 that could be measured across all countries. The Alliance country and regional partners implemented SRHR campaigns relevant to their contexts.
- **Local action plans:** GL worked with the 100 Centres of Excellence for Gender in Local Government that have been supporting the Sunrise Campaign, Empower Women, End Violence, to develop local level SRHR action plans. These included working with junior councilors to conduct a Rapid Assessment of Youth SRHR facilities and to conduct awareness around these.
- **SRHR action plans and campaigns:** Alliance focal networks in 15 countries implemented 40 national level campaigns and 177 local level campaigns in 10 countries.
- **Results during this period include:** removal of VAT and making sanitary ware available in schools in seven

SADC countries; the raising of the age of child marriages to 18 for girls in Mauritius; decriminalisation of homosexuality in four SADC countries. Initial doubts regarding the competencies of local authorities on SRHR are being dispelled by councils like Murehwa in Zimbabwe that devised a strategy for sustaining SRHR services under COVID-19 lockdown.

What we have learned

- **Evidence gathering and participatory research:** Alliance partners contribute to the Gender Responsive Assessment (peer review) of laws; case study collection, and analysis of campaigns. Youth conducted the Rapid Assessment of SRHR Services in Southern Africa. GL research has a strong emphasis on citizen engagement through scoring or assessing performance. Our motto is "making every voice count, and counting that it does."
- **The power of feminist movement building:** The #VoiceandChoice campaign re-energised the Alliance and made it relevant to current campaigns including #MeToo, #TimesUp, and (within Southern Africa) the #TotalShutdown campaign. Partner ownership of the campaign is underscored by pivoting to virtual campaigns during #COVID-19 lockdowns. New ways of working will be integrated into future programming to create multiplier effects, reduce costs and realise green savings.
- **The power of audits, learning and sharing between countries:** The 2019 mapping of SRHR SADC laws updated in 2020 and curated in an online data base is a rich repository of regional experience that will be drawn on to develop model ASRHR and safe abortion policies and checklist. It will also be used to share good practices on applying the SADC Model Law on Child Marriage.

- **Engaging with research findings:** GL works with partners to develop multi-media products and messages from campaigns appropriate to each national context, including in local languages. These are disseminated at working meetings to apply the research (such as those proposed with councils to strengthen ASRHR policies); mainstream media and social media. Keeping issues in the public eye puts pressure on policy processes. GL also offers partners coaching on data literacy to empower them to speak authentically on research findings. Partners determine their own advocacy strategies based on the findings.
- **Developing policies and action plans:** For example, the preliminary findings from the ASRHR research will be used to probe why two fifths of all youth fail to access services as long as they are not accompanied by another adult; fees being charged and whether these are appropriate.

What we will do in 2021-2025

- **Mount concerted ASRHR, safe abortion and child marriage campaigns to counter the regressive tide of the COVID-19 pandemic:** Ten out of 16 SADC countries do not have stand-alone ASRHR policies and some expire in 2020. The Alliance will seek to ensure that all SADC countries commit to progressive ASRHR policies. Six SADC countries still have different ages of marriage for girls and boys. The Alliance will seek to ensure 18 is the minimum age of marriage in all cases. Only two SADC countries have provision for abortion on demand. The Alliance will seek to ensure that countries take steps to liberalise abortion laws.
- **Youth led campaigns:** Involving youth in a meaningful way in SRHR work is important as they have different needs from adults. With the surge of HIV infections amongst youth for example,

it is important to include them in sexual behavioural campaigns that will foster change amongst peers.

- **Using digital platforms:** GL will strengthen the use of mobile technologies and the Community of Practice platform to communicate SRHR campaigns and results.
- **Evidence based programming:** Production of SRHR research products including relevant Audits, model laws and policies and the #Voice and Choice SRHR Barometer.
- **Cascade the Sunrise campaign to 100 local councils:** Work with local councils in ten countries to harness the Sunrise campaign and roll it out as part of their local economic development initiatives.
- **Linking survivors of GBV to LED and capital:** GL will build capacity of hub councils link GBV survivors to LED opportunities. GL is identifying private sector companies that can sponsor survivors of GBV with start-up capital for their businesses.
- **Review local council SRHR action plans to be more youth responsive:** The ASRHR Rapid Assessment findings for specific localities will be used to strengthen the youth responsiveness and sensitivity of local SRHR plans, as well as take corrective action at the health facilities. This forms part of a

broader GL initiative to review the SRHR and Gender Action plans of the COEs in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic based on a survey and

How we will measure change

- GL and Alliance partners will produce the annual #VoiceandChoice Barometer to measure progress on the implementation of the SADC Protocol on Gender Development and other relevant frameworks.
- Track policy and legislative changes on safe abortion, teenage pregnancy and the domestication of the SADC Model Law on Child Marriages.
- Progress on campaign implementation will be tracked using virtual feedback forms and engagements.
- Measure changes to Sunrise participants' experiences of violence and levels of income by administering the Gender Empowerment Index (GEI) at base- and end-line.
- Establish how much capital Sunrise participants have accessed using the online assessment tool to track progress.
- Do a comparative analysis of the changes in the council's SRHR plans to include youth responsive service delivery and track implementation of the plan through local council gender scorecards.

