



## **REPORT<sup>1</sup> ON THE CONVENING OF SADC MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT TO DISCUSS HARMFUL PRACTICES IN AFRICA**

Organised in collaboration by Outright International The Inclusive Governance Initiative (IGI) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and The SADC Parliamentary Forum

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<sup>1</sup> Report prepared for Outright International by Foluso Adegalu  
(folusoadegalu@gmail.com)

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## Executive summary

This report provides a summary of a 2-day convening of Members of Parliament from Southern Africa convened by the SADC Parliamentary Forum, Outright International and the Inclusive Governance Initiative (IGI) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The objective of this convening was to enhance the capacity of SADC parliamentarians to understand and address conversion practices in Africa: parliamentarians were sensitized on the nature, extent, and impact of conversion practices in Africa to easily identify conversion practices as human rights violations and respond as such. The convening brought together parliamentarians from various SADC countries and their officers, and human rights experts and activists.

The convening discussed the challenges faced by sexual and gender minorities in the SADC region, particularly as it relates to harmful conversion practices. The meeting recognized the crucial role of parliamentarians in instigating the necessary societal and legislative changes to protect sexual and gender minorities from the harmful effects of conversion practices and all kinds of discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression (SOGIE). In a dedicated parliamentary dialogue, lawmakers recognized the harms of conversion practices and violence based on SOGIE and suggested useful strategies for combating conversion practices and advancing the rights of sexual and gender minorities.

The discussions reiterated the need for comprehensive legislation, sensitization and education of lawmakers on sexual and gender minorities issues, and the strategic use of regional and international human rights instruments to combat harmful practices and SOGIE based violence. This discussion further highlighted the need for cooperation, inclusivity, and understanding in the policymaking process, and reinforcing the role of parliamentarians in driving societal change. Key action points from the meeting included the need for improved data collection framework that is developed, owned, and controlled by Africans for advancement of their needs, the development of a SADC-PF SOGIESC framework, development of best practices, the sensitization of religious and traditional leaders and the



implementation of accountability mechanisms for championing SOGIESC issues in the region.

The meeting served as an essential platform for dialogue and strategizing on the advancement of human rights in the SADC region. The meeting reiterated the urgency to address conversion practices, harmonize existing laws and policies, and promote the African concept of Ubuntu. It further served as an important platform for Southern African members of parliament to formulate specific key strategies which they could use to contribute to the eradication of conversion practices and ensure the enjoyment of fundamental human rights by all in Africa.



## **DAY ONE**

### **Overview of the Convening**

The convening of Members of Parliament from Southern Africa convened by the SADC Parliamentary Forum, Outright International and The Inclusive Governance Initiative (IGI) of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), held in Randburg, South Africa. The convening aimed to foster an environment where Southern African parliamentarians can deliberate on the concrete measures, they can take to promote human rights and inclusivity for sexual and gender minorities in their countries and in the sub-region, as well their role in the creating inclusive and protective legal and policy environments which ensure protection against violence and other harmful practices including conversion practices. Parliamentarians who participated in this convening included those working on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights as well as parliamentarians representing other parliamentary committees.

The objective of this convening was to enhance the capacity of SADC parliamentarians to understand and address conversion practices in Africa: parliamentarians were sensitized on the nature, extent, and impact of conversion practices in Africa to easily identify conversion practices as human rights violations and respond as such.

The expected outcome of the meeting was for parliamentarians to identify the primary factors contributing to the prevalence of conversion practices in their respective nations or constituencies, and to ascertain ways in which they can help to eradicate these practices in all forms. The meeting served as a platform for awareness raising and also sought to stimulate actionable steps towards the eradication of conversion practices which are detrimental to the wellbeing of sexual and gender minorities including LGBTI persons.

### **Introductory remarks**

The meeting commenced with introductory remarks by Outright International and its South African local partner, Access Chapter 2, followed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).



Khanyo Farise, spoke on behalf of Outright International and informed the participants that about the groundbreaking research conducted on the nature, extent, and impact of conversion practice in Africa. She explained that Outright and its partners commenced the pilot research project in 2019 and focused on South Africa, Nigeria, and Kenya.

Their findings indicate the widespread prevalence of conversion practices in the different countries and impact of these practices on the enjoyment of human rights of sexual and gender minorities, particularly their rights to enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health. A concerning trend shows that these harmful practices are especially prevalent among young people.

The research further highlighted a lack of information on the African continent about the nature, extent, and impact of conversion practices, and who the main perpetrators of these practices are, as well as the impact of these practices on those affected.

She expressed her gratitude to the delegates present and hoped that they can leverage their expertise and experience to find solutions for conversion practices in Africa.

Speaking on behalf of UNDP, Monica Tabengwa highlighted some of the work of UNDP which involves identifying decision-maker champions who will be accountable to sexual and gender minorities, ensuring they have equal human rights access and are included in national planning. She advocated for the principle of "leave no one behind," aligning with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Agenda 2063, which mandate that no one should be excluded from development and human rights realization.

Speaking on behalf of Access Chapter 2, Steve Letsike emphasized the role of parliamentarians in ensuring that the human rights of all people, particularly sexual and gender minorities, are not just protected but also promoted and fulfilled. She underscored the need for laws and procedures to advance inclusivity and protect sexual and gender minorities from violence, discrimination, and harmful practices like conversion practices. She further commended countries like Rwanda, Angola, and Mozambique



for their progressive steps in addressing the rights of sexual minorities and encouraged other countries to follow suit.

### **Keynote speech by H.E Minister Maropene Ramokgopa, Minister in the Presidency responsible for Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation of the Republic of South Africa**

In her keynote speech, the Minister stated that despite the strides made in regions around the world, there remains a persistent lack of legal protection for the Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer Intersex persons (LGBTQI+) in many African countries. This is so even in the face of ratification and adoption of key treaties, resolutions and protocols that affirm the rights and protection of all persons including LGBTQI+ persons. The absence of robust legal frameworks that specifically protect LGBTQI+ persons often leaves them vulnerable to various forms of discrimination, violence, and other injustices. She highlighted the pressing need for legislation that specifically addresses discrimination and violence against the LGBTQI+ persons and said that such legislation should be designed and implemented in a manner that ensures the full and effective protection of the rights of LGBTQI+ persons. The legislation should not only provide legal recourse for the victims of such discrimination and violence but should also serve as a deterrent to potential perpetrators.

Moreover, the importance of addressing entrenched patriarchal norms and social values cannot be overstated, as these often serve to perpetuate and exacerbate discrimination and violence against the LGBTQI+ persons. Challenging and dismantling these harmful norms and values is a crucial step in creating an inclusive and equitable society where all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity, are valued and protected.

She emphasized further the importance of regional solidarity, and the crucial role it can play in addressing the violence against LGBTQI+ persons across the region. This solidarity can manifest itself in various ways, including through accelerated legislative and policy reforms on issues related to LGBTQI+ persons. By uniting to promote and protect the rights of sexual minorities, regions can exert collective influence and achieve





significant progress that might be challenging for individual countries to achieve.

Furthermore, raising awareness in rural communities about the rights and experiences of LGBTQI+ persons can significantly contribute to reducing stigma and discrimination. She concluded by reiterating that the inclusion of LGBTQI+ persons in the development of policies and discourses is essential. This ensures that their voices are heard and their unique experiences and challenges are taken into account. Ultimately, concerted efforts on all these fronts will ensure a world where No one is left behind, (especially LGBTQI+ persons) to enjoy their fundamental human rights without discrimination.

A copy of the Honourable Minister's speech is annexed hereto.

### **Session 1: Panel discussion on introducing conversion practices and overview of research findings from 3 country research on conversion practices**

In this session, an overview of the research findings from the 3 countries was shared; a story of change from a survivor of conversion practises was also shared; as well as country specific findings on the harmful effect of conversion practise from South Africa, Nigeria and Kenya. The session also included a presentation on the psychological and other psychosocial impacts of conversion practises on people, highlighting the detrimental impact of these practices to both physical and mental health. A plenary discussion in the form of comments, questions and answers by participants concluded the session.

#### *Introducing conversion practices and Overview of research findings from 3 country research on conversion practices*

Yvonne Wamari (Outright International) presented a general overview of the cross-cutting findings from the three-country research study on conversion practices. The reason for the study is that there is a lack of comprehensive data on the nature, extent, and impact of conversion practices on LGBTIQ+ persons in Africa. This is a significant hurdle in fully understanding and addressing the issue.

This scarcity of information is exacerbated by challenges in finding appropriate terminology that is respectful and sensitive to the experiences of those involved, navigating complex political and legal contexts, involving survivors in a manner that is both respectful and empowering, and ensuring the safety and security of all participants. These challenges underscore the difficulties inherent in documenting and combating conversion practices in Africa.

The cross-cutting findings across the three research countries (i.e. Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa) reveal disturbing forms of conversion practices, including physical and non-physical forms of conversion practices. The non-physical forms include talk “therapy” prayers and laying of hands for healing and other forms of counselling; while the physical forms, which are the most concerning as these often amount to human rights violations, and include exorcisms, administration of various substances such as herbs under the guise of treatment, rape including homophobic rape and other forms of sexual assault as well as beatings, forced starvation and other actions which could amount to torture.

Perpetrators are wide-ranging and include mental health practitioners, religious leaders, and family members. The impacts on survivors are just as wide ranging and deeply concerning, with reports of depression, social anxiety, substance abuse, and suicidal thoughts and/or attempts. Notably, societal pressures to conform to heterosexuality are so strong that some LGBT individuals voluntarily seek out conversion practices.

### *Story of Change: Impact of conversion practices: KG*

KG, who described herself as a survivor of conversion practices, provided a firsthand narrative on the harmful effects of conversion practices. She highlighted that the consequences of conversion practices are enduring and deeply damaging, she shared how she grappled with psychological trauma for many years, even decades, after the experience. These abusive practices, which purports to change an individual's SOGIE, are not only scientifically unfounded but also pose serious risks to mental and physical health. The long-term psychological trauma experienced by survivors is a



testament to the harmful legacy these practices leave behind, causing profound and lasting distress.

Moreover, societal pressure and discrimination significantly affect the mental health and well-being of LGBTQ+ youth. Stigmatizing attitudes and prejudiced behaviors can result in these young people feeling isolated, misunderstood, and fundamentally rejected, often leading to anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues. The persistent prejudice faced by these individuals can have dire consequences, with societal pressure and discrimination serving as significant obstacles to their mental well-being.

She highlighted that education plays a pivotal role in mitigating the adverse effects of conversion practices. By fostering an understanding of different sexual and gender identities, experiences, and challenges, education can dispel misconceptions, challenge stereotypes, and cultivate a more inclusive society. Particularly within schools, comprehensive, and inclusive sexuality education can instill respect for diversity from an early age and potentially reduce instances of discrimination against sexual and gender minority youth.

According to KG, the support and understanding of families is also of paramount importance for the well-being of sexual and gender minorities. She emphasized that family members need to be equipped with the right knowledge and tools to support their loved ones in their journey of self-discovery and acceptance. Offering resources and guidance can help families foster a nurturing and affirming environment for LGBTQ+ individuals, thereby enhancing their mental and emotional well-being.

### *Presentation of research findings from South Africa country research on conversion practices*

The presentation on findings from research on conversion practices in South Africa was made by Access Chapter 2, a South African human rights organization working towards creating a conducive environment that recognizes and protects the human rights of the LGBTQ+ community and women.

During their research, they strived to localize terminology, understanding conversion practices as harmful methods intended to change one's SOGIE. As part of their efforts, they launched a campaign to localize the language around conversion practices, coining the term "***Inxeba lami***," which is an isiXhosa word meaning "my wound;" illustrating the long-term impact of conversion practices on survivors.

The study conducted by Access Chapter 2 reveals the following key findings (see AC2 report [here](#) for details):

- 58% of 303 respondents stated that they had experienced conversion practices. Of those who responded that they had experienced conversion practices, 47% stated that they experienced these practices under the age of 18 years, while 46% were between the ages of 18–24, and 46% were between 25–34
- 49% of 303 respondents stated that they were forced into conversion practices, while 30% made a personal decision to seek out and undergo conversion practices due to external influences and social environments
- Conversion practices in South Africa take on different forms, including sessions with a professional psychologist or a religious representative, encounters with a family member, engagement with a traditional (e.g., Sangoma) or cultural (e.g., Chief) representative, participating in a traditional ritual such as initiation school, forced marriage, so called "corrective rape," and beatings and torture.
- Asked about "the most common motivators of conversion practices," 49% of 303 respondents identified family members, including extended family, family friends and those close to the family – followed by religious leaders at 20%.

#### *Presentation of research findings from Nigeria country research on conversion practices*

The research in Nigeria was conducted by TIERS, LGBTIQ focused organization in Nigeria, to examine the nature, extent, and impact of conversion practices within the country.

The study conducted by Tiers reveals the following key findings (see Nigeria report [here](#) for details):

- 49% of 2011 respondents to the survey said that they had undergone conversion practices, defined as efforts to change or suppress their sexual orientation or gender identity, while 51% said that they had not experienced conversion practices. 36% of 1216 respondents stated that they knew someone who had undergone conversion practices
- Among respondents who said they had undergone conversion practices, 90% of 1056 respondents said that the conversion process did not work. In contrast, 10% stated that the conversion process did work
- 59% of 1072 respondents stated that they had undergone rituals such as exorcisms (casting out demons), prayer, or laying of hands for healing. This was the most prevalent form of conversion practice, while 28% indicated that they experienced physical deprivation including fasting (abstaining from food) and use of medications
- 45% of 1062 respondents said their parents initiated their conversion practices experience. This was confirmed by the mental health professionals interviewed for this study, who stated that parents approached the professionals requesting treatment for their LGBTQ+ child in most instances. 23% of respondents indicated that they themselves initiated conversion efforts and 12% of respondents said their conversion practices experiences were initiated by friends and acquaintances
- 47% of 1,052 respondents reported that religious leaders facilitated their conversion practices experience. This was followed by family members (24%)

TIERs called for legislative action, urging Parliamentarians to advocate for reform and the repeal of discriminatory laws using the research findings.

### *Presentation of research findings from Kenya country research on conversion practices*

The research on conversion practices in Kenya was conducted by GALCK+ a national umbrella organization of 18 LGBTQ+ focused groups in Kenya. galck+ produced a research report titled "Ashamed is Not a Cure? So-called

Conversion Practices in Kenya" documenting its findings on the extent of conversion practices in the country, which are rooted in the belief that LGBTQ+ identities are "wrong" or "bad" and need to be 'fixed'.

The study conducted by galck+ reveals the following key findings (see galck+ [report](#) here for details):

- 44% of 547 respondents indicated that they had experienced conversion practices, while 36% knew someone who had undergone conversion practices.
- 496 individuals responded to a question about identifying the perpetrators of conversion practices. 26% identified licensed health professionals and 27% identified individual religious leaders, while 23% identified family members as perpetrators of conversion practices
- 47% of 516 respondents who had experienced conversion practices indicated that they were forced into it while 22% stated that they were advised to participate in programs offering conversion practices. Notably, 14% indicated that they proactively sought out conversion practices. The remainder either did not respond or indicated that the question was not applicable.
- 66% of 530 respondents were personally against conversion practices, while 17% were in support of conversion practices. The fact that 17% of participants were in support of Conversion Practices means that activists and human rights defenders need to address the broader stigma and discrimination that make people reject their own identities. The rest of the respondents were either unsure or needed more information to articulate their stance on conversion practices. 62% of respondents agreed with the statement that conversion practices should be prohibited by law
- While no one under the age of 18 was interviewed for this report, 504 respondents indicated that children as young as 12 and 13 years of age have experienced insidious and/or abusive conversion efforts, and that young people between 15 and 30 years are especially vulnerable, as they are still in school or university, and thus remain financially dependent on family



The organization made recommendations for the government of Kenya, including the repeal of sections within the Kenyan Constitution that discriminate against sexual and gender minorities, the establishment of a holistic definition and prohibition of conversion practices, and the adoption of measures to address conversion practices.

### **Presentation on Impact of Conversion Practices [Brenda Sharp – Psychologist]**

Brenda Sharp, (a counselling) psychologist, presented on the impact of conversion practice. Her presentation shed light on the harmful and long-term effects of conversion practices on individuals that have been subjected to such practices.

She asserted that conversion practices, contrary to their misleading presentation, are far from therapeutic. They constitute harmful procedures that cause immense distress to individuals subjected to them. These practices, often reinforced by unfounded ideologies and discriminatory attitudes, pose substantial risks to the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of those subjected to them. They are not curative or beneficial but are instead sources of profound harm and suffering.

The psychological toll of conversion practices frequently manifests in the form of diagnosable mental health conditions. These include, mood disorders, depression, and personality disorders. Moreover, the severe psychological distress inflicted by these practices can also lead to suicidality and increased propensity for drug or substance dependency. The detrimental effects on mental health are both significant and long-lasting, further emphasizing the harmful nature of these practices.

Survivors of conversion practices often grapple with feelings of grief, loss, self-blame, and self-hate. This emotional turmoil is exacerbated by the rejection they may face from their families and communities. The sense of isolation and ostracization can be incredibly damaging, further deepening the emotional scars left by the conversion practices. The experience is not only traumatic but also fosters a pervasive sense of self-rejection and self-loathing.



The trauma inflicted by conversion practices can persist for years, manifesting in flashbacks, nightmares, and increased aggression among survivors. This enduring trauma underscores the urgent need for understanding the harmful nature of conversion practices and advocating against them. It is crucial to provide genuine therapy and healing for those affected and to establish protective measures for LGBTQI+ individuals. This requires collective awareness, advocacy, and action to abolish these practices and to ensure the protection and care of all LGBTQI+ individuals.

### **Plenary discussion on introducing conversion practices and overview of research findings from 3 country research on conversion practices**

One of the Parliamentarians, shared her personal experience about being a parent, doctor, and legislator, focusing on how her different roles intersect in relation to understanding and advocating for LGBTQI+ rights. She narrated the story of her nephew, who she suspected to be gay, and how she dealt with the situation in a supportive manner. She emphasized the acceptance and understanding of different sexual orientations, highlighting that sexual orientation is not a choice but a part of one's identity. She shared cultural insights from her country, stating that homosexuality has always existed, but it is the contemporary society that has stigmatized it.

Another Parliamentarian expressed concerns about the marginalization of the sexual and gender minorities and inquired about conversion practices, seeking to understand whether it can result in a complete shift in one's sexual orientation, or it only creates a semblance of change. There were also questions around the usage of "survivors" and "victims" and the long-term impact of conversion practices. The question sought to understand the nature of sexual orientation and the effectiveness of conversion practices.

In her response to some of the issues raised, Brenda Sharp emphasized the importance of understanding and acceptance in families and society for people identifying as sexual and gender minorities. She explained the concept of a "survivor", stating that it is not about being completely healed, but about going through a process of healing, which is a journey rather than a destination. She notes that there is no evidence to support the efficacy of





conversion practices, sharing that those who have undergone such practice have not seen a change in their feelings and their sexualities.

The discussions also highlighted the difference between imposed conversion practices and self-determined changes such as hormone therapy among transgender individuals. She explained that hormone therapy is not an act of conversion but an act of self-affirmation, emphasizing the importance of creating a supportive environment for sexual and gender minorities individuals.

galck+ explained that the recommendations to the government of Kenya have not been implemented. The organization stated that efforts are underway to collaborate with religious leaders to promote affirming interpretations of religious texts and with mental health and medical associations to incorporate conversion practices into broader discussions.

## **Session 2: Discussion on human rights approach to conversion practices**

This session featured presentation on themes such as human rights and conversion practices; SADC normative framework on Gender based violence (GBV) and other core principles within the region; incorporation of SADC frameworks in Zimbabwe and existing frameworks; and SADC Strategies and other core policies relevant to LGBTIQ persons.

### *Human Rights and Conversion Practices*

Dr. Ayodele Sogunro's comprehensive discourse on the intersection of human rights and conversion practices provides crucial insights into the importance of integrating a human rights-based approach in societal structures and governance, especially regarding the protection and inclusion of the sexual and gender minorities.

In his discussion on human rights and conversion practices, Dr. Sogunro underscores the universal necessity for human rights to serve as the bedrock of social interaction, governance, and policy-making processes. The assertion is that the respect for, and protection of human rights should be integral to all facets of societal function, especially in the treatment and



inclusion of sexual and gender minorities. Human rights should form the bedrock of a just, equal, and humane society, where every individual is given an opportunity to thrive and contribute meaningfully.

He further emphasized the need for States to adopt a robust framework of legislative, administrative, judicial, and policy measures to effect the rights accorded to sexual and gender minorities people within the African human rights system. Such an approach will enable these States to fulfill their obligations towards ensuring the protection and promotion of the human rights of sexual and gender minorities. This would involve not just the creation and enforcement of appropriate laws and policies, but also the establishment of administrative and judicial mechanisms to redress violations and ensure justice.

Finally, he advocated for a multi-pronged strategy to ensure widespread awareness and sensitivity towards human rights of sexual and gender minorities. This includes the necessity for States and advocacy groups to develop and disseminate resources that inform the public about the rights of sexual and gender minorities, fostering a more inclusive and understanding society. Moreover, it stresses the need for law enforcement officers to be sensitized towards on Conversion Practices, with a view to bolstering the protection afforded to sexual and gender minorities.

### *SADC Normative Framework on GBV and other core principles within the region*

In her analysis of the regional Gender-Based Violence (GBV) strategy by the SADC, Adjunct Professor Melanie Judge at UCT and a consultant at UNDP provided a compelling argument for the strategy's utility in combating conversion practices that affect the sexual and gender minorities.

Professor Judge highlighted the potential utility of the SADC regional Gender-Based Violence strategy as a key tool in addressing Conversion Practices. This strategy, given its regional scope and comprehensive approach to GBV, can be leveraged to specifically tackle the issues faced by sexual and gender minorities when they are subjected to conversion practices, thereby promoting their rights and safety.



Professor Judge outlined several strategies that Members of Parliament should adopt to safeguard sexual and gender minorities from conversion practices. These strategies include influencing narratives, particularly within gender/GBV parliamentary committees and other structures, to foster a more inclusive discourse around sex, sexuality, gender, gender identity, and expression. This approach also calls for legislative action, such as working to repeal laws that perpetuate discrimination based on these categories.

Professor Judge advocated for the development and/or implementation of national GBV strategies that pay particular attention to LGBTI+ issues. There is a need for members of parliament to work towards enacting and enforcing legislation designed to prevent harmful social and cultural practices. She further stated that we must view conversion practices as GBV in line with the inclusive or broad definition of GBV. Additionally, it calls for the provision of comprehensive services and recourse for all survivors. Through these measures, members of parliament can play a crucial role in transforming the legal, social, and cultural landscape to better protect and support sexual and gender minorities.

### *Incorporating SADC Frameworks in Zimbabwe and existing frameworks*

In her discussion about SADC Framework in Zimbabwe, Hon. Ruth Labode said that Resolution 275 of the African Commission, which condemns violence and human rights violations against people based on their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, is not popular among Members of Parliament (MPs). This lack of popularity could be indicative of resistance or lack of awareness among MPs, potentially hindering the resolution's implementation and impact.

She further stated that culture, religion, and politics are the three major factors influencing the capacity of MPs to protect the rights of sexual and gender minorities. These deeply ingrained societal elements shape MPs' attitudes and policies towards the rights of sexual and gender minorities, and create barriers to the full recognition and protection of these rights.



Her final point was on the need for proactive strategies to promote the protection of the rights of sexual and gender minorities. MPs who are committed to this cause are urged to identify and collaborate with like-minded colleagues and Civil Society Organizations. Through such alliances, they can jointly advocate for the enjoyment of human rights by sexual and gender minorities, potentially overcoming societal and institutional barriers to the realization of these rights.

### *SADC Strategies and other core policies relevant to LGBTIQ persons*

One MP's presentation focused on key population issues concerning the strategy for sexual and reproductive health and rights for all people living in the SADC region. This strategy, developed in 2017 with UNDP support, targets key populations and involves various stakeholders, including government, health ministers, and civil society. The strategy document is owned by Member States and has been approved by both technical and political levels. The implementation of this strategy, however, faces challenges due to varying legal, political, and programmatic environments in different countries.

Since 2017, the UNDP has been supporting the strategy's implementation and enforcement. Efforts are being made to mainstream key population issues into broader discussions. Progress is being tracked using yearly indicators that monitor the institutionalization of mechanisms to address stigma against key populations, among other metrics. However, the data shows varying degrees of progress across different countries, with some areas showing no improvement.

Key populations remain a priority in the HIV response in the region. Efforts are being made to remove barriers to access health services for these populations, but challenges remain, including data collection difficulties due to restrictive environments and rising HIV prevalence among key populations. Despite these challenges, progress has been made, and a multi-faceted approach is needed to address key population issues and achieve standardization and harmonization of services for key populations in the region.



## **Plenary discussion on session on human rights approach to conversion practices**

After the presentation, the following issues were raised and discussed during the plenary session:

- A conflict was identified between the rights of children and the rights of parents, particularly regarding sexuality education in schools.
- The practice of comprehensive sexuality education was lauded, alongside the need for more interactions between parliamentarians and the LGBTIQ community for better understanding.
- The duty of states to provide comprehensive sexuality education and up-to-date information was underscored, with a call for accepting diversity and avoiding categorizations of 'normal' and 'abnormal'.
- There was questioning of when society will be ready to fully accept and understand different sexual orientations and identities.
- There was concern over the lack of implementation of legislative documents and strategies relating to gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health, despite being developed and agreed upon by the SADC.
  - An observation was made regarding the fear of holding the government accountable for certain issues, such as sexual and reproductive health.
  - There was an emphasis on the role of parliamentarians in avoiding discrimination and promoting inclusivity.
  - The plenary session called for the involvement of marginalized voices in policy making and the need for best practices in addressing conversion 'therapies', all while cautioning against the use of prejudice as political currency.

**Discussion by Deputy Minister of Justice John Jeffery [Deputy Minister of Justice]**

During an interactive session with the Parliamentarians, Deputy Minister John Jeffery, provided insights into the complexities involved in advancing sexual and gender minorities rights in South Africa. He informed the Parliamentarians about the contrasting landscape of legal progress and societal attitudes in South Africa, the historical roots of anti-gay laws in Africa, and South Africa's approach to international diplomacy

He emphasized on the dichotomy of legal progress and societal attitudes in South Africa. Despite the country's adoption of numerous progressive laws and policies aimed at preventing discrimination against sexual and gender minorities, societal intolerance and violent attitudes towards women and sexual minorities persist. This highlights the disconnect between legislation and social attitudes, suggesting the need for broader social and cultural transformation alongside legal reform.

The Deputy Minister explained the South Africa's position on international diplomacy, particularly concerning human rights issues in neighboring countries. The country has refrained from publicly criticizing the situation in Uganda, opting instead for quiet diplomacy. This approach reflects South Africa's belief in the importance of dialogue and diplomacy in resolving regional issues, underscoring the country's role as a mediator on the African continent and respecting the sovereignty of other states.

#### *Plenary discussion with John Jeffery*

The following issues were discussed following the presentation of the South African Deputy Minister of Justice:

- There were suggestions that some African leaders perceive acceptance of sexual and gender minorities as a threat to family values, leading to a collective effort to obstruct sexual and gender minorities rights protection laws.
- The Deputy Minister countered the claim that decriminalizing homosexuality threatens the traditional family structure, citing no evidence of family values degradation in regions where homosexuality has been decriminalized. He discussed gender-based violence, emphasizing its predominance among men, irrespective of their sexual orientation.



- A counteraction through coordinated opposition is deemed necessary, including possibly suspending funding to countries proposing anti-LGBT laws, such as Uganda.
- Family violence was identified as a societal issue not specific to sexual and gender minorities, often leading to cycles of violence within families.
- Another query addressed the treatment of LGBT individuals within their communities and ways to support families grappling with acceptance of these individuals.
- The Deputy Minister responded by attributing historical intolerance of sexual orientation and gender identity to global influences, particularly from colonial powers, which might be the root of Africa's homophobia. He dismissed the notion that sexual orientation is a choice or that acceptance of LGBT individuals would influence others to adopt the same orientation.
- With regards to Uganda's anti-LGBT laws, the Deputy Minister favored diplomatic engagement over overt criticism.
- He explained that South Africa has three separate marriage acts and advocated for a single marriage act encompassing all forms of family diversity.
- The South African government permits same-sex couples to adopt children, with no reported issues arising from this policy.
- The Deputy Minister further stated that the African National Congress (ANC) championed women's right to abortion upon assuming power, notwithstanding widespread controversy and opposition, particularly from religious institutions.
- He highlighted efforts to decriminalize sex work in South Africa, stressing the goal is to protect sex workers from violence and discrimination, not promoting sex work.





## **DAY TWO**

### **Recap of day one**

The second day of the convening commenced with a recap of the events of the first day by Khanyo.

She detailed the severe physical and mental effects of conversion practices on victims and highlighted the need for education, sensitization of families, communities, and law enforcement officers, and comprehensive care for survivors. She also mentioned the support for these views at the United Nations level, emphasizing that conversion practices can amount to torture and ill-treatment in some cases.

She stressed the importance of influencing the narrative using existing SADC frameworks, repealing discriminatory laws, enacting protective legislation, and providing resources for survivors. She further underscored the importance of a robust discussion, ongoing sensitization of members of Parliament, the compilation of best practices, and sensitization of religious and traditional leaders about the harmful effects of conversion practices.

### **Anti-gender legislation in Africa**

The presentation by Dr. Adrian Jjuuko on anti-gender legislation in Africa detailed the adverse legal landscape for LGBTIQ rights in Uganda, particularly in light of the recent Anti-homosexuality bill of 2023.

Dr. Adrian compared this hostile environment to other African nations within the SADC region, such as South Africa, Mozambique, Angola, Seychelles, etc., that have demonstrated more progressive attitudes towards LGBTIQ rights. He drew attention to a concerning trend across Africa, where parliaments appear to be increasingly antagonistic towards LGBTQ rights, with countries like Kenya emulating Uganda's restrictive laws.

In analyzing these regressive laws, Dr. Adrian debunks the supposed protection of 'African culture' and religion as justifications, questioning the definitions of these terms and critiquing the hypocrisy of African leaders collaborating with Western evangelicals. He contends that these laws divert



attention from more pressing societal issues like poverty, child protection, and sexual violence, arguing that they exploit populist sentiments and victimize society's most vulnerable members. Dr. Jjuuko further warns against a retrogression in human rights progress, with the very laws that fostered current democratic standards being demonized. He illuminates the practical consequences of such legislation, including an escalation in arrests and violent assaults against LGBTIQ individuals and their supporters. Finally, he implores lawmakers to recognize the human toll of these laws and consider these realities in their legislative deliberations.

### *Plenary discussion on Adrian discussion*

The following issues were discussed following the presentation of Dr. Jjuuko:

- One of the Parliamentarians stressed the difficulty of opposing a bill supported by one's own party with reference to a similar situation in Zimbabwe. The speaker emphasized the risk of straying from party positions, as it could lead to isolation and potential legislative obstacles.
- A member of the Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) questioned if any Ugandan parliamentarians had signed the petition or opposed the bill, given their potential role in advocacy. Concern was expressed over Uganda's laws influencing other countries in the East African region, specifically Kenya.
- The necessity of African nations like South Africa and Botswana and others opposing anti-sexual and gender minorities sentiments was stressed, challenging the notion of sexual and gender minorities rights being a Western agenda.
- The need for collective action to combat harmful practices, involving diverse stakeholders such as survivors, lawyers, human rights institutions, and religious leaders.
- Dr. Adrian thanked the Parliamentarians and urged them to sign the petition and highlighted the wide support the anti-homosexuality bill had within Uganda's parliament.



## Practical steps for parliamentarians to advance LGBTIQ human rights- Monica Tabengwa – UNDP

Monica Tabengwa's presentation on practical steps for parliamentarians underscored the critical role of parliamentarians in safeguarding the rights and interests of sexual and gender minorities in their constituents.

Monica emphasized the fundamental responsibility of parliament members to ensure that the laws they pass **do no harm** to their constituents. She critiqued laws, such as those proposed in Uganda, which detract from the protections offered by national constitutions, and proposed a focus on repealing laws that continue to harm. She also emphasised the non-negotiable duty of parliament members to genuinely represent their diverse constituencies, rather than merely their own interests.

Monica further highlighted the role of parliamentarians in providing oversight when harmful actions are being undertaken or when a certain group of people is being overlooked. She noted the importance of forming alliances and partnerships to champion human rights, suggesting that allies can be found even among religious leaders who support inclusion. She urged parliamentarians to engage with these leaders to improve understanding and interpretation of religious scripture.

Lastly, Monica spotlighted the substantial economic costs of exclusionary laws, citing the burdens on the state when individuals are jailed and subsequently lose their jobs. She argued that such laws lead to a less healthy populace and undermine national welfare, making them a poor investment. She called the attention of the attendees to the Parliamentary Forum on Sexual and Gender Minorities, which is an annual gathering of parliamentarians who are allies and champions of LGBTI+ inclusion, and said that it's a platform where MPs can share experiences and strategies.

The presentation also discussed a parallel process involving a forum of judges called the African Regional Judges Forum. This forum, made up of judges who are champions of human rights and open to using international normative frameworks in their judgments, hosted a parallel meetings. Judges from countries like Botswana and Kenya have shared their thoughts



and experiences on decriminalization cases. While not all countries from Sub-Saharan Africa were represented, the speaker expressed hope to increase the number of participating judges.

### *Overview of June 2022 Parliamentary Forum convening and key outcomes*

The ensuing discussion encompasses contributions from various speakers that highlight regional practices and experiences in advancing sexual and gender minorities' rights, with emphasis on the crucial role of parliamentarians and the judiciary in formulating inclusive policies. These presentations shed light on the key outcomes of the Parliamentary Forum, and the state of the rights of sexual and gender minorities in Malawi, Namibia, and Botswana.

### *Presentation on African Parliamentary Forum on Gender and Sexual Minorities*

The presentation on African Parliamentary Forum on Gender and Sexual Minorities was made by an MP who acknowledged the importance of the motto "leave no one behind" in decision-making process, highlighting its relevance for achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. They affirm the commitment of African leaders to rely on the potential of their people, particularly children and youth, to instill respect for human rights and to work towards an inclusive continent by 2063, in line with Resolution 275 adopted by the African Commission on Human and People Rights.

The MP recounted the African Parliamentary Forum on Gender and Sexual Minorities, organized by UNDP and PGA in Johannesburg in June 2022. The forum saw the participation of 28 parliamentarians from 13 countries and 15 individuals and activists, along with eight civil society representatives. The purpose of this forum was to provide an overview of LGBTQ+ issues, share examples of the role of parliamentarians in promoting LGBTQ+ affirming legislation, discuss how parliamentarians can support each other, and inspire the repeal of laws criminalizing consensual same-sex conduct and diverse gender expression.

He then reflected on the outcomes of the forum, describing it as successful, historical, evergreen, and dynamic. The Honourable MP particularly



highlighted the presentation of a handbook for parliamentarians, titled *"Advancing the Human Rights and Inclusion of LGBT People."* This practical tool, available in multiple languages, provides a database of best practices and educates leaders about harmful practices that impact the right to health in Africa. He concluded by acknowledging the contributions of several organizations in supporting and advocating for such critical topics.

### *Presentation on Malawi*

The presentation acknowledged the existing challenges in Malawi regarding issues of Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR), the access to resources in Africa and the rights of the sexual and gender minorities community.

The presentation recounted an unsuccessful attempt to present these issues in parliament, indicating a widespread lack of acceptance among parliamentarians due to party lines, religious affiliations, and civil society perspectives. The speaker, however, acknowledges the need for broader consultation on LGBTQ+ issues and highlights the attempts of a human rights activist to raise awareness among parliamentarians. The speaker stresses the need for resource mobilization for benchmarking exercises to learn from countries that have enacted legislation protecting LGBTQ+ rights, which they believe is key to eliminating misconceptions about the community.

The speaker then addresses the mainstreaming of SRHR issues in education curricula in Malawi. They note that despite the Ministry of Education's efforts to incorporate SRHR issues into the curriculum, resistance persists, primarily from church leadership and civil society organizations. They emphasize the necessity of raising awareness about the importance of including these issues in the education curriculum.

Finally, the speaker presents recommendations to strengthen collaboration between their parliamentary caucus and organizations like Outright and UNDP. They propose the need for technical or financial support to deepen engagement, the engagement of visitors to learn from fellow members of parliament on how to decriminalize sexual and gender minorities issues, and participation in the African Union and United Nations General Assembly to



discuss these issues. This discussion will guide the way forward for Malawi to align with countries practicing similar rights.

### *Namibia*

MPs discussed the situation in the Parliament of the Republic of Namibia. He reports that discussions on issues concerning sexual and gender minorities are not taking place in their Parliament, and there has not been a petition on this matter presented.

The MP discussed the issues currently addressed in the Committee on Health, which he chairs. The committee is dealing with a petition on abortion on demand and is in the process of concluding public hearings on the matter. Other petitions received by the committee concern gender-based violence (with public hearings planned for June), mental health, dialysis, and the legalization of marijuana. These are the only topics currently being addressed by the committee.

### *Botswana*

The presentation on Botswana addresses the matter of how Botswana is handling a court judgement that decriminalized same-sex conduct, noting that the country's parliament has chosen to respect the ruling. The speaker discusses the principles of democracy, particularly the separation of powers among the judiciary, executive, and legislative branches. In this case, the judiciary, independent of the other branches, interpreted the laws and determined that the penal code provision criminalizing same-sex conduct violated constitutional rights. Hence, the judiciary declared this provision null and void.

The speaker clarified that the court did not instruct the parliament to pass any specific law, but rather made an interpretation of existing laws. The parliament of Botswana now has the choice to obey the ruling or not, and has chosen to do so. They further elucidate that the government initially appealed the judgement, but the highest court upheld it, leading the government to accept the outcome. This acceptance and moving forward, the speaker explains, is what democracy entails.



The presentation continued to highlight the need for a country like Zimbabwe to learn from Botswana. The speaker expresses a wish that the UNDP could facilitate a learning process and suggests a plenary discussion with champions of the cause.

### **Introduction of handbook for parliamentarians**

An MP stated that the purpose of the handbook titled "Advancing the Human Rights and Inclusion of the LGBTI People", which they received at the African Parliamentary Forum on Gender and Sexual Minorities was to promote the rights of all individuals, including the LGBTI community, in line with the UNDP's principle of "Leave No One Behind," as outlined in the 2030 Declaration for Sustainable Development. This principle is a commitment to ensuring that marginalized and excluded people in all countries enjoy full human rights and benefits from shared resources.

The Honourable member then delved into the structure of the handbook, explaining that it's organized on a modular basis and does not need to be read in its entirety. The handbook is divided into four sections: an overview of the current situation of LGBTIQ people worldwide, a section explaining that sexual and gender minorities rights are human rights, a part on effective action based on a global rights framework, and further guidance on speaking about LGBTIQ people and their rights.

Monica reiterated the purpose of the handbook by emphasizing that the handbook showcases the successes and struggles of various African countries in regard to diverse sexualities and legislation. She highlighted the importance of acknowledging the diversity of the continent's 54 countries, each with their unique religions, languages, and ways of life. She urged the recognition of both small and large victories, not just problems, and encourages the sharing of this tool to learn from one another's experiences.

She expresses the willingness of UNDP to provide technical assistance because building alliances with decision-makers who understand the importance of human lives can make significant progress, even in challenging contexts. She urged parliamentarians to share the booklet

within their parliament and with NGOs, stressing the importance of sharing success stories and good practices that can be replicated elsewhere. Furthermore, issues of HIV and women's rights as potential entry points for these discussions of issues of sexual and gender minorities. She suggested the adoption of intersectional approaches, which involve viewing problems from multiple angles and considering how different forms of discrimination intersect and impact different people differently.

### **Group Exercise and Presentations**

The group exercise requires the participants to address the question of key strategies or practical steps that can be taken to protect the rights of sexual minorities and eradicate conversion practices. To facilitate the exercise, the attendees were divided into four groups: Anglophone group 1; Anglophone group 2; Francophone group; and Portuguese group.

#### *Presentation by Anglophone group 1*

The group shared the key points discussed in their group concerning sub-regional and regional strategies for addressing sexual orientation and gender identity issues and conversion practices. One proposition at the sub-regional level includes the development of a SOGIESC framework by SADC-PF, which can be adopted by individual countries. They also suggest that SADC-PF encourages the implementation of international protocols and commitments, and act as a watchdog to monitor country-level progress and create platforms for countries to share their experiences and challenges regarding SOGIESC issues.

At the regional level, the group emphasized the importance of education and capacity-building among members of Parliament on SOGIESC issues and conversion practices. By forming alliances with civil society organizations and ensuring that the institution of Parliament is accessible to the public, members of parliament can better advocate for these issues. Another important aspect of their strategy is the inclusion of the LGBTQI+ community in decision-making processes that affect them and considering private members' bills as a legislative strategy.





The group also identified accountability as a significant challenge in implementing existing strategies. They propose the creation of country accountability mechanisms to address this issue. Lastly, they discuss the need for a support system for members of parliament who champion SOGIESC issues, acknowledging the vulnerability that these individuals face. By creating such a system, they aim to reduce the fear and backlash that members of parliament may experience, enabling them to continue advocating for human rights without compromise.

### *Presentation by Anglophone group 2*

The group discussed strategies for supporting work at the national level, emphasizing the importance of collaboration between various stakeholders. One approach includes conducting policy dialogues, which involve inviting multiple players to share their views, identify potential stumbling blocks, and assess progress. These dialogues can lead to policy reviews based on current conditions. Another strategy involves strengthening collaboration between sexual and gender minorities networks and parliamentarians who champion their cause. The group suggests creating a platform where sexual and gender minorities can directly raise their concerns with policymakers, potentially leading to policy or legislative reviews that address existing challenges.

The group also highlights the importance of parliamentary participation in national conferences on LGBT rights and sexual and reproductive health. This engagement can bring attention to LGBTI issues within broader discussions of sexual and reproductive health. Inclusion in these meetings allows parliamentarians to focus on LGBTI-related concerns and foster a more comprehensive understanding of these issues within the broader context of health and human rights.

The group addressed the challenge of funding for national-level activities. They propose that international organizations, such as UNDP, identify and allocate specific resources towards regional activities. These resources can then be channeled to individual countries for implementation, promoting a more effective and sustainable approach to addressing LGBTIQ rights and sexual and reproductive health issues.





### *Presentation by French group*

The French group stressed the importance of educating parliamentarians and the public, especially leaders in politics, religion, and traditional roles, about minority rights. The group further argues for well-organized associations of minorities to better advocate for their rights. They also underscore the necessity for a database to reflect the reality in each country regarding minority rights, suggesting that this could help inform more effective policy and legislation.

At the regional level, the group emphasizes the importance of disseminating texts adopted by international bodies such as the UN, OECD, SADC, and the African Union, as some countries may lack awareness of existing guidelines and standards. They propose the creation of standardised educational tools like flyers and booklets to ensure consistent information is disseminated across countries. The group suggests that regional assessments should be conducted with developed indicators to track progress and identify areas for improvement. They also advocate for the development of uniform laws to protect minorities in the region, noting that current laws vary between countries or may not exist at all.

Drawing from the lessons they have learned, the group notes the value of collaborations between minority associations, private sectors, and diplomats for mutual support. They highlight the importance of public declarations of support from these collaborations during public events, as a way to bolster advocacy efforts. Finally, the group suggests the promotion of minority rights through mass media should be increased.

### *Presentation by Portuguese group*

The group emphasized the need for improved knowledge within the sexual and gender minorities about its members and their locations to better combat the challenges they face. They propose that discussions about the sexual and gender minorities should be introduced in families, as the family is the largest institution worldwide. This would facilitate a better understanding of the community from an early age, preventing bullying in schools and other public places.



In their second point, the group calls for heightened public awareness of the sexual and gender minorities acknowledging it as a reality that needs to be universally recognized. They stress the importance of mass media in facilitating serious debates about the community, contending that discussions limited to small groups would not sufficiently challenge prevailing prejudices. They also suggest the dissemination of successful strategies from organizations that have effectively advocated for the sexual and gender minorities community, promoting shared learning and success.

At the regional level, the group recommends that the sexual and gender minorities engage a wider variety of stakeholders, such as musicians, religious leaders, traditional authorities, and other opinion leaders, to further their cause. They assert that parliamentary discussions alone are not enough, suggesting that these issues warrant state-level consideration. They endorse a multi-tiered approach to understanding and advocating for the sexual and gender minorities, encompassing national, municipal, provincial, and regional levels. Lastly, at the country level, they suggest clear agenda-setting for the community, ongoing engagement with judicial bodies to prevent harmful practices, and the formation of more groups to defend sexual and gender minorities rights.

### **Closing remarks**

The closing remarks were made by representatives of the SADC-PF, UNDP, Outright International and Access Chapter 2.

### **SADC-PF closing remarks**

The closing remarks acknowledged the efforts made by participants from various countries in promoting minority rights and express hope that the knowledge and insights gained from the meeting would enhance their work at the national level.

The closing remarks highlighted the serious problem of conversion practices in Africa, the lack of legal protection for sexual and gender minorities, and the urgent need to address these issues. Furthermore, the necessity of sensitization, understanding of conversion practices, and the harmonization of existing laws and policies was underscored.



The remarks commend the active participation of all attendees and their valuable contributions to the dialogue, emphasizing the need for collaboration and progress in addressing the challenges faced by the sexual and gender minorities in the SADC region.

### **UNDP closing remarks**

The closing remarks emphasizes how the forum has been an enlightening experience that increased their understanding of SADC and the challenges faced by the participants in their countries as parliamentarians and as individual representatives. The closing remarks highlight the importance of keeping an open mind to learn more and to give back to sexual and gender minorities, who are often left behind by policies, laws, and societal structures. The ultimate goal, both in the short and long term, is to ensure these minorities are protected, safe, and able to fully participate in life and in their communities.

The remarks highlighted the importance of recognizing the diversity of the different countries, their different stages of progress, but emphasizes the universality of humanity and human rights and the African concept of Ubuntu, emphasizing the mutual dependence and interconnection of human beings.

The closing remarks expressed gratitude to the participants for their time, attentiveness, and contributions. They extend their thanks to the government of South Africa and their partners, including Outright and the Secretariat of SADC-PF.

### **Access Chapter 2 & Outright International**

Steve Letsike, wearing her cap as the chair of the South African National Task Team on SOGIE based violence against LGBT persons, expressed gratitude to the attendees for dedicating two days to discuss and strategize on ending discrimination in Southern Africa. He reiterates the commitment of African leaders to developmental agenda, aimed at rectifying past injustices where individuals have been criminalized, marginalized, and oppressed. She also calls attention to the African Union's 2063 aspirations



and underscores the responsibility of current leaders to develop a safe and prosperous pathway for future generations.

Further, Steve stresses the importance of the SADC parliamentary forum as a platform for members of Parliament to exercise their power and fulfill the trust bestowed upon them by the people. She encourages leaders to debate, test, and ensure justice for all people. She underscores the importance of accountability frameworks and the obligations of parliament members. Furthermore, she mentions the mechanisms in place like the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the African Charter, and individual country constitutions, all aimed at protecting, fulfilling, and promoting human rights. Steve implores leaders to be relevant, pragmatic, and to stand by what is right, emphasizing that no one deserves to be discriminated against, left behind, or lose their lives.

She emphasized the African philosophy of Ubuntu—the mutual dependence and interconnectedness of humans, and advocates for the values of liberation, freedom, equality, and justice. She encourages leaders to reach out for assistance when they do not understand something and to respectfully accept disagreements. She then expresses her confidence in the attendees' leadership and commitment to justice.

In wrapping up the event, Khanyo echoed the sentiments of Steve, thanked all the participants and staff involved, and acknowledges that while the two-day event is ending, the journey towards equality and justice is just beginning.

## Conclusions

- The meeting underscores the necessity for increased sensitization of Members of Parliament regarding sexual and gender minorities issues. This entails equipping them with a better understanding of the lived experiences of sexual and gender minorities, their rights, and the challenges they face. This knowledge can, in turn, inform more inclusive and effective legislative decision-making.



- The meeting highlights the need for a compilation of best practices by states in addressing Conversion Practice. This would involve gathering and analyzing successful interventions, strategies, and policies from various states, providing a useful resource for policymakers and advocates in designing and implementing measures to combat Conversion Practice.
- The meeting acknowledges the existence of numerous instruments within the SADC region that could be employed to address Conversion Practice. However, it emphasizes the need to identify and harmonize all the existing SADC laws and policies relevant to this issue. Harmonization can ensure consistency and compatibility across different laws and policies, enhancing their collective impact and effectiveness.
- The meeting also underscores the importance of sensitizing religious and traditional leaders about the harmful effects of Conversion Practice. These leaders wield significant influence over societal attitudes and norms, and their understanding and support can be pivotal in changing harmful practices. Furthermore, it highlights the need for robust legal and policy measures to protect sexual and gender minorities from the detrimental effects of Conversion Practice. This speaks to the urgency of providing legal and policy safeguards to prevent harm and uphold the rights of sexual and gender minorities.
- The meeting advocates for the development of a SOGIESC framework by SADC-PF, which encourages the adoption of international protocols and the sharing of experiences on SOGIESC issues across countries. Education and capacity building for parliament members on SOGIESC and minority rights, along with the inclusion of the LGBTQI+ community in decision-making processes, are paramount. This inclusion can be fostered by creating platforms for direct dialogue between LGBTQI+ communities and policymakers while considering private member's bills as a legislative strategy.
- The meeting further advocated for accountability mechanisms and support systems for parliamentarians championing SOGIESC issues



are proposed, alongside policy dialogues with various stakeholders leading to potential policy or legislative reviews. Participation of parliamentarians in national conferences on LGBT rights and sexual and reproductive health is encouraged, with international organizations like UNDP allocating resources towards regional activities.

- The importance of well-organized minority associations and country-specific databases reflecting minority rights realities is highlighted, coupled with the dissemination of international bodies' texts and standardized educational tools across countries. The development of uniform laws to protect minorities and collaborations between minority associations, private sectors, and diplomats is suggested. Lastly, there is a call for a multi-tiered approach to understanding and advocating for sexual and gender minorities alongside heightened public awareness through mass media, clear community agenda-setting, ongoing judicial engagement, and the formation of more advocacy groups.