



**Colloquium
on navigating the
complex political
landscape of Africa
and its impact
on sexual and
reproductive health
and rights**

Introduction

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) are fundamental to human dignity and essential for achieving gender equality, social justice, and sustainable development. These rights, which encompass access to services related to reproductive health, family planning, maternal health, sexual education, and the right to make informed choices about one's own body, are critical for the well-being of individuals, particularly women and marginalised groups. In Africa, despite the progressive provisions of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, on the Rights of Women (Maputo Protocol), SRHR remains a challenging terrain, as various socio-political, economic, and cultural barriers continue to impede the realisation of these rights.

The political landscape in Africa plays a pivotal role in shaping SRHR policies and access. Elections, political transitions, governance, and external influences significantly impact the trajectory of SRHR initiatives. As Africa undergoes frequent political shifts, with elections and new leadership constantly reshaping national agendas, it is essential to examine how these changes affect SRHR policy, funding, and services. This colloquium aims to explore the intersections between political dynamics and SRHR outcomes, providing a platform for critical discussions and collaborative strategies to ensure that SRHR remains a priority on the continent.

This event is particularly timely, given the number of elections held across Africa in the past year, and the influence of global political shifts, such as President Donald Trump's election into office, on SRHR in the region. These political events have had far-reaching implications for SRHR access and advocacy, making it an urgent topic for analysis and discussion.

Background

In recent years, political changes in African countries have had both positive and negative consequences for SRHR. Many African nations are experiencing political transitions, with elections and leadership changes affecting the direction of national policies. In some cases, newly elected governments have embraced progressive approaches to SRHR, while others have rolled back policies or failed to prioritise SRHR as a public health and rights issue. These shifts often reflect larger socio-political trends, such as growing conservatism, religious influence, and political instability, which directly impact the rights and services available to women and marginalised groups.

The global political environment plays a pivotal role in shaping SRHR in Africa, with the Trump administration's foreign aid policies having a particularly severe impact. By using aid as a political leverage, the reimposition of the Global Gag Rule severely restricted U.S. foreign assistance for

family planning services, cutting funding to organisations that provide abortion services or advocate for abortion law reforms. Additionally, a 90-day suspension of U.S. foreign development aid and the withdrawal of support to the World Health Organisation have disrupted vital services, leaving millions without access to life-saving care, including programs supporting people living with HIV. While the U.S. issued a waiver allowing some humanitarian aid, it specifically excluded critical services such as abortion, family planning, and gender-affirming care.

Furthermore, African governments face the challenge of balancing domestic political pressures with international commitments, such as the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)

Programme of Action, which calls for universal access to sexual and reproductive health services. As elections and political transitions continue to unfold across Africa, the question of how these shifts affect the political will to uphold SRHR policies becomes even more pertinent.

Objectives

The objectives of the Colloquium are as follows:

- Analyse the Impact of Political Transitions on SRHR: To examine how political transitions, including elections and leadership changes, affect the formulation, implementation, and accessibility of SRHR policies in Africa.





- Explore the Influence of Global Politics on SRHR: To discuss the effects of global policies, such as the Global Gag Rule, on SRHR programmes in Africa, and how international political climates shape local governance of SRHR.
- Discuss Challenges in Advocacy and Policy Implementation: To identify the challenges faced by SRHR advocates and civil society organisations in navigating the political landscape and advocating for progressive SRHR policies in politically unstable or conservative environments.
- Assess the Role of African Governments in SRHR: To examine the political will and leadership of African governments in advancing SRHR, with a focus on how national policies align with international commitments to reproductive health and rights.

About the Colloquium

The Colloquium will be held on the 25th and 26th of September 2025 at the Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria, South Africa. The Colloquium will end with a commemoration of the legacy of Prof. Charles Ngwenya with a celebratory dinner and the launch of several books on the 26th of September 2025. The Colloquium, which seeks to bring scholars, experts, practitioners, and researchers from the African region and beyond, will serve as a forum for scholarly interactions and exchange of ideas. It is anticipated that the papers at the colloquium will be reworked by authors and submitted for consideration for publication in a special issue of the African Human Rights Law Journal. This will be edited by **Satang Nabaneh** (Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria, satang.nabaneh@up.ac.za) and **Ebenezer Durojaye** (Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria, ebenezer.durojaye@up.ac.za).

Possible Issues to be covered

The following are mere suggestions rather than an exhaustive list of issues that authors may consider using as focal areas or thematic areas:

- **Electoral Influence on SRHR;**
- **Recent African Elections and SRHR Case Studies;**
- **The Global Gag Rule's Impact on African SRHR;**
- **Funding Cuts and SRHR Service Delivery, especially in rural areas;**
- **African Leadership and SRHR Policy Implementation and Access;**
- **Political Instability as a Barrier to SRHR Services;**
- **Election induced conflict's Impact on Maternal Health, Family Planning, and HIV/AIDS Prevention;**
- **Intersection of Politics, Culture, and Religion in SRHR Policy;**
- **Advocacy Strategies in Unfavorable Political Climates;**
- **Engaging with Conservative Leadership on SRHR;**
- **International Actors' Influence on African SRHR Policies, especially in relation to same sex relationships, transgender and gender affirmation/identity;**
- **Balancing International Expectations with Domestic Realities;**
- **Policy Alignment and International Influence; and/or**
- **Use of strategic litigation in protecting and defending SRHR.**

Important Dates

Kindly send us an abstract of about 300 words by 4 April 2025. Kindly send it to **Danielle Visser** at Danielle.visser@up.ac.za. The feedback for successful abstracts will be communicated on 18 April 2025.

The first draft of the paper should be sent to us by **28 June 2025**.

A colloquium will be convened from **25 to 26 September 2025** to share comments with authors.

The revised papers should reach us by **30 November 2025**.

Guidelines for Authors

On the technical editing side, we prescribe the following requirements:

- Manuscripts should average between 5 000 and 7 000 words (including footnotes) in length.
- Each paper should have an introduction and a conclusion.
- Authors should supply a summary of their contributions of not more than 300 words, setting out the main findings and contribution to scholarship.
- Authors are kindly requested to adhere

to the house style of Pretoria University Law Press (PULP). We have attached the relevant guidelines which are also available at

https://www.ahrlj.up.ac.za/images/ahrlj/PULP_Styleguidelines_2022.pdf.

- To avoid a perennial back and forth between authors and editors, which has the effect of delaying the editorial and publication process, we implore authors to diligently adhere to the house style when preparing the chapters.
- Authors must provide their ORCID identifier together with their manuscript. ORCID provides a persistent digital identifier that distinguishes you from every other researcher and, through integration in key research workflows such as manuscript and grant submission, supports automated linkages between you and your professional activities ensuring that your work is recognized. If you do not have such an ID, please register at the website <https://orcid.org/register>, and thereafter provide us with your ID.

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