

**SADC Technical Meeting to review the SADC sponsored United Nations
Resolution on Women, the Girl Child and HIV and AIDS.**

27th – 30th July 2015,

Johannesburg, South Africa.

Due to the high prevalence rate and the effect that the HIV epidemic has on the southern African region, SADC Member States have since 1999; sponsored Resolution 58/3 on Women, the Girl Child and HIV and AIDS at the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. The resolution has been reviewed and updated on an annual basis during the Commission on the Status of Women Sessions (CSW), until 2012 when a decision was taken to review it every two years.

The United Nations Commission on the Status of Women is the principal global policy-making body dedicated exclusively to gender equality and the advancement of women. Every year, representatives of United Nations Member States gather at the United Nations Headquarters in New York to evaluate progress made on gender equality, identify challenges, set global standards and formulate concrete policies to promote gender equality and women's empowerment worldwide.

In addition, every second year (the next being March 2016) a resolution on “Women, the Girl Child and HIV and AIDS” is tabled, traditionally by SADC. CSW resolution 58/3 is the only UN resolution that is comprehensively dedicated to the issue of women, girls, gender equality and HIV and AIDS. During the 2012 and 2014, 56th and 58th Sessions of the Commission on the Status of Women respectively, for the first time in the history of the CSW, the negotiation process failed due to a number of contentious issues which caused SADC and the African group to withdraw the co-sponsorship of the resolution. The contentious issues are as follows:

- i) understanding of “comprehensive sexuality education”,
- ii) the evidence around the age of sexual debut and its benefits for protecting young girls from HIV; and
- iii) upholding agreed language on issues around sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Despite the withdrawal of the resolution at the CSW58 in 2014, SADC Member States agreed to sponsor the resolution and table it again at CSW60 in March 2016. The Ministers Responsible for Gender/ Women's Affairs during their meetings held on 25th July 2014 and 29th May 2015, in Lilongwe and Harare, respectively, directed the SADC Secretariat to convene an urgent meeting and review the resolution. Its on this decision that the Secretariat in close collaboration with UNAIDS (with financial support from UNAIDS, UN-Women and UNESCO), organized a technical meeting to review the SADC Resolution on Women, the Girl Child and HIV and

AIDS. The meeting was held from the 27-30th July 2015 at Birchwood Hotel and Conference Centre, Johannesburg, South Africa. The meeting objectives were to:

- (i) review the content of the Resolution on Women, the Girl Child and HIV and AIDS and in particular, with great emphasis on the three contentious issues that Member States could not agree on;
- (ii) make cross references and get inputs from other SADC sectors of Health and Education in terms of the agreed language in relation to the contentious issues and reach a consensus on the way forward; and
- (iii) prepare and agree on the Revised Resolution which will be presented to the Ministers Meeting for approval before its tabling at the CSW60.

The meeting was in total attended by 45 participants, at least three participants from each Member States i.e. Angola; Botswana; DRC; Lesotho; Madagascar; Malawi; Mauritius; Namibia; Seychelles; Swaziland; United Republic of Tanzania; Zambia and Zimbabwe. Participants were drawn from Gender, Education, Health and Legal sectors. In attendance also was representatives of the United Nations Agencies from UNAIDS Regional Office and HQ in Geneva; UN-Women and UNESCO.

The meeting successfully reviewed the 2014 CSW Resolution, paragraph by paragraph, mainly looking at issues that are outdated and updating the evidence; repetitions etc. After having identified, discussed and agreeing on what makes a “Good Resolution” with the United Nations guidance on how to draft UN resolutions, the meeting:

- outlined the key contentious issues from the past, and examined the evidence and considered how to mitigate/negotiate on these issues in future;
- identified the key current and future impacts of HIV on Women and Children (globally and within SADC) and the core forward looking areas to be included in the new resolution.
- agreed on the process for moving the resolution forward and getting buy-in within the AU and with key champion Member States from each region of the world.
- agreed on the process and identified the key thematic/ elements of the new resolutions and content for the new resolution paving the way forward leading up to the 60th CSW.
- came up with a working draft Resolution ready for circulation to all Member States for inputs.
- agreed and outlined all the necessary steps on the way forward leading up to CSW60.