

AFRICA REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS INITIATIVE

Statement of Commitment



On February 10-13, 2019, the Africa Reproductive Rights Initiative (ARRI) convened representatives of over 35 organizations from 13 African countries working across a wide set of sectors and disciplines in Kigali, Rwanda to discuss the changing landscape of SRHR in Africa and reflect on the challenges and opportunities that exist in relation to closing civic space for SRHR organizations, service providers and human rights defenders, maternal health, adolescents sexual and reproductive health and rights, and SRHR in conflict and emergency settings. Participants represented experts in: women's rights, sexual reproductive health and rights, disability rights, legal and human rights, adolescents' rights, service provision, communications, and SRHR in conflict and emergency settings, and national human rights institutions and academia.

ARRI was launched in 2017 and is dedicated to accelerating progress towards the full realization of African women and adolescents' sexual and reproductive rights, by coordinating, linking and strengthening legal and policy advocacy at the national, regional, and global levels. ARRI's vision is to see an Africa where all women and adolescents in their diversity are able to make autonomous decisions on their sexual and reproductive health without coercion, enabling them to realize their full potential and well-being. It also seeks to strengthen the reproductive rights movement by creating a forum where members can share experiences, exchange valuable knowledge and skills, and utilize their collective strength to advance accountability and increase access to SRH information and services. Members bring a track record of leveraging national laws and policies and regional and global instruments to advance reproductive rights in their countries and/or at the Africa regional level with; national human rights mechanisms, health ministries, regional economic communities and regional and global human rights bodies.

While we recognize the gains that have been made towards the realization of sexual and reproductive rights, including progressive recognition of these rights in human rights instruments, we are concerned about inadequate implementation of laws and policies and efforts to rollback these gains through crackdowns on civil society organizations, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), attacks on human rights defenders, including SRHR advocates and service providers, and implementation of funding rules that have limited resources available for SRHR work, amongst others.

In recognition that sexual and reproductive rights are fundamental human rights, governments must respect, protect, and fulfill the full range of these rights and strengthen the capacity of women and adolescents including in conflict and emergency settings.

Recognizing the gaps, challenges and opportunities that exist in relation to the realization of these rights, and the need for evidence-based research to drive sexual and reproductive health programming, advocacy, and the development of laws and policies on SRHR, **we as ARRI members agree:**

To proactively protect and expand civic space for SRHR that is affected by legal, policy and administrative actions that restrict the enjoyment of SRHR and the work of sexual and reproductive rights advocates and service providers by:

- advocating for full recognition of SRHR advocates and service providers as human rights defenders and challenge laws, policies and administrative actions that restrict their work;
- taking concerted action to ensure SRHR and stand in solidarity with all human rights defenders and institutions facing threats and attacks, including by establishing a rapid response mechanism and working with existing networks to expand their support structures to include sexual and reproductive rights advocates;
- acting to reverse efforts to undermine the autonomy of regional human rights mechanisms and attacks on civil society organizations' right to engage with these bodies, by engaging with regional human rights mechanisms, the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI) and its constituent entities to defend SRHR and civic space at all levels.

To address access to information as a fundamental right that underpins women and adolescents' ability to claim and exercise their full range of sexual and reproductive rights by:

- advocating for the proactive provision of accurate and complete information on sexual and reproductive health and rights in formal and informal settings;
- advocating for States to enact and implement freedom of information laws and promptly respond to requests

for information made by all stakeholders, including SRHR advocates, and ensure such information is available from public and private institutions;

- challenging laws, policies and practices affecting the right of access to information including restrictions on collection and dissemination of information by public and private actors, and restrictions imposed by foreign governments.

To address comprehensive maternal health services by:

- building evidence around how a human rights-based approach can better ensure access to comprehensive maternal health services that are accessible, acceptable, available, and of good quality;
- advocating for access to comprehensive information on maternal health and services that are accessible, acceptable, available, and of good quality; including access to safe abortion and post abortion care, including through litigation, law and policy reform and implementation.

To ensure the sexual and reproductive health and rights of affected populations in conflict and emergency settings by:

- advocating for access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information and services for women and adolescents in conflict and emergency settings;
- creating an evidence base around and advocating for recognition of the full range of SRHR violations occurring in conflict and emergency settings, including inadequate provision and lack of access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services for those affected by conflict, amongst other violations.
- promoting access to justice for SRHR violations occurring in conflict and emergency settings, including through strengthening local, regional and international legal frameworks and processes and building the capacity of women and adolescents affected by conflict to engage with these processes.

To promote the fullest enjoyment by adolescents of their SRHR, by:

- advocating for the full recognition of these rights at the national level, in accordance with sub-regional, regional and global human rights instruments;
- advocating for enabling legal and policy environments to facilitate adolescents' access to comprehensive SRH information and services;
- promoting meaningful participation of adolescents in decision-making on all issues affecting their well-being;
- advocating for the allocation of adequate resources for the effective realization of SRHR of adolescents.

Having committed to undertake the foregoing, **WE URGE:**

Governments

- To guarantee, in law and in practice, women and adolescents' access to complete, accurate and timely information on sexual and reproductive health and rights and the full range of sexual and reproductive health services, including by
 - Reforming restrictive laws, policies and administrative practices that undermine the realization of these rights; and
 - Fully funding and implementing laws and policies that advance SRHR.
- To report to the ACHPR on measures taken to ensure the full realization of the rights guaranteed to women and girls under the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol);
- To allocate more resources, financial and human, to facilitate access to sexual and reproductive health and rights information and services;
- To implement regional and global commitments on meaningful participation of adolescents in decisions affecting their SRHR including by putting in place required mechanisms and resources necessary for this.

National Human Rights Institutions

- To implement the Amman Declaration and Program of Action by mainstreaming SRHR in their programming;
- To build internal capacity on SRHR to enable the effective deployment of their mandates towards the respect, protection and fulfillment of SRHR in their contexts;
- To incorporate SRHR issues in preparation of Alternative Reports to regional and global human rights mechanisms;
- To advocate with their governments against pushback on the Maputo Protocol;
- To work with other actors including SRHR advocates and organizations, to defend the human rights space and ensure restrictive laws and policies that hinder SRHR work are repealed;
- To lead the charge with government for the implementation of Access to Information laws.

Humanitarian Service Providers

- To adopt a human rights-based approach to service provision in conflict and emergency settings, including by integrating and prioritizing the provision of the full range of SRH services; ensuring meaningful participation

of affected communities in the development and implementation of SRH programming; and implementing effective accountability mechanisms;

- To adopt the do no harm approach in their operations.

Transitional Justice Mechanisms

- To prioritize accountability for sexual and reproductive rights violations that occur during conflict, including by ensuring SRHR violations are properly documented and redressed;
- To guarantee that survivors of SRHR violations are afforded the right to meaningfully participate in post conflict justice mechanisms.

Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and the African Union (AU)

- To adhere to the spirit of the constitutive documents of the AU, the African system, and RECs by ensuring broader participation of citizens and expanding and safeguarding the space for engagement by civil society organizations.
- To enact enabling legal and policy frameworks for the enjoyment and fulfillment of SRHR;
- To develop and implement comprehensive rules of engagement for peace keeping and peace enforcement missions that take into consideration SRHR and ensure

accountability for sexual and reproductive rights violations that are perpetrated by members of these mission during conflict;

- To mainstream/ incorporate SRHR in existing or new early warning mechanisms to stem sexual and reproductive rights violations that occur in conflict.

Donors

- To ensure that States receiving development assistance commit to respect, protect and fulfill the full range of SRHR and to integrate effective accountability mechanisms for SRHR violations, including revoking or withholding aid where necessary;
- To integrate a human rights-based approach to SRHR in development assistance, including by devoting adequate resources to safeguarding against closing civic space, repealing restrictions or limitations on freedom of speech or association tied to funding, and prioritizing the provision of access to comprehensive SRH services.
- To ensure that development assistance to organizations working on SRHR strengthens these organizations and enhances coordination and efficiency by fostering stronger connections and communication among actors within the sector.

Adopted in Kigali on 13th February 2019.

The Statement of Commitment has been endorsed by the members below:

Organization	Name	Country
Solidarity of Burundian Women for Social Welfare and Progress	Avocat Jean Nkeshimana	Burundi
Dynamic Femmes	Claudine Siewe	Cameroon
Association Avenir du Nepad	Djembo Ornael Mikhael	Congo
Women's Solidarity for Integral Development (SOFEDI)	Vivian Sebahire Maramuke	Democratic Republic of Congo
AGIL Internationale	Mory Conde	Guinea
AGIL Internationale	Mariama S. Wangue	Guinea
Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA Kenya)	Miriam Wachira	Kenya
Trust for Indigenous Culture and Health (TICAH)	Mageda Esolyo	Kenya
African Woman and Child Feature Service (AWCFS)	Arthur Okwemba	Kenya
Network for Adolescent and Youth Africa (NAYA)	Victor Rasugu	Kenya
Inclusion International/ KAIHID	Fatma Wangari Haji	Kenya
Centre for the Study of Adolescence (CSA)	Albert Obbuyu	Kenya
Center for Reproductive Rights	Nancy Northup	Kenya
Center for Reproductive Rights	Evelyne Opondo	Kenya

Center for Reproductive Rights	Jill Russell	Kenya
Center for Reproductive Rights	Katherine Mayall	Kenya
Center for Reproductive Rights	Nyasha Chingore-Munazvo	Kenya
Center for Reproductive Rights	Onyema Afulukwe	Kenya
Center for Reproductive Rights	Lucy Minayo	Kenya
Center for Reproductive Rights	Martin Onyango	Kenya
Center for Reproductive Rights	Selome Argaw	Kenya
Center for Reproductive Rights	Miriam Nthenge	Kenya
Center for Reproductive Rights	Betty Odallo	Kenya
Center for Reproductive Rights	Victoria Ojoo	Kenya
Center for Reproductive Rights	Mary Gaichiri	Kenya
Center for Reproductive Rights	Jane Mangwana	Kenya
Center for Reproductive Rights	Daisy Rotich	Kenya
Center for Reproductive Rights	William Oluchina	Kenya
Center for Reproductive Rights	John Mims	Kenya
Center for Reproductive Rights	Mercy Musyimi	Kenya
Kisumu Medical and Education Trust (KMET)	Monica Oguttu	Kenya
Kenya National Commission on Human Rights	Commissioner George Morara	Kenya
Ipas Africa Alliance	Judith Okal	Kenya
Member in individual capacity	Prof. Joachim Osur	Kenya
Women and Law Southern Africa Research and Educational Trust (WLSA)	Clara Lungu	Malawi
Nyale Institute	Godfrey Kangaude	Malawi
The Coalition for the Prevention of Unsafe Abortion (COPUA)	Juliet Chimwanga	Malawi
Legal Defence and Assistance Project (LEDAP)	Pamela Okoroigwe	Nigeria
Women Advocates Research and Documentation Centre (WARDC)	Bukola Osidibo	Nigeria
Health Development Initiative (HDI)	Dr. Aflodis Kagaba	Rwanda
Great Lakes Initiative for Human Rights and Development (GLIHD)	John Scarius	Rwanda
African Youth and Adolescent Network on population and Development (Afri-YAN)	Hellen Nomugisha	Rwanda
Association Juristes des Senegalaises	Amy Sakho	Senegal
Aids Rights Alliance for Southern Africa (ARASA)	Nthabiseng Mokoena	South Africa
South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC)	Ncumisa Willie	South Africa
Southern Africa Litigation Centre	Tambudzai Gonese	South Africa
Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC)	Naemy Silayo	Tanzania
Chama cha Uzazi na Malezi Bora (UMATI)	Dr. Lugano Lyndon Daimon	Tanzania
Tanzania Women Lawyers Association (TAWLA)	Tike Mwambipile	Tanzania
Msichana Initiative	Jebra Kambole	Tanzania
Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF)	Edward Mwebaza	Uganda
Uganda Association of Women Lawyers (FIDA Uganda)	Munduru Mercy Grace	Uganda
Center for Health, Human Rights and Development (CEHURD)	Dhafa Esther Kyaliki	Uganda