



Love Alliance Southern Africa Summit: Breaking Structural Barriers Together

From 19-21 May, community partners from Southern Africa (Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe) gathered in Cape Town at the region's very first [Love Alliance](#) Policy Summit. It was the first time many of the partners connected face-to-face to discuss country priorities, share policy opportunities and jointly strategise.

The meeting was all about sharing, learning and connecting around the Love Alliance's "Advocacy Loop", which links country-, regional- and global-level advocacy whereby communities' needs are the basis for influencing policies and funding commitments at all levels. Participants stressed the unique contribution of the Love Alliance in funding community advocacy and providing them with the rare opportunity to address the persistent barriers key populations face in accessing quality healthcare, realise their human rights and broaden civic space to hold governments accountable.

Disconnect between political commitments & implementation

It was clear from the discussions that there are persistent gaps between policy and funding commitments and their implementation by governments. For example, in South Africa the government has progressive strategies in place to improve access to services for key populations, but these strategies often "remain in the drawer". This is due to a range of reasons, including that different Ministries are not on the same page, not prioritising it, or have competing funding priorities. There is also often a disconnect between provincial-level and national government officials in terms of implementation.

The Love Alliance aims to bridge these gaps by linking up advocacy efforts in an innovative way and engaging with different movements to counter the opposition. Movement building and intersectoral approaches are critical especially in conservative political contexts where rights-based approaches for key populations and other stigmatised people face opposition from conservative and religious groups. More opportunities need to be created for communities to engage in dialogue and undertake joint actions with people outside of their bubble, such as influencers who can help advance Love Alliance priorities.

Community leadership & community-led monitoring

The Love Alliance is all about putting communities in the lead. Therefore, the UNAIDS global targets on community leadership (30-6-80 targets) and the societal enablers targets (10-10-10 targets), that governments globally have committed to, provide a critical advocacy opportunity to increase investment in communities. During the meeting, it became clear that

there is limited awareness of the existence and meaning of these targets among communities in Love Alliance countries. It was clear from participants' interventions that countries in the Southern Africa region are far off from reaching these targets and that it makes sense to advocate first for more realistic achievable targets at the country-level.

The discussion then moved on to a discussion around community-led monitoring as an essential way of monitoring the government's progress towards these targets and other key commitments. Some participants called community-led monitoring "the latest buzzword" but underlined the need to become more intentional about it with regards to its purpose and to improve coordination across the different monitoring mechanisms that communities are engaged with, including those developed by PEPFAR and the EU. It is also important to get better in sharing data and increase community access to the data collected.

Not reinventing the wheel, improving sharing & creating equal representation

In terms of the different tactics and strategies employed by Love Alliance partners in their advocacy, participants stressed the importance of employing tactics that have proven to work and make as much use of already existing resources, research findings and data developed and collected by community partners. And, importantly, ensure that these are easily accessible to all Love Alliance partners.

Participants agreed that there are already many compelling best practices and stories to showcase externally that illustrate the realities behind the political and technical goals, targets and commitments policy makers adopt and which we should make creative use of in our advocacy.

The advocacy loop was discussed in terms of setting realistic country-level advocacy targets translated from global commitments and strengthening the Love Alliance collective voice, in particular at the regional level, where most improvements can be made. Also the Love Alliance partnership needs to continue to be mindful of underrepresentation of certain groups, in particular LBQ women, whose inclusion is still quite tokenistic.

Being comfortable with being uncomfortable

Finally, many country-level participants talked about the importance of continued engagement with donors by challenging them on funding decisions and priorities, and by having uncomfortable and bold conversations with them. There is so much to gain from urging donors to better align their funding allocations to the communities' actual needs and to put them in the driver seat not only in terms of deciding how grants are spent but also in designing the grants.

Thematic priorities & the way forward

The Love Alliance partnership has identified four key thematic advocacy priorities to collectively advocate for. Participants discussed each of these priorities in depth during the meeting, sharing priorities from their country context, identifying learning needs, and agreeing on plans and actions to take forward.

Human rights

The first thematic priority discussed was advancing human rights and gender equality by reducing stigma, discrimination, violence and criminalisation. Participants felt they could benefit from an increased understanding of the various human rights mechanisms and advocacy opportunities at the regional and global level, such as the Southern African Development Community's (SADC) Model Law processes, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, CEDAW, the UN Human Rights Council, including the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and the UNAIDS Human Rights Reference Group.

Critical for human rights advocacy at the global and country level to hold governments accountable for are the global "10-10-10" targets¹ that were included in the Global AIDS Strategy and the 2021 UN Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS. Participants learned about the consultative process and scoping review the Love Alliance is currently conducting on the current state of health and human rights policies, related programs and investments in societal enablers, collecting input from multilateral and bilateral agencies, pilot countries' stakeholders and civil society and community groups.

As a follow up of this consultative process, country-specific and global advocacy roadmaps for international and national civil society and community networks will be developed to support Love Alliance partners to more effectively advocate for increased resourcing and scale-up of societal enabler programming to address gender inequality, discrimination and criminalisation and to operationalise the 10-10-10 targets.

The Love Alliance will also resource community-led monitoring of laws and policies, including through shadow reporting of processes, like CEDAW and UPR and documentation of human rights violations such as the PLHIV Stigma Index.

Community-led health & rights interventions

This priority is about advocating for communities living with or affected by HIV themselves to have the space and adequate resources to hold governments and policymakers accountable and remove barriers to HIV and sexual and reproductive health and rights services through community-led advocacy, demand creation and service delivery.

The global 30-80-60 targets² adopted by governments in the Global AIDS Strategy and the 2021 UN Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS provide a powerful advocacy tool for the Love Alliance to mobilise partners, key population organisations and networks of people living with HIV to push for increased investments in community-led interventions in global funding mechanisms, such as PEPFAR and the Global Fund, and for the actual operationalisation of these targets at country-level.

These targets were also discussed during the meeting to make participants aware of them and, like the 10-10-10 targets, are part of the Love Alliance consultative process described

¹ Less than 10% of countries have punitive legal and policy environments that deny or limit access to services. Less than 10% of people living with HIV and key populations experience stigma and discrimination. Less than 10% of women, girls, people living with HIV and key populations experience gender inequality and violence.

² By 2025, communities will deliver 30% of testing and treatment services, 80% of HIV prevention services, and 60% of programmes supporting the achievement of societal enablers

above and the scoping review, which will analyse the costs, benefits of and estimated financial resource needs for community responses to HIV and health, in particular sexual and reproductive health. Community-led monitoring of financing for community-led processes will be part of the global and country-specific roadmaps that will be developed following the consultative process.

In addition, the process aims to build and strengthen a community-led accountability system focused on holding governments and funders accountable specifically for the achievement of these targets.

Civic space

A key focus of the Love Alliance is to address the shrinking space for key populations due to increasing conservatism in many countries and well-coordinated, funded and strong lobbies that are anti gender rights, anti-women's rights, anti-LGBTQI rights and against rights for sex workers and people who use drugs. This is threatening opportunities to speak out and fight for the health and rights of key populations. Participants underlined the importance of continued advocacy for core funding support and structured funding to support community groups. It was also agreed that the Love Alliance will undertake a mapping in Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe on the opposition and conservative forces, groups and trends impacting key populations and develop strategies on how to counter these forces, such as stronger intersectoral collaboration and movement building.

Universal health coverage

Ever since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the UN in 2016, which replaced the Millennium Development Goals, there has been a shift towards a bigger emphasis on supporting broader health and health systems, rather than disease-specific responses, specifically through the achievement of universal health coverage (UHC). Broader health has gotten an even bigger emphasis as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, where it became obvious that health systems have been neglected in many countries and they are not able to respond effectively to pandemics and other global health emergencies. UHC delivers the promise that everyone should have access to the health services they need, without falling into poverty.

Influencing UHC plans, strategies and funding is key for the Love Alliance to ensure that comprehensive HIV and SRHR services are part of UHC implementation and funding strategies and key populations are not excluded. Community engagement and leadership in UHC is critical as we have learned from the HIV response to ensure the right priorities are funded and barriers to accessing services are addressed.

The next UN High-Level Meeting on UHC will take place in 2023 and offers an important opportunity for the Love Alliance or organise communities to engage with the process and position HIV and SRHR firmly in the broader health environment.

Participants expressed strong interest in engaging with the UHC agenda, but they indicated that there is a need for more training and capacity building of communities to do advocacy around UHC, including health budget monitoring and advocacy. The Love Alliance is also in an excellent position to collect country evidence on how UHC is implemented in-country and

use this evidence to influence the outcomes of the next High-Level Meeting. In order to support this, the Love Alliance is funding the development of country profiles on UHC and its implications for HIV, SRHR and key populations in Love Alliance countries to support advocacy at the country-level and around the High-Level Meeting.

Communities in the driver seat!

During all the discussions, one message came across loud and clear: ***communities have to be in the driver seat***. They have to be fully represented in key political and financial decision-making processes affecting their lives. Communities must receive the funding and resources needed to be equal partners in a country's health response and to advocate for their needs with national and global decision-makers and donors alike. The Love Alliance is a welcome investment in community leadership, but so much more is needed.