



CONCEPT NOTE

African Regional Convening Towards Women Deliver 2026

Change Calls Us Here

Background

2030, is the landmark deadline for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other global Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) frameworks and as it draws closer, we face a critical 5-year window to intensify efforts and accelerate progress. Progress indicators have shown that there are missed targets and unfinished business in gender equality, women's rights and SRHR across Africa and this is manifested in the lived realities with social and political consequences. Raising geopolitical tensions, shrinking civic space and looming restructuring of UN agencies raise urgent questions about the future prioritization of SRHR within global development architecture and this requires urgent and coordinated action as there is a real risk that these issues may lose focus amidst broader institutional reforms.¹ At the same time, global funding withdrawals impacts on decades of gains in gender equality and SRHR. According to a 2025 report by Plan International UK, MSI Reproductive Choices, and the Guttmacher Institute, proposed UK foreign aid cuts to sexual and reproductive health services could have devastating consequences. A 70% reduction in funding would deny 7.7 million people access to contraceptive services, resulting in an estimated 2.6 million additional unintended pregnancies and 2,740 maternal deaths globally.² In a report published by [Amnesty International](#) titled "Lives at Risk", they assert that the United States government suspension of foreign assistance programmes has catastrophic consequences on global health and humanitarian efforts. The cuts halted critical services in at least 12 countries, including access to contraception, maternal health care, and post-rape treatment. The report highlights that the sudden withdrawal created a life-threatening vacuum, especially for women, girls, and survivors of sexual violence, and violated international human rights obligations by undermining access to life-saving care. UN Women has also documented that deep cuts to foreign aid from donor countries like the Netherlands have severely impacted women-led and women's rights organizations globally. In a survey of 411 organizations across 44 crisis-affected countries, 90% reported financial strain due to aid reductions, and nearly half anticipated shutting down within six months. These organizations, many of which provide essential sexual and reproductive health services, have already reduced staff and suspended key programs. The report warns that this funding crisis is not only financial but also a crisis of rights and accountability, as it threatens the survival of frontline services for women and girls in humanitarian settings.³ This funding cuts create a precarious vacuum that threatens to reverse decades of progress in SRHR and gender equality as these cuts are not matched by an increase in domestic financing through national budgets.

1 <https://www.guttmacher.org/report/adding-it-up-investing-in-sexual-reproductive-health-2019>

2 <https://plan-uk.org/press/new-report-warns-consequences-if-sexual-and-reproductive-health-funding-cut#main-content>

3 <http://unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2025/05/at-a-breaking-point-the-impact-of-foreign-aid-cuts-on-womens-organizations-in-humanitarian-crises-worldwide>

Africa is home to the youngest population in the world, with 70% of sub-Saharan Africa under the age of 30, and this demographic is growing rapidly⁴. The failure to fund SRHR initiatives adequately risks undermining the future of this generation, particularly for adolescent girls, young women, LGBTQ+ individuals, and those in rural or conflict-affected areas, who already face systemic exclusion. These funding withdrawals have also impacted on civic space, feminist organising, leading to shrinking space across many countries. Governments and anti-rights organizations are weaponizing family values rhetoric to undermine SRHR and gender rights while pushing policies on contraception, abortion, and sexual orientation.⁵ This pushback disproportionately impacts young people from marginalized communities, who are often excluded from advocacy platforms due to visa restrictions, funding barriers, and entrenched age and gender hierarchies.

Sonke together with its partners will unite African feminist, youth advocates, policymakers and grassroots movements to reclaim the narrative, push for more domestic funding and strengthen accountability for the AU Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls as well as other human rights instruments. This convening will serve as a space to reflect, align and mobilize, ensuring that our priorities are heard, protected and promoted on the road to Women Deliver 2026 and beyond.

Rationale

The African continent faces unique challenges in advancing SRHR and gender equality. This has been impacted by global funding withdrawal with traditional donors retreating, yet national budgets are not meeting the needs, which has left a significant gap, necessitating innovative domestic funding solutions. With Africa being home to the youngest population, it necessitates an urgent need for sustainable funding to support SRHR and gender equality initiatives. Further to this, Political environments in many countries are becoming more hostile, and civic spaces for advocacy are shrinking. In many countries, anti-rights movements are weaponizing family values to push back on SRHR progress and freedom and limiting civic space for feminist organizing. These feminists organizing, when and where possible has often seen the exclusion of young people especially adolescent girls and young women from rural areas and marginalized communities face visa barriers and funding gaps, sidelining their critical perspectives.

Women Deliver 2026 presents a strategic moment to reverse this trend. It offers a powerful platform for African advocates to reclaim space, demand accountability, and ensure that SRHR and gender justice remain central to global development frameworks. As these intersecting pressures mount, this convening is timely as it seeks to strengthen advocacy networks, co-create roadmap towards 2030 and beyond and defend the rights and dignity of all people, especially young women, adolescents, and marginalized groups—across Africa. At this crucial time, we can no longer afford fragmented responses.

While Africa has made important regional commitments through frameworks such as the Protocol to The African Charter on Human and People's Rights on The Rights Of Women In Africa (Maputo Protocol), implementation at the national level remains inconsistent and underfunded. Many countries have yet to ratify or fully operationalize these instruments, and where they are ratified, weak enforcement mechanisms, lack of political will, and limited domestic financing continue to hinder impact. These gaps reveal a disconnect between regional aspirations and national realities—making it urgent to strengthen domestic accountability, ensure resource allocation, and build stronger monitoring systems led by civil society, especially youth and grassroots movements.

⁴ <https://www.prb.org/resources/africas-future-youth-and-the-data-defining-their-lives/>

⁵ <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/article/2024/sep/11/religious-groups-christians-islamists-catholic-billions-counter-gender-equality-sex-education-lgbtq-equal-rights>



Objectives

1. Promote Sustainable Financing and Enabling Environments for SRHR and Gender Equality
 - Spark youth-centered continental dialogue to explore and advocate for innovative pathways for sustainable SRHR and gender equality financing in response to shrinking international aid.
 - Defend SRHR and gender justice amid reduced civic space and shifting political landscapes.
2. Strengthen Regional and Global Advocacy for Policy Change
 - Build momentum for the ratification and implementation of the AU Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls.
 - Influence post-2030 frameworks by engaging policymakers at all levels.
3. Elevate African Feminist and Youth Leadership on the Global Stage
 - Address barriers to youth participation and amplify their voices in advocacy spaces.
 - Promote African feminist narratives and solidarity in global forums, including in the lead-up to Women Deliver 2026.

Output

- Showcase grassroots-led models for sustainable financing—such as social impact bonds, local philanthropy, and gender-responsive budgeting—while collaboratively shaping strategies to encourage governments to ratify and uphold their commitments to the AU Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls and the Maputo Protocol.
- Spotlight innovative community-led interventions (e.g., men’s engagement programs, survivor-centered justice mechanisms).
- Fund 50+ youth delegates through a solidarity visa-support fund and co-design advocacy strategies with young leaders, including those unable to travel (e.g., hybrid “shadow delegations”).
- Co-create a shared intergenerational leadership framework—led by youth, feminist leaders, and grassroots activists—to guide inclusive advocacy, movement building, and decision-making, while shaping a unified African feminist narrative and position for global platforms such as Women Deliver 2026.

Expected Outcomes

- A collective position paper outlining Africa’s SRHR and gender justice priorities for Women Deliver 2026.
- Advocacy toolkits and national action plans supporting AU Convention ratification and implementation.
- A briefing paper on domestic financing options and alternative funding models.
- A youth-led accountability and engagement framework for monitoring post-2030 progress.
- Strengthened alliances between civil society, youth groups, and policymakers committed to advancing gender justice in Africa.



Co-Creation Partners





African Regional Convening Towards **Women Deliver 2026**

24-26 November 2025 NAIROBI, KENYA

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#WD2026

