



MenEngage
working with men and boys for gender equality
Africa



**SONKE
GENDER
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HIV/AIDS • GENDER EQUALITY • HUMAN RIGHTS

CONCEPT NOTE



**MENENGAGE AFRICA
SRHR LEARNING AND
EXCHANGE SYMPOSIUM**

PROGRESS 2024:

**“PROMOTING THE REALIZATION OF SRHR
AND GENDER EQUALITY ACROSS AFRICA.”**

VENUE: NAIROBI, KENYA

DATES: 12 – 14 AUGUST 2024

SRHR PROGRESS 2024

PARTNERS

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Introduction and Background

MenEngage Africa (MEA) is pleased to propose a three-day SRHR (Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights) Learning and Exchange Symposium to foster collaboration, knowledge sharing, and action towards achieving comprehensive sexuality education, safe abortion, and youth-friendly services. This symposium aligns with the objectives outlined in the MEA SRHR Strategic Plan (2023-2027) and focuses on the LINK, LEARN, IMPROVE, and INFLUENCE approach. Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are crucial for human well-being, gender equality, and social development. However, Africa faces numerous challenges, including limited access to comprehensive sexuality education, safe abortion, and youth-friendly services, particularly for marginalized populations. Young people in Africa have limited knowledge and access to contraception due to myths and social norms, leading to high rates of maternal death and hospitalization. Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest pregnancy rate and unintended pregnancy rate globally, with 77% of abortions being unsafe. Only 37% of young people in sub-Saharan Africa have comprehensive knowledge about HIV prevention and transmission. These issues hinder efforts to address high rates of teenage pregnancy, STIs, and gender-based violence. Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is essential for promoting SRHR, equipping individuals with knowledge, skills, and attitudes to make informed decisions, navigate relationships, and protect themselves from sexual and gender-based violence and diseases. Gender-based violence (GBV) is a deeply entrenched issue in Africa, disproportionately affecting women and girls in all their diversity. Addressing GBV is a fundamental prerequisite for advancing SRHR and promoting gender equality in Africa.

Rationale for the Symposium

The MenEngage Africa SRHR Learning and Exchange Symposium is an important platform to bring together diverse practitioners, policy makers, community gate keepers and young people in all their diversities to unpack youth involvement and participation in knowledge sharing and development of SRHR priorities in Africa. This year the symposium sets itself apart by prioritizing young voices and leadership, in the drive to improve SRHR and GBV advocacy and outcomes. Focus will be placed on reflecting on the ICPD conference in terms of youth involvement in knowledge sharing and setting SRHR priorities. Efforts will be made towards examination of the policy environment, gaps in implementation and the barriers to effective policy implementation. The symposium will bring together practitioners, programmers, policy makers, and young people in all their diversities to build consensus on critical actions that need to be taken for inclusive and accessible access to SRHR and GBV services.

Objectives

The primary objectives of the symposium are as follows:

- Launch a thorough analysis focused on gaps and potential areas of reinforcement within policy frameworks governing SRHR in Africa, aligning with the principles of ICPD 30.
- Identify, highlight, document and share valuable insights and practices related to male engagement in SRHR.
- Strengthen Regional Response Mechanisms by advocating for a coordinated platform among African countries to share best practices, harmonize SRHR policies, allocate resources strategically, promote cross-country and regional learning, and establish a robust monitoring system for progress assessment and policy implementation accountability.

Expected Outcomes:

The MenEngage Africa SRHR Learning and Exchange Symposium aims to achieve the following outcomes:

- **Enhanced Knowledge and Capacity for Action:** Participants will gain a deeper understanding of SRHR and GBV policy framework, identify policy gaps that should contribute to co-creating a roadmap for programmatic, policy and advocacy actions.
- **Shared Innovative Approaches and Promising practices documentation:** Participants will share best and promising practices from their implementation of SRHR initiatives and develop a knowledge product on the promising practices and working models highlighted throughout the symposium will be produced for wider sharing and scale up on working models.

Target Audience:

200 participants are expected to attend the symposium. The primary target audience includes:

The participants are expected to come from youth Leaders, including organizations, activists, and advocates, focus on SRHR issues and comprehensive sexuality education (CSE). Civil Society Organizations, comprising non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations (CBOs), who play an active role in promoting SRHR and advocating for policy reforms. The symposium will also bring together policymakers, who champion SRHR policies, are involved in designing and improving access to SRHR and gender-based violence (GBV) information and services, government representatives from relevant ministries contribute to shaping SRHR, education, and health policies, healthcare providers, such as medical professionals and counselors, are dedicated to delivering youth-friendly SRHR services. Academia and Researchers, including scholars and educators, contribute to the evidence-based understanding of SRHR and CSE in Africa. International and Regional Partners, including United Nations agencies and regional bodies, support SRHR initiatives in the continent. Lastly, Religious and Traditional Leaders from relevant structures participate in promoting gender equality in the context of SRHR.

Methodology

The symposium will be delivered using a myriad of interactive methods, including panel discussions, workshops, side events, abstract presentations, as well as Q&A sessions. Young people will lead in the delivery of the symposium with technical support from Sonke staff.

By uniting diverse stakeholders and fostering collaboration, the MenEngage Africa SRHR Learning and Exchange Symposium endeavors to contribute significantly to the advancement of SRHR and CSE in Africa. Partners can expect an elevated level of exposure to scalable working models in combating SRHR challenges and GBV through learning from other countries, and the high level engagements on the roadmap to promoting the realization of SRHR and Gender Equality Across Africa

SYMPOSIUM FORMAT

PROGRESS 2024 TV

The symposium will feature an outdoor TV show showcasing informal discussions, unique insights, and collective energy. The show will provide an authentic glimpse into the informal exchanges happening beyond the formal agenda, showcasing the diverse voices shaping the narrative of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Africa.

TRAINING WORKSHOP

The symposium will feature several workshops, during which participants will have their skills and competencies strengthened on different thematic including use of technology,

PANEL CONVERSATIONS

The symposium will provide an opportunity for exchange of ideas between leading experts in the SRHR field and participants. Panels will be composed of experts from diverse backgrounds to provide rich conversations and insights that will boost participants' knowledge through rich engagements.

ROUNDTABLE CONVERSATIONS

For in-depth conversations, the symposium will feature round table discussions through which participants can have a chance to interact with each other in critical conversations on approaches to SRHR and share working interventions. Round table conversations will enable participants to ask more questions and gain more understanding on working models for access to SRHR in Africa