



INTERNATIONAL SAFE ABORTION DAY 2024

KICK ABORTION STIGMA OUT TOURNAMENT ACTIVITY REPORT

1.0 Introduction

The Kick Abortion Stigma Out Tournament, held on September 28th, 2024, in Riruta Grounds, aimed to dismantle the stigma surrounding abortion through a community-centered sports event. This tournament brought together individuals from diverse backgrounds, uniting them in support of bodily autonomy and reproductive rights while challenging the societal stigma around abortion. With the support of WCK partners and allies, this event showcased the power of sports as a platform for advocacy and education, reaching a broad and diverse audience.

The tournament is crucial because it uses a social approach to help society address issues around SRHR and bodily autonomy. By integrating advocacy into a sports setting, we brought abortion rights conversations into the mainstream, reaching people who might otherwise be inaccessible. The event reaffirmed that the stigma around abortion can be addressed when we create environments that encourage dialogue and challenge societal taboos.

The tournament anticipated an attendance of 150 participants but successfully reached 350 attendees, showcasing the event's resonance within the community. This turnout reflects the growing interest in and need for discussions surrounding abortion rights and stigma.



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1.1 Objectives

- I. To create a safe space for open dialogue around abortion rights and stigma
- II. To provide vital information on safe abortion practices, post-abortion care, and contraceptive options, as well as create a non-judgmental space
- III. To foster meaningful conversations and strengthen solidarity within grassroots communities, particularly among those affected by abortion stigma
- IV. To amplify the visibility of abortion advocacy in a unique, engaging manner

1.2 Chronology of Activities

Opening Ceremony: The Executive Director of Women Collective Kenya, Ruth Mumbi, was invited to give the opening remarks on the importance of 28th September as the International Safe Abortion Day as well as the importance of the tournament to destigmatize abortion and abortion access and commemorate women and girls who've lost their lives through unsafe abortions. Moreover, Ms Mumbi gave real-life cases of women and girls in the area who've lost their lives through unsafe abortions. Ms Mumbi then proceeded to kick off the tournament officially.

The Kick Abortion Stigma Out Tournament Knockout Phase: Ten teams from ten sub county of Nairobi and two women teams from Kiambu County participated in the knockout phase namely Acakaro, from Embakasi North, Gursa Football team from Kibra, Mihang'o Elite from Embakasi East, Kikuyu Starlets, Kiambu, Garden Sportiff from Kiambu Mainstream FC from Kamukunji, Clavers from Mathare, Kawagware United from Dagoretti North, Dafuo FC from Embakasi Central Muslim Sportiff, Dagoretti North.



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Information Dissemination Session: Aunt Jane and DKT conducted three breakout Sessions between the matches. They conducted an attitude survey of the fans who had come to spectate and disseminated information on contraceptives, sex education, safe and legal abortion, and referral mechanisms for safe and legal abortion.

Breakout Session on Mental Health: Ms Salima Macharia from the East African Wellness Hub took the community through a session on the mental health of survivors of sexual violence and unsafe abortion because of the trauma as well as stigma. Ms Macharia also emphasized the need for the community to embrace and hold the survivors without judging and discriminating against them because of the decisions they have made concerning their bodies.

Breakout Session: Bar Hostess, a Sex Workers' Organization. The representative from the Bar Hostess emphasized that sex workers, like all women, have a right to make decisions about their bodies including the choice to access safe abortion services. For many sex workers, the ability to control their reproductive health is a matter of personal agency, dignity and safety.

Media Interviews: Media interviews organized by Malaika from the Centre for Reproductive Rights Partners in between the sessions including leading the collective statement (see *Appendix I*) by partners and allies of the tournament.

Winning Team: Muslim Sportiff (Dagoretti North)

Tournaments' Conclusion: The tournament concluded with a powerful closing by Martin Onyango, the Executive Director of CRR, who awarded the trophy to the winning team, joined by Nyambura from KELIN, Ruth Mumbi from Women Collective Kenya, and other dedicated partners. This trophy was more than just a prize; it symbolized the bold message of the "Kick Abortion Stigma Out" Tournament. Engraved with this message, the trophy now stands as a lasting



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testament in the winners' space—a reminder of the movement's impact and the enduring call to end abortion stigma.

2.0 Metrics of Success of the Tournament

The pivotal role of sports as a medium for advocacy: Using a soccer tournament as the focal point attracted people who may have yet to engage in SRHR conversations. This approach helped normalize discussions on abortion and SRHR, allowing the message to reach a broader audience in a non-judgmental setting.

"The Kick Abortion Stigma Out tournament is a unique event. In all my years as a professional player, including my time on the National team, I've never had the chance to play for a cause like this. Today, I'm here to stand in solidarity with women and girls who have been judged harshly for the decisions they make about their bodies. I'm here to kick the stigma out." - *Chairman Hans*

The Impact of the Tournament's Information Booth: Aunty Jane, Marie Stopes, and DKT International provided an information booth that played a significant role in addressing misconceptions about abortion, offering factual information, and making resources available for those needing support. This booth created a safe and accessible space for people to learn about SRHR issues in a supportive environment.

Community Ownership of the Tournament: The tournament was organized with direct input from the community, ensuring it resonated with the attendees and addressed their concerns and questions. This inclusive model boosted attendance and engagement, making the event more impactful.

Impact of Building Synergy with Key SRHR Partners: TICAH, KELIN, DKT, CRR, MAMA CASH, Marie Stopes, Bar Hostess as well as the support and



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involvement of other allies strengthened our advocacy and provided the logistical and financial backing needed for the event. This support was instrumental in delivering a well-organized and impactful tournament.

The competition was also attended by "Mbogi ya Chorea Chorea," a Kenyan video production collective with a sizable fan base that showcases life in impoverished neighborhoods, commonly known as the "ghetto." The group's main goal is to celebrate perseverance and solidarity by sharing authentic, day-to-day experiences from these communities. Mbogi ya Chorea Chorea, who are well-known for their distinctive dance techniques and colorful cultural expressions, highlight life through the Chorea Chorea series, which has become well-liked on websites like YouTube and TikTok. Their challenges and videos show real-world street life, highlighting the innovation and brilliance coming from underrepresented groups.

Mbogi ya Chorea Chorea initially rose to prominence with a controversial video featuring the slogan, "Teenage pregnancy is not a crime; it's not a sin." This sparked a debate about reproductive justice, particularly as the young woman in the video who delivered the chant shared her story during a community dialogue organized by WCK and supported by TICAH and KELIN. We learnt that she had faced early pregnancy herself due to limited access to reproductive health information and was reacting to the stigma she experienced.

The tournament also brought together 12 teams from across Nairobi County's 10 constituencies, along with opinion shapers, community elders, a Media Max football commentator, sex workers, and human rights defenders, all supporting the message of reproductive justice and community care.



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3.0 Outcomes of the Tournament

⊕ **Enhanced Awareness on Abortion Rights:** The tournament successfully created a safe space for open dialogue around abortion rights and stigma. Through speeches, an information booth, and engaging activities, attendees gained insights into the realities surrounding abortion and the importance of bodily autonomy.

As Nyambura from KELIN pointed out, the Kick Abortion Stigma Out Tournament is more than just a game; it's a bold declaration that reproductive rights are human rights.

“This event transforms the playing field into a platform for solidarity, breaking down barriers of silence and shame surrounding abortion. By rallying together in sport, we reclaim our voices, challenge stigma, and affirm the right to autonomy over our bodies. It's a celebration of resilience, where every goal is a step towards a society that respects, understands, and supports all choices. Together, we kick stigma out and stand strong for dignity, justice, and freedom.”

– Nyambura, KELIN

⊕ **Information Dissemination through the Information Booths by Our SRHR Partners i.e., Aunty Jane, Marie Stopes, and DKT International:** A key tournament feature was an information booth hosted by Aunty Jane, Marie Stopes, and DKT International. This booth provided vital information on safe abortion practices, post-abortion care, and contraceptive options, creating a non-judgmental space where people could learn and ask questions openly. The booth's presence was instrumental in providing credible, practical information and connecting individuals with resources to make informed decisions about their reproductive health.



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Focused Community Engagement with the Grassroots: The event drew participants from various backgrounds, including grassroots activists, youth, community leaders, and organizations focused on governance, environmental rights and SRHR. This diversity fostered meaningful conversations and strengthened solidarity within the community, particularly among those affected by abortion stigma. This was supported by sentiments from participants in the tournament;

"Today, I'm playing in the Kick Abortion Stigma Out tournament not to chase a win but to make a powerful statement: no woman or girl should ever lose her life because of unsafe abortion. This is bigger than the game—it's about standing up for the right to safe choices and protecting lives."

- Martha Mihango, Elite Football Team

Increased Visibility for Abortion Advocacy: With jerseys and banners displaying messages such as "Kick Abortion Stigma Out," the event amplified abortion advocacy's visibility in a unique, engaging manner. This imagery has had a lasting impact on community members and has furthered the reach of our messaging on social media platforms.

Strengthened Partnerships: Through the tournament, we forged new partnerships and strengthened existing ones with organizations like TICAH, KELIN, Aunty Jane, Marie Stopes, DKT International, Centre For Reproductive Rights, Bar Hostess, Mama Cash, East African Wellness Hub and other local SRHR advocacy groups. These connections have laid the groundwork for collaborative future campaigns on abortion rights and bodily autonomy.

Meaningful Impact on Kicking Out Stigma and Enhancing Access to Safe Abortion: Through this conversation, we built an alliance with



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Mbogi ya Chorea Chorea, who later attended the Kick Abortion Stigma Out event. Their TikTok video for the tournament helped publicize the Kick abortion stigma out tournament and Aunty Jane Hotline and, discussing safe sex and available resources for those in need of reproductive healthcare, especially, safe abortion access. The tournament led to 34 cases being referred to the Aunty Jane hotline, demonstrating a meaningful impact. This is evidence from one of the vcat participants who held an extremist view on abortion;

"I want to thank Women Collective Kenya and their partners for the incredible work they've done. Before, I used to believe that 'women who have had abortions are a tool for pleasure,' but they helped me confront and change this harmful view. Today, as I play, I'm playing for the women and girls who have lost their lives because of unsafe abortions. I stand with them, and I look forward to the next season with hope for change." — *Jibreel, Muslim Sportiff*

3.1 Challenges of the Tournament

- ⊕ **Logistical Challenges:** Due to the huge turnout, the food prepared for the tournament participants was not enough. This calls for contingent measures to cover such large turnouts. Secondly, the kit coverage for both staff and participants was inadequate.
- ⊕ **Communication Challenges:** The tournament was not widely advertised. To publicize it, sustained communication, particularly in social media, is needed.
- ⊕ **Resource constraints:** The tournament had resource constraints, which prevented us from rewarding the winning teams and the first and second runners-up with monetary tokens.



4.0 Charting the Way Forward: Recommendations

Based on the outcome of the Tournament, we make the following recommendations;

- ❖ **The need to Expand the Reach of Kick Abortion Stigma Out Initiatives:** Based on the success of this tournament, there is a need to expand the reach of Kick Abortion Stigma Out Initiatives. In this regard, we plan to organize similar events in other regions, reaching new audiences and building a broader coalition of supporters.
- ❖ **The Need to Fundraise for Monetary Appreciation of Tournament Winners:** More resources are needed to appreciate the winners and the first and second runners-up teams. Secondly, resources are needed to make participants community anti-abortion stigma ambassadors.
- ❖ **The Need to Integrate SRHR Education into Community Programs:** To sustain this event's impact, we aim to build after-school and community centres that integrate SRHR education into intergenerational learning to counter biases and misinformation about SRHR and provide the correct information. This approach will help normalize discussions on abortion rights from a young age.
- ❖ **The Need to Build a Network of Supporters:** Building a network of supporters is essential to building synergy. We will continue to engage participants, partners, and new allies through a "Kick Abortion Stigma Out" network. This platform will support ongoing initiatives, share resources, and provide a space for community members to exchange experiences and strategies.
- ❖ **Monitoring and Evaluation:** To measure our progress, we will conduct follow-up surveys with attendees and partners, assessing attitude changes and identifying improvement areas. This feedback will be crucial in refining future events and understanding the long-term impact of the Kick Abortion Stigma Out Tournament.



5.0 Conclusion

The Kick Abortion Stigma Out Tournament has shown that innovative, community-centred events can effectively address stigma and foster a supportive environment for discussing abortion rights. The impressive turnout of 350 participants demonstrates the demand for such initiatives. By expanding these efforts and building on the momentum, we can continue dismantling stigma and advancing reproductive rights advocacy.

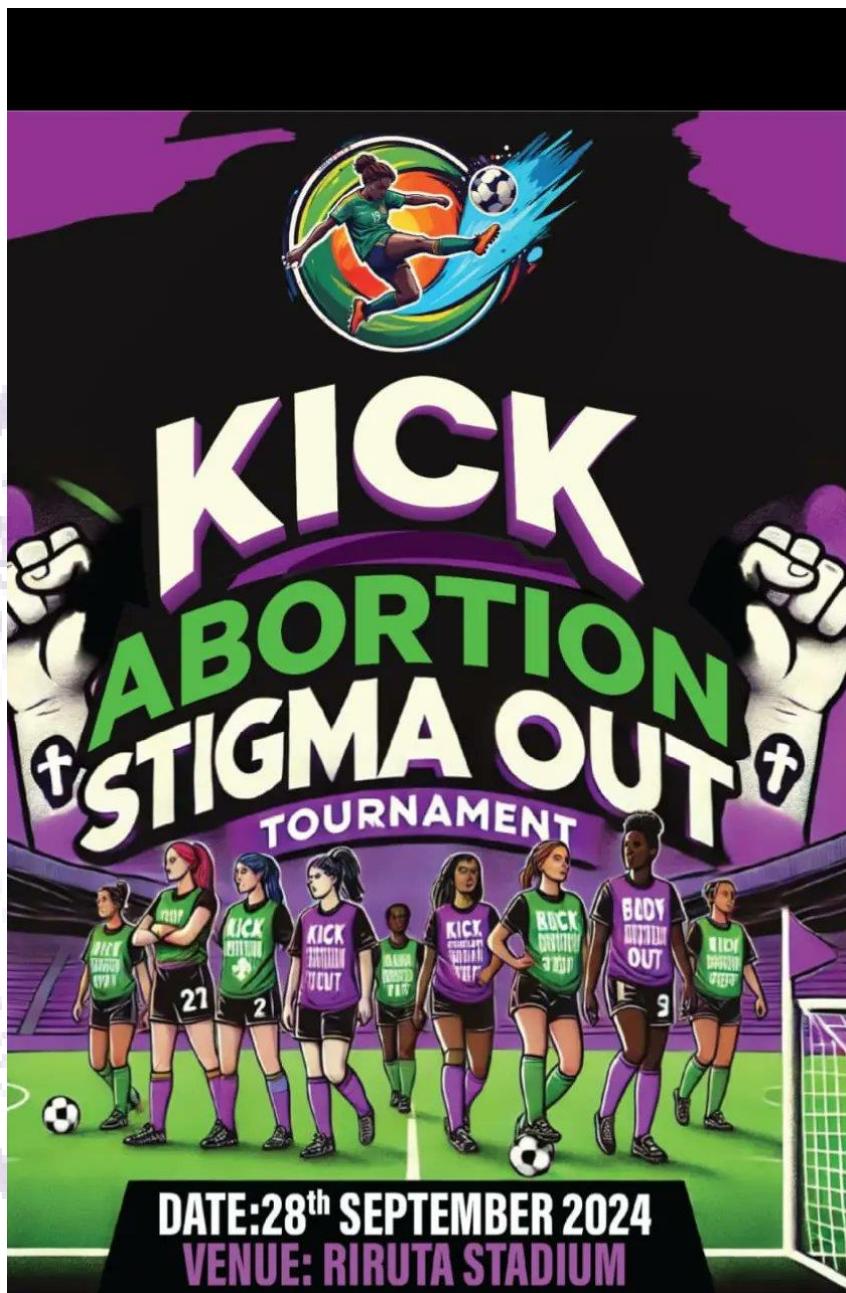
News	https://ghettoradio.co.ke/sexual-and-reproductive-health-champions-unite-to-commemorate-international-safe-abortion-day-2024/
Articles about the Activity	https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2024-10-15-lobby-decries-high-rates-of-unsafe-abortion-related-mortality-in-nairobi-slums
	https://youtu.be/uqCo7wwHmHQ?si=ioHlczw17CkoXss1



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6.0 Photos of the Activity



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28th September, 2024



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WOMEN VOICES

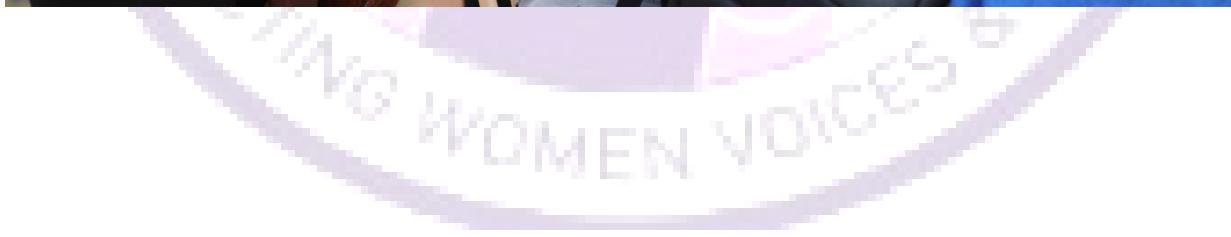


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**APPENDIX I: CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS' STATEMENT DURING THE
COMMEMORATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL SAFE ABORTION DAY (ISAD)
ON 28TH SEPTEMBER, 2024**

On this International Safe Abortion Day 2024, we, the undersigned organizations, committed to advancing the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) of women and adolescent girls across Africa, including in Nigeria, Zambia, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya, collectively reaffirm our commitment to promotion and protection of abortion rights. WE UNITE IN #ABORTIONSSOLIDARITY to amplify our voices and re-energize our efforts towards the realization of our shared objective of advocating for the removal of restrictive laws and policies and the promotion of access to safe abortion care as an essential reproductive health service.

We recognize the strides made by African governments towards advancing sexual and reproductive rights of women and girls, evidenced by the ratification of regional and international instruments such as the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

While appreciating that today, in many African states, abortion is legally permitted albeit under varying and often restrictive circumstances, we express concern that the legal frameworks for abortion in several countries, including Nigeria, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Kenya, continue to criminalize abortion under most circumstances. The interpretation and implementation of restrictive abortion laws in a varied and subjective manner, has resulted in reluctance by healthcare providers to perform safe abortions, even in situations where it is permitted, due to fear of legal repercussions or fear of societal reprimand.



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In addition, women and adolescent girls face substantial barriers to access, including the requirement for third-party authorizations in Kenya, Rwanda, and Zambia, cadre restrictions on authorized healthcare providers in Rwanda and Zambia, and the arbitrary withdrawal of essential standards and guidelines for healthcare providers in Nigeria, Uganda and Kenya. These barriers, compounded by rigid cultural and religious-based resistance to abortion, growing anti-rights, anti-gender movements, widespread misinformation, disinformation, and stigma, continue to make safe abortion care inaccessible to many women and girls in all their diversities.

In a continent with the highest rate of abortion-related deaths in the world at 185 maternal deaths per 100,000 abortions, where more than 77% of abortions are estimated to be unsafe, and approximately 6.2 million unsafe abortions occur annually (Guttmacher, 2020), the devastating impact on women and adolescent girls, including severe health complications and preventable death is undeniable.

In solidarity with the African women and adolescent girls in all their diversities, we join voices to affirm that safe abortion care is a fundamental human right that must be protected and upheld. We further call on governments to urgently:

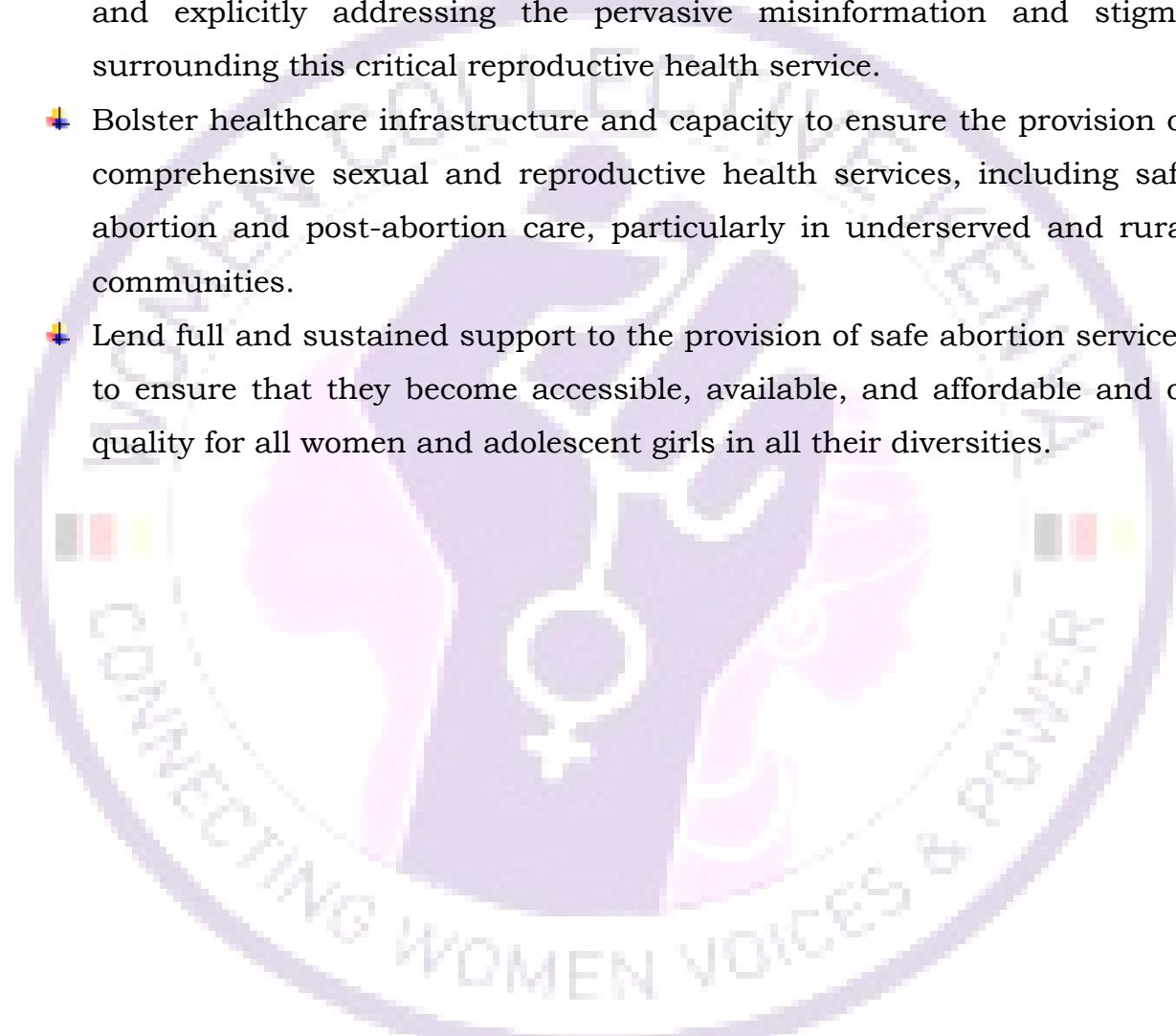
- ⊕ Revise their existing criminal and other laws regulating abortion to comply with the commitments outlined under the Maputo Protocol so as to ensure broader access to safe abortion services without any legal or administrative barriers.
- ⊕ Adopt, disseminate and implement comprehensive, evidence-based guidelines that support healthcare providers in delivering safe abortion and post-abortion care. Efforts should also be made to remove any legal or policy restrictions that impede healthcare providers' ability to provide safe abortion and post-abortion care services.



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- Provide accurate and non-judgmental information on SRHR including access to safe abortion care for all women and adolescent girls in all their diversities.
- Undertake comprehensive public awareness and education initiatives aimed at addressing and dismantling the stigma surrounding abortion, and explicitly addressing the pervasive misinformation and stigma surrounding this critical reproductive health service.
- Bolster healthcare infrastructure and capacity to ensure the provision of comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services, including safe abortion and post-abortion care, particularly in underserved and rural communities.
- Lend full and sustained support to the provision of safe abortion services to ensure that they become accessible, available, and affordable and of quality for all women and adolescent girls in all their diversities.



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