



SRHR Taskforce members during the reflection meeting

SRHR Taskforce Reflects 2023 Agreed Actions

The Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) Coalition task force recently organized a meeting aimed at reflecting on the agreed 2023 strategic activities and mapping the way forward for 2024.

The meeting, which took place at Dorsi Mollel Foundation Offices, was also intended to focus on the progress of the key strategic activities agreed during the coalition training which took place early last year including; Capacity building for coalition members, review of SRHR-related laws/policies, and guidelines, research of SRHR challenges in Tanzania, dialogue sessions with different SRHR stakeholders and SRHR annual conference.

Sharing updates with task force members Dr Sylvia Rwambo said, the major activities implemented in 2023 focused on 'Mtoto Njiti Agenda' campaign meant to increase maternity leave for mothers of preterm babies.

She said that in Zanzibar, coalition representatives met with House of Representatives members to persuade/lobby them to amend the existing maternity leave laws and recommend increasing maternity leave up to six months for mothers with pre-term babies. The agenda was positively received by members of the House of Representatives and they agreed to support the process which is still under discussion.

She also said that an event was organized with MP's from the Parliamentary Health and HIV/AIDS Committee to share on the campaign progress. The event triggered them to continue advocating for the agenda. As a result of the event, the MPs agreed with the Ministry of Public Service Management and Good Governance to lead the process in collaboration with the Ministry of Community Development and Gender. They requested the Coalition to write an official letter explaining the campaign from the initial to the current status.

Reflecting on the way forward, task force members agreed that a lot has been done and achieved in 2023, especially on the campaign but the successes are not properly documented. Also coalition members through their organizations have done a lot of interventions that contribute to coalition interventions, but the challenge is lack of a mechanism to capture and report them.

Some of the major agreed actions for the 2024 were; developing a road map for 2024, develop coalition media strategy, Organize task force quarterly meetings, Coalition annual conference and a mechanism on how to share informations with SRHR coalition regularly.

As a way forward, a small team was assigned to work on the following; Planning bigger meeting for the coalition members, and Designing report templates for coalition members.

The SRHR Coalition was formed in 2022 as a result of the findings of a study of key actors and agenda priority issues within the SRHR space. It brings together 90+ women and children's rights organizations working in the sexual and reproductive health space whereas the main focus seems to be on the medical aspects of SRHR.

Currently, the Coalition is supporting a campaign advocating for an increase of maternity leave for mothers of preterm babies and babies with special needs from 84 to 180 days but ultimately extending to all women as they exercise their right to safe and respectful motherhood.



Some members of the coalition in a press conference which took place in Arusha

Coalition calls for justice over a Girl Killing

The Women Fund Tanzania Trust (WFT-T) recently facilitated an emergency meeting for stakeholders working on women, girls, and children's rights to discuss strategies to raise their voices over the brutal killing of a 22-year-old girl, Nanyoli Mohee, in Loliondo District, Arusha Region.

The meeting was organized after WFT-T received information about the incident from a coalition member, Mimutie Women Organization which advocates for women and girls' rights in peripheral districts.

The aim of the emergency meeting was to discuss strategies to raise their voices to condemn the killing of the girl and also request relevant authorities to take appropriate action against the killing, considering that this is not the only case.

Similarly, the meeting discussed the importance for the government to amend the Marriage Act 1971, which allows girls to be married before the age of 18.

As part of the implementation of the agreed actions from the stakeholder's emergency meeting, under the coordination of Msichana Initiative, Coalition members in Arusha met with journalists and presented a statement condemning the murder of the girl on behalf of the Women, Children, and Girls' coalition..

Speaking to the journalists, Mary Laizer, said that they strongly condemn the killing of the Masai girl who was brutally beaten with a stick by a man before succumbing to injuries.

"We are saddened and hurt by this cruel incident which is a continuation of acts of violence against children, girls and women, which is going on in various parts of the country where it is against the law and the Constitution of the United Republic of Tanzania," she said.

She stressed that, without important steps being taken, children will continue to be subjected to sexual violence and lose their lives, therefore, Parliament has the responsibility to make changes to the Marriage Act of 1971.

"We propose to the relevant authorities to take these cases seriously and ensure that investigations are carried out either by creating a commission with the authority to investigate these reported cases of violence," she added.

Nanyoli was fatally assaulted after she had refused to live with a man her parents wanted her to marry. The girl is said to have refused to be forced into marrying the man and ran away from her parents' house and lived in the forest. But on 06 February 2024, a person who knows her, caught her and returned her to her parents' home. It is when the father summoned the man who had paid dowry for Nanyoli, identified as Amyor Mathayo, a Maasai from the village of Endepes to come and take her away and that's when he carried out the brutal attack.

Women Fund Tanzania Trust (WFT-T)'s among other commitments promotes strategic collective actions aimed at disrupting all forms of power, including patriarchy leading to discrimination, exploitation, and exclusion of women, girls, children, and other marginalized social groups. This includes coordinating stakeholders whenever there is an issue/agenda related to women/girls/children that needs attention.

Addressing Teenage Pregnancies Through “Big Sisters & Brothers” Project



She added that the trained big sisters and brothers became knowledgeable champions who supervise their young sisters and brothers and also shared SRHR knowledge with them, while “Nguvu ya mama” members used the knowledge to continue raising awareness on SRHR at secondary schools and in their localities, mainly supporting the initiative to prevent early pregnancy and avoid risk behaviors in their children.

Ruphene added that teachers were trained to help support and lead the students towards addressing early pregnancies and improving performance in subject

She further said that monthly supportive supervision was conducted to the groups (Mothers, Big Sisters & Brothers) as a means of continuing to strengthen them to help reduce teenage pregnancies and prevent other forms of violence in schools and in the community.

“Through household visits and meetings organized by local government authorities, we managed to empower parents and family members to support and educate their children on SRHR matters. We encouraged them to give enough time, especially to girls so as to rescue them from engaging in risky behavior groups,” she added.

Ruphene also said that, apart from using mentor groups, they also use other means to raise awareness on SRHR such as essay competitions, radio programmes, quarterly meetings with students, parents, and teachers etc.

Regarding the success of the programme, she explained that there are notable changes including increased knowledge on SRHR to parents and students, enhanced Teacher-Student Bonds, and Nurturing Leadership Skills and Confidence to students.

“When I join the SRHR club at school, we were taught on the risk of engaging in love affairs at a young age and given skills to shun peer pressure. We engaged in meaningful discussions and activities, safeguarding us from potential pitfalls that could impede academic progress. The sessions changed my mind completely. I am now a change agent educating my fellow students,” narrated Mwinjinvua

Mwinjinvua highlighted that SRHR education should be accessible to all students in school, considering the transformative impact it has had on those who have already received it.

The Headmaster for Mikese Secondary School said, *“I thank Kinara for coming to my school, as it has significantly increased students’ self-awareness, resulting in a decrease in teenage pregnancies. In 2022, twelve (12) girls were reported pregnant, while in 2023, the number decreased to five (5). I request that the project continues to help students, especially girls, with SRHR sessions. I assure you of my continued cooperation in reducing teenage pregnancies in our region.”*

KINARA For Youth Evolution has been implementing the ‘Big Sisters, and Brothers’ project in Morogoro Municipality and Morogoro DC.

The major goal of the project is to reduce teenage pregnancies among secondary school students while ensuring their educational rights through raising awareness on Sexual Reproductive Health and Gender Equality.

The project came in handy as according to a 2018 baseline study in Morogoro Municipality, the root causes of teenage pregnancies include inadequate Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) awareness, lack of educational social support, poverty, poor parental care, cultural initiation, peer pressure etc.

The project played an important role in continuing the long-term initiative of reducing teenage pregnancies which had been started at eight secondary schools (2020 to 2023) under the Women Fund Tanzania Trust (WFTT) support.

The project focuses on supporting female students to achieve their dreams by completing their studies and avoiding teenage pregnancies through a unique mentoring and coaching approach, whereby Big Sisters and Brothers lead their Little Sisters and Brothers (*Kuzungumza wao kwa wao*).

Speaking about the initiative the Project Officer, Prisca Ruphene, said,

“We started by identifying a group of mentors comprising 60 Big Sisters and Brothers from three secondary schools (Mikese, Gwatwa, NaneNane), 12 teachers, and 6 “Nguvu ya mama” members. Nguvu ya Mama members are mothers who have skills, knowledge, and experience in how to provide knowledge to students and to the community. We then conducted comprehensive training on Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and Human Rights to them. Major topics were how to avoid early pregnancies and risk groups, Self-awareness, GBV, Peer pressure, Relationship, Menstruation, Sexually transmitted infections, Decision-making, Family Planning, and Facilitation skills and Leadership”

Ukerewe Women's Platform Strategize for Climate Action



Sophia Donald, (SAWAU Executive Director) speaking with platform members during the reflection workshop

As part of actions to address the effects of climate change, the Ukerewe District Women's Platform met in a one-day workshop organized by Sauti ya Wanawake Ukerewe (SAWAU) under the project "Haki za Mazingira Phase II," which was supported by Women Fund Tanzania Trust.

The main objective of the workshop was to raise awareness about gender and climate change among women and prepare an advocacy campaign to mobilize action to address climate change.

The workshop was attended by 34 participants, consisting of women from nine wards.

In her welcoming note, Pudentiana Ngereza, SAWAU Chairperson, highlighted that approximately 95% of human activities, such as deforestation, agriculture, industry, and indiscriminate waste disposal, are sources of climate change challenges currently being experienced. She emphasized that as climate change causes more extreme weather events, such as droughts, floods, and storms, women are disproportionately affected because they are often the primary caregivers for their families and responsible for collecting water, growing food, and caring for livestock.

On his side, the District Community Development Officer (DCDO) appreciated Sauti ya Wanawake Ukerewe and WFT-T for recognizing the importance of implementing the project. He promised that the Ukerewe Municipal Council would continue to collaborate with various stakeholders to ensure that gender issues are included in plans to address climate change.

During discussions, participants shared the impacts of climate change they are experiencing in their areas, including a decrease in fish stocks due to overfishing, pollution, climate change, the disappearance of certain fish species, family abandonment, increasing poverty, increasing hunger, and high malnutrition. They identified major contributors to climate change effects as the loss of native trees on the island, poor solid waste management by residents, fishing camps, and small hotels, all leading to water pollution and decreasing fishing productivity.

"Most of the native trees in Ukerewe are gone. We must take action together to prevent the deforestation of our forests. Let's return to our villages and raise awareness about the importance of native trees in maintaining environmental balance and biodiversity conservation," said Pili Gutu.

Regarding renewable energy, they noted that the scarcity of wood has forced many women to walk long distances to find firewood.

They suggested that using renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind power, could help address deforestation and reduce energy costs. They also called for government investment in research and development of renewable energy technologies.

"Gas is expensive and not readily available in our localities. You need to travel up to 35 kilometers to buy gas, which costs 15,000 TZS for the fare and 25,000 TZS to refill the gas. We need knowledge of alternative energy sources, such as innovative stoves that use less wood. We also request that the government reduce the cost of gas," explained Maria.

At the end of the workshop, participants agreed to organize a waste management campaign scheduled to take place in March. They developed a campaign plan focusing on raising awareness about the importance of proper waste disposal and the negative impacts of pollution on health and the environment. The campaign will target residents of Ukerewe, including those in urban areas and rural communities.

The campaign is necessary because the district is home to several landfills overflowing with waste, posing a threat to public health.

The Ukerewe Women's Platform is a network of women working together to address the effects of climate change. It was launched in 2022 by SAWAU in collaboration with the Ukerewe District Council. It comprises women from various sectors, including agriculture, livestock, business, and health.

Major responsibilities of the platform includes public awareness on impacts of climate change to women, developing gender-responsive climate change adaptation strategies, empowering women to cope with climate change effects, advocating for gender-responsive climate change policies and programs, and implementing community-based initiatives empowering women to take action on climate change.

Pictorial



Coordinating collective action against killing of the girl in Loliondo



Strategizing on Chief Mwami Ntare HerStory documentation



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Our visitors from CRDB Bank



Contact

✉ info@wftrust.or.tz

🌐 www.wftrust.or.tz

📍 P. O. Box 79235
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania
17 Rufiji Street, Masaki
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

☎ T: +255 22 26 00 944
M: +255 753 912 130

📱 [f](#) [ig](#) [tw](#) [in](#) @womenfund_tz