

INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR WOMEN'S RIGHT TO SAFE ABORTION

National Coalition-Building Meetings 2019: Ecuador, Gabon, Gambia, Madagascar & Peru

FINAL REPORT: 13 January 2020

In advocacy work for the right to safe abortion, movement building and strong national coalitions are central to ensuring coherence in promoting common goals and agreed messages across sectors. Movement building was a central theme at the Campaign's International Forum – [Developing an Advocacy Agenda for Abortion in the 21st Century and Making Change Happen, 5-7 September 2018](#). At the end of the meeting, we proposed to provide small grants to a number of Campaign member groups to initiate national coalitions in their countries. In early 2019, we received applications from and provided grants to support national coalition-building meetings in Ecuador, Gabon, The Gambia, Madagascar and Peru. We also received an application and supported a meeting to initiate a regional network in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. A report of that meeting was published in 2019 in [French](#), [Arabic](#) and [English](#). All these meetings shared the overall aim of discussing common strategies and developing opportunities for movement building. The grants for these meetings, and for a meeting in Haiti which has not yet taken place due to political upheaval, were provided by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation. Additional funds for the MENA regional meeting were provided by the Safe Abortion Action Fund. Our grateful thanks to both donors for this support.

Successfully building a national movement takes years and is challenged by differences in political aims and perspectives, experience and approaches; the extent of availability of evidence and data to work with; the level of support from or opposition by government; and the willingness of a wide range of national stakeholders to work together and agree common goals. Nevertheless, in all settings, movement building in support of the right to safe abortion is considered crucial and is fuelled by the need to challenge the injustice and violation of rights faced by women and girls when access to safe abortion is denied.

Much of the discussion in these meetings centred around decriminalization of abortion and how to develop strategies to achieve it in the current national political context. They also discussed the importance of gathering evidence on the ground at local level of what is happening when women seek an abortion, and for abortion to be included and recognized in law and policy discussions related to women's rights. Thus, in Madagascar, the meeting participants decided they would continue to work locally in their respective provinces as well as support a new national network. And in Ecuador, the meeting also focused on creating bridges between advocates from different generations, to ensure less fragmentation of the movement, which has existed up to now.

THE REPORTS

The following are summaries of the five country reports, with links to the full reports.

ECUADOR: Forming a coalition to fight for free, legal and safe abortion

Surkuna organized this meeting on 18 May 2019 in Quito. It was attended by more than 50 women from 18 organisations. The overall objective of the meeting was to develop a two-year national action plan for the "Campaign for free, legal and safe abortion" and specifically to seek to achieve progress in women's access to safe abortions and shift public opinion towards support for the decriminalization of

abortion. The meeting addressed an important division within the abortion rights movement and set out a strategy to build a unified campaign. “Vivas Nos Queremos” Platform, Surkuna and Las Comadres are responsible for promoting the campaign and future priorities includes mapping of organisations and strategies, promotion of local meetings and organisation of a permanent meeting space in Quito for the national abortion Campaign.



FULL REPORT: [ECUADOR](#)

GABON: Abortion practices and experiences

The Reseau d'Afrique Centrale pour la Sante Reproductive des Femmes (Middle Africa Network for Women's Reproductive Health: Gabon, Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea (GCG)) organized this meeting on 20 March 2019 in Libreville. There were two panels: Process and practice, and Experiences and ethics. The aim was to create a space for a deeper reflection on the realities of abortion in Gabon. The 62 meeting participants included academic researchers, teachers, midwives, and governmental and non-governmental organization representatives. The participants proposed holding an international symposium on the realities of abortions in Gabon; an annual meeting of all participants and others to work more closely together; research on complications and consequences of clandestine abortion; and education, information and awareness campaigns on sexuality and contraception for adolescents and their parents care.



FULL REPORT: [GABON](#)

THE GAMBIA: Using human rights principles to realize sexual and reproductive health & rights

Think Young Women organized this meeting on 4 May 2019. The aim was to build a critical mass of support on decriminalization of abortion in the Gambia, particularly among gender and human rights experts, women’s and youth groups, and health professionals. The 41 participants were lawyers, health professionals, and representatives of civil society organizations, international organizations and government. There was an opening ceremony, several presentations, and two parallel discussion workshops. The outcomes included development of a national action plan on how to promote abortion reform; enhancement of the knowledge of key stakeholders on the international, regional and national human rights frameworks that guarantee sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls; and formalisation of the *SRNet* to influence legal and policy development, including on safe, legal abortion.



FULL REPORT: [THE GAMBIA](#)

MADAGASCAR: Promoting an abortion decriminalisation network

Nifin'Akanga organized this workshop on 11-13 March 2019 in Antananarivo. The main aim of the workshop was to create a national coalition for the decriminalization of abortion. There were 24 participants from seven localities in Madagascar. The meeting participants signed a charter for the creation of the "Nifin'akanga Network", a national network whose mission is the total decriminalization of abortion in Madagascar – not only in cases of rape, incest or at-risk pregnancies. Future priorities and follow-up activities that were agreed included the announcement of the new national network, implementation of the network's activities, the organization of a meeting with governmental and NGO partners, and better access to data on abortion. Participants were also provided with briefcases with tools to use to start workshops and advocacy activities in their localities.



FULL REPORT: [MADAGASCAR](#)

PERU: Challenges and opportunities for the guarantee of the right to decide of Peruvian women

PROMSEX (Centro de Promoción y Defensa de los Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos) hosted this meeting on 20 February 2019 in Lima. The aim was to create a space for dialogue between representatives from various regions across the country on national challenges to achieving safe abortion. There were 69 activists who participated from different organisations and institutions from nine regions in Peru and a range of age groups. There were presentations on experience in Argentina and Central America, treatment in the health system, lack of awareness of technical standards on the part of some health care professionals, lack of political will to implement better services, and social stigma around the subject of abortion. There was a panel on how to achieve a new regulatory system for abortion, including both legal challenges and treatment challenges. It was agreed to maintain communication at local and national levels, hold more face-to-face meetings, and continue mapping who is working in this area and what strategies are being used, in order to share them and incorporate them in national and local work.



FULL REPORT: [PERU](#)
