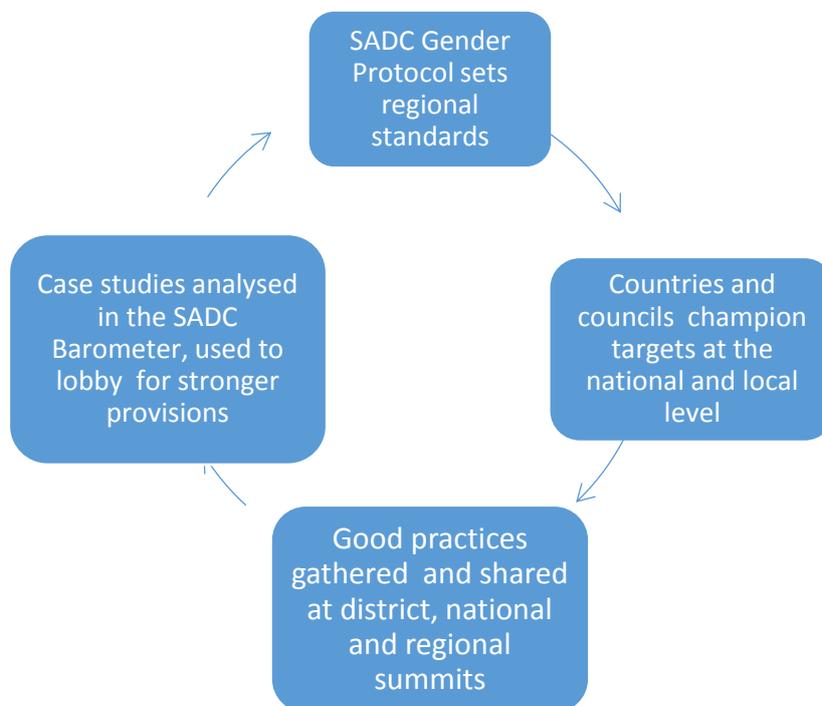


## Connecting the dots on SRHR in Southern Africa Gender Links Case Study



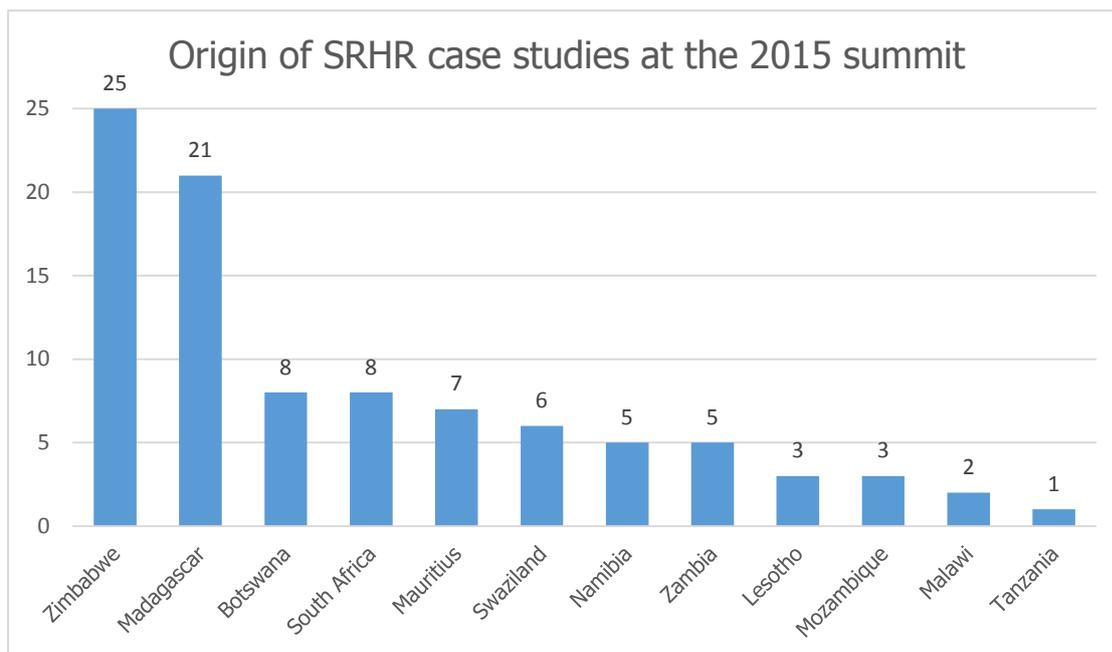
This case study demonstrates the unique way in which Gender Links (GL), the lead agency in this consortium, is driving the campaign for SRHR from local to regional level through its work with 425 Councils in ten Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries. GL and 40 NGOs in the Southern African Gender Protocol Alliance campaigned for the SADC Gender Protocol, a unique sub-regional instrument that brings together African and global commitments to gender equality. Working with gender and local government ministries GL

cascades these targets to the local level through its Centres of Excellence for Gender in Local Government. Over the last five years, partners have shared over 2000 case studies of the SADC Protocol@Work in 26 district, 36 national and eight regional summits. While GL is not directly involved in implementation, the case studies reflect the extent to which gender policies and advocacy create an enabling environment for action on the ground with multiplier effects well beyond what one middle size Women's Rights Organisation could achieve. GL's catalytic impact has been independently evaluated and commended by Coffey, a London-based development consultancy, as one of twelve case studies in the DFID Programme Partnership Arrangement (PPA) in which GL is the only Southern based grantee (see graphic at *Annex 1*).



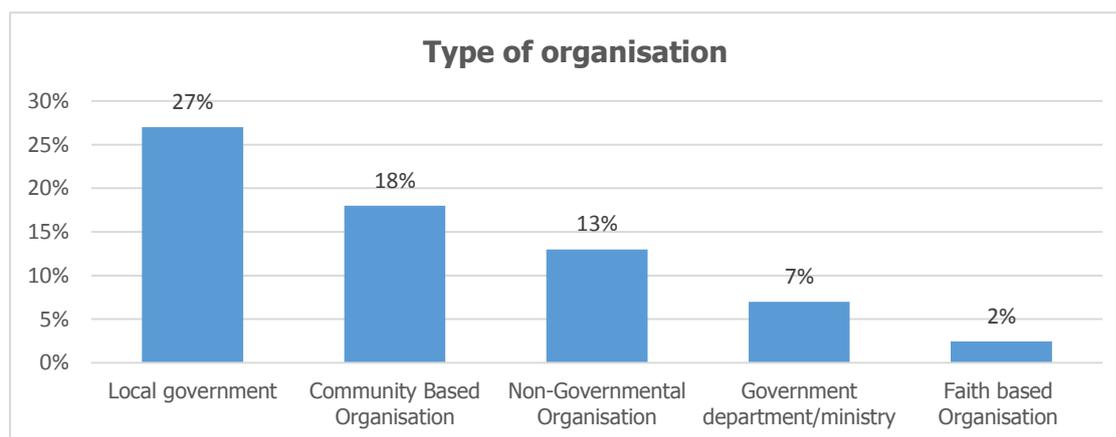
In 2015, as part of the campaign to update the SADC Gender Protocol in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Alliance introduced SRHR as a distinct category in the summits. This analysis of the 92 case studies shared in this category in 2015 shows how, working through local government, GL is able to introduce sensitive subjects with a high degree of

local ownership, as well as amplify these results through lobbying for stronger regional standard-setting.



**Expertise and comparative strength on SRHR and HIV/AIDS in SADC:** Over the last nine years, GL has worked with 425 councils, covering 26% of the population of SADC, to develop gender action plans with flagship programmes on SRHR, HIV and AIDS, and GBV as part of the ten stage COE programme. The range of countries that presented case studies on the impact of their work on SRHR in 2015 (see graph) demonstrates GL's regional reach, including in Lusophone and Francophone speaking countries.

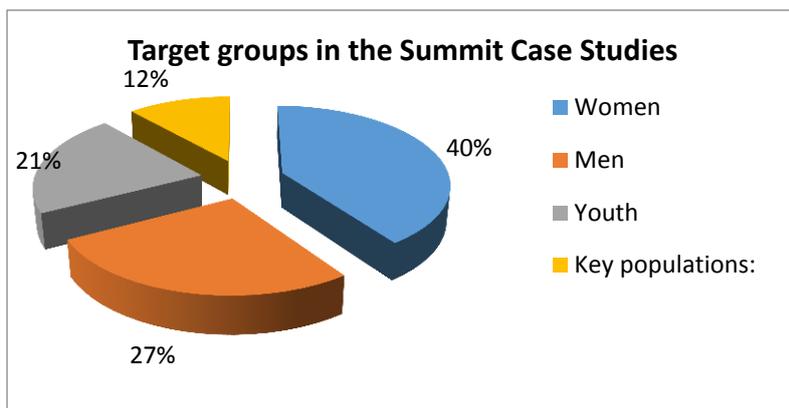
**Involving local partners and target groups in preparing, planning and implementing:** GL country staff assist the councils with capacity building support in developing action plans. The councils then document progress on their different interventions. One of the questions concerns how they involve beneficiaries. Testimonial evidence is a crucial part of the entries. Progress is presented in a case study format that is shared at district summits. Winners go on to national and regional summits.



**Working with national and international networks:** The analysis shows that while local government (27% of the case studies) is the focus of the work, the SADC Protocol@Work summits galvanise several other partners: community and faith-based organisations, NGOs and government departments. Alliance focal networks in each country organise the national summit. The Alliance regional theme clusters serve as independent judges. GL shares its results through SADC, African, Commonwealth and UN networks.

**Covering all three target groups in the RNE call:** The analysis shows that while the

majority of the SADC Protocol@Work case studies concerned women and men in general, they also focused on youth (26%), and key populations (12% of the case studies concerned sex workers, injecting drug users, LGBTI persons, persons with disabilities and prisoners).

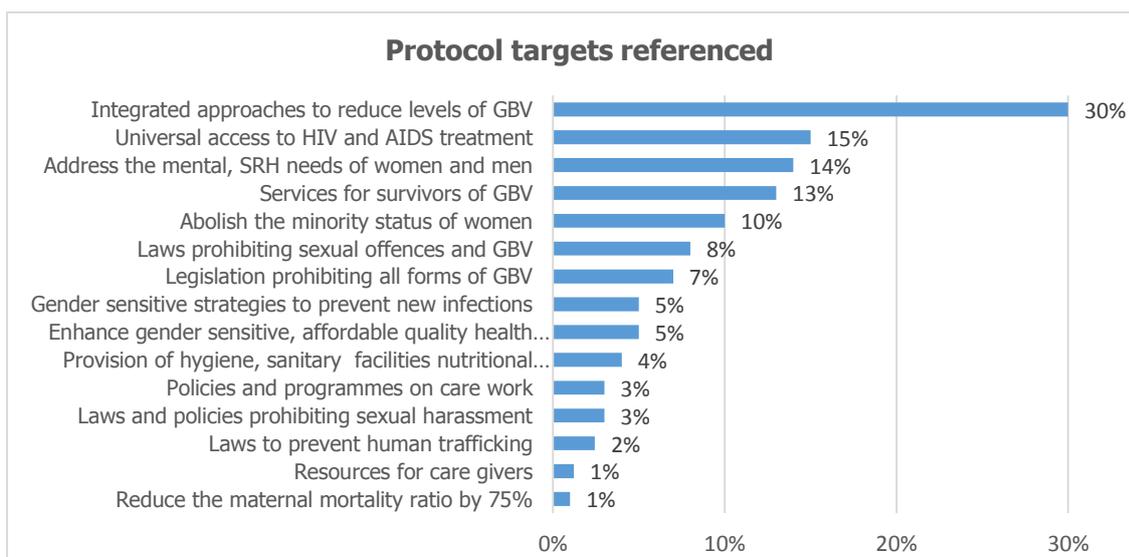


In Mauritius, for example, the Young Queer Alliance (depicted in the adjacent photo) presented its work with 15 – 29 year olds on actions to de-stigmatise LGBTI, create support networks, and lobby for enabling legislation. One case study concerned councils working with truck drivers on HIV and AIDS.

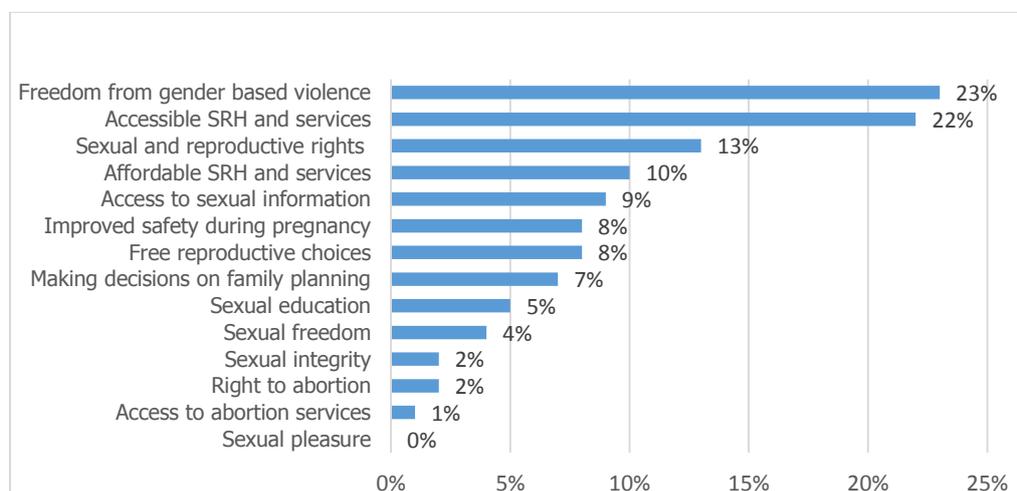


**Men as partners:** 27% of the case studies focused on men as partners. For example, case studies from Swaziland and South Africa showed how men are coming together to demystify some of the attributes, behaviours and myths around masculinity. Through dialogues and workshops men and boys work as partners with women to end violence and fight against the twin scourges of GBV, HIV and AIDS.

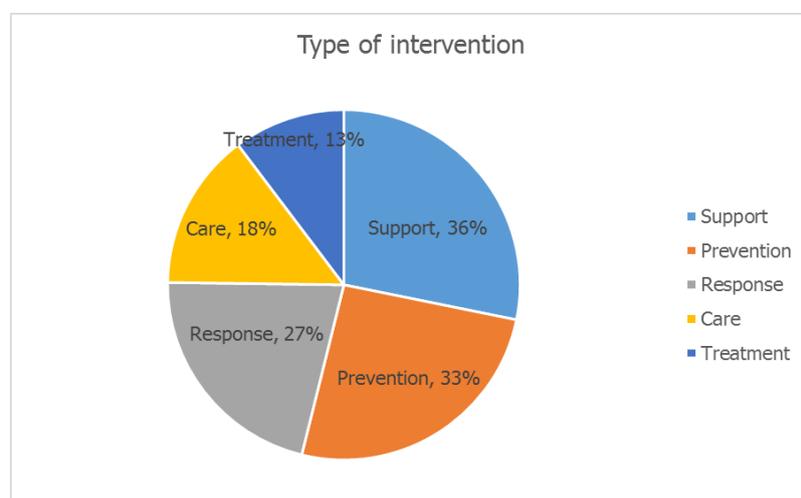
### Results and effectiveness



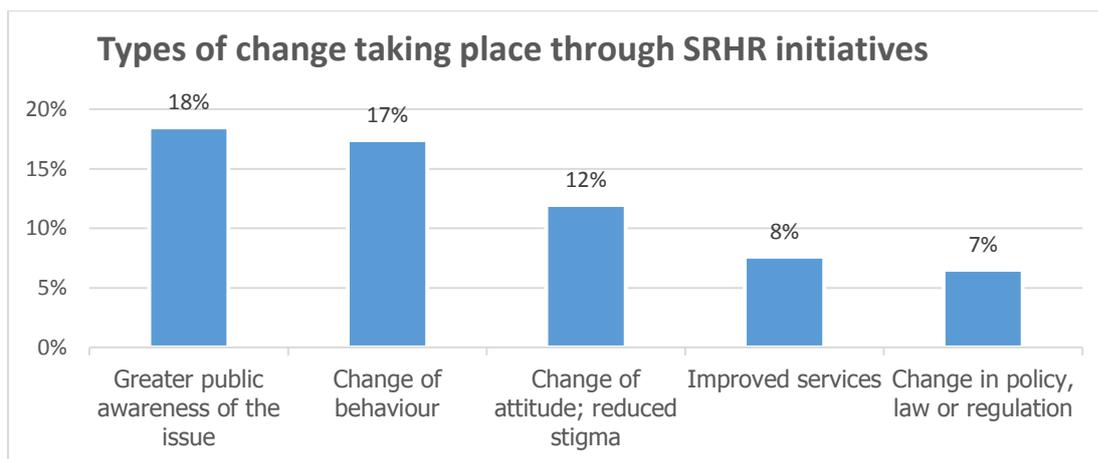
**SADC Protocol targets at work:** 15 of the existing 28 targets of the SADC Gender Protocol relate to SRHR. The graph shows how these are being put to work on the ground, with integrated approaches to ending GBV, universal access to HIV and AIDs treatment, SRH needs of women and men being the most referenced.



**Promoting rights:** The analysis shows that the case studies have a strong rights-based focus (freedom from violence; SRR). Some of the more sensitive areas (sexual pleasure, abortion, and sexual freedom) are not as prominent; however the fact that they are featuring on local agendas is a positive sign.



**In a proactive way:** The largest proportion of interventions concerns support (36%) and prevention (33%) of GBV, and HIV and AIDS. It is encouraging to see that these proactive and preventive approaches feature more prominently than the reactive ones (response, care and treatment). This is an important paradigm shift in the region, and one that opens space for more rights-based approaches.



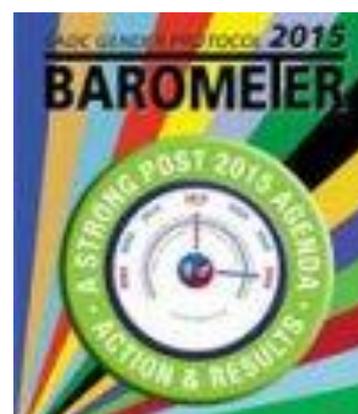
**Changing attitudes and behaviour:** The most reported change in case studies analysed concerned greater public awareness (18%), followed by behaviour change (17%); reduced stigma (12%) and improved services (8%). The summary below of a case study from **Madagascar** shows how this is achieved:

In 2012 the gender committee of the rural council of **Tsiafahy**, a GL COE, created an association called Amis (*friend*) focusing on education, information and sensitisation of young people on gender, gender violence, sexual and reproductive health. Led by an active young teacher, with the support of local health centres, they visited the 15 hamlets of the council to offer free HIV testing and medical consultation. This led to spirited campaigns during the Sixteen Days of Activism on SRHR; periodic sensitisation campaigns in schools. In 2014, the association teamed up with the Ministry of Health and UN agencies to launch “Allo Fanantenana”, free phoning, in which young people can get free counselling and information that it is free, easy to access and confidential, often provided by peers. The youth have created radio dramas conveying messages on gender equality gender violence, SRHR breaking the taboos on these topics in the community. Thanks to the association’s activities, the council included strategies for young people in the development action plan of the council, which won the runner up award for Madagascar in the SRHR category in the 2015 SADC Protocol@Work summit in Madagascar, where the mayor received the award.



**Laws, policies and regulations:** Seven percent of the case studies concerned changes in laws, policies and regulations on SRHR. Six SADC countries now have SRHR laws. The Alliance is campaigning for SRHR policies in the other nine -

**Innovation: changing regional and global SRHR standards from the bottom up:** GL used the 2015 case studies to make the case in the 2015 Barometer for stronger language on SRHR in the post 2015 SADC Gender Protocol and through the Women’s Major Group, in the SDGs. The draft post 2015 Protocol, to be adopted by Heads of State in August 2015, has a specific section on SRHR, and adopts SDG, Beijing Plus Twenty and IPDC standards for its Post 2015 Monitoring, Evaluation and Results Framework.



***Transparency and accountability:*** Summits allow for all work and challenges to be shared and debated. The case studies are housed on the website and in Barometers. They feedback into campaigns led by the target groups.

### **Challenges**

As reflected in the 2015 Barometer, only three countries have decriminalised sexual orientation; only South Africa allows choice of termination of pregnancy and no SADC country has decriminalised sex work. Custom, culture and religion remain strong influences on the ground, rolling back progress, especially on work with the three target groups.

### **Lessons learned and next steps**

GL has learned to be tactful, diplomatic and incremental in prising open the envelope on SRHR. Work on GBV, HIV and AIDS at the local level has opened the door to other sensitive SRHR issues; for example GL has conducted a pilot project on LGBTI attitudes with councils in Namibia. GL has become adept at using local pressure to strengthen regional provisions and vice versa. Councils are ready to take on new challenges around flagship SRHR programmes focusing on youth and key populations.