

Policy and Financing that works for African Women's Sexual & Reproductive Health Rights

A call to action at the 10th Africa Conference on Sexual Health and Rights (ACSHR) June 2022, Sierra Leone.

PREAMBLE

Standing together as feminists, gender justice activists and representatives of Women's rights organisations from Eastern, Western, Southern and Central Africa working with Sex worker communities, queer and LGBTQ+ communities, safe abortion rights activists, adolescent girls and women and girls with disabilities' rights advocates;

Noting the contribution of African States in ensuring the attainment of Goal three of Aspiration one of the AU Agenda 2063 and the Maputo Protocol on expanding access to quality health care services, particularly for women and girls and promoting and protecting their rights; the Sustainable Development Goals three and five on health and wellbeing, and on gender equality and empowerment of all women respectively;

Aware of the existing challenges in attaining these commitments including inadequate prioritisation of SHRH in national health budgets, systemic reproduction of patriarchy and a heteronormative culture through national policies and laws that perpetrate anti-women's rights rhetoric, limited investment in equitable research on SHRH, shrinking civic space for feminist and Women Rights Organisations and continued humanitarian crises on the continent.

Cognisant of our role in promoting the wellbeing and dignity of adolescent girls, women and girls with disability, Sex workers, Queer and LBT+ and protecting their rights to attaining comprehensive sexual reproductive health and rights.

Recommitting today, at the 10th Africa Conference on Sexual Health and Rights (ACSHR) to promote the attainment of an enabling policy environment and financing for African women and girls; particularly, adolescent girls, women and girls with disabilities, Sex workers, Queer and LBT+ Women Sexual Reproductive health;

Call on governments, donors, feminist funds, Women Rights Organizations and the private sector to prioritise the following recommendations to achieve greater impact in policy and financing outcomes for African Women's SRHR.

Increase flexible and sustainable financing for SRHR

1. Increase health budgets to more than 15% in compliance with Article 26 (2) of the Maputo protocol and the realisation of the 2019 Africa Government's commitment of USD \$200M to investment in health through stronger domestic and continental funding mechanisms. Financing efforts must be particularly directed towards increasing access to SRHR services and commodities, strengthening the health systems and building the capacity of health workers.
2. Invest in frontline women's rights and community-led organisations which are well-positioned in most marginalised communities and have built an understanding of the core needs of affected groups but remain significantly under-resourced to deliver the urgently required change.



"We keep saying that we do not speak the donor language. It is high time for the donor to learn and speak our language [the grassroots language]."

**Winy Obure, Executive Director,
Teen Seed, Kenya**

3. Fund informal organisations and associations, collectives, independent activists and influencers to leverage the gaps between mainstream and most marginalised women's groups on the continent.
4. Expand beyond traditional platforms and spaces of popularising funder calls to reach smaller, informal organisations and independent activists. This can be done through the use of regional physical convenings and Bulk SMS.

Enact and promote progressive policy and legal frameworks for SRHR

1. Demonstrate political commitment to review existing colonial and abusive laws. In addition, it is critical and timely to formulate, resource and implement policy and legal frameworks that challenge socio-economic, cultural and religious barriers to SRHR for African women and gender-nonconforming people.
2. Sign, ratify and fully domesticate the Maputo Protocol and all other enabling International and Regional instruments that are anchored on protecting, sexual and reproductive health and rights of most marginalised groups of women, girls and gender-nonconforming people.

3. Promote rule of law and good governance and an enabling environment for all Women's Rights Organisations by repealing regressive policies and laws against gender equality and those that impose barriers on access to sexual and reproductive health services.

Promote Meaningful participation and partnerships to enhance SRHR

1. Build lasting partnerships with feminist funds, and women's rights organisations in the areas of research, monitoring, and evaluation to advance SRHR for women and gender-nonconforming people.
2. Create programs that expand and promote comprehensive sexuality education for all adolescents and young people in schools and those out of schools in all African States.



Contributors: 133 individuals that include sixty-seven participants at the policy and financing dialogue on prioritising African women's SRHR at the 10th ACSHR Conference in Freetown; and, sixty-six feminists, gender justice activists, and representatives of Women's rights organisations from Eastern, Western, Southern and Central Africa reached through an online survey.

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