



YPT

Young People Today



Evaluation of the **ESA Ministerial Commitment** on
Comprehensive Sexuality Education and SRH services for
Adolescents and Young People

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2013 - 2020





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1. Context

In 2013, Regional Economic Communities (RECs), UNESCO, and other development partners initiated a process to develop a regional commitment within the East and Southern African (ESA) region. More specifically, the commitment-making process was led by three coordination platforms created for this purpose, a Technical Coordinating Group (TCG), a High-Level Group (HLG), and a Civil Society Platform, with the TCG handling the day-to-day decision making and the HLG serving as a convening platform for political leaders to drive the process.

To help inform the Commitment, a diagnostic report was commissioned by UNESCO to surface major data trends regarding adolescent and youth health and education needs in the region. Following the release of the report, in December 2013, the political process to create the commitment was met with success as 20¹² ministers of education and health signed onto the new ESA Ministerial Commitment. These Governments thus committed themselves to work together for the good of adolescents and young people to deliver comprehensive sexuality education and SRH services.

In 2020, an evaluation was commissioned to document the journey travelled by the 21 ESA Commitment countries progress towards the 9 set targets, as well as to explore opportunities to sustain the momentum that the Commitment has generated over the years. The evaluation covered the entire implementation period of the Commitment from 2013-2020 and aims to generate knowledge and evidence that will inform the rationale for the extension of the ESA Commitment to 2030 in line with Agenda 2030.

¹ Angola, Botswana, Burundi, DRC, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe

² Rwanda did not officially endorse the commitment as their ministers of education and health were unavailable for the December 2013 meeting, however, they were part of the ESA commitment process and actively participate in coordination and reporting on the commitment.

2. Evaluation Findings

2.1 Relevance and Coherence

2.1.1 ESA Commitment influence on the development of national and regional ASRHR laws, policies, and strategies

At country level

- The ESA Commitment has increased political will and engagement on SRHR related to A&Y at the country level. The ESA Commitment influenced the development of national and regional ASRHR laws, policies, and strategies by heightening attention regionally, and within countries to specific thematic issues. Modalities to raise ASRHR on country agendas included advocacy, policy dialogue, capacity building, monitoring, measurement, and reporting. While emphasis differed between countries, notable progress has been made towards some targets in all countries.
- New laws and policies around child marriage and education rights of pregnant learners were adopted as a result of the ESA Commitment. Countries with legal and policy.
- frameworks already in place used the ESA Commitment to advance implementation by developing national strategies and implementing guidelines on SRHR.
- Significant programming included the design and roll-out of new CSE interventions and programmes for early and unintended pregnancy. AYFHS remain a priority but appear to be a “work in progress” that has yet to be achieved, often due to underfunding.
- The ESA Commitment also facilitated the creation of advocacy windows for CSOs to engage the government.
- Challenges remain in harmonising laws to align to national commitments, especially related to the age of consent to sex, marriage, and access to SRH services such as family planning commodities.
- Another limitation can be found with the ESA Commitment targets do not detail progress towards effective and supportive implementation of the law for adolescents and youth. An expansion of the ESA targets could include process measures related to the enabling environment.

At regional level

- The ESA Commitment’s placement within the RECs adds gravitas to the commitment, giving legitimacy and pressure for the achievement of targets by the Member States. SADC and the EAC however do not have the same level of resources, especially staff, dedicated to the monitoring of the Commitment and support towards its implementation. For example, SADC, with its 16 Member States, and sufficient staff for health and education, was able to provide support and monitor progress against the Commitment through coordinated periodic reporting at the SADC Ministers of Education meetings, a process that will also soon be managed at the Ministers of Health meeting during the annual SADC meeting. EAC, representing fewer countries (6 Member-States), currently lacks the resources of SADC to do the same.
- Raising the level of progress review to include finance ministries would further emphasise the endorsement by SADC and EAC, and heighten the pressure on countries to commit the necessary financial resources for A&Y interventions. It would also build bridges between health, education, and economic development interests in youth programming and intervention strategies to meet ESA targets.

At global level

- The ESA Commitment preceded the SDGs and paved the way for governments within the region to consolidate reporting on adolescent and youth health, education, and gender equality outcomes, which supported subsequent reporting on the SDGs. This was particularly relevant to SDG 3 on ‘Good Health and Well-being’, which covered AYFHS, EUP, and HIV prevention, SDG 4 on ‘Quality Education’, which covered CSE, and SDG 5 on ‘Gender Equality’, which covered CEFM and SRGBV.

2.1.2 Meaningful Adolescent and Youth Engagement

- The ESA Commitment involved young people in the regional coordination mechanisms through the AfriYAN and Young Positives (Y+). Despite the participation of these networks and a few other youth organisations, the representation of adolescents and youth was narrow.
- AfriYAN played an important representative role for youth organisations in the region, supported by its presence in many of the ESA countries. However, it could not fully represent the diversity of national and sub-national level youth organisations and networks, particularly beyond the ASRHR domain (e.g. economic empowerment, climate change, civic engagement, etc.). The absence of other representative networks in the region limits broader engagement with diverse youth organisations in countries that are not affiliated with AfriYAN.
- As an inter-governmental commitment, the role of civil society, and youth, in particular, has not been well defined. Resources have not been set aside to ensure diverse youth engagement, which in turn has limited accountability to youth as rights holders of the Commitment. Additionally, the lack of indicators on youth-led and youth-serving CSO engagement in the monitoring and evaluation of progress on the Commitment is a missed opportunity.
- The Commitment should be expanded to include youth movement building and new modalities of engaging with youth, not only as beneficiaries, but also as full partners in all aspects of the design, implementation and monitoring of progress on the ESA Commitments.

2.1.3 Inclusion of human rights related to SRH, HIV, and youth in the ESA Commitment

- The ESA Commitment includes Human Rights language, and indicators monitoring the implementation of strategic interventions (including the removal of barriers to access), and strengthening of the legal and policy environment.
- It does not however emphasise and advocate for the protection and fulfillment of human rights among young people more broadly. Currently the ESA Commitment does not have an indicator to measure whether standards of non-discriminatory service provision is adhered to, or whether there is professional accountability in the system to ensure youth rights are upheld.
- The renewal of the ESA Commitment offers an opportunity to standardise respect of human rights among young people through accountability mechanisms such as spot checks, digital youth reports on issues; feedback loops; or the use of technology to ensure real-time responses of youth on their access to service.

2.2 Effectiveness

Target 1: A good quality CSE curriculum framework is in place and being implemented in each of the 21 countries

- By 2018, 17 countries had a CSE strategy or framework for out of school youth³.
- CSE continues to be high on the priority list for the majority of countries in the region, over 80% of reporting countries recorded having a CSE framework during the lifetime of the commitment.

Target 2: Pre- and in-service CSE and SRH training for teachers and health and social workers are established and being implemented in all 21 countries.

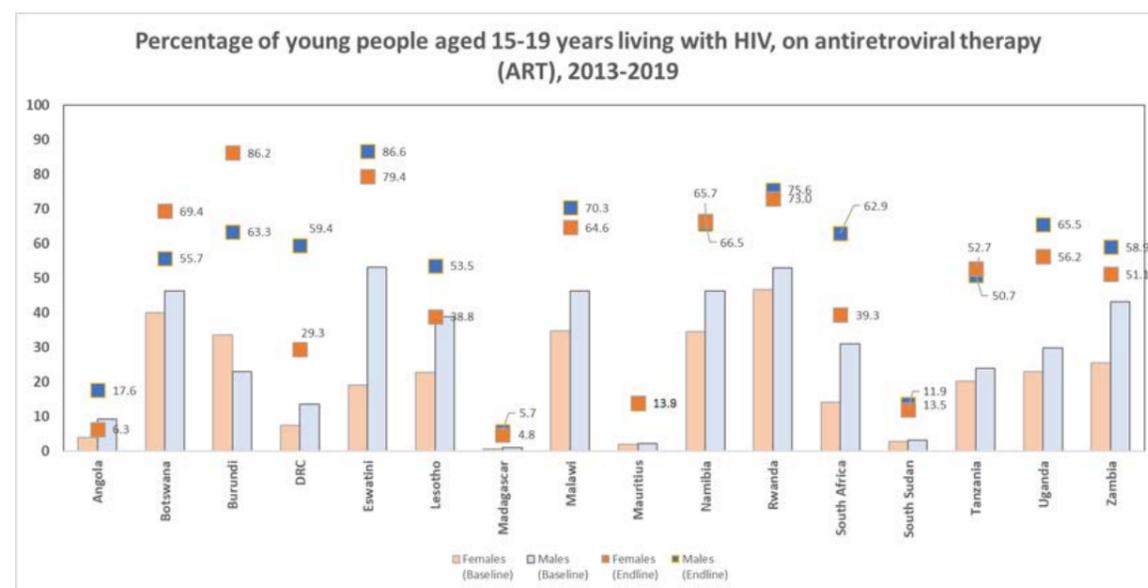
- There was only one regional data point on the percentage of schools with teachers who received training, and taught lessons, in life-skills based on HIV and sexuality education in the previous academic year, which was 76% for primary school and 56% for secondary schools in 2015.
- Based on available quantitative data, it was not possible to analyse quantitative trends related to this indicator, or on the ESA Commitment’s influence on pre-and in-service CSE and SRH training for teachers.

³ Angola, Botswana, Burundi, DRC, Eswatini, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe

Target 3: Decrease by 50% the number of adolescents and young people who do not have access to youth-friendly SRH services, including HIV related services that are equitable, accessible, acceptable, appropriate, and effective

- Adolescents and youth received more youth-friendly/sensitive SRH services throughout the lifetime of the commitment than they did before its launch, however, the data were not analysed according to disparities relating to rural/urban settings, income status, education level, and other factors.
- By 2018, all 21 countries reported providing pre-service and/or in-service training programmes on the delivery of the adolescent/youth-friendly services
- The ESA Commitment enabled the achievement of 100% provision of pre-service and/or in-service training programmes on the delivery of adolescent/youth-friendly services
- The percentages of adolescents and young people aged 15-19 living with HIV and receiving antiretroviral therapy increased across all 16 countries⁴ with complete data for two points during the lifetime of the Commitment.

Figure 1: Percentage of adolescents and young people aged 15-19 years living with HIV currently receiving antiretroviral therapy (2013 – 2019)



Target 4: Eliminate all new HIV infections among adolescents and young people aged 10-24

- The ESA Commitment, alongside other regional efforts, contributed to a decline of new HIV infections among adolescent girls and boys and young women and men by 30% (366,900 to 258,192) from 2013 to 2019 in the ESA region.
- While majority of countries showed declines in new HIV infections among young people, increases were noted in Burundi and South Sudan among both males and females, and an increase among females only in Angola. There were no changes for both males and females in Mauritius, and in Madagascar no changes were noted for males.
- The rate of reduction of new HIV infections was slower for adolescent girls and young women (10.9%) than it was for adolescent boys and young men (12.5%).

⁴ Angola, Botswana, Burundi, DRC, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia

Figure 2: Number of new HIV infections among females aged 15-24

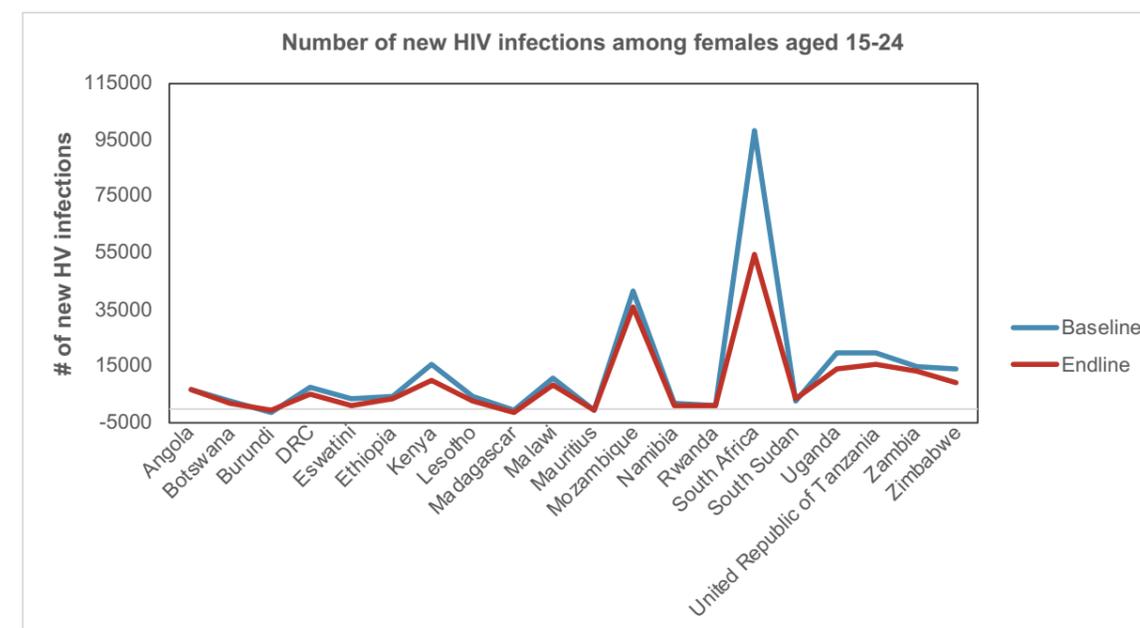
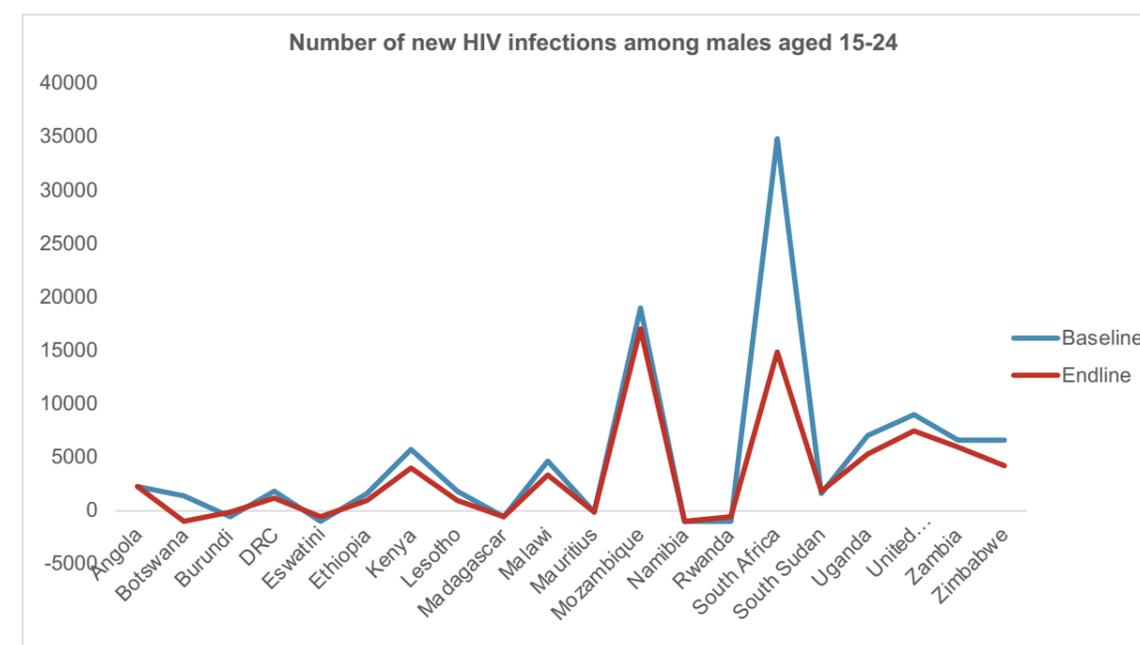


Figure 3: Number of new HIV infections among males aged 15-24



Target 5: Increase to 95% the number of adolescents and young people aged 10-24 who demonstrate comprehensive HIV prevention knowledge levels

- The percentage of young people aged 15-24 years who both correctly identified ways of preventing the sexual transmission of HIV and who reject major misconceptions about HIV transmission increased from 36% in 2013 to 40% in 2018 in the ESA region, representing a 4% change.
- The ESA Commitment helped influence a 4% increase in HIV knowledge amongst young people in the region, albeit far below the target set for achievement by 2020.
- In general, HIV knowledge levels in the region are still very low, and a momentous effort is required to lift country

performance towards this indicator to the desired levels.

Figure 4: Percentage of adolescents and young people (female) aged 15-24 years who have comprehensive HIV prevention knowledge

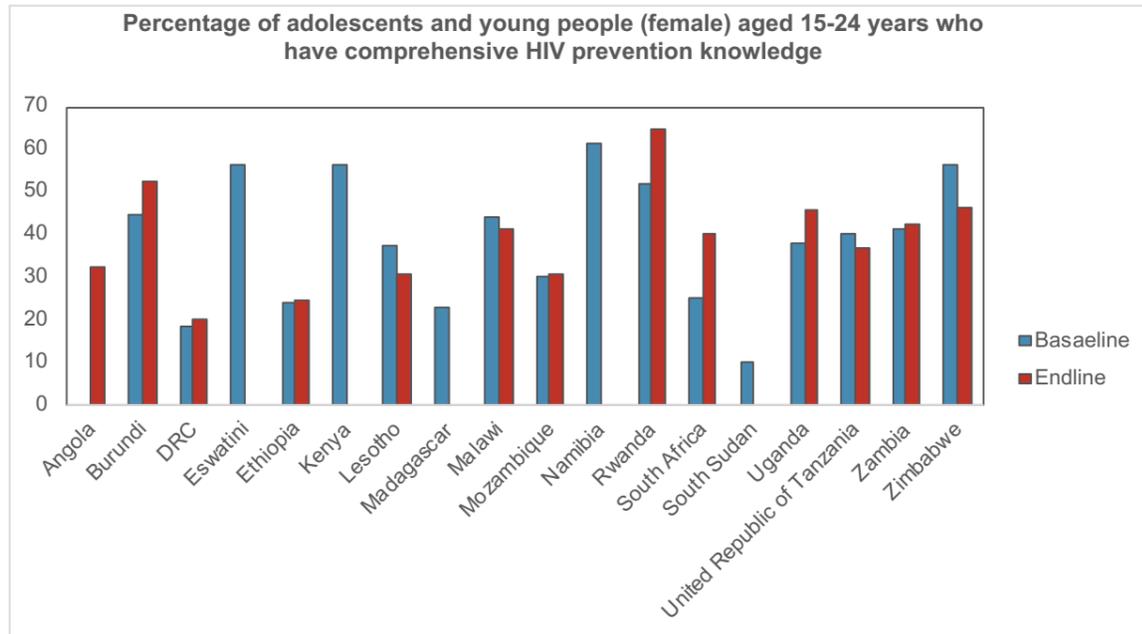
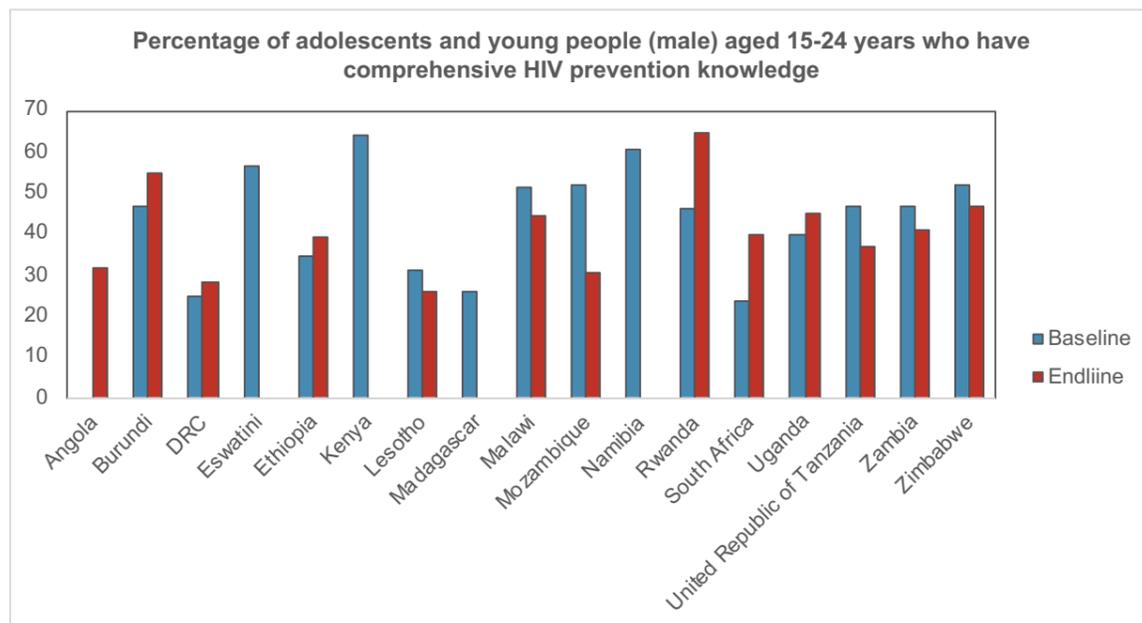


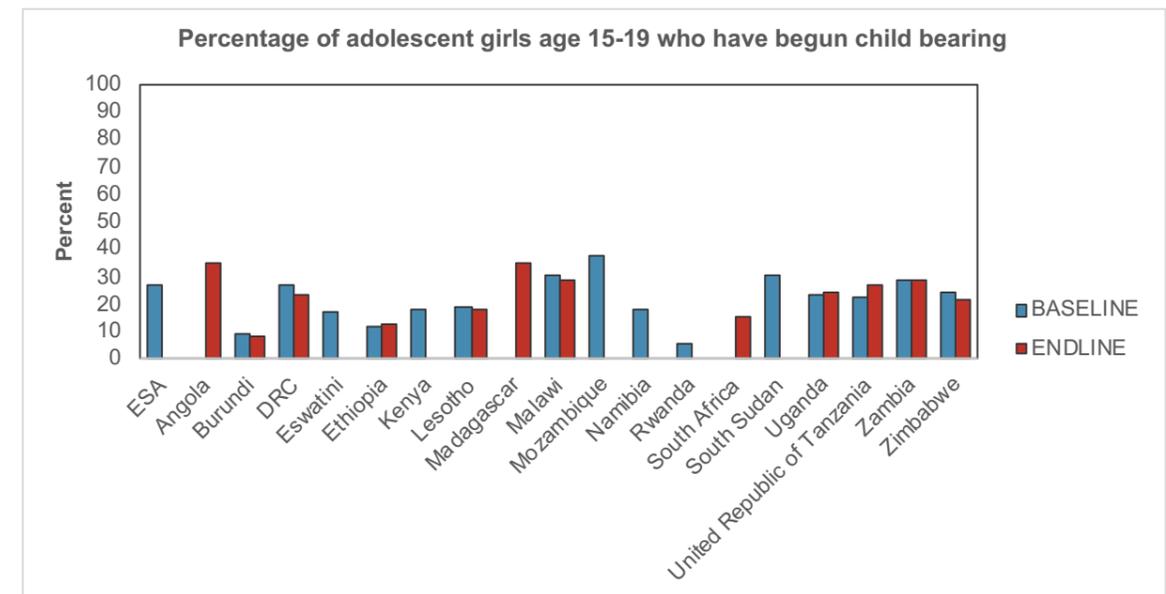
Figure 5: Percentage of adolescents and young people (male) aged 15-24 years who have comprehensive HIV prevention knowledge



Target 6: Reduce early and unintended pregnancies among young people by 75%

- Regional data⁵ on the percentage of women aged 15-19 years who have begun childbearing was only available for 2014 at 27%. In the 2015 ESA Commitment progress report, data on this indicator was presented separately for each of the 12 countries for which data are available; no aggregated figure was given.
- At the country level, declines were recorded in 5⁶ out of 9 countries that had two data points, whilst increases were noted in 4⁷ out of 9 countries reporting. Overall, insufficient progress was made towards this target, with 8 of the 9 countries with endline data still having unintended pregnancy rates ranging from 22% (Zimbabwe) to 36% (Angola), and no countries achieving the 75% targets.
- By 2018, 16⁸ countries were implementing a national policy/strategy on pregnant learners

Figure 6: Percentage of adolescent girls 15-19 years who have begun childbearing (2013 – 2019)



Target 7: Eliminate gender-based violence

- Of the countries with two data points between 2013 and 2019 reporting on wife-beating as justified for at least one of the five reasons specified, only Burundi (10.6%), Ethiopia (4.5%), Rwanda (11.7%), Uganda (7.7) and Zambia (1.8) saw a decline amongst young female respondents; among young men declines were seen in Burundi (7%), Ethiopia (17%), Rwanda (8%), and Zambia (7%)
- Three countries saw a rise in tolerance to wife beating among young women and young men, namely Malawi, Tanzania and Zimbabwe, and among young men also in Uganda. Rates of tolerance to wife beating at endline ranged from 5% in South Africa to 60% among young women respondents, and from 13.5% to 50% among young men. These distressing figures indicate much work is to be done on transforming gender norms around masculinity and gender-based violence.
- On average Governments in the ESA Commitment made significant strides in creating an enabling environment to address school-related gender-based violence. By 2018, 18⁹ countries had education sector policies that addressed SRGBV.

⁵ Data in Regional Accountability Framework based on State of the World report (2014)

⁶ Declines reported in Burundi (1.3%), DRC (3.8%), Lesotho (1.3%), Malawi (1.4%), Zimbabwe (2.6%) between 2010 and 2019

⁷ Increases reported in Ethiopia (0.4%), Tanzania (3.9%), Uganda (1%), Zambia (0.7%) between 2010 and 2019

⁸ Burundi, Eswatini, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

⁹ All countries had, except for Botswana, Burundi and DRC

Figure 7: Percentage of females aged 15-24 who think a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife in certain circumstances

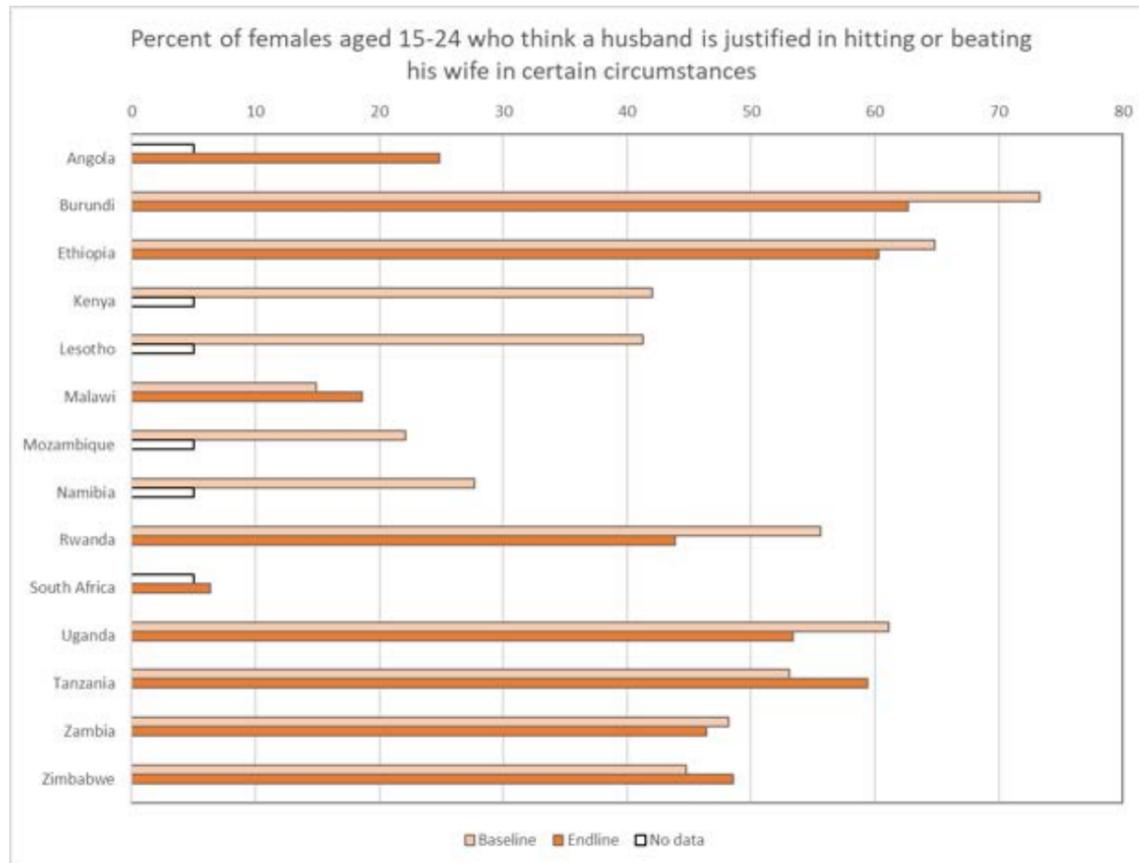
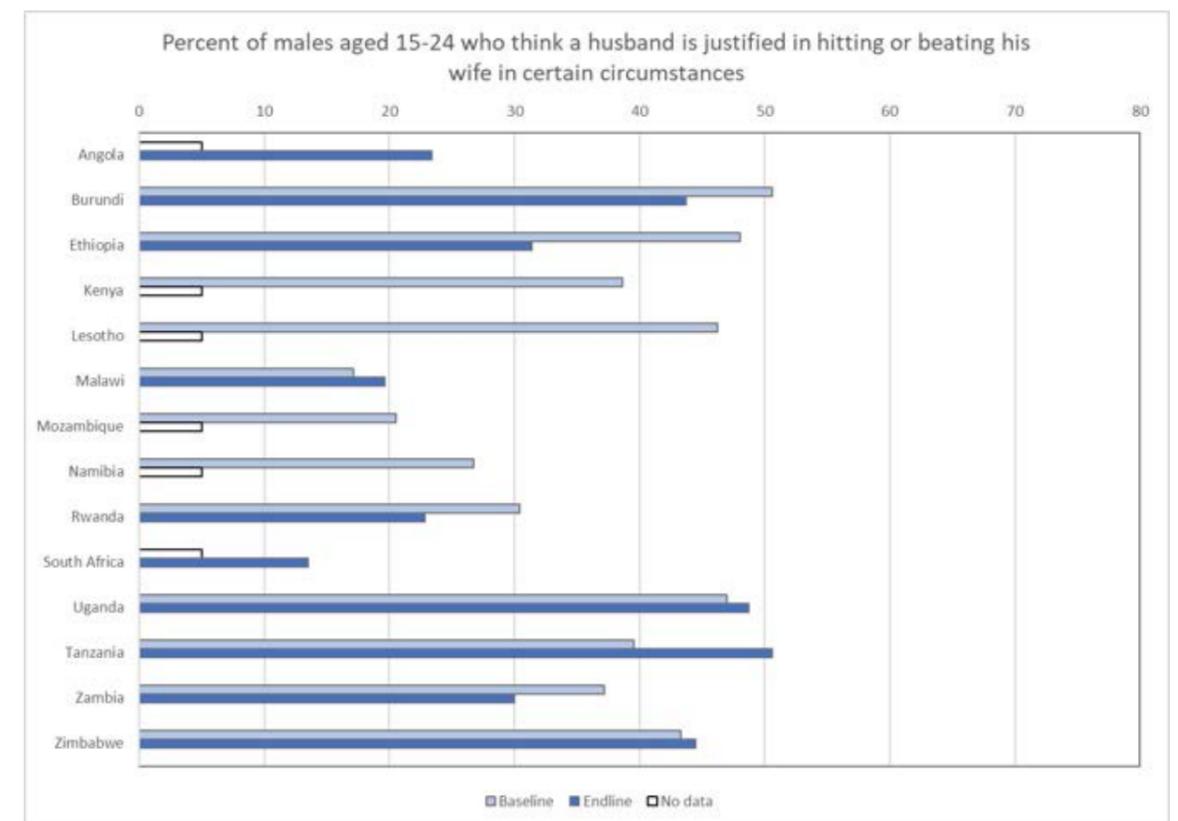


Figure 8: Percentage of males aged 15-24 who think a husband is justified in hitting or beating his wife in certain circumstances



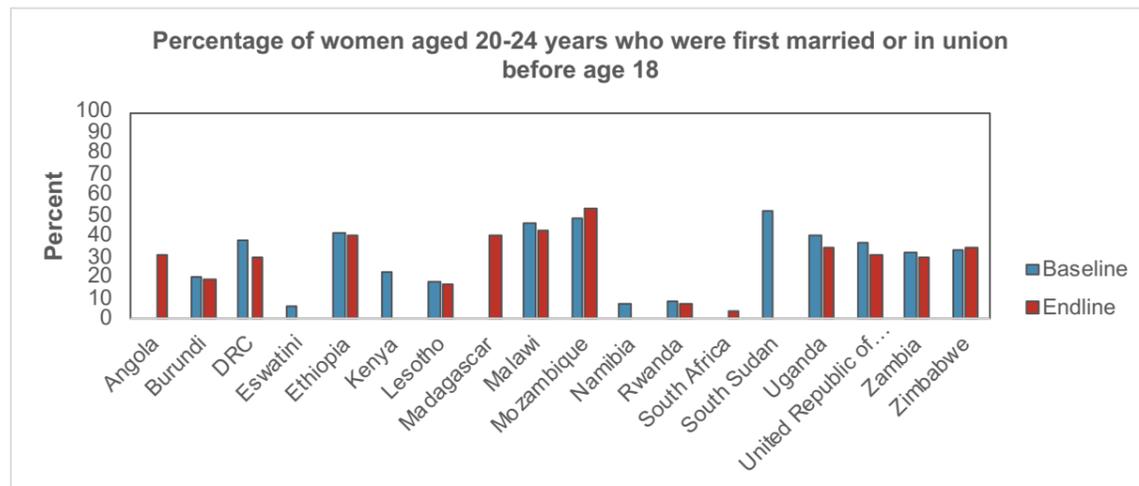
Target 8: Eliminate child marriage

- The ESA Commitment helped sustain momentum towards ending child marriage across a number of countries in the region
- Small decreases in the prevalence of child marriage were seen in 9¹⁰ of 11 countries with available baseline and endline data.
- Progress in ending child marriage was not universal across the region, as negative trends continued in Mozambique, and Zimbabwe.
- By 2018, 16¹¹ countries had programmes to prevent and mitigate child marriage

¹⁰ Decreases in Burundi, DRC, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Malawi, Rwanda, Uganda, Tanzania and Zambia. Increases in Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

¹¹ Angola, Eswatini, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, South Africa, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe

Figure 9: Percentage of women aged 20-24 years who were first married or in union before age 18



Target 9: Increase the number of all schools and teacher training institutions that provide CSE to 75%

- There was only one regional data point on the percentage of schools that provide life-skills-based HIV and sexuality education in the previous academic year, which was 88% for primary schools and 71% for secondary schools in 2015.
- The ESA Commitment countries surpassed the targeted percentage of primary schools providing CSE by 13% but did not make similar progress for secondary schools after scoring 4% below the target.

Developing and reinforcing an enabling environment

- The number of countries implementing a multi-sectoral strategy or framework for operationalisation of the ESA Commitment moved up from none in 2013 to 19 in 2018.
- The number of countries having earmarked/mobilised financial resources for the implementation of the ESA Commitment moved up from none in 2013 to 12 in 2018.
- There was no data available on the direct influence of the ESA Commitment on legal changes to the age of consent to access to SRH services in the region.

2.3 Efficiency

National coordination

- Most countries had (or created during the period) national coordination structures in different forms that facilitated coordination through scheduled meetings, harmonized reporting, and support to resource mobilisation, communication, and advocacy actions by in-country implementers.
- The inclusion of the ESA Commitment RAF in reporting processes increased government accountability around SRHR for adolescents and young people.
- Collaboration between the two ministries in-country (health and education) was still reported as being weak in some countries. This was partly attributed to the absence of a higher political office to convene and ensure collaboration between the ministries.
- Gaps were reported in the lack of strength and responsiveness of monitoring and evaluation systems in some countries, which resulted in delayed or absent reporting on certain indicators.
- Some CSO partners reported being excluded from country reporting processes as governments perceived ESA Commitment reporting to be a wholly government-owned and driven process, given the branding of the commitment as being 'ministerial' as opposed to 'multi-stakeholder/multisectoral'. The result was the absence

of qualitative data in-country reports, and the exclusion of data from non-state implementers of commitment-related targets.

Regional coordination

- Coordination at the regional level has resulted in effective reporting on the Commitment from education ministries at the SADC level, the successful launch of two regional programmes, and the sustained political prioritisation of ESA Commitment targets in all countries.
- Regional coordination brought together CSOs from East and Southern Africa to coordinate efforts in CSE and AYFHS implementation and advocacy and provided a platform for youth movements to directly engage with regional and national decision-makers on their advocacy priorities through the TCG, HLG, and CSO engagement mechanism.
- The leadership of UN agencies in facilitating technical support for the Commitment unlocked resources for regional and national campaigns and provided much-needed coordination for the gathering of country-level data used to craft the regional reports.
- Both RECs reported having inadequate human resources and financial support to fulfill their coordination role for the Commitment; this gap was particularly stark in the EAC and it impeded the ability of RECs to effectively support their Member States. Linked to this was the overlap in functions of the different coordination structures operating at the regional level, which led to role-duplication and inefficiencies.

Resourcing

- Resources increased for priorities in the ESA Commitment, however, the scale of the increase was difficult to quantify because allocations were not earmarked or tracked in-country budgets. This was partly due to the Commitment's RAF not making this a requirement, or providing a clear indicator to be reported on to track the amounts of money invested for Commitment priorities at the regional and national level.
- With regards to funding sources, there was reported donor-dependency in-country, and where domestic resources were available, there was weak budget-tracking. There is reported hesitancy from governments to allocate 'new money' towards the Commitment's activities, as they opted to maintain existing budget priorities in health and education, under the assumption that Commitment activities would receive support in existing priority areas. This made it difficult to track budget allocations towards ESA Commitment targets.

Opposition

- Opposition to CSE and SRHR was recorded across the region and affected the efficiency of commitment implementation in several countries. This opposition was often countered by civil society collectives taking initiative to clarify alignment of CSE with national development priorities.

2.4 Sustainability

- The integration of the ESA Commitment priorities in national policy and development frameworks, and the set-up/use of national coordination mechanisms on adolescent health, often spanning across different sectors, were seen as testimonies of national ownership and sustainability of the interventions.
- In practice, levels of national ownership of the ESA Commitment by governments are mixed across the region. Coordination issues at the interface between ministries, and siloed ways of working remain, leading to inefficiencies.
- Significant policy and legal changes were achieved across most areas but their dissemination, implementation, or enforcement at subnational levels, among service providers and local decision-makers, remain limited, partly explaining the low performance on some indicators.
- There was limited identification of regional best practices related to the ESA Commitment programming. Country successes were shared through reporting but these were not described as best practices. Documentation of evidence-based approaches on certain topics exist but they are not necessarily branded as a product of the ESA Commitment.

¹² Angola, Botswana, Burundi, DRC, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia

¹³ Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe

- The ESA Commitment fostered exchanges that have been primarily focused on policy and structural changes and less on interventions, and therefore discussions on scalability are lacking.

3. Key Considerations for Advancing the ESA Commitment

3.1 Effectiveness

ESR 1: Use and test innovation with strong documentation of best practices

Description: At the close of the 7-year implementation period of the ESA Commitment, there were no readily available documented cases of best practices shared from regional reports, country case studies, interviews, and online survey responses. Without the documentation of best practices, it is difficult to make recommendations on how governments and non-state actors can optimise service delivery to better meet the needs of adolescents and young people.

Action Points	
Governments	Commission the documentation and sharing of best practices at the country level following the conclusion of the first phase of the ESA Commitment.
RECs	Facilitate a regional convening for the sharing of best practices and lessons learned from the implementation of the ESA Commitment.
UN Agencies	Support research on best practices in the implementation of the ESA Commitment across specific thematic areas of interest at both country and regional level.
CSOs	Document possible best practices of CSO implementation of ESA Commitment activities for consideration at the country and regional level.

ESR 2: Ensure further disaggregation of data

Description: There were significant data gaps from countries as highlighted in the findings section, which impeded the ability to track progress on the commitment on key areas including ART coverage (15 – 24 years), and attitudes towards gender-based violence. Data collection needs to be strengthened at the country level, beyond self-reported data that is quantitative. This will ensure that progress in advancing young people's health and wellbeing is tracked constantly and that opportunities to strengthen programming are identified ahead of time.

Action Points	
Governments	Adapt monitoring and evaluation tools drawn from the RAF to local commitments and indicator frameworks to ensure country-relevant data is collected.
RECs	Facilitate a regional indicator alignment process with the Member States to support further disaggregation of data. Consider including indicators from the State of the African Youth Report to support countries to gather data across a wider spectrum of youth development issues.
UN Agencies	Provide technical support to countries and RECs to strengthen monitoring and evaluation mechanisms and reporting.
CSOs	Lobby governments for the introduction of sub-indicators to support the disaggregation of data on adolescents and young people.

ESR 3: Conduct a systematic review of implementation modalities for CSE at the country level

Description: There is disharmony in programming on CSE between and within different countries. These differences in implementation modalities have produced mixed results and produced uncertainty on what is working in the delivery of CSE in different contexts. To respond to this, a systematic review should be conducted to explore the relationship between stand-alone and integrated delivery, examinations versus assessments, and cost-effectiveness amongst others.

Action Points	
Governments	Commission a country-level review of the implementation of CSE, and hold a convening to review and agree on implementation modalities.
RECs	Provide technical support to the Member States to conduct a systematic review of implementation modalities for CSE at the country level. In the event of an extension of the ESA Commitment, introduce process indicators to measure effective implementation of laws and policies in creating an enabling legal, policy, and regulatory environment for ASRRH.
UN Agencies	Provide technical support for a regional systematic review of implementation modalities for CSE.
CSOs	Engage robustly in the design and roll-out of a systematic review of the implementation modalities for CSE at the country level.

3.2 Relevance & Coherence

RCR1: Create a robust engagement mechanism for young people's participation

Description: The ESA Commitment is focused on adolescents and youth, and as such, should be grounded in the experiences, perspectives, and expectations of adolescents and youth. Work to end AIDS, prevent early and unintended pregnancy, end child early and forced marriage and prevent school-related gender-based violence should be carried out in close partnership with young people. ESA Commitment coordination and implementation should be conducted in a way that promotes young people's rights, recognizes their agency and dynamics, builds youth-adult partnerships, and prioritises adolescents who are marginalised and most vulnerable.

The involvement of young people needs to go beyond simple recognition of their importance or inclusion in decision-making platforms, to instead ensure that they have the necessary resources to influence decisions and lead coordination and implementation of the ESA Commitment. Adopting more transformative frameworks for the engagement of young people like the YIELD and Three-Lens frameworks, can support the effective tracking of the levels of youth representation and provide the guidance needed by adult allies to make the right investments in youth engagement at the regional and country level.

An extension of the ESA Commitment, even if it is situated at the level of Governments, must include a measurement framework that involves youth in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the Commitments, in true application of the "Nothing for youth without youth" principles. A stronger commitment to youth engagement requires resource allocation for this purpose. It also requires that representatives of youth networks demonstrate accountability to the broader youth community, which they represent including mechanisms to collect inputs and disseminate information to all network members and the large constituencies they represent.

Action Points	
Governments	Include country targets on meaningful youth engagement in the next iteration of the ESA Commitment's accountability framework.
	Include diverse representatives of young people in local coordination mechanisms for the ESA Commitment.
	Allocate domestic resources to support youth movements to sensitize communities on the importance of the commitment and its priorities for the achievement of national development goals.
RECs	Recruit a regional youth focal point to support coordination of young people's meaningful engagement in coordination and implementation of the ESA Commitment.
	Facilitate the representation of youth networks and coalitions in regional convenings on health, education, youth, and gender.
UN Agencies	Allocate resources for regional and country social and behaviour change campaigns led by young people and youth-serving partners, working on ESA Commitment priority areas including EUP, SRGBV, CEFM, and HIV prevention.
	Provide technical support to REC and country governments on how to effectively embed meaningful youth engagement within youth development-related policy and practice.
	Support resource mobilisation for funding of youth focal points at regional and country levels who will help facilitate implementation of the ESA Commitment.
CSOs	Incorporate relevant standards and guidelines on meaningful adolescent and youth participation in the organisation's programmes and operations.
	Support youth consultations at different levels to inform the next ESA Commitment, and to support its coordination and implementation once endorsed.
	Support youth-led groups and youth movements representing a larger youth constituency to strengthen their representativeness and internal accountability towards the youth they represent, by supporting more transparent internal processes and feedback loops.

RCR2: Balance support and engagement of RECs

Description: Despite the differences in the number of members between the EAC and SADC, support for both RECs should be proportionally balanced to ensure effective coordination of ESA Commitment implementation in both sub-regions. The existing disproportionate allocation of technical and financial resources to the EAC versus to SADC needs to be adjusted to assist the EAC to function at similar levels of capacity with SADC. This is a more integrated approach and can serve to revive political commitment and coordination efforts to drive implementation of the ESA Commitment within the East African Community as a whole.

Action Points	
Governments	Allocate resources to the EAC and SADC secretariats to facilitate effective coordination of ESA Commitment implementation.
	Participate more robustly in ESA Commitment reporting and coordination activities driven by SADC and the EAC.

	Develop a resource mobilisation plan in tandem with the next ESA Commitment to ensure that both RECs have a clear pathway to effectively resource their coordination role under the commitment.
RECs	Facilitate cross-regional collaboration in identify good practices, sharing learnings, mobilising resources, conducting research and supporting Member States to address opposition to ESA Commitment implementation areas.
UN Agencies	Assess comparative funding dynamics between the two RECs and identify priority areas for resourcing in both regions.
	Increase financing for research in the East African region to help inform future commitment priorities in the region.
	Consider adjusting regional consultancy and staff recruitment practices to be more inclusive of professionals and firms from the East African region, especially for roles linked to the coordination and implementation of the ESA Commitment.
CSOs	Increase the involvement and support of CSOs based in East Africa in ESA Commitment coordination and advocacy efforts.

RCR3: Pitch the ESA Commitment at a higher political level, and with renewed narratives

Description: The ESA Commitment has the potential to draw in more government ministries, CSOs, and UN agencies due to its adolescent and youth-focused mandate. However, the Commitment's current limit on mainly health and education-focused stakeholders falls short of the mark in driving progress towards youth development more holistically. It is a missed opportunity, especially as the commitment is situated within a very youthful continent and within two sub-regions that are working to harness the demographic dividend. Bringing all adolescent and youth-focused stakeholders together, beyond health and education, has the potential to create a more coherent commitment that is also more relevant to the population dynamics and policy priorities regarding youth within the ESA region.

Bringing in multiple government ministries to coordinate a single commitment in this way requires the involvement of a convener above the ministerial level, which is the protocol in most countries within the region. In this respect, a Prime Minister or President can convene multiple ministries, and as such, the commitment could be pitched at this level, to support cross-ministerial collaboration in advancing youth development targets. At the regional level, this would involve engaging the African Union and making use of the SADC and EAC convening of Heads of State to facilitate the high-level endorsement of any follow-up to the ESA Commitment. In addition to this, making the Commitment legally binding, through its processing by the relevant regional legal platforms, and legal definition, can elevate its political status in-country and make sure it is prioritised as needed.

Beyond the government level, the ESA Commitment requires the involvement and leadership of diverse stakeholders including CSOs and development agencies. Despite the importance of non-state actors in the delivery of the commitment, they are inadequately recognised within the commitment itself, as well as in the RAF. In response to this, any future ESA Commitment should include explicit references to the important contributions of non-state actors, as well as indicators that non-state actors will be responsible for reporting on. This will broaden the range of ESA commitment respondents and will increase ownership of the commitment beyond government and UN agencies.

New narratives could be explored to increase the relevance of the ESA Commitment with countries. Recognising the sensitive issues associated with key topics (CSE, ASRHR) and the requests from countries for adaptation of terminologies to ensure local relevance and acceptability, new narratives to pitch the ESA Commitment could increasingly focus on the impact youth has on the economic welfare of the region, and how investments in youth health and wellbeing across sectors contribute to the readiness of the future youth workforce.

Action Points	
Governments	Work closely with the offices of the Prime Minister and President to secure high-level political support for a new commitment on youth development.
	Facilitate cross-ministerial collaboration through the appropriate platforms, bringing together health, gender, youth, education, labour and social welfare portfolios to generate political momentum for the endorsement and implementation of a new commitment.
RECs	Pitch the new commitment as an agenda item for the next meeting of heads of state at sub-regional level, and lobby for the same at AU level.
	Introduce reporting on the ESA Commitment as a standing item in sub-regional meetings of ministers of youth, health, gender and education.
UN Agencies	Provide technical support to the offices of the Prime Minister and President to facilitate cross-ministerial collaboration for the implementation and coordination of the ESA Commitment.
	Provide technical and financial support to RECs to drive advocacy for the adoption of a higher-level political commitment that follows up on the ESA Commitment.
CSOs	Facilitate a regional campaign to build public support for a new ESA Commitment, and put pressure on governments to make it a high priority. Use the Young People Today platform as a call to action. Engage a broad coalition of actors beyond the UN, governments and selected youth networks and partners to create a movement for ASRHR in the region.
All	Pitch the extension of the ESA commitment along the integration of youth health/wellbeing and youth economic empowerment, for an impact of the future workforce of the region. Use the Demographic Dividend and economic arguments to enlarge the support for investments into youth health and well-being.

3.3 Efficiency

EYR1: Strengthen ESA Commitment coordination and accountability

Description: There was a disconnect in coordination between regional and country-level platforms, and between state and non-state actors across the East African region. There was also a disparity in coordination capacity between the two RECs as explained in the Relevance section. The ambitions of the commitment on coordination were not met as the layers of coordination did not function as expected. This is described in-depth in the findings section. To take the ESA Commitment forward, the coordination mechanisms available need to be strengthened, and where necessary, rethought.

Furthermore, there is a need to strengthen the accountability mechanism linked to the coordination of the commitment. Inviting more stakeholders to submit annual reports and increasing the number and type of indicators (both quality and quantity) that are reported on, can improve the tracking of ESA Commitment activities. More specifically, the contributions and reporting of CSOs should be incorporated in the next RAF, with resources availed for periodic reporting of stakeholders beyond country governments.

To strengthen the regional oversight of the ESA Commitment, it was suggested that regional-level coordination mechanisms be led by the Regional intergovernmental structure, i.e. SADC and EAC Secretariats, with dedicated staff and budget for this coordination role. At the country level, respondents suggested that existing technical working groups be strengthened by creating sub-committees following on specific aspects related to CSE and ASRHR.

Action Points	
Governments	Increase the number of Government ministries that report on the ESA Commitment through a centralised in-country platform.
	Broaden the type of reporting conducted on the status of implementation of the ESA Commitment beyond self-reported quantitative data, to instead include qualitative data and inputs from non-state implementers of the commitment.
	Introduce national joint coordination teams led by government and CSOs.
RECs	Introduce annual country and regional performance reviews to hold governments accountable.
	Allocate more human resources to support regional coordination of the ESA Commitment.
	Redefine roles, expectations, membership and modus operandi of the HLG, with a focus on institutional representation, diversity and inclusion, and effective use of coordination resources without duplicating the role of RECs or the TCG.
UN Agencies	When resources are secured for RECs, ensure they are equitably distributed to enable both sub-regions to coordinate implementation effectively.
CSOs	Revive the CSO Engagement Mechanism and develop an implementation plan, with an attendant resource mobilisation strategy to sustain CSO engagement in the implementation of the commitment.
	Lobby government for the creation of a national joint coordination platform led by governments and CSOs.

EYR2: Improve the quality of teaching and learning materials

Description: To improve the existing delivery of CSE and its effectiveness in affecting adolescent health outcomes, the current teaching and learning materials need to be updated to keep up with developments in the space. This includes translating material to cater to learners with disabilities and catering for diverse local languages and contexts. In the instances where teacher training materials and learner resources are unavailable, these need to be developed and rolled out as a matter of urgency. Within school settings, support should be provided for the management of school-related gender-based violence, as this is an area identified as needing continued support in the evaluation.

Action Points	
Governments	Conduct a fast-track CSE curriculum review across the region, to update the last review done in 2011. This should include a review of teaching and learning materials to identify gaps for strengthening in the next iteration of implementation of the ESA Commitment.
	Convene national and sub-national consultations to identify opportunities to improve SRGBV content in learning and teaching materials.
	Urgently commission a widespread translation and reproduction of CSE learning and teaching materials consistent with existing language translation needs.
RECs	Commission the development of regional standards and guidelines for the development of teaching and learning materials on CSE to support Member States in their review efforts.

UN Agencies	Provide technical support to countries for the review of teaching and learning material, as well as their distribution across learning institutions.
CSOs	Collaborate with government in the review of CSE teaching and learning materials, particularly for content to be delivered by CSOs.

EYR3: Improve domestic, regional, and global resource mobilisation

Description: The ESA Commitment is one of many commitments vying for political and financial attention from governments in the ESA region, as such, resource mobilisation efforts for the commitment need work within existing financing systems. To unlock more domestic resources for the coordination and implementation of the ESA Commitment, commitment priorities need to be integrated within government development planning processes and budget discussions. Furthermore, involving non-state actors in financing commitment activities holds promise in supporting CSOs and private sector implementers to complement government efforts. More broadly, integrating ESA Commitment priorities and young people's involvement in the workings of global financing mechanisms like the GFF and SDG Fund can unlock additional resources to support both regional and national coordination and implementation of the commitment. Such a concerted resource mobilisation effort is expected to help bridge funding gaps in support for REC coordination, local country coordination, and work to end child marriage.

Action Points	
Governments	Develop and implement a resource mobilisation strategy to meet funding gaps identified in the first phase of the ESA Commitment.
RECs	Convene Member States to make financial commitments towards the regional coordination of the ESA Commitment, and agree on an appropriate accountability process for this.
UN Agencies	Convene a regional and country-level multi-agency taskforce to streamline support of UN agencies towards the ESA Commitment at both levels, and monitor progress towards resource mobilisation targets.
CSOs	Develop and implement a resource mobilisation strategy to meet funding gaps identified in the first phase of the ESA Commitment, both at regional level and within respective countries.

EYR4: Strengthen referral linkages between schools and health facilities

Description: Adolescents in many schools in the region receive CSE to respond to their SRH information needs, albeit without an explicit link to a broader range of the SRH services that they need. This disconnect continues to drive the unmet need for SRH services, and consequently increases the rates of EUP, HIV infection and reduces the likelihood of CEFM and SRGBV cases going unreported amongst young people. On the other hand, bridging the gap between CSE and access to SRH services is expected to increase uptake of SRH services in young people, and improve their health and development outcomes. Strengthening referral linkages between schools and health facilities is a pathway to this, and should be prioritised in the ESA Commitment moving forward. This should include the creation of confidential reporting and referral systems to manage SRGBV, to facilitate early detection of abused children, and the provision of comprehensive support services.

Action Points	
Governments	Review school health policies to incorporate referrals to health and legal services and the provision of health services in school settings where possible.
	Review relevant curriculum guidelines to allow for educators to make referrals to health services.

RECs	Provide technical support to Member States to update policies and guidelines for the linkages between health and education services, and improve reporting on the same.
UN Agencies	Support the documentation of good practices on how to effectively link health and education services, as well how to effectively support access to services in response to SRGBV.
CSOs	Test innovations in supporting adolescents and young people in school to access health services and redress for SRGBV.

3.4 Sustainability

SR1: Develop and report on a composite youth indicator for youth well-being

Description: There is a lack of convergence in indicator framing and reporting within the region, which is a significant challenge given the wide range of cross-cutting factors that affect progress on any single health or education indicator. The ESA Commitment RAF as an example sought to reflect improvements in young people's wellbeing through tracking change on specific health and education outcomes, whilst ignoring indicators on economic empowerment and other influencers of change on the Commitment's targets. The discussion on possible indicators for a new ESA Commitment presents an opportunity to introduce a much broader set of youth development indicators to constitute a composite indicator on youth well-being. Such an indicator can provide a temperature check on the status of young people within the ESA region, through tracking and scoring changes in selected sub-indicators. This type of indicator framing and tracking is in tandem with broader regional aspirations for youth development and will substantiate calls for the involvement of a wider range of stakeholders in framing, owning, and driving the next ESA Commitment.

Action Points	
Governments	Convene stakeholders from the country's leading research units and research-focused organisations to map possible sub-indicators to use to report on youth well-being in-country and at regional level.
	Resource the relevant national statistics office to build the data collection tools and protocols for a national roll-out of the envisaged youth well-being indicator framework.
RECs	Convene Member States to adopting the youth well-being index and agree to the relevant reporting guidelines.
UN Agencies	Provide technical support to countries directly and through the RECs to adapt their information management systems to the needs of having a youth well-being index.
CSOs	Partner with government and UN agencies to collect qualitative data on the performance of countries in advancing youth well-being as per the sub-indicators defined by ESA Commitment stakeholders.

SR2: Fast-track review, harmonisation, and implementation of laws and policies

Description: ESA countries made significant progress in the review and adoption of laws, policies, and guidelines on child marriage, school-related gender-based violence, re-entry of pregnant learners, and age of consent for access to services. However, some countries are still lagging and have yet to finalise steps to create an enabling environment for the achievement of ESA Commitment targets.

Action Points	
Governments	The governments of Angola, Botswana, DRC, Ethiopia and Lesotho to fast-track the implementation of a national policy/strategy on pregnant learners.
	The governments of Botswana and Burundi to fast-track the adoption of education sector policies that address school related gender based violence.
	The governments of Botswana, Burundi, DRC, Ethiopia and Seychelles to fast-track the development of programmes to prevent and mitigate against child, early and forced marriage.
RECs	Provide technical support to the governments of Botswana, Burundi, DRC, Seychelles, Ethiopia, Lesotho and Angola to achieve their ESA Commitment targets on the review of laws and policies.
UN Agencies	Provide technical guidance to ESA countries on gaps that remain in legal infrastructure, and that need to be addressed in the next iteration of the ESA Commitment.
CSOs	Scale up support for and implementation of advocacy campaigns in Botswana, Burundi, Seychelles, Ethiopia, Lesotho and Angola for the change of laws and policies identified in the ESA Commitment.

