to the Youth Agenda in Southern Africa!

4th Edition Report

24-25 August 2022,
Lilongwe, Malawi, Sunbird Capital Hotel

Executive Summary

From the 24th to the 25th of August 2022, students and youth in Southern Africa gathered in Lilongwe, Malawi, for the 4th edition of the Southern African Regional Students and Youth Conference (SARSYC). SARSYC is a regional strategic platform that brings together students and youth, civil society organizations, researchers, academics, advocates, activists, government officials, the UN Family and other key actors to engage in solution focused dialogues that aim to address public health and education needs of young people. The regional conference convenes diverse stakeholders to unpack the public health needs of young people from a non-clinical perspective, analyzing epidemiological characteristics of how young people are impacted by both non communicable and communicable diseases. The conference is convened by SAYWHAT on a biennial basis and the 2022 edition was held in collaboration with the Government of Malawi, Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) and the Girls Activists Youth Organization (GAYO).

The 4th edition of the conference was held under the theme ***Reshaping, Re-planning and Re-Committing to the Youth Agenda in the Southern African Region!*** This theme was born out of the need to re-energize and redirect youth development conversations to the pre-COVID-19 commitments and priorities such as the SADC SRHR Strategy, the Regional Strategy for HIV and AIDS Prevention, Treatment and Care and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights among Key Populations adopted in November 2017, the SADC Protocol on Education and Training, East and Southern Africa Ministerial Protocol on Education (ESA), United Nations High Level Meeting (UNHLM) on TB targets and commitments, Health and Wellbeing of Adolescents and Young People, Agenda 2030, Agenda 2063 and the Maputo Plan of Action. The conference was further designed to interrogate policy and practices in the quest to address public health challenges in the wake of new emergencies like COVID-19 and other climate change induced humanitarian crisis situations.

The following objectives guided the 2022 SARSYC edition conversations:

- To create a platform of re-engaging young people on their health and education rights through analyzing the implementation of related regional and international policy frameworks
- To consolidate the re-commitment agenda on young people's health and education rights by Southern African member states
- To design a roadmap that ensures the implementation of conference outcomes with young people leading in all processes

The conference was physically attended by 279 young people from 9 Southern African countries, namely Botswana, Kingdom of Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. More than 200 young people followed the conference virtually.

The program was structured to facilitate the delivery of technical presentations and analysis of regional reports on public health and education, with space allocated for participatory dialogues that invited interrogation by young people.

On the 1st day, the conference started with an introductory session which included welcome remarks and keynote presentations that located the theme of SARSYC within the public health

and education landscapes in the region. Partners and youth networks presented solidarity messages to mark their support for the agenda of the conference. The delegates were then split into 3 main summits with the broad objectives of laying the foundation for conference deliberations. The first summit focused on adolescents, girls and young women, dubbed the ***Web for Life* Summit**. The second summit was a space for young men and other genders branded as the **Mugota young men's Summit**. The third summit was the inaugural **Research Indaba**, space created for budding researchers**.** At the end of these summits, delegates reconvened for an **Ideas Festival**, a session which allowed delegates to interrogate and contribute to innovative approaches to address young people's health and education issues. Focus was also given on understanding key facets of inclusive health and education programs in the contemporary era, including specific issues pertinent to the LGBTIQ+ community.

The 2nd day of the conference was geared to promote interface between young people and policy makers in a **High Level Engagement Platform**. The day started with the official **Opening Ceremony** of the 4th edition of SARSYC with the guest of honour being the Minister of Youths and Sports in Malawi who is also the leader of Government in the Parliament of Malawi, Honorable MP Richard Chimwendo Banda. The guest of honour was standing in for the President of Malawi his Excellency Dr L Chakwera who is also the outgoing chairperson of the SADC summit of heads of state and government. Other keynote speakers were the Deputy Head of Mission and Head of Development Cooperation from the Swedish Embassy in Zimbabwe – Dr Berthollet Bwira Kaboru, the President for Society for AIDS in Africa – Dr David Parirenyatwa, LUARNA Vice Chancellor – Professor Emmanuel Kaunda. All the speakers resonated on the need to commit more technical and financial support to young people as a means to facilitate their ability to innovate and concrete their imagined features in as far as their health and education is concerned. There was emphasis for member states in Southern Africa to relook at their youth development models and check whether they are still relevant to the emerging and unique needs of diverse groups of young people.

Delegates were then split into conference tracks that allowed delegates to zoom in on pertinent thematic areas relating to youth health and education. The tracks covered a broad range of issues ranging from TB and youth, young people's access to inclusive education, bodily autonomy, young people's access to SRH and progress in the implementation of SDGs amongst other focus areas.

The closing ceremony was then held, with the key highlights being the handing over of the conference communique to the President of Society for AIDS in Africa, Dr David Parerinyatwa who was the closing ceremony guest of honour. The SAA president flagged out International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA) to mainstream the conference communique in the continental bodies' priority areas for young people. He further highlighted plans to support SARYC in the integration with West, East, Central and North African blocks.

The conference ended in the evening with a **Culture Night** in which delegates had an opportunity to experience the diverse cultures of delegates from their varying national backgrounds. The Culture night was graced by the Minister of Tourism and Hospitality in Malawi Honorable Michael Usi and other government representatives including the director of reproductive health, Dr Fanny Kachale.

The key success outcomes of this conference are centered and inspired by the theme of the conference which aimed at refocusing, replanting and reshaping the SRHR collective agenda

for the region. In line with that, the conference ushered a new program and policy direction that set a new vision for the region in which young people challenged policies and practices by various actors and interfaced with higher level authorities to inform regional priorities for young people. The key advocacy messages and commitments by young people are captured in the conference communique which outlined the young people's big dreams and the specific actions to be taken by actors. Key among the **recommendations for Governments of Southern African Countries** from the conference are for them to:

a) Move from rhetoric to action and implement the commitments and policies signed at national, regional, and global level, and further increase financial investment and political commitment to the youth development agenda.
b) Support the economic empowerment of youths by availing entrepreneurial opportunities and developing economic policies that create jobs and opportunities for the young people
c) Be pro-active in adopting protective initiatives that shield young people from the adverse effects of emergencies like COVID-19
d) Recommit and strengthen collaboration between governments and young people in addressing challenges affecting youths by not only consulting them in policy and program development but involving them across the cycle of policy and program implementation

Further r**ecommendations from the conference to Donors, Civil Society, Private Players and Colleges Authorities** are for them to:

a) Design flexible programs that take into account realities of targeted communities. Closed project proposal calls suffocate the creativity of youths and communities to design effective programs
b) Strengthen funding and implementation of programs that address contemporary and previously neglected SRHR issues relevant to youths including TB and mental health.
c) The need to design interventions that reflect the prevailing socio-economic dynamics such as unemployment, labor migration and crisis-related displacement, within broader frameworks to promote SRHR of young persons.
d) The need to increase investment towards research to inform learning and evidence-based advocacy, programming and policy formulation. Specific steps may include:

    i. Investing in research skills transfer to ensure young persons are capacitated to conduct research.
    ii. Decolonizing research and academia around SRHR and developmental concerns of young persons in Africa to include harnessing the power of indigenous knowledge systems and other learning alternatives responsive to the unique sociocultural, economic and political context in the respective countries

Acknowledgements

The 4th edition of Southern African Regional Students and Youth Conference (SARSYC) owes its success to collaborative efforts and dedication of different players in the region. As the Conference Convener, SAYWHAT, its management, board and staff expresses its utmost gratitude to the support that was rendered by various development partners.

The organization honors the young people; the students and youth from the participating 9 Southern African countries and the multitudes of young people who virtually followed the conference for demonstrating commitment to be active players in Replanning and Reshaping the SADC health and education landscape.

SAYWHAT extends its deep appreciation to the government of Malawi, Lilongwe University of Agricultural and Natural Resources (LUANAR) and Girls Activist Youth Organization (GAYO) for hosting the conference. The hospitality extended to the delegates in the warm heart of Africa provided the perfect environment for fruitful deliberations on youth health and education issues.

The organization would like to further express its appreciation towards the various partners that provided financial support towards the conference. These include The Embassy of Sweden in Zimbabwe, UNESCO, Education Out Loud, the Stop TB Partnership, UNFPA, and SAIH.

Special mention goes to our esteemed partners who directly supported the different young people to attend the conference. These includes the Centre for Sexualities and Aids and Gender, Youth Empowerment for Transformation Trust (YETT), SAFAIDS, National AIDS Council of Zimbabwe, GALZ, University of Pretoria, and Y+ Global.

SAYWHAT further acknowledges the SADC Parliamentary Forum and respective Parliamentarians from the Parliament of Zimbabwe, Parliament of Zambia and Parliament of Eswatini.

SAYWHAT was thrilled with the quality discussions led by the various speakers during the conference. These include the esteemed delegates and panelists who delivered technical presentations and speeches and facilitated dialogues on very topical issues relevant to the youth.

The organization further appreciates the hosts of the various tracks and side events held during the conference which allowed in-depth dialogue on critical matters in health and education.

The organization also extends its appreciation to all the technical team in the media and communication including members of the media, the camera persons and the team that provided live broadcasting of the conference via several social media platforms.

The conference would have not been well organized without the dedication and hard working spirit of the volunteers from the hosting nation, Malawi.

Acronyms

AfriYAN	Africa Youth and Adolescents Network
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ARASA	AIDS and Rights Alliance for Southern Africa
ARV	Anti-Retroviral
AU	African Union
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease of 2019
CSA&G	Centre for Sexuality, AIDS and Gender
CSE	Comprehensive Sex Education
EOL	Education Out Loud
ESA	East and Southern Africa Ministerial Protocol on Education
GALZ	Gays and Lesbian of Zimbabwe
GBV	Gender Based Violence
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICASA	International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa
LGBTIQ+	Lesbians, Gays, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex and Queer
LUANAR	Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources
PrEP	Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADC PF	Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum
SARSYC	Southern African Regional Students and Youth Conference
SARSYC	Southern African Regional Students and Youth Consortium
SAYWHAT	Students and Youths Working for reproductive Health Action Team
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Populations Fund
UNHLM	

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1. Introduction

SAYWHAT hosts a regional consortium branded as the Southern African Students and Youth Consortium (SARSYC).The consortium runs a portfolio of projects which are designed to implement intercountry advocacy work that harness on binding and legal frameworks governing young people's socio-economic rights in the Southern African region. To implement this is the Girls Education and Advocacy in the Region (GEAR) Alliance. The GEAR alliance currently implements several projects and initiatives that include the GEAR project and the Sexuality Education for Transformation (SET) Project. The regional consortium is also mandated to deliver as one of its key deliverables the Southern African Regional Students And Youth Conference amongst other intervention and the GEAR alliance is key in the hosting of the conference. The conference marks the peak of SAYWHAT`s regional programming as coordinated under the Southern African Students and Youth Consortium.

This report summarizes the key deliberations - including advocacy messages, challenges, opportunities and lessons - drawn from the delegates of the 4th edition of the Southern African Regional Students and Youth Conference (SARSYC). This year's edition was hosted by one of the GEAR alliance member based in Malawi, thus the Girls Activists Youth Organization (GAYO) in partnership with Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR). The 4th edition of SARSYC took place in Lilongwe, Malawi, from the 24th to the 25th of August 2022. It was held under the theme, 'Reshaping, Re-planning and Re-Committing to the Youth Agenda in the Southern African Region!'

i. About SARSYC

The idea of SARSYC was born out of the desire by young people to create a regional, inclusive platform where they can deliberate on key public health and education issues. This platform would also enable them to interface with strategic partners such as government line ministries, civil society organizations and development partners who play a pivotal role in the delivery of young people's health and education policies and services. In pursuit of this desire, young people convened the inaugural SARSYC in Harare, Zimbabwe in 2015. It was envisioned as a biennial conference with the rationale of influencing the commitments of Southern African member countries to capture the lived realities of diverse groups of young people in the context of their unmet sexual health and developmental needs.
Prior to SARSYC, SAYWHAT hosted national level conferences and platforms in an endeavor to afford students a voice with regards to the public health delivery system. The influence of these national conferences grew in scope and mandate to include public health and young people's education. Following the inaugural SARSYC edition in 2015, the 2nd and 3rd editions were held in Johannesburg, South Africa and Lusaka, Zambia in 2017 and 2019 respectively.

ii. About the 4th Edition of SARSYC

The 4th edition of SARSYC was held from the 24th to the 25th of August 2022 in collaboration with the Government of Malawi, LUANAR and GAYO. It was held under the theme ***Reshaping, Re-planning and Re-Committing to the Youth Agenda in the Southern African Region!*** The theme was born out of the need to re-energize and redirect youth development conversations to the pre-COVID-19 commitments and priorities such as the SADC SRHR Strategy, the Regional Strategy for HIV and AIDS Prevention, Treatment and

Care and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights among Key Populations adopted in November 2017, the SADC Protocol on Education and Training, East and Southern Africa Ministerial Protocol on Education (ESA), UNHLM on TB targets and commitments, Health and Wellbeing of Adolescents and Young People, Agenda 2030, Agenda 2063 and the Maputo Plan of Action.

Due to the several emerging development issues that have been negatively affecting young people such as the COVID-19 pandemic, mental health and other non-communicable diseases, SARSYC IV was a platform where these issues would be interrogated with the end goal of re-aligning all interventions to the youth agenda. The direct engagement of key development and implementing partners, government agencies and UN Agencies was critical in enabling the co-creation of practical solutions, strategies and commitments on addressing health rights as well as inclusive access to education in the Southern African Region.

iii. Conference Objectives

The SARSYC 4th edition was held under the following objectives:

- To create a platform of re-engaging young people on their health and education rights through analyzing the implementation of related regional and international policy frameworks
- To consolidate the re-commitment agenda on young people's health and education rights by Southern African member states
- To design a roadmap that ensures the implementation of conference outcomes with young people leading in all processes

iv. Conference Delegation

The 4th edition of SARSYC was attended by young people and policy makers from 9 Southern African countries, namely:

- Botswana,
- Eswatini,
- Lesotho,
- Malawi,
- Mozambique,
- Namibia,
- South África,
- Zambia, and
- Zimbabwe

A total of 249 and 279 people attended the conference on day 1 and day 2 respectively as outlined in the table below.

Table 1: Conference Delegates

DAY 1	
Total number of males	123
Total number of females	122
Other gender	4
Total number of participants	**249**

DAY 2	
Total number of males	132
Total number of females	143
Other gender	4
Total number of participants	**279**

v. Structure of the Conference

The conference was held over two days from the 24th to the 25th of August 2022. The program outline was designed in such a way that ensured the delivery of technical reports and presentations and participatory dialogues to young people. It also included tracks for in-depth issue based detailed deliberations with experts and youths to allow an exchange of ideas and to foster debates on policy directions.

On the first day, the conference started with an introductory session which included welcome remarks and keynote presentations that located the theme of SARSYC within the health and education landscapes in the region. Partners and youth-led organizations also presented their solidarity messages to mark their support for the conference. The delegates were then split into 3 main summits with the broad objectives of laying the foundation for conference deliberations. The first summit focused on adolescents, girls and young women, dubbed the Web for Life Summit. The second summit was a space for young men and other genders branded as the Mugota young men's Summit. The third summit created space for budding researchers and this was branded as the original Research Indaba. At the end of these summits, delegates reconvened for an ideas festival, a session which allowed delegates to interrogate and contribute to innovative approaches to address young people's health and education issues. Focus was also given on understanding key facets of inclusive health and education programs in the contemporary era, including specific issues pertinent to the LGBTIQ+ community. The conference delegates later met in the evening for a Bonfire Night where they networked and engaged in edutainment activities such as playing games themed on health and education.

The second day of the conference was geared to promote interface between young people and policy makers in a High Level Engagement Platform. The day started with a summary presentation of first day deliberations by the conference rapporteur. Official opening remarks and strategic speeches were delivered before the guest of Honor, the Minister of Youths and Sports in Malawi, Honorable MP Richard Chimwendo Banda who then delivered the keynote address. The Embassy of Sweden in Zimbabwe also gave a technical presentation on the need for intersectionality in SRHR programming, and students were given an opportunity to share with the high-level delegates some highlights of the issues they covered in the previous day. Delegates were then split into some conference tracks that allowed delegates to zoom in on pertinent thematic areas relating to youth health and education. The closing ceremony was then held, with the key highlight being the handing over of the conference communique to the guest of honour, Dr David Parerinyatwa, in his official capacity as the President of Society for AIDS in Africa. The conference ended in the evening with a Culture Night in which delegates had an opportunity to experience the cultures of delegates from their varying national backgrounds. The event was graced by officials from the Ministry of Tourism and Hospitality in Malawi and other government representatives, including the Minister of Tourism and Hospitality, Honorable Michael Bizwick Usi.

2. Conference Proceedings

Conference Day 1: Opening Sessions

i. Welcome Remarks

Presenter: Dr Judith Kamoto, Acting College Director for LUANAR

Dr Judith Kamoto as the Acting College Director for LUANAR acknowledged the attendance of delegates from the SADC region representing several sectors, that is, Members of Parliaments (MP), government officials, representatives of the civic society groups, members of the diplomatic call and young people who were the key stakeholders at the conference. Dr Kamoto highlighted that the deliberations of the two-day conference are anchored and influenced by mutual respect and the tolerance for diversity. The College Director underscored that the deliberations shall be youth centric in having engaging conversations which are deep and introspective. She further noted that all this was necessary in shaping the destiny of youths in Southern Africa which was largely dependent on their access to education and health rights. In wrapping up her welcoming note, Dr Kamoto urged young people to embrace, appreciate and learn from the deliberations to shape better societies as that will translate into progressive development of Southern African communities.

ii. SARSYC: The Journey and SARSYC Objectives

Presenter: Benevolence Taguta, a SAYWHAT Board Member

The presentation was delivered by Ms. Benevolence Taguta, a SAYWHAT Board Member who briefly outlined the SARSYC journey, providing key highlights that have characterized the journey. She noted that SAYWHAT was created to contribute to the creation of a healthy generation in Zimbabwe, an effort that has expanded in scope to the Southern African region. This expansion has been characterized by the hosting of SARSYC 2nd Edition and 3rd Editions in South Africa (2017) in partnership with the University of Johannesburg and in Zambia (2019) in partnership with the University of Zambia.

The presentation by the board member implored development partners to continue with funding efforts for the initiatives like SARSYC as these would have the ripple effect of feeding directly into the health and education needs of young people. In summing up, the board member raised 3 key issues:

- That young people should take inspiration from the ideals of young people who formed SAYWHAT in 2003 to continue advocating for the health and education of youths
- That the donor community should keep on supporting initiatives like SARSYC which brings together youths and policy makers
- That there is a need for mainstreaming inclusion by leaving no one behind.

iii. Unpacking the SARSYC Theme

Presenter: University of Amsterdam - Assistant Professor - Dr Choolwe Muzyamba

"*We must interrogate today's challenges and opportunities within this historical context, asking ourselves those difficult questions including what has gone wrong? Where have we gone wrong? What*

worked well and how can we effectively work within our historical complexities, and today's challenges and opportunities to promote the youth agenda in SADC," Prof Choolwe

The presenter gave a socio-political outline of the context in which young people in Africa live. He underscored the need for an honest reflection of where each respective African country and its society is coming from in a bid to map out a better future that is youth centered.
In essence, Dr Muzyamba unpacked the conference theme to entail giving a new form to the youth agenda while taking a different approach cognizant of the changes in the socio-economic environment. The Professor appreciated the fact that 60% of the Southern African region's population is below the age of 25, implying that there are huge opportunities to push for youth centric agendas in health and education policies and programs..

The presenter acknowledged that a cocktail of plans and strategies have been ratified at regional level to advance the youth agenda and these include but not limited to;

- SADC Declaration on Youth Development Empowerment (2015)
- SADC Youth Empowerment Policy Framework (2021)
- African Youth Charter (2006)

However, Dr Muzyamba noted that in spite of these strategies young people are greatly affected by the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, poverty, unemployment, lack of access to education exacerbated by lack of social investment by governments. He outlined fundamental challenges that have derailed effective implementation of policies in Southern African, chief among them include:

- Little attention paid to the feasible and accessible local resources in preference of the western-approved and academically attractive solutions
- Presence of structures that disempower the locals, local youth, local workers, etc. but privilege those that are already in power
- The infantilization and characterization of locals as lacking agency within social change processes
- The domination of politicians and consultant's worldviews and not the contextual local realities.

He added that some of the policies are mere instruments of domination by the powerful over the marginalized and promote disempowering initiatives branded as empowerment projects. He further pointed out that as a bloc, there is need to do away with youth policies that work on paper but are divorced from the needs and realities experiences of the youth. The professor implored the youths to be united as they can achieve great success as evidenced by the Rhodes or fees must fall campaign and Treatment Action Campaign that influenced the affordability of anti-retroviral drugs at the turn of the century.

Key among the recommendations from the presenter were:

- Governments to allow youths to formulate their own agendas instead of imposing policies
- There is need for collaboration with marginalized communities to bring about inclusivity in youth centered policies
- Innovative interventions must be feasible and practical for the betterment of young people
- Utilizing locally available resources to address challenges that communities face
- Promote local innovation within communities

- Ensure creation of local ownership of interventions.

iv. Conference Solidarity Messages

GEAR Alliance (represented by GAYO)

Presenter: Richard Batch

The presenter provided an overview of GEAR Alliance noting that the Alliance was initiated during the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic which disrupted access to education for girls in rural and farming communities in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. He noted that the Alliance consists of four organizations that include Girls Activists Youth Organization (Malawi), National Alliance for Quality Education (Zambia), Farming Communities Educational Trust (Zimbabwe) and SAYWHAT as the leading organization. Richard pointed out that the rationale of the Alliance is to ensure access to education by girls in rural and farming communities of Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In pursuit of the Alliances' mandate, the presenter stressed the need for policy makers and funding partners to ensure that young people have their health and educational needs met while striving to attain sustainable development goals 3 and 4. However, Batch bemoaned the inefficiencies of the SADC SRHR frameworks that were failing to address the needs of young people, a sentiment he shared with Dr Muzyamba.

Young People's Network

Presenter: Luckmore Pamhidzai

"*The sustainability of the HIV response highly depends on our capacity to reach the most marginalized, including young people, and to address their specific needs. The effectiveness of programmes and interventions targeting young people can only be ensured with the full participation of young people in their design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.*" Luckmore Pamhidzai

The representative of Young People's Network and AfriYAN applauded SAYWHAT for convening a progressive regional platform to unravel young peoples' development needs with a particular focus on health and education. He emphasized that the needs of young people take center stage as the building blocks of a healthier society, and called upon stakeholders to prioritize consultations, implementation and evaluation of young people centered responses. However, the presenter opined that persons with disabilities are continuously neglected during implementation of interventions even in policy areas in which they are the key focus, and this has worsened their vulnerability.

Restrictive policies or laws that are draconian in nature are argued to have militated against the young people's enjoyment of sexual and reproductive health and rights particularly in Zimbabwe. The YPN representative indicated that the current Public Health Act bars young people below the age of 16 years from accessing SRH and HIV/AIDS related services without parental consent. In summing up his solidarity speech, Luckmore Pamhidzai implored Zimbabwean authorities attending SARSYC to push for the removal of the parental consent clause within the Public Health Act to facilitate ease of access to sexual reproductive health services by young people.

Centre for Sexuality, AIDS and Gender (CSA & G)

Presenter: Hulisani Khorombi

In her presentation, the representative for the CSA & G noted the importance of platforms like SARSYC in the quest to reconnect with other players in the SRHR field for the purposes of learning and sharing. She highlighted that since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has not been many forums where people could convene to discuss their challenges, and further noted that in the drive to address youth SRHR, there is always the need for players to come together and deliberate on strategies of youth SRHR response and programming. She therefore concluded by thanking SAYWHAT and every stakeholder involved in making the 4th SARSYC a possibility

SADC Youth Parliament Malawi

Presenter: Patience Mwenyenyembe

In the pursuit of representing young people, the SADC Youth parliamentarian congratulated SAYWHAT for bringing together youths from the region to interface with government officials, civil society groups and distinguished scholars to focus on young people. She advocated for meaningful youth inclusion in development priorities as the conference was a manifestation of passions to find common solutions to common problems plaguing youths in the SADC region.

She noted that young people are the custodians of the future, and their development is paramount to Africa's own development. She further highlighted that the SARSYC theme calling for reshaping, replanning and recommitting to the young agenda is one that calls upon all stakeholders to take action to implement the outcomes deliberated during SARSYC and called upon government officials, policy makers and development players to take seriously the needs of young people. She further recommended youth networks and organizations that work in the Southern African region to collaborate and work together as they implement outcomes and resolutions of such regional conference.

3. The Web for Life, Mugota and Research Indaba Conventions Summits

3.1. Web for Life

3.1.1. Introduction to the Web for Life

Web for Life Network is a platform for female students to dialogue on their peculiar health and education issues that have a bearing on their well-being and access to sexual reproductive health services and rights. Since the inception of SAYWHAT, gender and human rights approaches formed the epicenter of the agency's programming, and this necessitated the mobilization of young women in Zimbabwe to initiate a broad platform for adolescent girls and young women. Web for Life is a safe space for adolescent girls and young women to convene and redress the challenges they face with regards to their health and education rights as well as a platform for advocacy to advance their needs. In this regard, Web for Life entails a means to which the voices of adolescent girls and young women are integrated to pursue this cohorts' advocacy agenda. The movement is designed for young women to facilitate policy direction to achieve gender equality and gender equity in young peoples' development.

3.1.2. Engaging with Girls and Young women

Presenter: Memory Mutsaka, Embassy of Sweden in Zimbabwe

"*When getting in different places of association, young girls and young women should not restrict their roles to hearing presentations and speeches. Rather, women and girls should seize the opportunity to tell their own story, sharing their experiences and inspire others, shape policy direction, and learn from one another,*" Memory Mutsaka

This session was spearheaded by Memory Mutsaka from the Embassy of Sweden in Zimbabwe. The segment served to reflect on the status of sexual and reproductive health and rights as well as education in the Southern African region. Memory noted the positive strides in accomplishing social/behavioral change with regards to education and health. Young people were ascertaining their sexuality without fear and seeking health services where necessary.

In line with the presenter's call for young women to priorities sharing their own experiences, the strides made in education as a development tool to emancipate young women was illustrated by the success stories of two young women from Malawi who shared their testimonials. The young women came from marginalized communities within the deep roots of Malawi, and explained the importance of educating girls to break the vicious cycles of poverty in marginalized communities.

3.1.3. Reality Check: A Glance into COVID-19

Talkshow

This session was carried out in the form of a Talk Show where girls and young women shared their experiences, challenges and lived realities during the COVID-19 period. The following were key deliberations from the panel;
Melody from Zimbabwe discussed the issue of teenage pregnancies, forced marriages, unemployment and school dropouts. She was of the view that empowering the girl child is key in addressing these challenges. As a solution, she highlighted how she ventured into empowering herself and other women around her. As an entrepreneur in the Makeup and

cosmetics business, she uses this opportunity to provide tutorial lessons, and transfer skills to aspiring women entrepreneurs on a low fee. She noted how her efforts contributed to keeping girls occupied and helped them avoid negative behavioral practices.

Wadzanai from YPN Zimbabwe talked about exploitation. She noted that during lockdowns, many young women were stuck at home with perpetrators of gender based violence, and added that it was difficult to go out and report as movements were restricted. Her organization responded to this challenge by adopting social media engagement as a means to reach out to young people.
The other speaker was Thato from SAFAIDS, a representative of the LGBTQI+ community. They highlighted that they faced heightened discrimination prejudice, loss of employment and disruption of normalcy during the pandemic. As a solution, they highlighted the need for strong advocacy to push for the formulation of anti-discriminatory policies.

3.1.4. Track 1: Progress in Biomedical prevention mechanisms for young women in Southern Africa

Presenter - Pangaea Zimbabwe Aids Trust

The brief session outlined the biological-technological advancements that will be at the disposal of young women in ascertaining their sexual and reproductive health rights. It was noted that biomedical HIV protection measures are a work in progress and are inclusive of vaginal rings, prep pills, long oral injectables of PreP, HIV vaccines and oral PreP vaccinations.

3.1.5. Track 2: Adolescent and young women's access to education in the Southern African region

Presenter -FAWEMA

The presentation focused on advocacy of gender sensitive policies that benefited the girl child at primary school level. These policies would ensure the ease of access to education and empower the young generation to have a voice within the public spheres. The FAWEMA representative urged girls and young women to assert their rights and occupy their space in society without having their rights trampled on.

3.1.6. Recommendations/Key Asks

Based on the aforementioned concerns and feedback from participants, the Talk Show and other deliberations from the Web for Life Convention, the proffered recommendations to address these challenges include:

- Ramping up advocacy for a conducive environment and instituting interventions that are inclusive of the LGBTIQ+ community
- Investments in e-learning to cope up with crises such as pandemics
- Strong advocacy for policies that advocate for the girl child's access to education
- The need to step up and educate other women on how they can use social media without feeling unsafe
- The need to address women and girls' menstrual hygiene needs including in times of emergencies like COVID-19
- The need for female representation in decision making boards
- Capacity building in entrepreneurship skills

- Promotion of uptake of new Biomedical HIV protection measures in the pipeline which are inclusive of the vaginal ring, PREP pill that is smaller, long oral injectables of PREP, HIV vaccines, and Oral PREP Vaccination

3.2. Mugota/Young Men's Summit -24 August

3.2.1. About Mugota Young Men's Summit

SAYWHAT`s programming recognizes that holistic gender and SRH responses requires the meaningful engagement of men and boys both and agencies of change and users of related gender and SRH services. This realization led to the organization creating a movement of men branded as Mugota/ Ixhiba/Young Men`s Forum which borrows its roots in the name of a hut where traditionally boys would sleep and naturally discuss masculinity related issues. The movement of young men has been escalated to feature as a pre-event at the 4th Edition of SARSYC branded as the Mugota/Young Men`s Forum Regional Summit.

Mugota/Ixhiba/Young Men`s Forum is movement created by SAYWHAT where young men discuss socio-cultural and economic issues while interrogating young men's' unmet sexual reproductive needs coupled with their responsibility to be agents of change in their communities. The summit was anchored on dialogues that unbundled emerging issues such as mental health, substance and drug abuse, economic empowerment and comprehensive sexuality education and the correlation between HIV/AIDS and Tuberculosis (TB).

3.2.2. Contextualizing regional issues- An analysis of the SRHR terrain for young men in Southern Africa

Presenter: – Nelson Banda (Zambia National Men's Network for Gender and Development)

Nelson Banda noted that Zambia National Men`s Network for Gender and Development was formed to change societal perspectives which view gender as a "women's issue". He highlighted that gender is broad and there is need for gender mainstreaming in all development facets for young people. He noted that in most Southern African states there is a general lack of facilities for men to speak about real issues affecting them , for instance, in most general hospitals across Southern Africa, there is lack of facilities specifically for men`s health needs such as counseling facilities for men.

Mr. Banda further noted a depressing trend of men not speaking out as this is perceived as a feminine issue and this is leading to most men committing suicides. Nelson Banda noted the value that socialization plays in shaping men`s behaviors and highlighted that the family is the first school to shape men's behaviors during the child development stage. He noted that his organization has created a platform for men to "cry on each other's shoulders", that is, young men receiving counseling services from fellow men which can be used as a model in other Southern African states adding that this model works very well in addressing the health needs of young people, particularly young men.

Discussion points.

- Southern African communities are more protective of the girl child over the boy child. It was noted that there is a need to shift from such a phenomenon to ensure that the rights and needs of both girls and girls are prioritized and met.
- A participant applauded the initiative by Zambia National Men's Network for Gender and Development of creating spaces for men to men counseling and noted that this model needs to be replicated in other countries to ensure accessibility to comprehensive services.
- A participant highlighted that Africa in general and SADC in particular has major problems in the form of laws which are not in harmony thus leaving a lot of gaps in service uptake and accessibility by young men.
- Negative cultural norms and practices leave young men with negative masculinity which leaves them at a risk of engaging in risky sexual behaviors, drug and substance abuse coupled with a general poor health seeking behavior.

3.2.3. An analysis of young men's health prioritization in the public health sectors of SADC member states

Presenter: Berthollet Bwira Kaboru, - Embassy of Sweden in Zimbabwe

The presenter highlighted the need for prioritization of young people's development by all stakeholders, that is, government officials, policy makers, funding partners and young people themselves leading at the forefront. He highlighted the need for young people to look for all options available to respond to their daily health challenges. Dr Kaboru further noted that young people need to be able to have solution-based interventions in addressing their daily challenges.

He further emphasized the need for the generation of evidence as it determines the best response mechanism including on having a cost benefit analysis in devising initiatives and programs aimed at addressing community problems. He also highlighted that prioritization of young people's development goals is a process and not an event, that is, development players and policy makers must ensure that there is an enabling environment adding that there is need for them to be up to date with the problems facing young men in their communities, nation, regionally and internationally.

He noted that public health systems in most countries focus more on girls and women at the expense of young men and added that this phenomenon can only be changed if young men use evidence-based approaches to fight the systematic segregation of young men`s health priorities. He reiterated that the research on men and public health makes young men`s issues to be ignored by policy makers who are supposed to create an enabling policy and administrative environment for access to health by young men.

Further encouragements from the presenter were:

- Young people to generate evidence and to document them so as to push for the issues affecting young men to be taken seriously by all duty bearers.
- Young men to take a leading step in advancing young men's health needs
- Development practitioners to come up with empowerment initiatives that targets young men in order to solve unemployment and its interlinked challenges

- Dr Kaboru noted that the Embassy of Sweden in Zimbabwe is happy to partner with young people in SRHR and empowerment programs and applauds the partnership between SAYWHAT and Embassy of Sweden in Zimbabwe in the delivery of the health needs for young people in Zimbabwe.

Further Discussion points

- Representative from Malawi Youth Council highlighted that development priorities for young people are now being determined by the donors with predetermined objectives thus limiting the innovativeness of young people. He implored donors to make open calls for proposals to ensure that young people develop community-based responses to their challenges.
- Dr. Kaboru highlighted that there is a need for a paradigm shift in programming and encouraged young people to find a niche in the development priorities of donors. He encouraged young people to look for these kind of calls from donors and be creative enough to link their community based responses to the needs of the donor. For instance, a call for proposals on climate change can be linked to SRHR priorities within communities but this requires creative thinking.
- He highlighted that the Swedish Embassy in Zimbabwe in an effort to understand young people`s challenges engages with the Youth Sounding Board under the European Commission which advises the Embassy with information on the depth of problems young people are facing.

3.2.4. Youth and TB Response in Africa

Presenter: Abdulai Sesay – Stop TB Partnership

Mr. Sesay contextualized TB as a contagious disease which is one of the leading causes of death in the world. Interventions to stop the spread of TB are of crucial importance. However, the COVID-19 pandemic shifted attention away from TB and other traditional illnesses such as HIV and AIDS. Mr. Sesay highlighted that there is a paradigm shift in TB response that calls upon multifaceted approaches in TB responses and elimination. He called upon stakeholders in TB programming to ensure the effective and active involvement of youths and adolescents in TB responses in an effort to maximize impact of the interventions.

He added that meaningful involvement of young people in TB responses assists in understanding how youths and adolescents should be involved in this paradigm shift, identifying what opportunities exist to support youth in TB elimination. There is a need to develop an Advocacy Road Map (ARM) that will enable youths and adolescents to participate meaningfully in TB elimination. Mr. Sesay added that the Stop TB partnership wants to see an empowered generation of youth to end TB.
He noted that youths are energetic and have the power to contribute to the growth and development of Africa, and this is ideal because the majority of Africans are young people. He highlighted that millions of youths are now on social media, hence they can leverage on that space to contribute to end TB using the power of social media and emerging technologies.

Importantly, the presenter highlighted that involving youths to engage and participate in decision making is a great way to contribute to addressing policy related issues on TB and added that the Stop TB Partnership is pleased to support young people centered innovations that seeks to empower young people on TB responses. He also applauded the current partnership existing between The Stop TB Partnership and SAYWHAT and noted that Stop

TB Partnership is determined to continue the partnership with SAYWHAT in TB response programming.

3.2.5. The interlinkages between HIV and TB among adolescents in Sub-Saharan Africa

Presenter: Gwendoline Chapwanya – Pangaea Zimbabwe Aids Trust (PZAT)

In an effort to unpack the interconnectedness of HIV and TB, the presenter noted that an estimated one-fourth of the worlds' populations is infected with TB and about 5-10% of those infected develop active TB in their lifetime. Gwendolyn underlined that statistically people living with HIV are 15-22 times more likely to develop active TB compared to those who are not infected. Progress has been made in the last decade with a 46% decline in new HIV infections amongst young people of ages 15-24 years. However, these gains are inadequate to end the TB epidemic by 2030 as in 2021 there was a sharp increase of 42% of new infections in young people.

The delegate attributed these developments to gaps in the health systems that include but not limited to:

- Lack of data on TB/HIV among adolescents
- Poor capacity to diagnose HIV and TB in patients
- Inadequate knowledge and skills among health workers towards the provision of integrated TB/HIV Care

The presenter proffered some solutions to redress these gaps which entails;

- Establishment and strengthening the mechanisms for delivering integrated TB/HIV services
- Reduce the burden of TB among people living with HIV and initiate early antiretroviral therapy
- Reduce the burden of HIV in patients with presumptive and diagnosed TB by providing HIV testing and counseling.
- Countries implementing collaborative TB/HIV activities should set their own country-specific process and impact targets for scaling up.

3.2.6. Reality Check: A Glance into COVID-19

A panel of young men shared their experience, knowledge and lived realities throughout the outbreak of the pandemic. These include;

- Loss of income as youths' businesses closed down due to imposed lockdown measures
- Depression/mental health challenges characterized the lives of youths as they struggled to adjust to the new normal and being confined for a long period of time
- Poor adherence to antiretroviral therapy because patients struggled to acquire their medication on time leading to drug resistance due to strict lockdown measures
- Advocacy work failed to gain traction due to restrictive measures thus resorting to online platforms which were limited to those who had internet and smart electronic gadgets
- Sexual reproductive health and rights interventions were side-tracked as funds from development partners and governments were channeled towards fighting the COVID-19 pandemic and development of vaccines

Quick reactions
Participants suggested that organizations ought to have contingency plans in place in the event of health emergencies and special focus on people with disabilities who are continuously on the receiving end of the spectrum. There was a need to promote and conscientise young people on health seeking behaviors particularly during crises.

3.3. Research Indaba - 24 August

3.3.1. Introduction and Background

The Research Indaba was a critical component of the 4th Edition of SARSYC in which current bachelors and postgraduate students had an opportunity to contribute in evidence building and share knowledge with high level delegates and fellow students. In this regard, students had an opportunity to share their research findings largely relating COVID-19 pandemic and its implications to the health and socio-economic wellbeing of young people, including their sexual and reproductive health.

The objectives of the Research Indaba were:

- To give students a platform to Present research findings emanating from students-research on the implications of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic on young-persons wellbeing across the Southern Africa region.
- Build the capacity of aspiring young people in key aspects of academic life and research.
- Motivate interest in scientific research and other non-academic careers, globally.
- Inform delegates on current trends in reproductive health research and policy among the youth.

3.3.2. Introduction and Background

In the build up towards hosting this inaugural Research Indaba during a SARSYC Conference, the conference convener, SAYWHAT, announced a call for proposals from young people to submit abstracts for research areas that relate to the COVID-19 and its impact on young people, including their sexual and reproductive health.

The call was advertised in various online publications and social media platforms in all the countries in Southern Africa. Youth structures and student structures in each respective country were also used as publicity platforms, encouraging youth to take part in the initiative by submitting their bids. This made the process a competitive one and exiting for young people.

A panel of experts selected the best abstracts and shared communication to the winning candidates to work on their respective research.

3.3.3. Research Indaba Delegation

The research Indaba was attended by various stakeholders representing students and youth, members of the academic field, civil society organisations, representatives from UN Agencies, Civil society organisations among other delegates. This enabled rich discussions on each respective research area, while at the same time providing a platform for the student

researchers to learn from experts not only on technical aspects of research but also the relevant reach areas they focused on.

3.3.4. Research Presentations

The following are the researches presented during the Research Indaba,

3.3.4.1. Development and Implementation of the SADC SRHR Strategy. Young People's Perspectives

Presenter: Jephiter Tsamwi - Advocacy and Communications Consultant

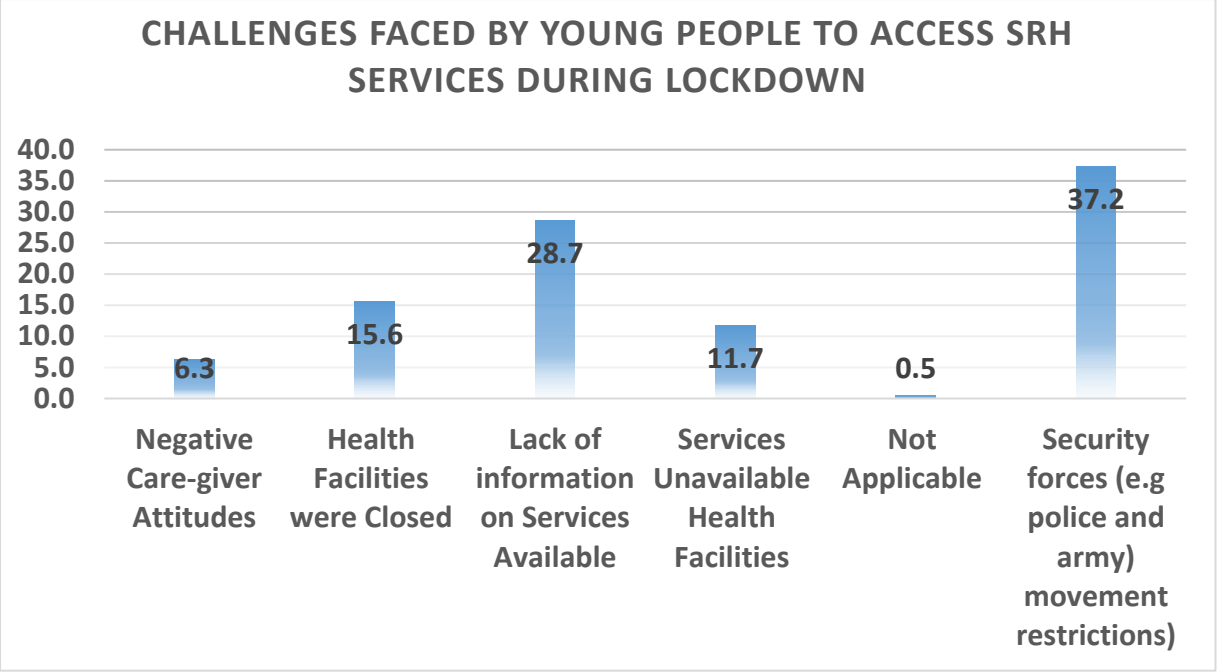
Introduction

The research Indaba started with a research presentation that sought to highlight results from a study that was conducted as part of implementing a key recommendation from the 3rd edition of SARSYC which was held in Lusaka, Zambia. During the previous conference, students called for stakeholders to establish consultative platforms in which young people can give feedback regarding strategy formulation and implementation process for it to reflect the wishes of young people in the region. To ensure effective implementation of the strategy, the Students and Youth Working on Reproductive Health Action Team (SAYWHAT) initiated a consultative process with young people to understand how young people have and are interacting with the strategy, both at regional and country level. This was done through an online survey. Results from this survey were presented during this 4th edition of SARSYC.

The key results from this survey were as follows;

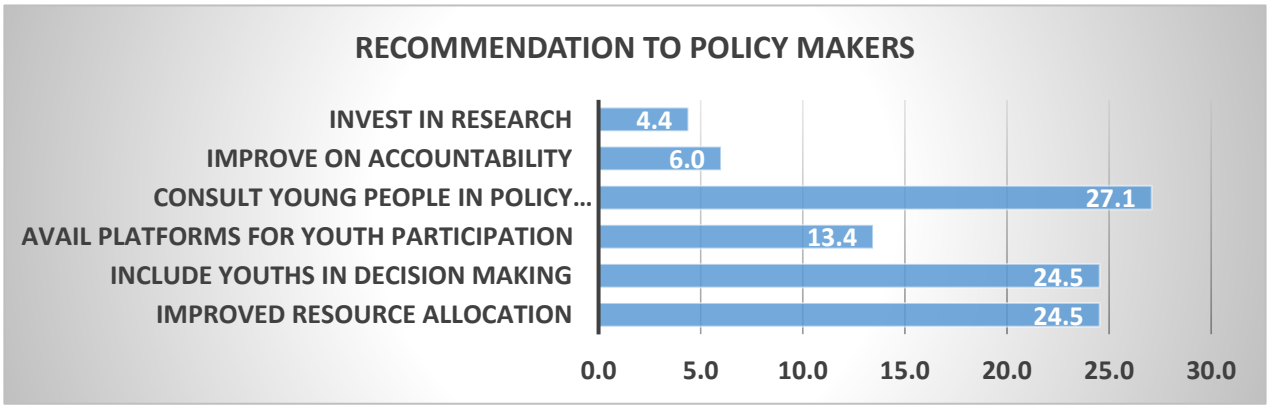
About 74% of the youths confirmed they knew about the SADC SRHR Strategy, and the majority acknowledged having interacted with it via internet or social media. However, those that were not involved in SRH activities did not know about the strategy, indicating the need to widen reach to young people beyond the circles of youths who are involved in civil society related work. The survey further interrogated young people to understand if they were currently participating in initiatives related to the strategy implementation in their respective countries. The majority (69.4%) confirmed there were no initiatives in their countries where young people could take part in the strategy implementation highlighting a key gap that needs to be filled in as far as participation of young people in strategy implementation is concerned.

The survey further looked into priority outcomes in the strategy implementation. Out of all the 10 outcomes, only ending AIDS by 2030 and addressing gender-based violence are where governments in the region and young people in agreement that these must be top of the agenda. For young people, priority issues include addressing rates of unplanned pregnancies (14.4%), followed by addressing sexual gender-based violence (13%) and creation of an enabling environment (12.8%. Interestingly, issues related to barriers to youth realisation of their SRHR were ranked among the lowest on government priorities but young people rate it as one of the top priorities (10.1%). About 84% of the respondents confirmed facing challenges in access sexual and reproductive health services during lockdown with security forces restrictions being the most confronted challenge (including when one intended to access SRHR services)



The strategy further consulted young people regarding what they considered as priority interventions to be included as part of the strategy implementation. SRHR in emergencies, sexual harassment and young sex workers were ranked top three priority areas. The survey therefore concluded that in the strategy implementation, there was a disconnect between what governments were prioritising versus what young people wanted prioritised and further concluded that the structures and bodies that represent young people were not giving feedback to young people when they took part in policy development processes. Also, SRHR related programs and information is currently concentrated only to a group of few young people that are involved in SRH Programs and the civil society. Youths from non-health sectors of youth development are excluded.

Recommendations



The survey recommended the following,

- There is need for clear policy frameworks to guide SRHR related programs, processes and interventions in the context of emergencies for young people to enjoy their sexual and reproductive health rights without interruption

- There is need to establish a youth consultation framework to guide policy formulation processes in relation to youth consultation
- There is need for increased resource allocation to fund the SADC SRHR Strategy by both the governments and civil society organisations

Programmatic Related Recommendations

- There is need to widen channels through which young people can participate in public policy formulation especially those that relate to their SRHR
- There is need for more investment in building the capacity of young people to advocate and hold governments accountable
- There is need to widen the reach of SRH related matters to young people in other spheres for collective and inclusive advocacy on SRHR matters

3.3.4.2. Effects of covid-19 on sexual reproductive health & rights in Zimbabwe

Presenter: Bothwell Gwatidzo-Youthwyze Zimbabwe

Research Objectives

- To identify and assess the available SRHR services during the peak of COVID-19,
- To ascertain the ease of accessing the available SRHR services by young people,
- To assess the affordability of the SRHR services available by young people,
- To ascertain the effects of not accessing SRHR services by young people

Methodology

The researcher held WhatsApp group discussions and zoom meetings on a weekly basis with different young people on how they were accessing services in their communities and challenges they were facing. Participants were provided with Internet data and these comprised of different age groups between 16 and 24. A total of 40 interviews were done between the period of Jan and May 2021. 20 Interviews targeted participants identified as key informants and these were young people knowledgeable about the aspect at hand and gave an account from their perspective without having to live the experience. 20 interviews were done with young people who were affected by the implementation of lockdown measures and failed to access services.

Findings

The findings from this research generated several issues related to young people's SRHR during the COVID-19 pandemic, there was limited access to SRHR services due to movement restriction as per lockdown regulations. Young people were asked to produce travel documents at roadblocks of which these were only given to essential service providers. Clinics and pharmacies being hot spots for COVID-19. Young people were rather scared to go to these places to access services and resorted to use of unsafe alternatives. Other critical challenges that resulted from the lockdown include sexual or intimate partner violence and increased rate of teenage pregnancies as well as early and unplanned marriages.

- Effects were that nearly 5,000 teenage girls became pregnant in January and February 2021 and about 1,800 entered early marriages during the same period (official statistical reports that were released by the government)
- Young people also reported having to access services from private individuals at a very high cost.
- Condoms that are usually distributed for free were now being sold in some communities

- Young people who reside in vulnerable areas were the most affected

Recommendations

- Introduction of integrated services through mobile clinics ,which would bring the service to young people who were unable to go past the travel restrictions
- Dial-a-service toll free numbers which would allow young people to get in touch with service providers
- Community based outreaches in the form of scheduled visits by service providers on given dates, times and central locations.
- Training of community based peer supporters on HIV/AIDS counselling and testing, Contraceptives, and STI screening
- Establish safe spaces and resource centres in communities
- Identifying and assessing the availability of SRHR services during the COVID 19 outbreak

3.3.4.3. Impact of Covid-19 pandemic on students' mental health

Presenter: Shantel Wilford- University of Cape Town

"You remember what happened during the COVID-19 pandemic….you open this TV channel, and this radio station, all of them focussing on the widespread ramifications of Covid-19 pandemic and its dire implications on individuals' collective health. Remember how the pandemic further disrupted young people's daily lives…. Yet there was and there still is very limited research on psychological impact on all this to students and other young people," Shantel

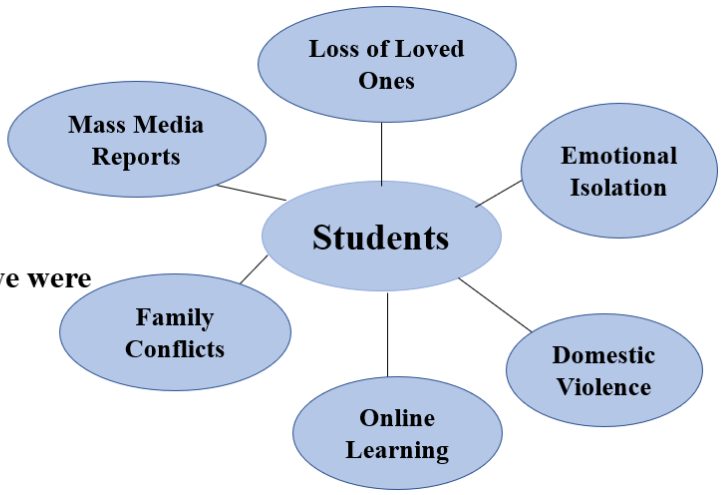
As an undergraduate student at the University of Cape Town, Shantel's research was an investigation on the COVID-19 related stressors and how they impacted on students while assessing the severity of depression in students due to the pandemic. The researcher employed in-depth interviews and questionnaires in collecting data.
The findings from the research illustrated that young people within tertiary institutions suffered from the bereavement of loved ones while domestic violence was a menace in most households. Due to confinement at home, family conflicts were inevitable and that caused anxiety for 61.5% young people who participated in the study.

Recommendations

The research established 3 main recommendations which are

Covid-19 related stressors

- **"Pandemic changed a lot of things and took away a lot of Special people".**
  (Interview 1)
- **"Being stuck at home with my parents was overwhelming and we were always fighting".**
  (Interview 33)



- The need to invest in developing coping mechanisms for young people during emergencies
- The need to invest in Student wellness program at universities and communities
- Apply psychological crisis intervention model to assist students in need of psychological support

3.3.4.4. Advancing psychosocial support & mental health services for girls and women at water points in peri-urban of Domboramwari Epworth

Presenter: Cosmas Rongoti- Shanduko Yeupenyu Child Care

The organization operates in the Epworth peri-urban area in Zimbabwe and its main goal is to provide sustainable support to girls and women focusing on:

- Female headed rural households
- Urban women and girls
- And rural adolescent girls.

The study unearthed sexual exploitation of young girls and women aged 9-15 years with an increase of 35% in 2022 compared to 2021 in which 19% of the girls were exploited at borehole water points. The study implied that the vulnerability of young girls was worsened by perennial water shortages in Epworth where men self-imposed as borehole marshals exploit vulnerable young women. The researcher pointed out that, the presence of these perpetrators of sexual violence, teenage pregnancies are on the rise and early sexual debuts among the girls leaves them susceptible to sexually transmitted diseases. Through the study, the major findings were that, psychosocial support services coupled by mental health services for adolescents were not common in Epworth. Thus the researcher recommended that;

- There is need to strengthen child protection systems to avoid the exploitation of girls
- Conduct capacity building for relevant service providers to enhance the quality of services to adolescents.
- Dissemination of information on mental health psycho support to adolescents and the community at large.

3.3.4.5. Assessment of the implementation & effectiveness of social media campaigns in prevention of drug and substance abuse in Malawi's rural communities

Presenter: Aubrey Chidziwaniso

The use of media, including the mobile phone, has potential for engaging youth in civic affairs and service, microenterprise, and non-formal education. However, there is still very little understanding on how social media can be used as a campaign strategy especially in curbing drug and substance abuse in rural communities

Research Objectives

- To identify social media campaigns on drug and substance prevention in Malawi's rural communities
- To understand on how social media can be used as a campaign strategy in curbing drug and substance abuse
- To find out the effectiveness of social media campaigns in drug and substance prevention in Malawi's rural communities

Research Design and Methodology

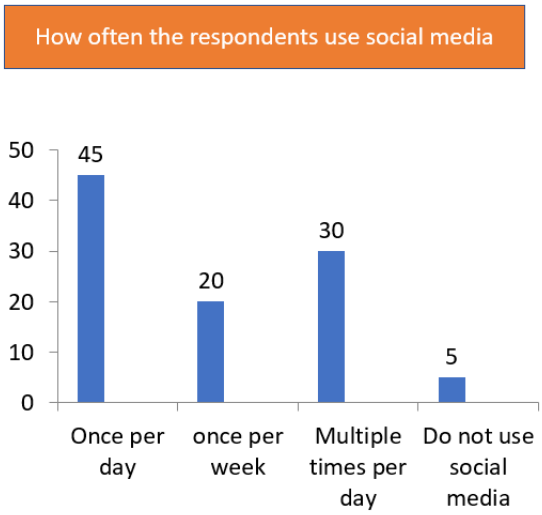
The population of interest of this study comprised of youth from Malawi's rural communities. The study also recruited drug and substance abuse content producers and social media influencers. The target population is 100 young people selected randomly across Malawi's rural communities. Purpose sampling method was used during data collection

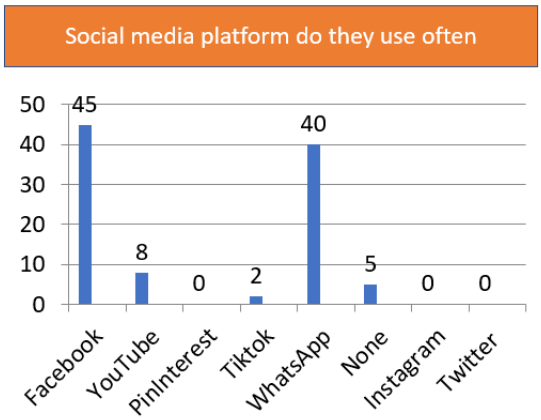
The primary data was collected by means of questionnaire, interview schedule, and observation. The main modes of questionnaire administration was through phone calls and face to face interviews. The social media campaigns about drug and substance abuse prevention were identified through internet searches and key informant interviews. The social media content was analysed using cognitive dissonance theory.

Key Research Findings

The study sampled 100 youth respondents from five districts of Malawi, namely; - Mchinji, Lilongwe, Mzimba, Dedza and Chiradzulu. The participants were grouped into the age range of 15 -19, 20-25, 26-30, and 31-35. All the sampled respondents had smart phones and came from Malawi's rural communities

A total of six social media campaigns were selected for analysis. The analysis was based on the following variables; frequency coverage of drug and substance abuse, and the content





influence on attitudes and norms, uncover benefits of drug free lifestyle, and awareness creation on dangers of Drugs and Substance abuse.

The research shows that, in Malawi there is very few social media campaigns solely focusing on drug and substance abuse prevention. Out of the six sampled social media campaigns only three solely focused on drug and substance abuse prevention.

Out of three social media campaigns, two were frequently covering issues of drug and substance prevention, one was the special program on drug and substance abuse. The social media campaigns on drug and substance abuse received mixed reactions from the general public both negative and positive. The study also found that most social media campaigns content focus on awareness on dangers of drug and substance abuses.

Study Conclusion

- The study concluded that the issue of drug and substance abuse prevention is not frequently covered.
- The study concluded that most social media campaigns focus on awareness on dangers on drug and substance abuse and less focus on to others variables such as benefits of drug free lifestyle that influence their attitudes and norms.

- The need for advocates on drug and substance to be more aggressive in their online campaigns to reach a wider audience and influence behavioural change
- There is need for frequent coverage and awareness on the health benefits of a drug free lifestyle
-

Feedback and Comments from Panellists and Audiences

- The panellists i.e. Dr Kamoto, Dr Molekele and Dr Melessie applauded the efforts by students in making presentations on their research findings. However, they emphasized that students should not limit themselves to qualitative research methodologies but should merge with quantitative research methodologies.
- The panellists further encourage members of the academic in the respective universities to mentor students in research including the technical aspects and basics in research like constructing better research topics, structuring presentations and referencing
- A participant applauded the research that focused on Mental Health of students noting that the research brought in a new perspective that is rarely prioritised within the civil society and the academic.
- Another participant also implored Universities to invest in working solutions identified to put programs and systems in colleges that ensure that the mental health of students is catered for even when there is no emergencies like COVID-19.

3.3.5. Life after bachelor's degree: Labour market/scholarship opportunities in both

Academia and non-academic industries

Presenter: Dr T Melesse- World Bank

Dr T Melesse focused on sharing with young people some opportunities available for young people within international organizations. Dr Melesse took students through on how to identify and successfully apply for scholarships and research grants. Her presentation empowered the young people with knowledge on how to apply for grants to pursue their proposed interventions.

She noted that there are so many opportunities including under World Bank but youth in Southern Africa seem to have limited knowledge about them. She encouraged youths to always be on the lookout for these opportunities as they are specifically designed to help empower them and realise their dreams.

3.4. Young People's Ideas Festival - 24 August 2022

3.4.1. Youth-led SRHR Advocacy: Recommitting to Regional SRHR Policies & Practice in SADC

Session Lead: SAFAIDS

SAFAIDS chaired a discussion on youth led SRHR advocacy - recommitting to the youth SRHR through youth discussions. This was done in a panel discussion that had representatives of young people, a member of parliament, and a UNESCO Representative.
The youths spoke of the current crisis in SRHR Advocacy because of the barriers to get to SRH services. Examples include policies in which young people need to first have the approval of parents and guardians in order to access sexual health services in the health facilities. The youth representative further unpacked what can be termed the 'triple negative situation' which consists of governments imposing policies that affect the youthful population negatively, poor infrastructure, and absence of youth friendly service provision in the health facilities.
The Honorable member of parliament noted that in the region, investments of governments on SRH services delivery are still limited adding that there is need to strategize government priorities, including budgetary allocations so that more focus can be given to youth SRHR issues.
He admitted that governments should conform to the will of the people, but the wishes of young people have not been given due attention by policy makers and there is a need to break the silence by talking about increasing budget allocations to youth services. He also called for the need to have adequate youth friendly spaces where youths can meaningfully engage and learn from each other.

The representative from UNESCO spoke about the ESA commitments noting that the previous commitments had shown increased political interest in sexual reproductive health issues. However, COVID-19 shifted attention away from young people's SRHR. She recommended that governments should be proactive in addressing the needs of their young people without relying on the donor community.
Some of the critical questions that came from the floor which were addressed by the panelists include:

- Why is there less emphasis on implementing Comprehensive Sexual Education in tertiary institutions?
- How can we safeguard against policy fatigue?
- How do we promote and scale up learning and sharing of best practices as actors in the region?
- How are we reshaping SRHR budgets in light of the shift in focus to the COVID-19 pandemic?

3.4.2. Piloting the use of digital techniques in young people's access to education

Session Lead: UNESCO

In this session, UNESCO presented one of their new innovations - a mobile application aimed at improving young people's access to SRHR information. The speaker led the delegation through a process of outlining the key features of the application. They further invited views from young with the aim of improving the application to be relevant to their demographic needs.

The presenter further noted that the use of digital techniques in young people's access to education has been one of their organization's priorities since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. UNESCO is working on information communication technology training for teachers so that they can possess the required competence and resources to facilitate the learning systems in schools, with Zambia and Zimbabwe being the first countries to have pilot programmes. The organization is also striving to ensure that refugees have online learning facilities to keep up with their education needs. In efforts to deliver comprehensive sexuality education to young people, the organization intends to make use of the mass media to reach a wider audience.
Targeting young people in tertiary institutions, the organization hopes to create a space where young people can access critical information on SRH in a platform that is convenient and exciting to them.

Some of the key recommendations that came from young people about the app include

- That the application must allow youths to access information even when they are offline
- The application must not be too heavy, and must not consume a lot of data when installing and navigating through it
- The application must have exciting features that will motivate youths to install it and use it
- Content must include relevant aspects peculiar to youths in tertiary institutions in their diversity and also address contemporary SRHR challenges that students face

3.4.3. Session 3; Leaving No-one Behind on the Youth Development Agenda

Session Lead– GALZ

This session was a panel discussion, hosted by Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ) to bring critical issues of inclusion to the attention of the conference delegates including the policy makers. Hosted by young people, the session revealed critical insights into varying degrees and forms of exclusion that the LGBTIQ+ community face including in critical sectors of the economy like education and health. Fundamentally, one of the student panelists noted that there is serious stigma and discrimination within the higher education sector making it very difficult for excluded groups to break cycles of poverty and occupy strategic positions in the economy since their access to higher education is systematically blocked.

Key recommendations that came from this session include:

- That the inclusion of LGBTIQ+ community members must not come as an afterthought but deliberate efforts to include them must be mainstreamed across all stages of policy and program design and implementation
- That platforms like SARSYC must lead as examples of inclusion
- That the LGBTIQ+ must not be consulted in policy making for the purposes of ticking boxes, but rather their inclusion must be mainstreamed to policy implementation and evaluation as well

4. Day 2 - High Level Engagement Platforms

This was the high-level part of the conference, with strategic engagement platforms attended by guests from the Southern African region drawn from government representatives of participating SADC countries, UN Agencies, Members from the academic sector, civil society organizations, advocates and youths. The day was meant to promote engagements between young people and duty bearers.

4.1. The Students' Voice

The day started with a session that sought to get the general feedback, in the form of views, questions and reflections from the youths on all the deliberations that took place in the first day of the conference. Different youths from the participating countries had this to say

- **Participant 1**: "In future conferences, may we have all service providers present at the conference as well for example, HIV Testing, TB Screening, Cervical Cancer Screening etcetera. This is so because some of these services are not easily accessible in some of our countries and the conference could be a huge opportunity for us to access them.'
- **Participant 2**: "After such a successful meeting, let us not forget to go back to the rural areas and brief them on the deliberations made here because often times than not we forget to reach them out'
- **Participant 3**: "We should think of restructuring the conference and make sure that young people are given time to give out their cries and not to just sit down and listen to people speaking about what we supposedly go through and what should be done to help solve the problems, when we are here, the youth, who actually are experiencing what is being spoken of and may have the right solutions for ourselves"
- **Participant 4**: "In light of Reshaping and relearning as the theme entails, let's go back to fund young people to do research themselves. Put us in diverse spaces where we are able to work e.g. M&E, and research"
- **Participant 5**: "There is a need for the youth to embrace the spirit of 'I am empowered to empower others'. Most of the time when empowered and emancipated, we tend to relax"
- **Participant 6:** "Looking forward to the time when we speak of what has been done after other conferences and not just speak."

4.2. Introduction of delegates and Welcome Remarks

Presenter: Prof Kaunda-Vice Chancellor- LUANAR

Prof Kaunda welcomed all the SARSYC delegates, acknowledging SADC Parliament representatives, MPs from the SADC region, government officials from the SADC region, development partners, members of the diplomatic call, members of the civil society organizations and all young people who managed to attend the progressive conference. The Prof applauded all organizations who take seriously the issues affecting young people, especially in the academia adding that such efforts must be applauded for their contribution to the youth agenda in the region and Africa at large.

He noted that young people of today are faced by a myriad of challenges which includes but not limited to cyberbullying, and drug and substance abuse. He further noted that LUANAR is proud to partner SAYWHAT during SARSYC in an effort to address the challenges being faced by young people in SADC and pointed out that LUANAR values such fruitful partnerships. Prof Kaunda highlighted that he is expecting discussions during SARSYC to take

a horizontal approach that is, ensuring the meaningful engagement of young people during all the discussions.
Prof Kaunda highlighted that the next SARSYC should focus on discussing what has been done and achieved in between the 2 conferences rather than continuously planning with no or limited action. In closing the Prof acknowledged the presence of Malawi's Minister of Youth and highlighted that this is proof that Malawi's government is in support of young people`s pleas.

4.3. SAYWHAT Regional Roadmap and vision

Presenter: Jimmy Wilford- SARSYC Convener

Addressing the SARSYC delegates, Jimmy Wilford started by appreciating the collaboration between SAYWHAT and the hosting partners in Malawi - GAYO and LUANAR. He noted that the conference is coming at the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic which has disrupted education and health rights for young people. Jimmy highlighted that the post COVID-19 period is an opportune time to re-plan, recommit and reshape the youth agenda. Having observed the Research Indaba Summit the previous day, Jimmy applauded the research done by young people focusing on the effects of COVID-19. He noted that the challenges being faced by young people inspired the conference theme calling for recommitments to young people's health and education needs. The SARSYC Convener further highlighted that the SADC nations have a number of progressive legislative mechanisms which can work in favour of young people but are rarely implemented and that the effects of covid19 has made the situation more worse
Jimmy noted that the road map of SARSYC is continuous and does not need any relaxation and called upon the Minister of Youths in Malawi to influence other Ministers in the region. He also stressed the need for the Minister to push forward the health and education needs of young people to be taken seriously using the SADC Summit. In closing, Jimmy highlighted the need for young people to fight for their spaces and take charge of their developmental priorities without being short-changed by those that claim to represent them in spaces that belong to young people

4.4. Opening Remarks

Presenter: Dr David Parirenyatwa- The President for Society for AIDS in Africa

In his remarks, Dr Parirenyatwa highlighted that the gathering of young people during SARSYC is a strong message to the Guest of Honour to carry the message forward to the President of Malawi and influence policy direction in the SADC region. Dr Parirenyatwa noted that he is excited to be part of the 4th edition of SARSYC in 2022 because he was part of the delegates who graced the inaugural edition of SARSYC in Zimbabwe in 2015, adding that he is glad that the idea of SARSYC has grown to the 4th edition
He highlighted that he is excited by the complementary work by ICASA and SARSYC and noted that it is a giant step towards meeting the needs of young people. He also indicated that SARSYC is coming at a time where we are questioning the resilience of the public health systems in the SADC region and implored government officials and policy makers to adopt Pan Africanism and not depend much on the assistance coming from donors outside Africa.
The former Minister of Health and Child Care for Zimbabwe reiterated that he is concerned to note that though resources, policies and strategies have been mapped, young people are still affected by HIV, which means there is something that needs to be improved by development players and policy makers. Dr Parirenyatwa highlighted that there is a need for

young people to close the tap for new HIV infections and encouraged young people to devise ways to close those taps themselves.
He acknowledged that Commitments such as the ESA commitments are critical in driving the youth agenda by all progressive governments and closed his remarks by calling upon the guest of honour to carry the message of young people forward to the President of the Republic of Malawi and further encouraged all policy makers and government officials from the SADC region to carry forward the concerns of young people.

4.5. An analysis of the intersectionality in SRHR programming for young people

Presenter: - Dr Berthollet Bwira Kaboru- Deputy Head of Mission and Head of Development Cooperation-(Embassy of Sweden in Zimbabwe

Dr Kaboru recognized that young people are important actors in any sustainable development work. He noted that the realization of sexual and reproductive health and rights is part of achieving economic justice as it encompasses access to safe and decent work and equal access to social protection systems. In his presentation, the Head of Mission and Development Cooperation underlined the need for duty bearers to make investments in young people to curtail child marriages, drug and substance abuse.
He called upon governments to seriously consider the issues of gender as they have a ripple effect in lifting the economy from poverty as investments in programmes to reduce child marriages will generate economic benefits. He added that empowering girls to be educated will feed into the economies. Politics and democracy were argued to be essential as they promoted access to safe and quality sexual reproductive health products and services and determining the legislative landscape for the full attainment and enjoyment of sexual reproductive health rights. Dr Kaboru stressed the need for government and development partners to promote youth empowerment as it is a prerequisite to access sexual reproductive health services.

4.6. Keynote Address

Presenter: Conference Guest of Honour – Honorable Richard Chimwendo Banda, MP, Minister of Youth and Sports

Honorable Richard Chimwendo Banda, the Minister of Youths and Sports delivered the keynote address on behalf of the President of Malawi as the guest of honour. He highlighted that his ministry and the Malawian government is deeply concerned by young people's development issues and they take these seriously. Adding that the Malawian government is excited about the theme of the conference; but highlighted that after replanning, reshaping and recommitting to the youth agenda; action should be prioritized in an effort to meet the health and education rights of young people in SADC.
He underscored the need for SADC governments to create spaces for young people to explore avenues for their developmental priorities and called upon governments in the SADC region to give opportunities to young people today and not always refer to them as leaders for tomorrow. He further called upon policy makers and governments in the SADC region to ensure youth friendly budgeting, borrowing from the widely conceptualized gender sensitive budgeting methodologies. He closed the speech by wishing all delegates fruitful deliberations.

4.7. Students Talk Engagement with the Guest of Honour

The session was a round table discussion with the guest of honour accompanied by one male and one female student delegates to present on the key asks for young people based on deliberations from day one. The following are some of the issues presented to the Honorable Member;

- Mental health issues deserve to be prioritized as these are emerging issues affecting young people today
- Female students in Malawi are vulnerable to lack of access to education
- During the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, persons living with disabilities struggled to access sexual reproductive health services, thus they need to be made a priority in government interventions
- Young women ought to be advocates for social change. They must champion for change within societies regardless of the nature of challenges faces

4.8. A panel on the ESA Ministerial Commitments in the Southern African Region:

Topic: *"The gaps and progress in the Implementation of the ESA Ministerial Commitments in the Southern African Region; Best practices and Lessons learnt*

The panel consisted of representative from UNESCO and SAFAIDS, Ministry of Education - Malawi, the Parliament Portfolio Committee Chairperson on primary and secondary Education –Zimbabwe and a representative from the SADC Youth Parliament under Southern Africa Youth Forum (SAYoF-SADC). The panel discussion was held in the form of a question and answer segment directed to different panelists as shown in the table below.

Question	*Answer*
Question to UNESCO Rep: What is UNESCO doing in the implementation of the ESA Commitments	The representative noted that there were consultations done in 2020 to evaluate the effectiveness of the ESA Commitments whose outcome showed that there is need for the expansion of the ESA Commitments. The current focus include ▪ Pushing for children to complete primary education and the percentage of transition of primary school education to secondary education has increased. ▪ Health workers and teachers trained on CSE ▪ Integration of CSE in university curriculum
Question to UNESCO Rep: How are the gaps going to be addressed? (UNESCO)	In her response, the representative noted that ESA commitments are very important and are indispensable adding that education is a basic human right and most governments in the SADC region are not implementing free and compulsory education. She applauded Ghana for free and compulsory education- providing food and tuition for school children etc. She further noted that the Ghana model can be used as a model in other countries to implement the ESA commitments and added that taxations by governments can be used to fund free and compulsory education for school children in the SADC region
Question to Honourable Moyo from Zimbabwe	*Key among the points he raised are as follows*

Is the policy environment accommodative for the ESA Commitments?	▪ SADC governments must walk the talk- one thing committing to international and regional legislative frameworks and the other implementing. ▪ Most states have idea policies for the implementation of the ESA commitments but everything fails at implementation. Legal frameworks in the SADC region needs political will to ensure implementation. ▪ He noted that the Age of Consent in Zimbabwe at 18 years means that youths under the age of 18 are therefore not allowed to have access to SRH services. ▪ Young people are indulging in sex and service provision should be comprehensive to avoid SRH infirmities such as unplanned pregnancies and unsafe abortions ▪ Policies should therefore speak to the needs of young people
Question to Young Person (SAYoF-SADC). Did the last phase of the ESA commitments yielded positive results?	The Representative appreciated the ESA commitments noting that there are several positive results that have been yielded in the last phase but more needs to be done. She added that although results have been achieved CSE needs to be age appropriate and use the language that is age appropriate as well
Question to Young Person (SAYoF-SADC). *Q: How are we moving away from bringing YPs as a rubber stamp in decision making processes? QN to a YP panellist*	The YP highlighted the need for stakeholders and duty bearers to give power to young people to meaningfully participate in processes of the ESA Commitments
Question to UNESCO: What has changed in the new ESA commitments?	*Key points raised* ▪ *Consultations and evaluations have been conducted and the outcome of these processes noted the ESA commitments should be carried forward* ▪ *The name of the ESA Commitments changed to take a holistic approach in addressing the needs of young people- New name - Ministerial Commitment on comprehensive sexuality education and sexual and reproductive health services for adolescents and young people in Eastern and Southern African (ESA)* ▪ *GBV, SRHR and Education services are now comprehensive, that is, benefitting both girls and boys* ▪ *-New ESA Commitments brought boys into perspective though it take notes that girls are disproportionately affected and that they needs specialised attention.*
Question to Honourable Moyo *Were there any policy reforms influenced by the ESA Commitments? Qn to MP Moyo*	▪ *A general improvement in political will in the SADC region to address young people's challenges such as teenage pregnancies which often prevents young girls to access education* ▪ *SADC countries improving the administrative environment to readmit young pregnant girls into the education system- readmission policies*

	▪ *CSE provision in schools in line with SDG 4* ▪ *Social safety nets provision for marginalised students*

Recommendations from this session

- Action is needed in addressing the needs of young people through development and implementation of policies that cater for the needs of young people
- There is a need for collaborations between different ministries to ensure the effective implementation of the ESA Commitments,
- There is need for capacity building workshops for policy makers to understand what needs to be done with regards to the effective implementation of the ESA commitments
- Young people should participate in budget consultations - every development prioritization starts and ends at budget development – something which is not budgeted for cannot be implemented.
- Young people should work closely with CSOs to demand duty bearers to fulfill YP centered programmes.

4.9. Financing Youth Rights - Stop the Bleeding Campaign

Presenter: Mukasiri Sibanda

The presenters introduced the Stop the Bleeding Campaign which interrogates why Africa as a rich continent with vast mineral resources is still poor. He urged young people to demand tax justice from their governments and foreign investors, noting the important role of young people in stopping the bleeding of their countries to increase the size of the cake-the budgets in which their priority issues are financed from.

The presenters challenged everyone by pleading that they think about the need to enhance how countries are managing their tax. Key among the recommendations were that

- Tax budget networks should be created by countries so that more money can be generated and made available for the youths.
- Fair taxing demands that we should focus on rich people and stop the bleeding on poor people
- Investors that come and do mining activities in African countries must pay tax and be accountable to the environmental damage they cause to protect the communities
- Young people to push for an end to illicit financial flows to ensure that resources are available to cater for the needs and rights of young people such as the provision of health and education rights.

4.10. Track Sessions

Delegates were split into different track sessions. The key highlights from the track sessions are as follows

4.10.1. Track 1; Access to Inclusive, Quality and Equitable Education by adolescent and young people

The track session had as the lead presenter a representative from Education Out Loud with other delegates being members of the Coalition for Education in Malawi. Chairperson of the Parliament Portfolio Education Zambia – Hon Mutinta and the Parliament Portfolio Committee Chairperson on Higher Education Zimbabwe- Hon Maphosa

This track tackled critical aspects within the education sector, challenging the status quo in which the education systems in Africa seem to be detached from the real-socio-economic needs of the African people.

In his presentation, the Education Out Loud Regional Education Adviser, David Simon Kobia noted that the African continent was colonized and, in doing so, the colonial education system was designed to only provide theory and not the practical skills. He further noted with concern that till today many African countries adopted this education system and are still using it, and in the process, producing more job seekers and not innovators.

Currently, Malawi, with help of CFOs and other stakeholders are currently changing the curriculum for primary, secondary and tertiary institutions to address the identified gaps. The presenter noted that the African educational sector has been characterized by patching up rather than changing the bedrock, which is the colonial education system.

Key Discussions

Esther from Malawi indicated that access to quality education is a must to build the African continent. This includes access to information about programs that are available for young people to take part in.

Rumbiga from Zambia noted that there is a need to have less standardized examinations which are more practical rather than theory. African governments need to start structuring the curriculum to suit the market place.

In support of the view, Dr. Sapato noted that the labour market survey indicated that there is a mismatch between skills taught in African countries and what the labour market requires. African countries devise good policies but lack implementation, which is the critical part, however, implementation requires a third element of investment.

Way forward and recommendations

- African countries invest in implementing educational policy rather than crafting good policies and fail to deliver.
- The parliament must play its role as the watchdog for implementation of educational policies.
- Access to the internet needs to reach all parts of the world including Africa. There is further need to invest in construction of infrastructure that allows easy access of internet including in rural areas
- African countries can learn from countries like Finland and Rwanda, how they have implemented a new educational curriculum that suits the labour market demands.
- There is a need for a bottom-up educational curriculum rather than a top down approach.

4.10.2. Track 2; Sustainable Development: Young People and Agenda 2030; Lenses on SDG

A panel discussion was held. The representatives were: Zimbabwe MP- Parliament Portfolio Committee Chairperson on Health- Hon Dr R Labode 2. Zambia MP – Parliament portfolio committee Chairperson Hon Joseph S Mushunje 3. UNFPA Malawi
Explaining what UNFPA is doing to advance SDG3, the representative noted that they have introduced the community fund to address community centered initiatives. They are also digitalizing to reach out to young girls with information such as conscientizing girls and young women to demand their rights. She added that they are also working with the ministry of health in Malawi to make sure that young people have access to health in every communities and taking a multispectral approach in addressing the health needs of young people
Responding to the question on whether the policy in Zambia is inclusive to vulnerable communities in Zambia, the representative noted that Zambia's policy environment is indeed inclusive, with 86% of the policies focusing on SDGs including SDG 3. He added that rights to SRH choices are respected, and that young people have the right to make their own choices in his country without fear of stigmatization during the provision of SRH services. He emphasized on Training of health workers on friendly service provision, seeing the person first, non-judgmental service provision.
Dr Labode responded to the question on what the challenges young people are facing in SRHR service provision are. She firstly responded by disagreeing with the previous speakers on the issues on inclusive service provision noting that that SRH service provision in the SADC region is prohibitive she cited prohibitive laws for SRH service provision which are resulting in teen pregnancies, unplanned pregnancies etc. and added that in SADC the policies are divorced from the reality on the ground.
Dr Labode added that LGBTIQ+ communities in most SADC countries are discriminated from accessing public health services and also added that there is rising cases of unsafe abortions in Zimbabwe due to prohibitive laws. Dr Labode noted that she is excited to be fighting for the rights of LGBTIQ people in Zimbabwe and promised that before her term of office ends in 2023, she will make great strides in achieving positive results in this area.

Plan International Malawi highlighted the importance of CBOs in SRHR service provision noting that their role is crucial because they are in the community and have a better understanding of community issues. She added that they identify with the situations on the ground and implement projects on youth friendly service provision.
The former Member of Parliament contributed to the debate by highlighting policy makers' need to be open about the real issues affecting young people and not pretending as if everything is in shape. She added that governments should not be concerned about people`s private and sex life and religion should not be used as an explanation to avoid service provision for young people e.g. the LGBTIQ+ community. She questioned why governments are not implementing policies but focusing on regulating anti-SRHR related policies.

Recommendations from the session

- There is a need for local empowerment programs
- There is a need to ensure that taxes collected by governments are channeled to the SRHR needs of the young people
- There is need to mainstream health provision in all the sectors of government

- The ministries of health from the SADC region should coordinate the implementation of the health needs of their people – not entirely promoting donor dependent health systems.
- Governments and policy makers to decolonize the education curriculum – sex has no nationality
- Governments to embrace diversity of people`s sexual identities and choices and ensure that policies speak to the rights of all young people regardless of their diversity.

4.10.3. Track 3; The Interlinkages of HIV and TB for young people in the Southern African Region; Gaps and Opportunities

Role of TB Champions

In this track, Mr. Elliard Kupfuma explained the role of TB champions in Zimbabwe. He noted that 30 TB Champions were trained from around Zimbabwe to help in advocacy work that contributes to ending TB in Zimbabwe in line with the national and global TB goals and targets. He highlighted that as TB champions, they collect information on the realities of TB within the youth sector and share information about TB amongst young people working in collaboration with the National TB campaign program.
The presenter added that TB screening is free in Zimbabwe and TB Champions are motivating students to go and get screened and they are also hosting dialogues to talk about TB in schools. In addition, they also engage relevant offices, checking if every university has health policies that talk about TB. The TB champions are also using social media as a tool to engage other students and spread information about TB within the youth population.

National TB Program – A case of Zimbabwe
A representative from the National TB program in Zimbabwe, Mr Andrew Nyambo gave a brief presentation that highlighted some of the key policy and programmatic issues relating to TB in Zimbabwe. Mr Nyambo expressed concern on how accommodation spaces in Zimbabwe have become too crowded, increasing risk factors for the spread of TB. He noted that such issues require college authorities to be mindful of the potential health risks to students and the surrounding communities and devise proper accommodation models that does not contribute to health risks of students and the communities
Mr Nyambo further advised on the need for TB screening for students during orientation. He hinted on the idea of the government to digitalize TB services which are still in the pipeline.

Key Recommendations and Discussion Points

- The need to leave no one behind by making sure that TB services are available to remote, hard to reach areas in the country
- The need for continuous engagement between TB advocates and college authorities so that TB screening services become part of the package of services offered to students during student orientation days and many other events that happen at college
- An application called ONE IMPACT has been put in place sending questions to the users in the country and getting responses which they use to respond to TB cases. Such innovative approaches were applauded by young people
- The need to increase funding for TB related programs including media based awareness programs. It was noted during the discussions that people have limited information on TB

4.10.4. Track 4: The analysis of bodily autonomy and gender equity for young people in Southern Africa

The session was hosted by the AIDS and Rights Alliance for southern Africa (ARASA) represented and representatives from the University of Johannesburg. This was an exciting track which was largely dominated by discussions. Some of the key highlights are as follows

Participant 1: *"Let's begin from the basics. As of now, parents are failing to teach their children positive bodily autonomy. Now we are trying to teach this at a later stage, forgetting the grass roots. Let us go back to the foundation"*

Participant 2: *"Feeling entitled to someone else's body is wrong!"*

Participant 3: *Let us consider the important stakeholders of this all, the parents. Giving an example of the introduction of SRH services at primary schools in South Africa, parents denied and even boycotted this, but we have 12-year old pregnant girls in primary schools."*

Participant 4: "*We need to engage religious leaders as most of them support the patriarchy systems that are toxic even to the men themselves"*

Participant 5: *"Religion suppresses people's bodily autonomy. The bible counts people as men and leaves out women and children, but everyone is religious. If both men and women are put in the forefront of woman advocacy, change would be seen. Change the mind-set of the pastors as they are mostly one of the perpetrators."*

Participant 6: "*Culture speaks of submission, but to what degree should we respect and submit to each other as partners?"*

Participant 7: "*Empowering ourselves is the way to go. Let us leg up and empower others on these issues. Empowering people at the grassroots level."*

Main Conclusions from the discussions

- People's rights should be respected when accessing services. No person should be denied access to services no matter the circumstances
- There is need to encourage parent-child communication on sexual and reproductive health issues, promoting open dialogue between young people and their parents and guardian
- As we empower the girl child, there is also a need to teach the boy child how to co-exist with empowered girls.

4.10.5. The Conference Resolutions

A team of youth from the region took to the stage to read the conference resolutions. Developed in the form of a communique, the conference outcome paper was handed over to the guest of honour, Dr David Parerinyatwa in his official capacity as the President of Society and AIDS in Africa to carry forward the voice of young people in SADC to the Continental ICASA conference so that their issues can be integrated into broader plans for the continent.

The Communique is divided into 9 articles that carry key highlights from the conference as follows

- Article 1:Introduction and Background
- Article 2: SARSYC 2022 Contextual Note
- Article 3: Contemporary SRHR Challenges Affecting Young People in SADC Region
- Article 4: SRHR Related Policy Gaps
- Article 5: Program and Practices Related Gaps
- Article 6: Roles and Responsibilities of Young People in Improving SRHR Outcomes in the Region

- Article 7: Recommendations to Governments of Southern African Countries
    - Article 8: Recommendations to Donors, Civil Society, Private Players and Colleges Authorities
    - Article 9:Plans for the Next Conference

The full conference communique can be accessed here (Insert hyperlink)

4.10.6. Closing Ceremony Guest of Honour Remarks

The President Society for AIDS in Africa – Dr David Parirenyatwa

Dr Parirenyatwa thanked all the esteemed delegates for coming to deliberate on young people's development agenda during SARSYC 2022. He noted that the conversations for the 2 days of the conference showed that young people are open minded and that duty bearers present will push forward the outcomes of the conference.
The former Minister of Health for Zimbabwe noted that as Africans, we are bound by the notion and belief that our young people should be at the center of development and renewal of the ideology of Pan Africanism, and that is the bedrock of the 4th edition of the Southern African Regional Students and Youth Conference.
He noted that in essence, our being together reflects on our collective intention to build back better and bigger. He called upon senior government representatives, members of parliament members of the diplomatic call, heads of Civic Society Organizations, UN Agencies, and strategically positioned individuals to take this conference as a stepping stone towards an inclusive, equitable youth developmental agenda. With this, he officially closed the conference.

5. Culture Night

The conference ended with a culture night that gave delegates an opportunity to experience the beauty and diversity of different cultures in SADC with the host Malawi showcasing their culture in music and dancing and local cuisines.
The event was graced by high profile delegates from the government of Malawi, including the Minister of Tourism and Hospitality, Honorable Michael Usi. The minister encouraged young people to be proud ambassadors of their heritage and culture, as these are critical in the development of their identities. The minister also reminded the youths that they are one, and should work collectively under the spirit of Pan-Africanism. Other represented delegates included the Ministry of Education for Malawi, the Director of Reproductive Health in the Ministry of Health of Malawi and several representatives from civil society, academic, students and young people from the region

6. Conclusion

The 4th edition of the Southern African Regional Students and Youth Conference on SRHR (SARSYC) was a huge success. The conference provided delegates a chance to reflect on policy and practices in the quest to reshape the future of the SRHR landscape in Southern Africa. By providing a strategic engagement platform for policy makers and young people, this conference represented an ideal space for solution focused dialogues in which young people

can participate in influencing policy direction on matters that affect them. As noted in the Communique under plans for the future conference, even more time for interaction between youths and policy makers will be needed as this enhances young people's role in shaping policy direction.

Index

Participating Organizations

- AIDS and Rights Alliance for Southern Africa - ARASA
- Boitekanelo College Botswana
- Chinhoyi University of Technology
- CSA&G
- Civil Society Education Malawi
- Community Initiative for Social Empowerment - CISE MALAWI
- Council for NGOs in Malawi - CONGOMA
- Education Out Loud
- Embassy of Japan in Malawi
- Embassy of Zimbabwe in Malawi
- Embassy of Sweden in Zimbabwe
- Eswatini Parliament
- Farming Community Education Trust - FACET
- Forum for African Women Educationalists- Malawi - FAWEMA
- Gays And Lesbians of Zimbabwe - GALZ
- Girls Activist Youth Organization -GAYO
- Global Partnership for Education
- Government Ministries in Malawi – Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Youth
- Government Ministries in Zimbabwe – Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health and Child Care-AIDS &TB Unit
- Hillside Teachers College
- Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources - LUANAR
- Lupane State University
- Malawi Institute of Management - MIM
- Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences
- Mulher Lei e Desenvolvimento Mozambique - MULEIDE
- Mzuzu University
- National Action for Quality Education in Zambia - NAQEZ
- National AIDS Council - NAC
- National Youth Council of Malawi
- OXFAM Malawi
- Pangaea Zimbabwe AIDS Trust
- Parliament of Zimbabwe
- Plan International Malawi
- Society for AIDS in Africa - SAA
- Southern Africa AIDS - SAFAIDS
- Southern Africa Youth Forum - SAYOF
- Southern African AIDS Trust - SAT
- Southern African Development Community Parliamentary Forum - SADCPF
- SRHR Alliance
- Stop TB Partnership
- UNESCO
- UNFPA Botswana
- UNICEF
- University of Eswatini - UNESWA
- University of Johannesburg

- University of Malawi - UNIMA
- University of Pretoria
- University of Zambia
- World Bank
- Y Plus Global
- Young People's Network on Sexual and Reproductive Health HIV and AIDS
- Youth Empowerment Transformation Trust - YET
- Zambia National Men's Network for Gender and Development – ZNMNGD
- Zambia Parliament

Southern African Regional Students and Youth Conference

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