



#SARSYC2019 Communique



SARSYC 3RD EDITION

10 - 13 July 2019: Lusaka, Zambia

Introduction and Background

Established in 2015 the Southern African Regional Students and Youth Conference on Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SARSYC) is biennial event which acts as a strategic platform and forum for collaborative brainstorming and development of solutions to the Southern Africa's youth Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) challenges. SARSYC harnesses the potential of young people and other stakeholders, and assists them to develop consensus on matters related to young people's sexual and reproductive health. First held in Zimbabwe in 2015, the event has since been staged in South Africa in 2017, with the latest edition being hosted in Zambia in July 2019 under the theme Plan, Prioritise and Prevent.

SARSYC 2019 Rationale

The 3rd edition of SARSYC represented young people's commitment to improve the SRHR landscape in the region, and shared the following observations:

Recognising the need to **Plan** to address young people's contemporary health challenges and the realization of their sexual reproductive health and rights.

Reinforcing the importance of **Prioritizing** young people, with special emphasis on marginalised populations including students in institutions of higher learning with a special focus on female students, LGBTI+, young people with disabilities and those living with HIV.

Remembering that **Prevention** is a key strategic imperative which should be mainstreamed in programing to address youth SRH challenges, including early and unintended pregnancies (EUP), unsafe abortions and new HIV infections.

Re-affirming the conference's belief that education is one of the key pillars to address youth challenges, including breaking the cycles of poverty, the agenda towards keeping girls in school forms part of the core mandate of each edition of SARSYC.

Recalling the resolutions of past conferences, particularly the 2017 edition where young people expressed commitment to adopt and encourage protective behaviours among each other; to be the change, taking ownership, responsibility, leadership and control over sexual and reproductive health matters in their countries without waiting for governments to do it for them. The young people further committed to use their skills and innovation to spearhead creative programs that are youth cantered; and to meaningfully participate and spearhead advocacy efforts towards scaling up youth access to SRH services.

Further recalling 2017 resolutions calling for governments, Regional Entities, Health Providers, UN Agencies, CSOs, Parents and Guardians and other Relevant Entities In Southern Africa to Promote collaborations between research organisations in knowledge and evidence generation; Promote youth participation at all levels and strengthen interventions and funding towards comprehensive sexuality education; continue supporting programs that promote young people's access to sexual and reproductive health services; support youth led research for meaningful advocacy work among other resolutions.

Appreciating the development of the SADC SRHR Strategy, with the active participation of young people, and the adoption of the strategy by member states to provide a framework for programing and policy formulation and other supporting model laws and policies at SADC level.

Also appreciating that young people in the region, including key populations are committed to be part of the solution and to be active participants in coming up with solutions to address challenge they face.

Further Appreciating that SADC governments have developed various laws and policy documents to guide SRH interventions but with limited implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

Concerned that young people's SRH challenges keep escalating with emerging issues like unsafe abortions claiming lives of young people. Mortality from unsafe abortion disproportionately affects women in Africa, with the continent accounting for 29% of all unsafe abortions, and 62% of unsafe abortion-related deaths.

Further noting with concern that uptake of SRHR services, including contraception services remain low among young people.

Mindful that new HIV infections among young people keep rising, although the region is recording significant progress HIV treatment across all ages. In Sub-Saharan Africa, 3 in 5 new HIV infections among 15- 19 year olds are among girls.

Realising the need for strengthened accountability among governments to quality services to the youths in the face of serious economic melt- down in most of the region's economies.

Bearing in mind that we are already in the 4th year of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) implementation and only less than a year before reaching the FP 2020 mark, but with still high unmet need for contraceptives among SADC countries. In East and Southern Africa, unmet need for family planning is also high, at 25 per cent, representing 49 million women who either use traditional family planning methods or no method at all yet wish to avoid pregnancy.

#SARSYC 2019 Resolves that Students and Youths Should

- 1) Systematically plan and strive to be active participants in policy advocacy, particularly in the development of reproductive health related policies and laws in their respective countries.
- 2) Continue to coordinate themselves, share lessons and learn from each other and further develop their own action oriented plans localised to their specific context targeting other young people to promote responsible sexual and reproductive health choices.
- 3) Take part in prevention by being a responsible generation that takes charge of its health, adopts informed health choices, and takes up SRH services in available facilities in their localities.

¹World Health Organisation ²⁰¹⁹: Preventing unsafe abortion. Key Facts. Adapted from:
<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/preventing-unsafe-abortion>

²UNAIDS ²⁰¹⁸ Estimates: At a Glance. Adapted from:
https://www.unaids.org/en/resources/infographics/women_girls_hiv_sub_saharan_africa

³UNFPA East and Southern Africa. Family Planning. Adapted from:
<https://esaro.unfpa.org/en/topics/family-planning>

- 4) Prioritize innovation in addressing the socio-economic challenges they face through harnessing the power of the digital platforms accessible to them; take advantage of the information age to come up with creative initiatives.
- 5) Further prioritize the interest of regional health outcomes prior to the interest of those involved in program activities.

SARSYC 2019 Recommended College Authorities to:

- 1) Prioritise provision of inclusive and comprehensive youth friendly SRH services (including rape kits, safe abortion, sanitary products, sensitivity training for staff and HTS. The services should also cater for marginalised groups like students with disabilities, students living with HIV, the LGBTIQ+ among others.
- 2) Plan and implement student centred programs that foster students' access to and uptake of services, and promote responsible sexual behaviours.
- 3) Prevent sexual harassment in tertiary institutions by developing, reviewing and enforcing sexual harassment policies in all colleges.
- 4) Provide data and research information that can guide programming, noting the importance of academic freedom in fostering this agenda.
- 5) Prioritise provision of services to students staying on and off campus.

SARSYC 2019 Recommended the Donor Community and Civil Society Organisations to:

- 1) Plan and implement quality and sustainable programs.
- 2) Prioritize and increase resource allocation towards SRHR youth focussed interventions as part of efforts to achieve SDG targets in Southern Africa.
- 3) Further prioritise support towards capacity building of youth led and youth focused organisations to ensure delivery of high quality programs in youth focused interventions in the region.
- 4) Prevent stimulating divisions among young people's organisations by supporting more collaborative initiatives among civil society organisations as opposed to fostering competition among the organisations.
- 5) Support evidence based youth driven advocacy approaches on SRHR for students and youth.

SARSYC 2019 urged Governments to:

- 1) Plan, recognise, and institute platforms or structures that support youth participation in decision making.
- 2) Review relevant laws and policies in each respective country to address child marriages in line with SADC SRHR Strategy, SADC Model law on ending child marriages and other regional guidelines.
- 3) Further prioritise increase in resource allocation towards youth centred programs, particularly those that address the socio-economic challenges of young people including sexual and reproductive health challenges in line with the Abuja Declaration.
- 4) Ensure availability of quality SRHR services for young people.
- 5) Honour their commitments at national, regional and international level to address youth SRHR challenges and further commit to accountable leadership, and eliminate leakages in resource allocation and management for youth programs.
- 6) Ensure there is coordination among various government line ministries and stakeholders to ensure collective effort in addressing youth SRHR challenges.

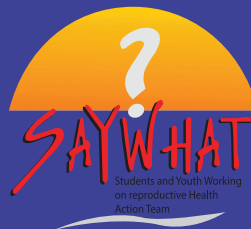
SARSYC exhorted the SADC Secretariat to:

- 1) Monitor the member states' implementation of Regional Policies.
- 2) Hold governments accountable to the implementation of policies ratified by the member states.

The conference further resolved:

- 1) To submit this communique to the next International Conference on AIDS and STI's in Africa (ICASA) to be held in Rwanda in December 2019 as the official voice of students and youth in Southern Africa in matters related to their SRHR.
- 2) To prioritise strengthening comprehensive sexuality education and life skills development among youths, and promote access to menstrual hygiene by young girls.
- 3) That the 4th edition of SARSYC be hosted by either Malawi or Botswana in July 2021.
- 4) That in-between SARSYCs, SAYWHAT should coordinate in-country interventions as part of the monitoring and follow-up processes around implementation of SAYSC 2019 resolutions.

1 Southern Africa SRH Voice



SRHR Conference



SARSYC Conference



Southern African Regional Students and Youth Conference

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