

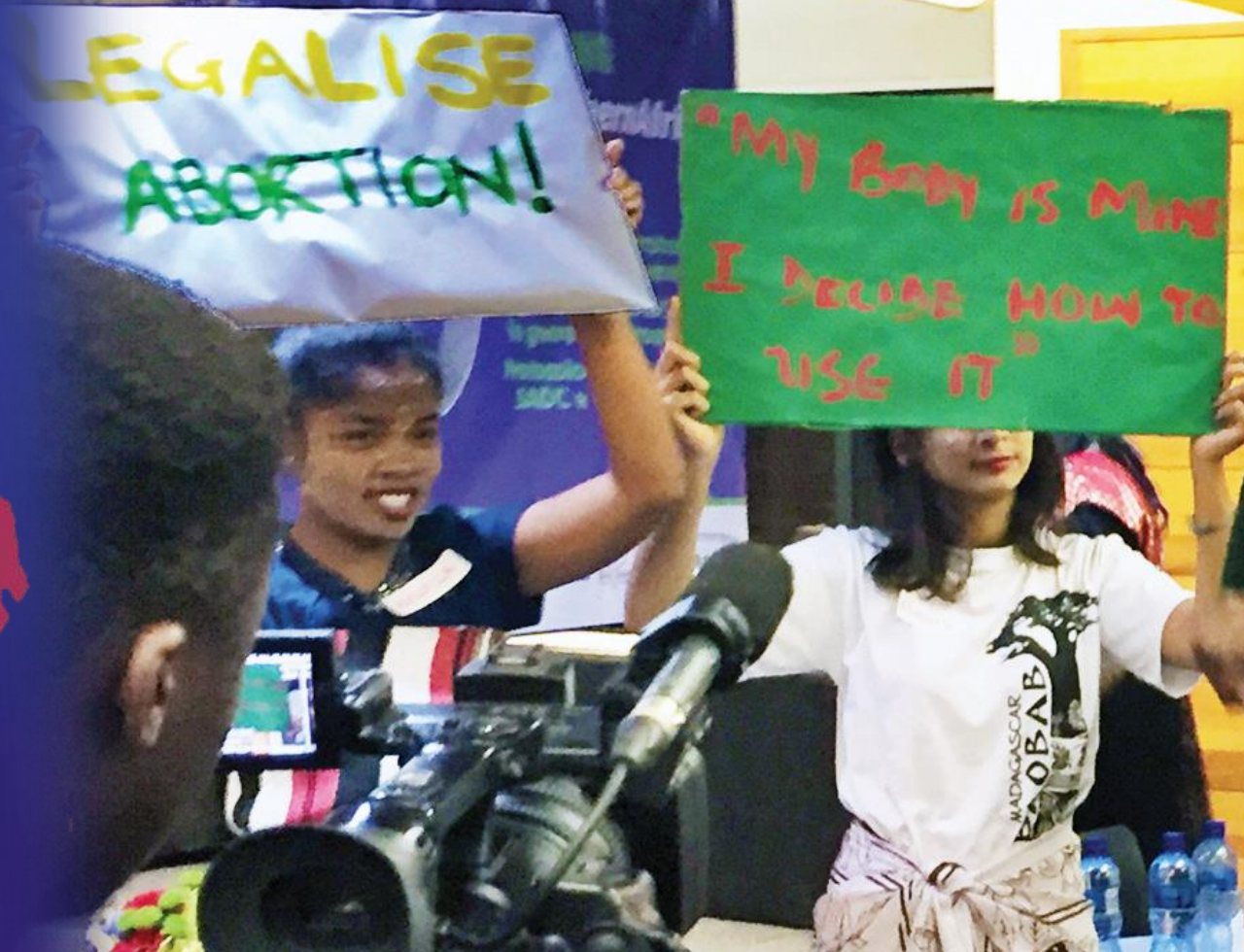
SOUTHERN AFRICA GENDER 2026

BAROMETER

Voice + Choice



Safe Abortion



Mentimeter participation Link:
<https://www.menti.com/al54vfj47ofo>



Programme

AGENDA ITEM	SESSION / FOCUS	LEAD / SPEAKER
01 Opening remarks	Moderator	Lynet Tinoza
02 Lived experience	First hand account from Zambia	To be confirmed
03 Setting the scene	2026 Barometer findings Red Lights + Green Lights	Lynette Mudekunye
04 Country case studies	Malawi Zambia Zimbabwe	Emma Kaliya Sharon Williams Vimbayi Nyika • Women's Action Group
05 Thematic cluster lead	Safe Abortion Cluster	Refiloe Harris
06 Pause & reflect	Mentimeter	Moderator
07 Post 2030 Agenda	What does the evidence mean for the Post 2030 Agenda?	Lynette Mudekunye
08 Call to action	From evidence to action	Moderator

Speakers



Moderator
Lynet Tinoza
Safe Abortion Cluster
Co-lead



Emma Kaliya
Malawi
MHRRC



Sharon Williams
Zambia
WLSA Zambia



Vimbayi Nyika
Zimbabwe
Women's Action Group



Refiloe Harris
Safe Abortion Cluster Lead
She Hive

Zambia: Woman convicted for abortion set free



CASE STUDY

01

What happened

A mother of two who could not afford contraception, became pregnant after her partner left. She could not afford a safe service and procured an illicit abortion.

02

The conviction

She was convicted for terminating a pregnancy and sentenced to seven years in prison in January 2024.

03

The appeal

WLSA Zambia, supported by the Center for Reproductive Rights, appealed. In January 2026 the High Court reversed the conviction and set her at liberty.

What this case shows

It highlights a gap between legal availability and real access, including barriers linked to information and affordability.

Progress in making safe abortion more easily available is painfully slow across the region even as it is acknowledged that unsafe abortions contribute significantly to high maternal mortality ratios (MMRs).



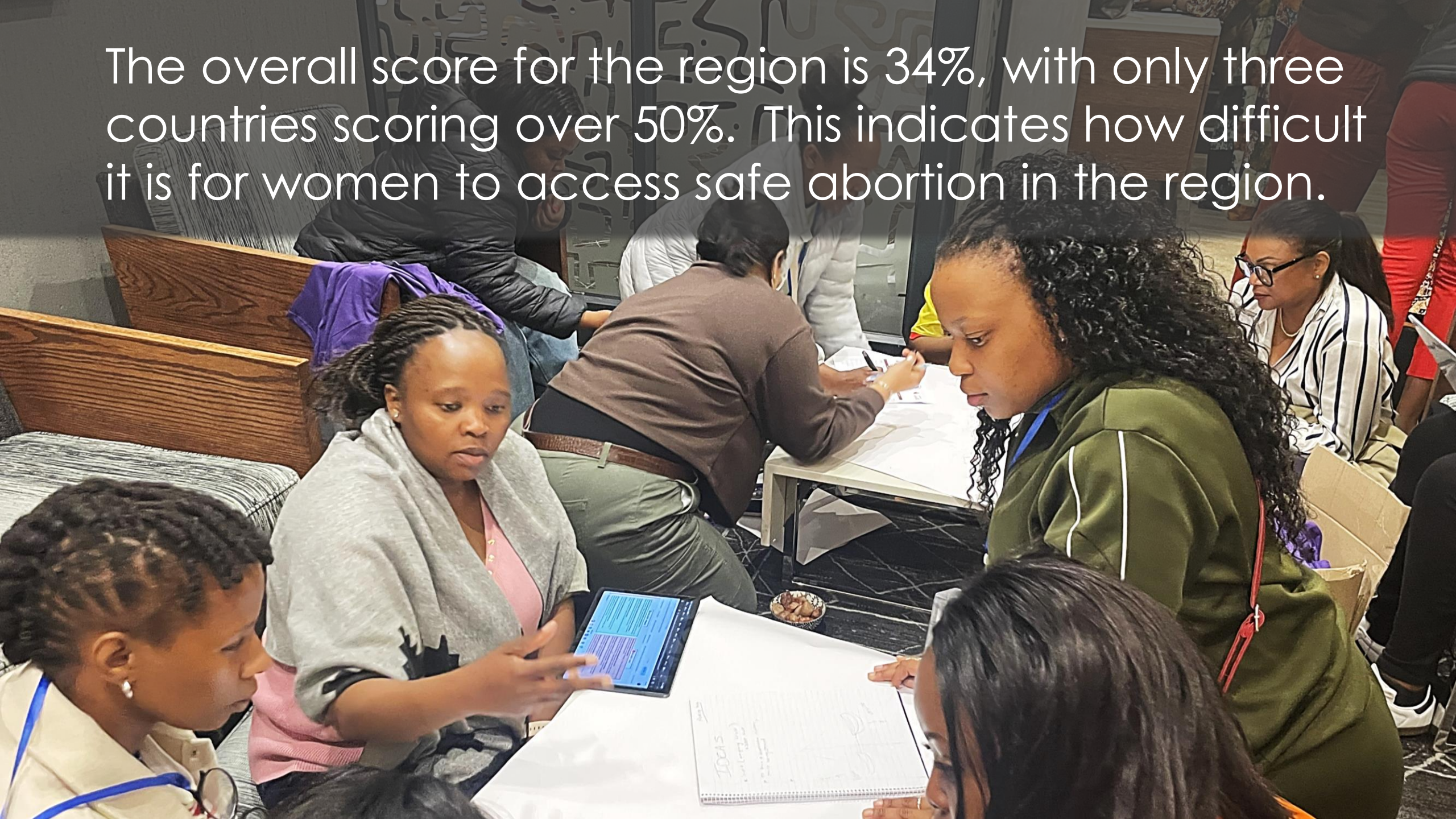
The African Union (AU) Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Women repeated the call for complete decriminalisation on International Safe Abortion Day, 28 September 2025

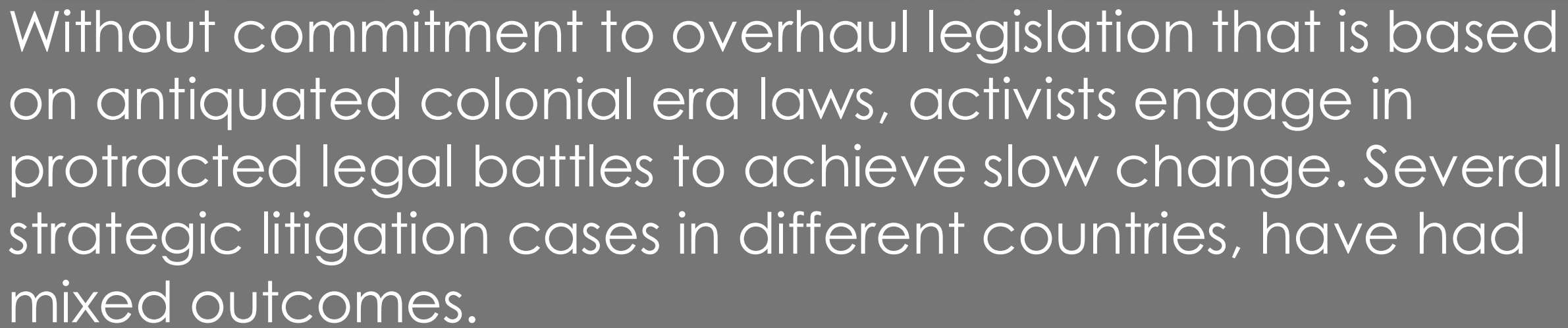


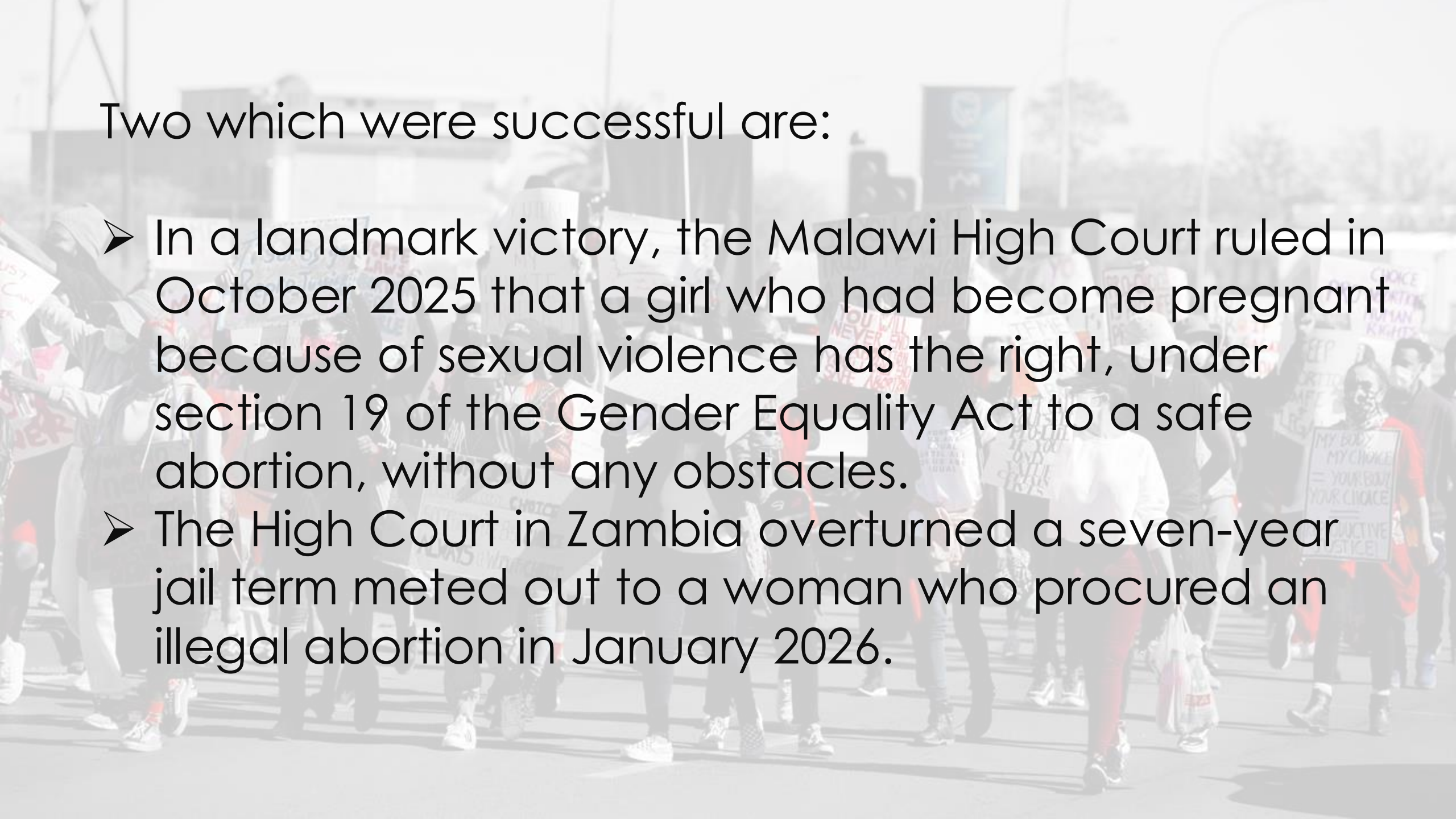


The 2026 Barometer uses scores from the Southern Africa Safe Abortion Assessment completed by national members of the Safe Abortion Alliance of Southern Africa (SAASA) to rank countries' progress on the provision of safe abortion.

The overall score for the region is 34%, with only three countries scoring over 50%. This indicates how difficult it is for women to access safe abortion in the region.





A faded background image showing a large group of people participating in a protest or demonstration. Many individuals are holding up signs with various messages, including "CHOICE", "MY BODY MY CHOICE", and "YOUR BODY YOUR CHOICE". The scene is outdoors on a city street.

Two which were successful are:

- In a landmark victory, the Malawi High Court ruled in October 2025 that a girl who had become pregnant because of sexual violence has the right, under section 19 of the Gender Equality Act to a safe abortion, without any obstacles.
- The High Court in Zambia overturned a seven-year jail term meted out to a woman who procured an illegal abortion in January 2026.

There is increasing momentum in the region around medication or self-managed abortion which puts power in the hands of women. Stock-outs of Misoprostol and Mifepristone are a barrier to availability of medication abortion.





Zambia, DRC and South Africa are reviewing their abortion care guidelines to align to the most up to date WHO guidelines. This includes guidelines for medical abortion which may be self-managed and roles in abortion care for a range of health care practitioners including nurses, midwives and pharmacists



Reflections from the Safe Abortion Cluster Lead



Malawi: Landmark ruling on abortion breaks new ground

“In Malawi, a landmark ruling relying on the Gender Equality Act (GEA) has given a fresh impetus to the work of the Coalition for the Prevention of Unsafe Abortion (COPUA).



The case involves a 14-year-old, who had become pregnant because of sexual violence, sued the clinician who denied her an abortion, the Ministry of Health, Blantyre District Council and Malawi Human Rights Commission. The Nyale Institute, a member of COPUA, supported her in the case. Abortion in Malawi is governed by the Penal code and only allowed to preserve a woman's life.

But in October 2025 the High Court of Malawi ruled that denying a minor a safe abortion violated her rights to adequate sexual and reproductive health as provided in section 19 of the GEA.”



Zambia: Women convicted for abortion set free

“In Zambia, thanks to the intervention of Women in Law Southern Africa (WLSA) a woman convicted for abortion has been set free.



The High Court accepted that prolonged detention, lack of legal representation, and her vulnerable physical and emotional state had a negative impact on Zulu's understanding of the plea. The court reversed the conviction and set Zulu at liberty in January 2026.

The arrest and conviction of Violet Zulu highlights that access to a safe service that is legally available, is limited by lack of information and other barriers. Legal protections in relation to SRHR for women and girls in Zambia are needed to achieve national efforts to protect and advance access to justice.”

Zimbabwe: From legal provision to real access



What WAG is seeing

Poor information, stigma, fear and cultural barriers continue to prevent women from accessing services, including post abortion care, in time.

Signs of change

Conversations on SRHR are increasingly happening among village health workers, health providers, religious and traditional leaders, as well as in Parliament.

The challenge

Legal provision alone does not guarantee access. Women and girls need to know what services they are entitled to and be able to obtain them without unnecessary barriers.

Mentimeter

Where should we focus our efforts – on legislative change or on finding ways to help women to access medication abortion? 1. Legislative change or 2. Access medication abortion

What does the
evidence mean for
the Post 2030
Agenda?- LAM





Thank you!

