

Part 1: The Recommendations

Youth Leadership, Partnership and Accountability

Youth Accountability Recommendations Report



Authors:



East and Southern Africa

**RESTLESS
DEVELOPMENT**

A woman with dark, wavy hair is standing in a field of tall green grass. She is wearing a bright orange hoodie and a necklace with a small pendant. In the background, there is a body of water and a distant town under a cloudy sky.

PART 1

THE RECOMMENDATIONS

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1. WHY YOUTH-LED ACCOUNTABILITY

Recent global frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals and Family Planning 2020 promise to achieve universal access to sexual and reproductive health, including for family planning, as well as education on gender equality, including elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls and harmful practices, such as child marriage and female genital mutilation.

Meaningful youth participation and increased support for youth-led accountability is essential for these commitments to be achieved. Half the world's population is currently under 30 and nine in ten of these young people live in developing countries. Never before and never again will there be such a large generation of young people ready and able to deliver change in their communities. If we are to ensure the policies aimed at changing this are enacted, we must engage and mobilise the enormous potential of the global youth population to make these promises a reality.

What is Youth-Led Accountability?

"The enabling of young people to hold decision-makers accountable for the commitments they have made towards sustainable development, through increased capacity, access and agency."

In 2018/2019 Restless Development and UNFPA ESARO, in coordination with partners, have worked with young people and development stakeholders from across East and Southern Africa. Recognising that most youth-led accountability takes place at the local to national level, we have given significant weight to this area. However we also acknowledge the value, support and opportunities given by regional and global advocacy spaces to push for change.

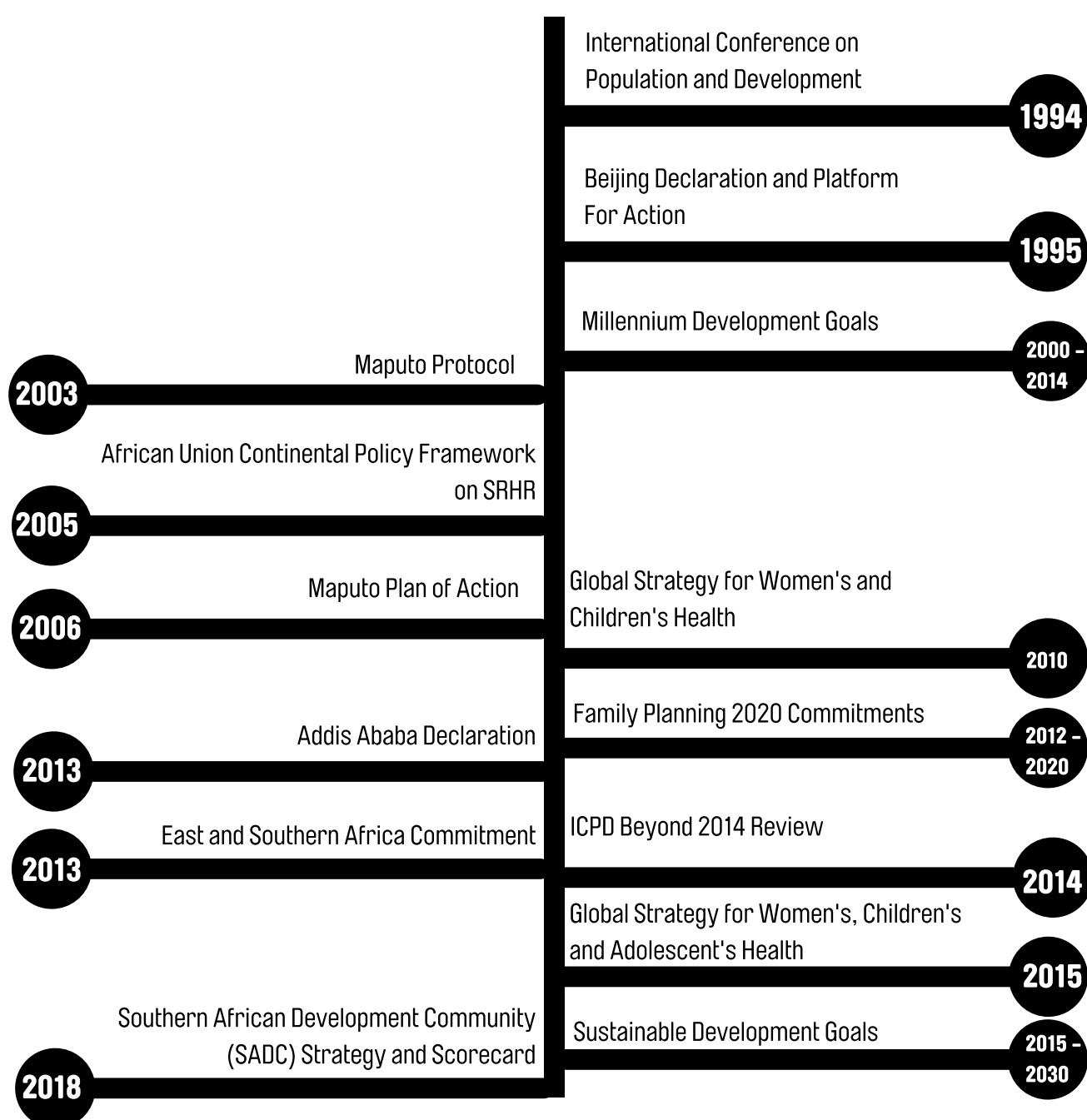


2. THE CONTEXT

A. The Global and Regional Policy Environment for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

This section highlights some of the key moments in which policies and tools for accountability on SRHR were agreed at the global and regional level.

Timeline of key events



The International Conference on Population and Development

At the global level, the United Nations 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), is considered a landmark moment in the history of sexual and reproductive health and rights. The Cairo conference was the largest intergovernmental conference on population and development ever held in which all regions recognised reproductive health as a basic human right (1). Furthermore, the definition of ‘reproductive health’ outlined in the ICPD Programme of Action (2), as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease” and its affirmation that people should have the ability to have “a satisfying and safe sex life [...] the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so” was truly groundbreaking.



The Programme of Action, adopted by 179 countries, set out three goals to be reached by 2015, one of which was to achieve universal access to reproductive health services, including family planning. ICPD affirmed the importance of sexual and reproductive health and family planning as a precondition for women’s empowerment and is widely considered “the foundational document for the modern sexual and reproductive health movement” (3). The UN Commission on Population Development (CPD) leads the monitoring and review of the ICPD Programme of Action at the global level.

ICPD Beyond 2014 and the Addis Ababa Declaration

In 2013, each of the world’s five regions organised a Regional Conference on Population and Development to review the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. The ICPD Beyond 2014 Review achieved the global consensus that investing in individual human rights, capabilities and dignity across multiple sectors, and throughout the life course, is the foundation of sustainable development. In the African region, the Addis Ababa Declaration (4) reaffirmed the commitments of ICPD and reviewed the implementation of its Programme of Action, acknowledging the gaps to be taken into account in its implementation beyond 2014. The Declaration also reaffirmed the Maputo Protocol and Plan of Action (see pgs. 9 and 10), emphasised the growth of the African youth population and the importance of adopting inclusive development policies and strategies.

(1) UNFPA (1994) “ICPD Programme of Action.” Available at: https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/event-pdf/PoA_en.pdf. Accessed 26/02/19.

(2) Ibid.

(3) UNPOPIN (1995) “From Cairo to Beijing: Women’s Conference Amplifies ICPD” Available at <http://www.un.org/popin/unfpa/taskforce/icpdnews/icpdnews9510/cairo.html>. Accessed: 26/02/19

(4) UNECA, AU, UNFPA (2013) “Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development beyond 2014” Available at: https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/addis_declaration_english_final_e1351225_1.pdf Accessed 26/02/19.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

In 1995, the Fourth World Conference on Women was held in Beijing. The conference produced the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, seen as the most progressive blueprint ever for advancing women's rights. The Platform for Action imagines a world where each woman and girl can exercise her freedoms and choices, and realise all her rights, such as to live free from violence or child marriage, to go to school, to participate in decisions and to earn equal pay for equal work.

The Beijing process unleashed remarkable political will and worldwide visibility on these issues. It connected and reinforced the activism of women's movements on a global scale. It reaffirmed the goals of the ICPD Programme of Action and also raised the possibility of the decriminalisation of abortion, inviting governments to "consider reviewing laws containing punitive measures against women who have undergone illegal abortions. (5)" The UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) leads the monitoring and review of the Beijing Platform For Action at the global level.

The Maputo Protocol

In 2003, the African Union adopted The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (6), better known as the Maputo Protocol. This protocol guaranteed comprehensive rights to women including the right to take part in the political process, to social and political equality with men, improved autonomy in their reproductive health decisions, and an end to female genital mutilation.

The Protocol is binding on all who ratify it. It came into effect in November 2005, after the minimum 15 of the 53 African Union member countries ratified it. As of January 2018, it had been ratified by 40 of the 55 AU Member States (7).



(5) UNPOPIN (1995) "From Cairo to Beijing: Women's Conference Amplifies ICDP" Available at

<http://www.un.org/popin/unfpa/taskforce/icpdnews/icpdnews9510/cairo.html>. Accessed: 26/02/19

(6) AU (2003) "Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa" Available at:

http://www.achpr.org/files/instruments/women-protocol/achpr_instr_proto_women_eng.pdf Accessed: 26/02/19

(7) AU (2018) "High Level Consultation on the Ratification of the Maputo Protocol." Available at: <https://au.int/en/newsevents/20180129/high-level-consultation-ratification-maputo-protocol>. Accessed 26/02/19

African Union Continental Policy Framework on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

The African Union's Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Continental Policy Framework (8) was agreed in 2005 in response to the call for the reduction of maternal and infant morbidity and mortality across the African continent. It was developed by the African Union Commission in collaboration with the United Nations Population Fund, the African Regional Office of the International Planned Parenthood Federation, and other development partners. The corresponding Maputo Plan of Action (2016 – 2030) (9) set out how this Framework would be operationalised and committed to ensuring universal access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services in Africa. The Plan of Action has been adopted by all countries in the ESA region.

Family Planning 2020

In 2012, at the London Summit on Family Planning, 41 governments adopted the commitments to address the policy, financing, delivery and socio-cultural barriers to women accessing contraceptive information, services and supplies, known as the FP2020 Commitments. FP2020 was renewed and expanded during the 2017 Family Planning Summit for Safer, Healthier, and Empowered Futures growing to include more than 120 commitment-making partners including governments, multilateral organisations, private sector organisations and youth-led civil society organisations.

FP2020 is based on the principle that all women, no matter where they live, should have access to lifesaving contraceptives. The commitments also address the integration of family planning within the continuum of care for women and children, including HIV-related services, as well as empowering women to decide whether and when they wish to become pregnant as well as how many children they wish to have (10). FP2020 works closely with key partners and existing mechanisms and contributes to the UN Secretary General's Strategy for Women's and Children's Health, 'Every Woman, Every Child, Every Adolescent' (11).



(8) AU (2005) "Sexual and Reproductive Rights: Continental Policy Framework" Available at: https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/30921-doc-srhr_english_0.pdf Accessed: 26/02/19

(9) AU (2016) "Maputo Plan of Action 2016–2030" Available at: https://au.int/sites/default/files/documents/24099-poa_5-_revised_clean.pdf Accessed: 26/02/19.

(10) FP2020 <<https://www.familyplanning2020.org/about-us#who-we-are>> Accessed: 26/02/19.

(11) EWECC <<http://www.everywomaneverychild.org/global-strategy/>> Accessed: 26/02/19.

Agenda 2030

More recently, the goals of ICPD and Beijing have been further reinforced within the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all UN Member States in 2015. The 2030 Agenda specifically affirms the right to sexual and reproductive health under Sustainable Development Goals 3 and 5 [SEE BOX]. However, there remains no globally agreed language on sexual rights.

BOX 1: Sexual and reproductive health and rights in the 2030 Agenda



SDG 3 – Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Target 3.3 “By 2030, end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and neglected tropical diseases and combat hepatitis, water-borne diseases and other communicable diseases.”

Target 3.7 “By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes.”

SDG 5 – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Target 5.3 “Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.”

Target 5.6 “Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences”.

UN Secretary General’s Global Strategy for Women’s, Children’s and Adolescent’s Health

The Global Strategy for Women’s and Children’s Health was launched by the UN Secretary General in 2010 and put into action by the multi-stakeholder ‘Every Woman Every Child’ movement. The strategy was updated in 2015 to include adolescents and to align fully to SDG targets, recognising that the survival, health and well-being of women, children and adolescents are essential to ending extreme poverty, promoting development and resilience, and achieving all the SDGs (12).

ESA Commitment on CSE and SRH services for adolescent and young people

The East and Southern Africa (ESA) Commitment was adopted in December 2013 by Ministers of Health and Education from 20 countries in East and Southern Africa in Cape Town, South Africa. The Commitment is a strategic tool that, for the first time, brought together Ministries of Education and Health to strengthen HIV prevention efforts and foster positive health outcomes by advocating for access to quality, comprehensive sexuality education as well as sexual and reproductive health services for young people in the region. An accountability framework was developed to monitor country and regional progress towards the agreed commitments developed and implemented by the Technical Coordinating Group, under the leadership of UNAIDS and with support from the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the East African Community (EAC) Secretariats (13).

SADC SRHR strategy and Scorecard

In November 2018, the Health Ministers of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) agreed on a new sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) strategy and an accompanying scorecard to assist countries to reach targets set out in the Sustainable Development Goals, improving health, reducing mortality, and realising the rights of all citizens, especially girls and women. The scorecard was developed collaboratively by UN agencies, civil society organisations, SheDecides and young people and will be used to monitor progress and advocate for changes to achieve action on the most pressing issues in the region, including reducing the extremely high rates of teenage pregnancy and maternal mortality which are often linked to unsafe abortion, improving access to contraception, supporting efforts to drive down rates of HIV and cervical cancer, and scaling up comprehensive sexuality education (14).

Other Frameworks

The frameworks and tools presented here are not an exhaustive list. Several other global development, human rights and legal frameworks also uphold the right to sexual and reproductive health and gender equality, including the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. It is also acknowledged by numerous treaty bodies, including the CEDAW Committee, the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and the Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (CESCR) (15).

(13) UNESCO (2014) "ESA Commitment Update" Available at:

<http://www.unesco.org/new/fileadmin/MULTIMEDIA/FIELD/Harare/pdf/ESACommitmentNewsletter22May2014.pdf>. Accessed: 26/02/19

(14) Zambian Eye (2018) "Health Ministers agree strategy to help SADC become a region where SheDecides" <<https://zambianeye.com/health-ministers-agree-strategy-to-help-sadc-become-a-region-where-shedecides/>> Accessed: 26/02/19.

(15) UNFPA (2009) "Frameworks and Policies on Sexual and Reproductive Health" Available at: https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/jahia-events/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/events/2009/policies_frameworks.pdf Accessed: 26/02/19.

B. Who We Are: Mapping Youth-Led Organisations Across East and Southern Africa

We undertook a mapping of youth-led organisations and movements currently working on SRHR and gender equality in the East and Southern Africa region. The methodology used was a combination of desk-based research, a stakeholder mapping undertaken during the South Africa Youth Consultation and key informant interviews with members of youth-led organisations and development partners in the ESA region. This is not meant as a complete list of organisations and movements working on these issues but is an attempt to capture a sample of how youth-led organisations and movements are tackling these issues in the ESA region and the innovative, effective approaches they take to seek accountability, as well as the challenges they face.

During the youth consultation in South Africa, the participants mapped the accountability ecosystem in the region, including public sector, civil society, private sector stakeholders and youth-led organisations. The other stakeholders identified are highlighted in the photos and diagram below and overleaf.



Stakeholder mapping snapshot

Public sector

African Union Commission
SIDA
ASRHR National Framework Technical Committee South Africa
UNFPA
SRH Technical working Group of Malawi
FHI 360
USAID
PEPFAR
DFID
GIZ
Danida
Irish Aid
National Gender Equality Commission Kenya
Ministry of Gender and Family Planning Rwanda
Zimbabwe National Family Planning Council

Private sector

Johnson & Johnson
Malkia Investments
McKinsey and Co.
GSK

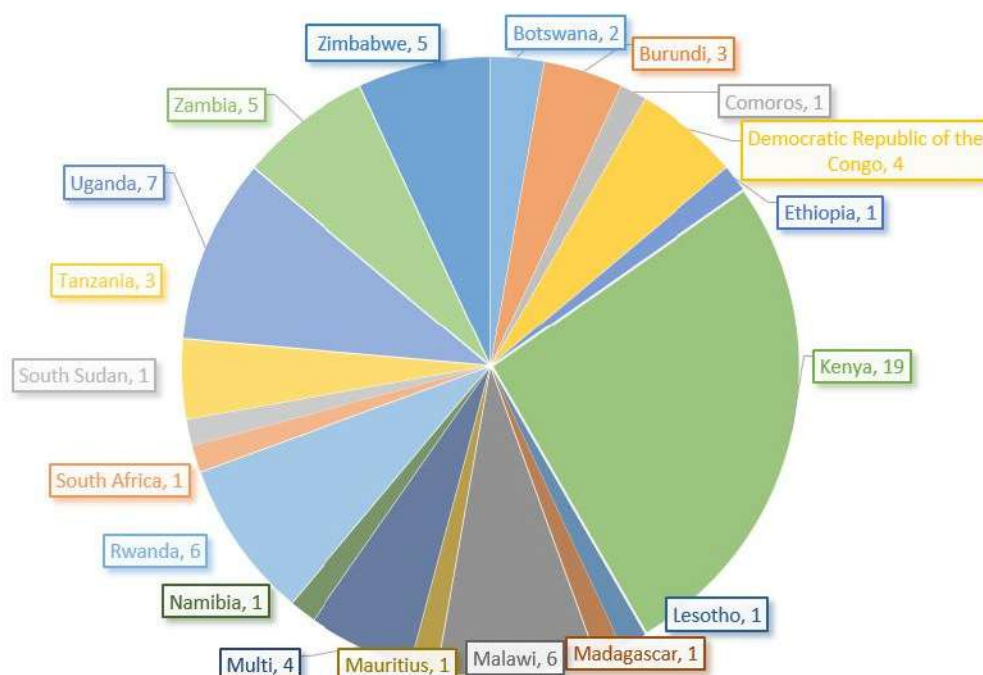
Civil Society

Sex Workers Education & Advocacy Taskforce
Fight Inequality Alliance
Women's Global IPAS
Restless Development
Network
MenEngage
Caritas
IPPF
Femina Hip
Amnesty International
SheDecides
IBIS Reproductive Health
Pathfinder International

Mapping of youth-led organisations

The mapping of youth-led organisations identified 72 youth-led organisations from 18 of the 23 countries in the East and Southern Africa region. The below chart displays the spread of youth-led organisations by country and highlights where further research is required. In particular, further research is required to identify youth-led organisation working in Angola, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Eswatini, Mozambique, Namibia and the Seychelles.

Youth-led organisations by country



The organisations work on a range of issues relating to gender equality and sexual health and rights, with several organisations working on multiple issues. The below wordcloud illustrates the issues these organisations mostly address.



3. CHALLENGES

Members of youth-led organisations who took part in key informant interviews and the Regional Consultation workshop shared the following barriers they commonly encounter in their accountability work on SRHR and gender equality which can be divided into social, economic and institutional barriers.

Social Barriers

Stigma acts as a barrier and is encountered in various ways by young people working on SRHR accountability. For example, young people who identify as LGBTQ+ reported that social stigma associated with their sexuality means they often cannot have an opportunity to engage with government and decision makers which hinders their ability to do accountability work. Others reported that they were stigmatised for just working on sexual health and rights.

“ Stigma related to abortion hinders our ability to sensitise communities and seek accountability for the implementation of post-abortion care services. ”
-Youth-led Organisation

Culture and religion is another social barrier young people face when working on accountability for SRHR. In particular for young women, where traditional structures have resulted in female participants not being seen as credible actors when meeting with decision-makers. For example, one participant noted that the pastoral religion her community follows doesn't enable young women to take up leadership roles, which has impacted her work.

In some countries in the ESA region, anti-LGBTQ+ laws mean confidentiality is critical to protect LGBTQ+ people working on accountability. For LGBTQ+ groups, attending a government or NGO meeting risks declaring themselves as members of the LGBTQ+ community without any guarantee of confidentiality, putting themselves and others at risk.

Accessibility is another issue which particularly affects young people living with disabilities who are carrying out accountability work, with many meeting spaces not physically accessible to them. Accessibility also came up in terms of making meeting content understandable for young people. Technical language and jargon, and a lack of understanding of the government system and key relationships, can also be a significant barrier for young people who work at the grassroots level.

Economic barriers

The funding environment for accountability work acts as another barrier to youth-led accountability for SRHR and gender equality. Young people reported that as funding is controlled by donors, young people feel they need to push the donor's agenda rather than advocating for their own specific issues. In cases when supported by their government, young people feel they can't criticise the government. Even those who don't directly receive funding from the government may feel reluctant to criticise them if they rely on them for access to certain spaces.

“ We don't do as much social accountability work as we would like to because the government provides facilities and places for training. ”
– Youth-led organisation

Young people reported that resources for youth-led accountability work are limited and that where funding is available, donors often lack an understanding of the work required before and after in order to fund it sufficiently.

“ Organisations must compete for the same funding which creates silos and is a barrier to good partnerships. ”
– Youth-led organisation

Young people also perceived a general decrease in prioritisation of health and SRHR funding in the ESA region with governments prioritising other issues such as economic development and terrorism. Young people reported that donors don't tend to trust young people to manage funds and therefore there are a lot of “gatekeepers” and “middlemen” involved who cut off direct access to funds for youth-led organisations.

Young people leading organisations have direct experience of the delivery of their work but are not given the authority to make changes to budgets based on that learning, whereas donors can change costs mid-programme. Young people also reported that they are not always aware of donor's budget rules and procedures. It was suggested that donors cut out “middlemen” organisations and directly fund grassroots youth-led organisations while providing them with support and training to manage the funds.

Institutional Barriers

Young people reported that laws around public demonstrations such as Public Order Policies, place restrictions on how they can mobilise on an issue. In addition, complex political structures make it difficult to know who makes decisions on a particular issue. When young people do know who to approach, they often find that they don't want to positively engage with young people. Young people reported that in many contexts, influencing at the local government level is often heavily dependent on bribes and corruption to persuade leaders to support certain issues. Grassroots youth-led organisations cannot compete with big business or other larger organisations pushing an agenda.

Young people reported that decision-making is often centralised particularly in capital cities with a lack of regional bodies. The infrastructure of government is not supportive of local level accountability, and in some contexts the people that hold the responsibility are based within the centralised system of national government making them harder to access.

Young people also face complexities in navigating a political system they don't understand. There are multiple levels of decision making and issues can be pushed from one department to another, without one clear lead. For example, it could be the responsibility of the Ministry of Gender, the Ministry of Youth or the Ministry of Health.

“We don't have a properly functioning coordination mechanism or council of NGOs locally. Sometimes we are quite unaware of what other organisations are doing and there's a danger in duplicating efforts or sending the wrong messages that aren't in line with government's priorities.”
– Youth-led Organisation

In some contexts, attitudes of health care providers and negative values can influence quality of service provision, resulting in a lack of SRHR services accessible for young people. For example, in South Africa all doctors are legally bound to provide abortion services, however young people we spoke with reported that only 1 in 4 will provide these services.

Young people reported that it's difficult to understand the complexity of SRHR power holders and players in the SRHR ecosystem, how they link together and where to therefore seek opportunity. Young people also observed politics between different partners such as UN Agencies or bilateral donors as a barrier to accountability, with different actors each having their own agendas and politics to navigate.

4. INNOVATIVE APPROACHES

Our consultations with young people identified many ways in which young people seek accountability on SRHR at different levels. Below we have highlighted some of the innovative approaches taken by youth-led organisations.

Accountability through media

ASHWA, a youth-led organisation operating in Busia, Uganda. Through a partnership with a local radio station, they raise awareness and seek accountability from district health officers. The radio station records their sessions during advocacy meetings with local leaders and later airs them for the entire population to listen in and join the discussion.



“We engage the community through radio talk shows. Listeners call in and ask questions to the leaders about what they have done.”

– Eric Omondi

For example, community members called into radio station to say they cannot access HIV drugs on time, and call on the local leader to ensure the stock is replenished by the national drug authority in a timely manner. Using radio has also had a positive effect on the organisations profile and reputation in the community, resulting in greater access to carry out their work advocating for youth-friendly health services.

Hola Africa, founded in 2012 in Johannesburg, is an interactive online space which uses audio, visual, and written material to challenge perceptions and norms, raise awareness and engage in activism on African queer women’s experiences and issues.

Its contributors are queer women from across the African continent and diaspora. The collective focuses on adding to the African female sex and sexuality narrative by publishing stories by African women on sex and sexuality while also engaging in online activities and campaigns, on everything from masturbation and safe sex to cyber violence.

16. Bashi, G. et al. (2018) “Young feminists’ creative strategies to challenge the status quo: a view from FRIDA” Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13552074.2018.1526464>. Accessed: 26/02/19.

Online activism has been a method employed by youth-led organisations and movements either as a standalone strategy or as a component of a wider campaign or activity. Examples identified include:

- Warembo Ni Yes' ('Ladies Say Yes') movement aimed to mobilise thousands of young Kenyan women to vote for the 2010 Constitution of Kenya, raising awareness of how their rights would be improved under the new Constitution and galvanising their support for the vote.
- In 2014, there were widespread protests in reaction to a video of a young woman being forcibly stripped of her clothes in public. Offline protests were reinforced online through the hashtag #MyDressMyChoice. The campaign resulted in the arrest of the culprits and the introduction of an amendment to the law recommending a jail term of up to 20 years for those found guilty of invasion of privacy.¹⁷

Accountability through performing arts

Circus Zambia, a youth-led organisation, is seeking improve the relationship between government officials and the community members in the townships in which they work. The project is in response to a recent incident in which an unarmed community member was shot by police in a public space. Circus Zambia realised that without bridging the divide between government officials and members of the township communities, situations in which they interact with each other can often escalate into conflict.

Through circus, they are working with young people to create a show about this incident which also educates citizens, in particular young people, about their rights when they are engaged with police.



Love Prize is a youth-led organisation founded by University Students in Rwanda, who identified that pastors were preaching abstinence as there was an increase in female students falling pregnant and contacting HIV.

"So we thought, abstinence is not working. Why don't we promote safe sexual behaviours rather than abstinence"
-Florentine Kamirwa

Love Prize organises Zumba dances. They go into cabarets and nightclubs where they know sex workers and drug users gather. There they use the opportunity during Zumba dance to talk about safe sex and HIV. In the daytime, they reach out with mobile services that offer free HIV testing and free condoms.

17. Marler, I. et al. "Reclaiming culture, resisting co-optation: young feminists confronting the rising right" Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13552074.2018.1523274>. Accessed: 26/02/19

Swadakta is a youth-led organisation based in Kenya which works on HIV and AIDS prevention and sexual health. Swadakta is a dance crew which performs in public places such as on public buses and in schools to create awareness of HIV and AIDS and to distribute condoms.

“While dancing, we raise awareness of how people can avoid getting HIV or how to live with AIDS. There are also a lot of circumcised ladies in our area. We are anti Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) and also raise awareness of why FGM is harmful for women.”

– Andrew Koroso

This method has been effective in raising awareness among the community and decision makers.

Accountability through harnessing technology

Uthabiti is a youth-led organisation based in Kenya using blockchain technology to campaign for sexual health rights and increase access to safe and legitimate sexual health products by holding pharmacies to account for selling authentic products. According to Uthabiti, the Pharmacy and Poisons Board of Kenya (PPB) has stated that up to 30% of health products in Kenya are counterfeit. Using Blockchain technology, Uthabiti has developed an app which checks the legitimacy of health products.

Uthabiti has built partnerships with manufacturers, who allow the organisation to compile the batch numbers of each product in its system. Patients can use the app to scan the batch number of a medicine or product to verify its authenticity before purchase. Through its partnership with the Pharmacy and Poisons Board of Kenya (PPB), Uthabiti has compiled a list of certified pharmacies. Community members can send a text with a verification code provided by the pharmacy to a centralised number which responds to confirm that the pharmacy is verified and its products are legitimate. Uthabiti has used evidence from its work to engage the Council of Governors of Kenya on the need to ensure the County Government hospitals in Kericho and Uasin Gishu County safeguard their sexual health products supply chain from counterfeit products.



5. RECOMENDATIONS

How to strengthen youth-led accountability for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and Gender Equality

Restless Development and UNFPA consulted with young people from across East and Southern Africa to identify how development agencies and young people can work together to strengthen accountability for SRHR and gender equality.

From this process, four themes were highlighted as priority areas for young people, under which eight key recommendations have emerged. Recognising the need to visualise and find practical solutions, each recommendation is accompanied by a suggestion for a way this could be implemented.

1. Create an enabling environment for Youth Leadership

During the consultations, it was recognised that many development agencies and civil society stakeholders have made positive steps towards meaningful youth engagement in accountability programmes. For example, participants highlighted programmes supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, Marie Stopes South Africa and ActionAid, which are empowering young people, and creating the space for them to hold decision makers to account for their SRHR and gender equality commitments.

“ We need to shift negative attitudes held by some agency and NGO staff towards young people. ”
– Youth Advocate

Young people shared that whilst the rhetoric of youth engagement is known, many young people felt that in practical terms they still faced discrimination. For example being actively excluded from high-level meetings and tokenistic participation in forums without any real opportunities to influence decision-making.

Whilst young people consulted recognised their own power to lead and drive accountability work, they also recognised the importance of building a strong accountability network and working in partnership with local and national civil society, and government bodies, to strengthen their work. Therefore the recommendations set out below seek to create an enabling environment for youth within national CSOs & Forums, NGOs, UN Agencies and Government Bodies to support the integration of young people into existing accountability work.

What

Facilitate regular interaction between development practitioners (especially within INGOs and UN agencies and) and young people.

Build knowledge and skills of staff in youth engagement – theory & practice.

Include young people in existing decision making structures.

Ensure young people are represented on panels and platforms.

Ensure a diverse range of young people's perspectives are gathered during youth consultations – so no perspectives are left behind.

Create stronger links between National CSOs and youth-led organisations to increase connections and build capacity in key areas for accountability.

Strengthen communications between young people and NGOs and UN Agencies.

Evaluate CSOs, INGOs and UN agencies on levels of youth participation.

How

Invite youth organizations and activists into your office to share their work in informal spaces (e.g brown bags, staff retreats).

Include youth engagement as part of compulsory and regular training for staff.

Open up a position on your governance board for a young person – fully supported as an equal member.

Establish policy that your Director will not speak on a panel if there is no young person represented.

Minimum requirement to consult 3 youth organisations/networks – incl. young women and marginalised groups.

Establish a two-way skills exchange programme between INGOs, CSOs and youth-led organizations – on topics incl advocacy, and youth engagement.

Trial the use of platforms including Facebook & Whatsapp as a mode of communication and reporting.

Support young people to lead “youth audits” of structures and programmes.

2. Leverage and diversify resources for Youth-Led Accountability

Throughout the consultations, a lack of financial resources was repeatedly highlighted as a key barrier for young people to be able to lead accountability work. Young people we spoke with recognized the opportunities that have been made available for some, such as sponsorship from NGOs and some UN Agencies to participate in youth conferences and regional or global forums.

“ Give young people enough support and resources in a timely manner, do not expect them to volunteer their time. ”
-Development Practitioner

However, young people identified that there is not consistent funding to support youth-led accountability work at a grassroots and national level. For example, whilst a select number of young people may receive sponsorship to attend an event and speak with decision makers, they do not have the resources to collect and analyse data to hold decision makers accountable or to hold meetings to feedback to community members.

The recommendations below give suggestions for how to broaden out funding opportunities.



What

Expand funding opportunities beyond participation at events and conferences.

Open up funding opportunities to diverse range of youth organisations and movements supporting marginalised young people.

Increase information and transparency about funding opportunities.

Increase skills and capacity of youth-led organisations in budgeting and financial management, to build trust with donors.

Encourage NGOs to allocate funding for youth engagement in accountability work.

Foster collaboration rather than competition between NGOs, CSOs and youth organisations in the SRHR sector.

Encourage government delegations to include and support youth representatives.

Explore non-traditional funding mechanisms, to support grassroots organisations.

How

Funding youth-led organisations to gather evidence prior to presenting at conferences & hold people accountable for outcomes.

Establish a regular "partners audit" to assess and evaluate existing youth partners, creating opportunity for others apply.

Invite youth-led organisations to "hot-desk" in your office, and support them to use internet to access information.

Include financial management training and mentoring as key component of any funded programme, alongside guidance documentation.

Require down-stream NGO partners to budget and publish reports on youth participation, incl. highlighting marginalised groups.

Grants with co-creation, to encourage CSOs to collaborate with youth-led organisations, ensuring young people feed in at early stages.

Lobby for a Government Minister to bring a Youth Delegate as part of official delegation to high-level forums and international conferences.

Trial funding informal youth organisations to undertake accountability work, for example, by using Mobile Money.

3. Increase diversity of Young People leading accountability work

A recurrent theme from the consultations was the lack of diversity amongst young people leading accountability work, especially in engaging with decision makers at high-level events. Young people we spoke with identified that marginalised young people who are most affected by the poor national implementation of SRHR and gender equality commitments, are not represented or supported to hold decision makers to account.

“ After all, young people know their needs, they know what they want, they know what kind of services are missing – they are the population that is affected. ”
–Development Practitioner

In unpacking the barriers faced, the young people we consulted shared their experiences of unclear and unequal selection processes, with unnecessary academic and language barriers within selection criteria, and how this has resulted in “cherry picking”, fostering the “professionalisation” of youth advocacy. The recommendations below put forward solutions for how to open up opportunities for a more diverse range of voices, and support experienced advocates to “pass on the torch”.

Drawing from direct experience, young people also identified additional barriers young people from marginalised groups, notably LGBTQ+ young people and young people with disabilities, faced in advocacy spaces. The recommendations below also put forward a set of suggestions for how organising partners can take responsibility for ensuring safe and accessible opportunities for young people to engage with decision makers and development stakeholders.



What

Ensure recruitment and selection of youth representatives is simple and transparent, ending the practice of “cherry picking” youth delegates.

Remove academic and education requirements to participation in accountability initiatives.

Remove language barriers for young people to engage in advocacy and accountability work.

Support for marginalised groups – notably young women, LGBTQ+ young people, and young PwD to participate.

Ensure safe physical and social spaces for marginalised groups – notably young women, LGBTQ+ young people and Young PwD.

Build the skills and experience of a diverse range of young people in accountability.

Encourage experienced advocates to mentor upcoming activities to capacitate and support the growth, learning and exposure of new youth representatives.

Use creative media to engage young people “outside the room” at events and conferences in two way conversation.

How

Share opportunities widely, inform young people on criteria they are being selected upon and ask co-select representatives with a youth panel.

Remove degree requirement from all applications, placing greater value on community volunteering and work experience.

Ensure translation support – whether formal or informal – is available at events and conferences.

Allocate a member of staff to outreach to local LGBTQ+ and PwD youth organisations, and share opportunities as they arise.

Host training in key skills for accountability (e.g data collection & analysis) for youth activists and youth-led organisations.

Provide a briefing to all attendees on appropriate language and terminology – especially regarding gender, sexuality and disability inclusion.

Establish a “buddying” programme at the next national, regional or global conference.

Support young creatives and social media influencers to attend conferences and develop engaging content.

4. Foster greater accountability to communities

The consultations highlighted the unintended consequence of youth mobilisation at the global level, (e.g. Sustainable Development Goals). Young people we spoke with shared they felt resources have been stretched, or even taken away from engaging with national or regional SRHR frameworks.

In addition a lack of awareness of these platforms, and how they link to local decision making and a lack of transparent structured opportunities for young people to engage, result in young people focusing on global movements. This, young people shared, can result in accountability and advocacy work appearing “far away” from the grassroots, and difficult for community members to understand the impact it could have on their Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. The recommendations below include ideas for how to re-energise youth participation in national and regional platforms.



“ Young people must be responsible and go with accurate data when approaching decision makers. ”
-Youth Advocate

Young people also shared challenges of being a “youth representative” where it is often unclear which constituency they are representing, who they are accountable to and what feedback mechanisms are available. Young people shared experience of feeling they did not have adequate or quality evidence to fully represent community perspectives, relying on their personal testimonies.

Young people shared examples of how they have developed informal feedback mechanisms, such as live tweeting their activities at events and presenting back to colleagues during team meetings. The recommendations below include suggestions for how to establish feedback mechanisms, to enable community members to hold their youth representatives more accountable.

What

Strengthen young people's knowledge & understanding of global & regional accountability frameworks and interlinkages with local commitments.

Increase awareness amongst communities on role of accountability in improving access to SRHR (e.g. service provision, reducing stigma).

Increase public awareness of local, regional and national accountability work – alongside global conferences.

Encourage young people to undertake community consultations to identify issues prior to deciding accountability priorities.

Encourage young people to undertake community consultations to identify issues prior to deciding accountability priorities.

Increase the quality of evidence gathered, analysed, and used by young people for accountability work.

Strengthen links between youth spaces and main conferences – to ensure young people can accurately report on outcomes.

Encourage young people to provide feedback to community members on outcomes following meeting with decision makers.

How

Make mapping documents and advocacy briefings (e.g. on links between SDG & SADC indicators) open source, and share with youth organisations.

Support young people to present their accountability work at community meetings.

Use UN Media channels to feature stories of youth-led accountability – linking local activism to global issues, and sharing with other media.

Call on regional and national forums (incl. AU, SADC, EAC) to increase space for youth-led accountability, sharing these recommendations.

Ask young people to present community perspectives during a pre-conference session, host side-events and plenary sessions.

Include data analysis as key activity in any youth-led accountability programme.

Set-up a screening room adjacent to conference and in Country Offices for young people to watch and interact with conversation.

Include a “Community Perspectives” section in feedback reporting for young people to complete and share back with sponsoring partners.



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