

Concept Note

The High Level Regional Webinar to Launch the
Policy Discussion Paper on HIV, Sexual and
Reproductive Health & Rights for Adolescent Girls
and Young Women in the SADC Region

6 October 2021



INTRODUCTION

In the SADC region, progress in the realization of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) has been particularly slow especially for adolescent girls and young women who face barriers due to their age as well as their gender. This can be attributed to discriminatory social norms and attitudes towards girls and young women which often leads to them being denied a voice, agency and autonomy in decisions about their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). This is particularly devastating in the area of HIV/AIDS where adolescent girls and young women are disproportionately affected. In Eastern and Southern Africa girls and women aged 15-24 years account for 29 percent of new HIV infections amongst adults (15+ years) - 4000 new infections weekly, which is more than double that for young men (1700 weekly) (source: UNAIDS estimates 2019). A lack of legal protection and enforcement against gender discrimination heightens risks to the health and well-being of women and girls.

The SADC-LA notes that legislation has yet to provide a comprehensively protective and enabling environment for adolescent girls and young women to exercise their full sexual and reproductive health and rights.

In light of this, SADC-LA with the support of the UNAIDS & positive contribution of UNWOMEN & UNFPA came up with a policy discussion paper to highlight the key challenges in legislation and its implementation towards fulfilling the SRHR of adolescent girls and young women in the region.

A webinar to launch this policy discussion paper and discuss its findings and recommendations will accordingly be hosted by the SADC-LA.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this High-Level Policy Discussion Paper Launch are:

- I. Promote an understanding of SADC regional laws and related policies on SRHR and HIV/AIDS. Further, to define the role of the law in advancing SRHR through the normative human rights framework;
- II. Creating awareness of the legislative framework to key stakeholders in the implementation of law and policy regarding SRHR and HIV/AIDS. The target of this awareness is amongst other, parliamentarians; advocacy champions, etc;
- III. To promote domestication of the Regional Strategy for SRHR 2019 -2030 and operationalization of the corresponding scorecard to measure progress;
- IV. To identify and expose structures that are responsible for policy implementation;
- V. To create a basis for unified legislative and policy mapping guideline for policy makers and implementers in SRHR and advancement of effective HIV/AIDS related policy implementation;
- VI. To expose gaps in international and regional standards for national laws and update existing attempts based on recent amendments to national, regional and international laws;
- VII. Analysis of practical and administrative measures to enhance policy implementation;

SETTING

The regional webinar will be held on 6 October 2021. It will be a one-day virtual meeting convened and facilitated by SADCLA. It will have high-level participation, including a keynote address from the Swedish Ambassador. This webinar will be an interactive discussion with a question and answer session between presenters and the targeted participants. The presenters will be representatives from the Executive, SADCLA Partners, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and the targeted participants.

TARGETED PARTICIPANTS

The targeted participants for this initiative are:

1. Disadvantaged People
2. Young women and children
3. Sex workers
4. People living with HIV
5. Indigenous people
6. Disabled people

POTENTIAL AUDIENCE

- Government representatives from the Legislature, Executive and Judiciary
- Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum (SADCPF)
- CSOs
- Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)
- Academia
- Research institutions
- Youths and young leaders

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