

# QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

April 2026

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Sexual & Reproductive Justice Coalition,  
Working together for reproductive justice

# NATIONAL SRJ STRATEGY

SRJC warmly welcomes the passing of the National Sexual and Reproductive Justice Strategy by cabinet in February this year. This strategy is the cumulative efforts of civil society consultation, including SRJC and its members, over the last decade to recede socio-economic, structural and institutional barriers to individuals, particularly women's, ability to make informed, consensual decisions concerning their reproductive autonomy and sexual wellbeing.

SRJ, goes beyond rights by recognising the intersects of rights to broader socio-economic inequalities. The strategy outlines 6 key areas of importance, namely the:

- 1.strengthening of information and knowledge management;
- 2.improvement of governance in the social sector;
- 3.increased interdepartmental coordination;
- 4.integration of SRHR services into service delivery frameworks.
- 5.youth participation and
- 6.reviewing of service delivery systems for persons with disabilities.

The policy notably mentions the countering of negative, restrictive social, religious and cultural values that hinder such justice. Our spirits are renewed by this acknowledgement. The South African government's choice to embrace a justice strategy for SRHR makes clear the country stands firm in our protection and advancement of sexual and reproductive freedom amidst the growing campaigns and consolidating encroaching force of anti-rights actors.

We are honoured to have directly informed the conception of SRJ, in South Africa as employed in the strategy, "Sexual and Reproductive Justice links reproductive rights with the social, political, and economic inequalities that affect an individual's ability to access sexual and reproductive health care services". As the SRJ strategy rightfully states "Human experiences cannot be accurately understood by prioritising any one single factor or constellation of factors" rather one must account for the individual as affected by their locality and positioning within society.



## **GOVERNMENT SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE STRATEGY FOR SOUTH AFRICA**

**FEBRUARY 2026**

# BODILY AUTONOMY: OBSTETRIC VIOLENCE

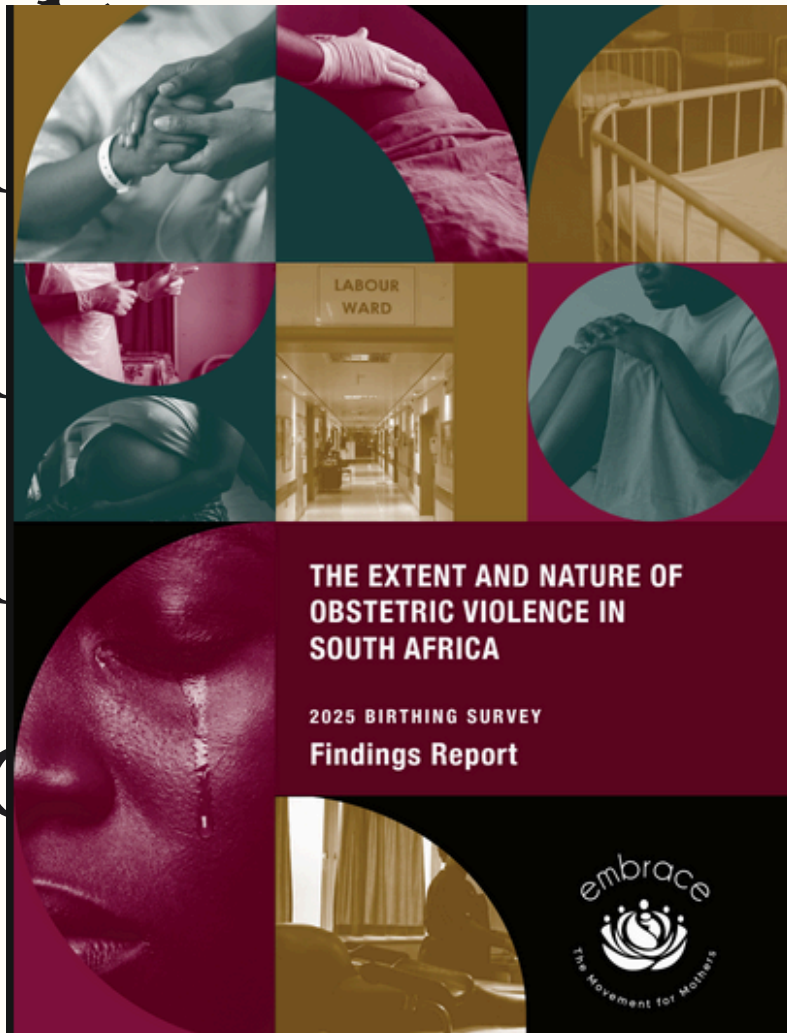
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THE EXTENT AND NATURE OF  
OBSTETRIC VIOLENCE IN  
SOUTH AFRICA

2025 BIRTHING SURVEY  
Findings Report



MOTHER

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MOTHERS

MOTHERS

During Reproductive Health Month, the Obstetric Justice Coalition of which we are a member, was led by Embrace: Movement for Mothers to realise #LaundryDay, a public demonstration outside the National Department of Health in Tshwane calling for urgent action to address obstetric violence. The protest, joined by members of the SRJC, including CALS and Section27, as well as survivors of obstetric violence and other civil society organisations, aimed to “air the truth” about women’s experiences of violations within South Africa’s healthcare system. It saw hospital bedsheets carrying testimonies from women across the country hung at the gates of the National Department of Health, where a memorandum of [demands](#) was delivered alongside an invitation to the launch of Embrace’s [Birthing Survey report](#)

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Pictured above is Nonkululeko handing over the memorandum to Nonhlanhla Ndlovu, Deputy Director General of the Department of Health

The report is South Africa's first obstetric violence prevalence study. The research found that 6 in 10 women in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal experienced some form of obstetric violence while accessing public or private maternity care over the past decade. Held at Wits University in partnership with the Centre for Applied Legal Studies, the launch drew stakeholders from government, organised labour, Chapter 9 institutions, civil society, and women affected by the issue for a multistakeholder engagement. The engagement resulted in the National Department of Health publicly acknowledging the reality of obstetric violence and committing to strengthening Respectful Maternity Care across health facilities.

Embrace leader Julie Mentor will be sharing learnings from #LaundryDay at an upcoming webinar hosted by Human Rights Watch. Register [here](#) to attend the webinar

(This was written by Nonkululeko from Embrace Mothers)



Pictured above is Tshego amongst other participants

## ADOLESCENT PREGNANCY

In March our intern Tshegofatso Malatse participated, on behalf of SRJC, in the youth convening on the National Adolescent Pregnancy Strategy hosted by the UNFPA and SRHR Africa Trust in collaboration with the Department of Women, Youth and Persons with Disabilities, (DWYPD) as well as the National Planning Commission.

This consultative dialogue was admirable and refreshing as it provided a structured platform for young people to inform policy and develop a relationship of mutual concern and understanding between policy makers and the target population as equal stakeholders. As such, youth focused policy ought to draw inspiration from this exemplar.

The convening included high school aged participants, young adults both in and out of formal education as well as those employed within civil society. Regrettably there was a disparity in both the number of male participants as well as their attitudes towards bodily autonomy in comparison to their female counterparts, the adolescent boys, despite being fewer in number, consistently held negative, stigma-based ideas towards sexual and reproductive healthcare. Participants raised various concerns regarding the role of material conditions as a driver of age disparate romantic relationships; the ostracization of teen mothers, information asymmetries between young people and their elders; and fears of abortion as a result of misinformation. Moreover, they expressed concern regarding policies that hyper fixate on them and called for greater, multi-sectoral collaboration with an intersectional scope. The youth want to see intervention, in relation to the issues of statutory rape as a contributor to the adolescent pregnancy rates, particularly with legal enforcement.

Tshego, urges that we ensure young people receive adequate education on the value of bodily autonomy and sexual and reproductive well-being. We ought to strive and reject information asymmetries which serve our ability to exert control over adolescents and young people as it renders them vulnerable to nefarious actors, particularly in an epoch of rabid anti-rights mobilisation.



Pictured above is Lucy O'Connell (MSF), Marion Stevens, Sister Judy, Makgoale Magwentshu (VCAT trainer), Sis Connie Mathe (SRJC Chairperson)

## **ABORTION PROVIDERS APPRECIATION DAY**



On the 10<sup>th</sup> of March we partnered with the Western Cape Department of Health, through the leadership of our member Sister Judiac Renape to celebrate abortion providers and recognise their value as the backbone of reproductive autonomy praxis. Their compassion, extraordinary dedication and resilience in delivering one of the most stigmatised healthcare services is deeply regarded, without these clinicians, South Africa would not be able to uphold its constitutional duties. We are proud to say our upcoming programmatic work will include advocating for resources, integration, and adequate supervision of Choice of Termination of Pregnancy (CTOP) services.

For anyone needing support to access safe legal abortion services in South Africa, please call one of our partners hotlines: Mmoho 080 001 4597 (free call) or 021 424 5660 Women's Legal Centre.

# THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN 2026



Pictured above is Thokozani Ndaba, Wendy Issack (Madre), Brenda Mofya (Oxfam), Jess Rucell, Earl Phillips (SAE Foundation)

The UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality taking a leading role in monitoring and reviewing progress and problems. It is instrumental in promoting women's and girls' rights, and shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Member States do so by negotiating agreed-upon conclusions at annual sessions which analyse a yearly priority theme and setting action-oriented recommendations for governments and civil society.

The 70th CSW, negotiations were characterised by the Holy See, whom despite their observer status, spoke. They did so as a mouthpiece for anti-rights civil society. Notably, the United States' (U.S.) aimed to pass a reinterpretation of the agreed language on gender by lobbying for "male and female" to be noted as the only genders (corresponding to sex). These efforts constrained consensus-making, where the conclusions, for the first time in 70 years, were voted upon. This departure from consensus, resulted in a document that reaffirms sexual and reproductive rights and rejects binary assertions of gender. All member states but the U.S. voted in favour.



Pictured above is Thokozani Ndaba with Minister of Social Development Minister Chikunga

Our member Thokozani Ndaba (director of the Ntethelelo Foundation [JR1]), having been present at the proceedings along with board secretary Jess Rucell, acknowledges the commitments upheld, in spite of resisting coercion by more powerful actors. She notes that these conference rooms are still exclusive, functioning to bolster elite actors through centralised structures representing the symbolic and material consolidation of hegemonic powers. Thokozani furthers stating, “True gender equality must connect policy to lived experience and redistribute decision-making power to those most affected”. She points us to the compounding vulnerabilities faced by Global South women as a result of structured geopolitical and economic exploitation that demands the development of responsive global frameworks. Thokozani recommends institutionalising accountability towards the achievement of these commitments, encouraging greater incorporation of grassroots movements (who are primarily from the Global South) and integrating intersectional understandings and aims of justice as they relate to SRHR and women’s rights.

# CPD59: DYNAMIC DISAGREEMENT OR DELIBERATE STUNTING?

This theme for this year's annual global Commission on Population & Development, CPD59 'Population, Technology and Research in the context of sustainable development' intended to be groundbreaking in its consideration of technology and its effects on SRHR, however, much like the broader international socio-political climate its outcomes were lacklustre.

CPD59 on par with the 1995 ICPD Programme of Action captures the contemporary contentions regarding the advancement of reproductive autonomy and dignity for women and girls as well as the framing of critical concepts such as the "family". Our member Levi Singh, Regional Policy Officer, SAT African Trust, noted these critical points to understand CPD59. 1. It was unable to achieve consensus and pass a resolution that would advance a people-centred policy and acknowledge the inalienable relationship between development justice and population well-being. Levi, having engaged in 12 years of CPD, expands our perspective on 2. the weakening force of multilateral diplomacy in favour of transactional relations (trade not aid). This environment spreads a political conditioning devoid of solidarity, functioning instead to feed the vacuous appetite of structural inequality. 3. The UN's increasing institutional collapse and the mass aggregation of mandate specific departments for "efficiency" and frugality amidst the shrinking resource availability, despite leaving much to be done. 4. We ought to strengthen counter measures to the rollback of human rights and bodily autonomy in preparation for post 2030.



Pictured above is Levi Singh

As Levi rightly points out, the post-2030 development architecture is already in the making through our acceptance of new norms, –for example, excluding the words evidence-based, and gender– and multilateral culture, thus, we must urgently disrupt these behaviours and block their internalisation.

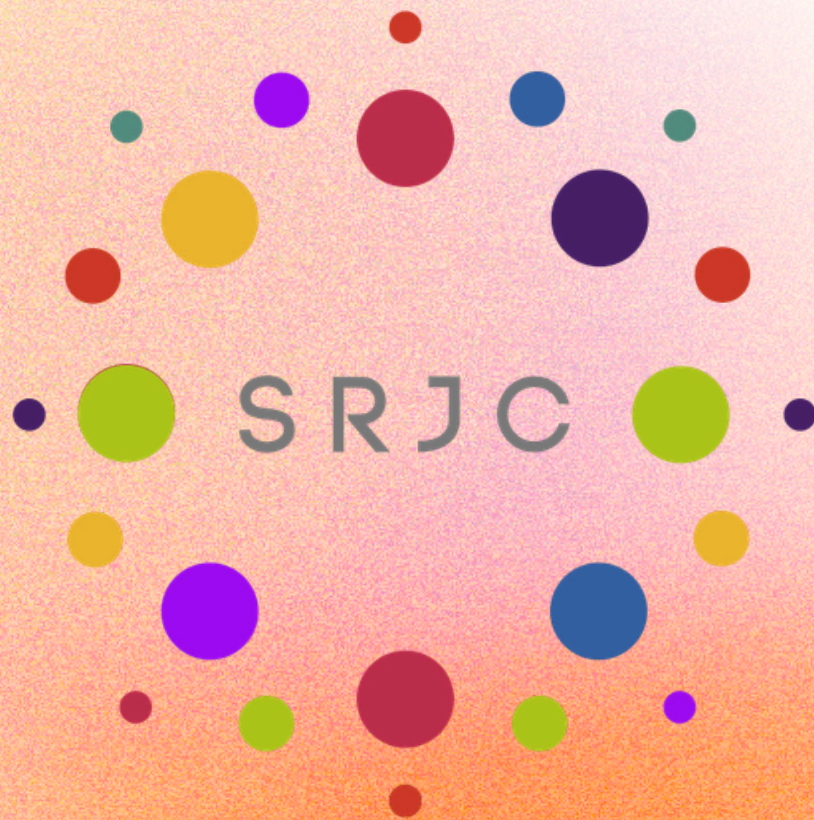
Given that South Africa as a co-signatory to the ICPD, and further having passed the National SRJ strategy in February this year the country is taking a clear stance of support for SRHR. This moment is the time for, civil society to celebrate and realise these wins, advancing them and building stronger organisation to counter efforts of anti-rights actors. Indeed, now more than ever we must remember the shocks of policy failures do not confine themselves to conference rooms, as Levi puts it, people absorb the cost.



Pictured above is the same as below including High level national government delegation of Ghana comprising representatives of the National planning commission of Ghana and honorable members of the parliament of Ghana population and development caucus and civil society

Pictured below (from right to left) is: Dr Noor Mahommed, Executive Director, Population Services and Training Centre, Lydia Zigomo, Regional Director, UNFPA East and Southern Africa Hon Steve Letsike, Deputy Minister for women, children and persons with disabilities in the Presidency of RSA Karin Nilsson, Executive Director, She Decides Movement Levi Singh, Regional policy officer, SRHR Africa Trust





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