

WELCOME TO 31st ISSUE OF THE ARASA NEWSLETTER!

In this final edition of the ARASA Newsletter for 2019, we look at some of the highlights of the work that ARASA and its partners have done during the year through our two key strategies of advocacy and capacity strengthening. As always, it has been a very busy year for ARASA, especially as we fight to stop the space for civil society from shrinking in the region.

In 2019 we shifted our strategic direction to focus on Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) and Bodily Autonomy and Integrity (BAI). Furthermore, ARASA centred its efforts on addressing the social and structural determinants of health and the promotion of Universal Health Coverage (UHC), which is central to equality, equity and social justice in health.

Some highlights from 2019!

- In March ARASA hosted the 2nd Activist Meeting on Structural Barriers to HIV Prevention in Johannesburg, South Africa. The meeting brought together delegates from Southern Africa to review the progress made in addressing structural barriers to HIV prevention. Following this meeting ARASA launched [5 Issue Briefs on Structural Barriers to HIV Prevention](#).
- In June ARASA launched a report entitled: "[Drug Policy and the Lived Experiences of People Who Use Drugs in Southern Africa](#)," looking at the repressive policies that further the stigma and violence faced by People Who Used Drugs (PWUD).

- In September we hosted the [4th NANHRI convening](#) in Johannesburg, South Africa, with the aim of further strengthening advocacy for better health services in the region.
- In November, in partnership with Aidsfonds and Frontline AIDS through the Partnership to Inspire, Transform and Connect the HIV Response (PITCH), UNAIDS and Health GAP, we hosted a two and a half day workshop titled: Building Universal Health Coverage We Want - Enhancing Inclusion of African key and vulnerable populations in the UHC Agenda. Out of this meeting, a [Call to Action](#) endorsed by 34 organisations from 10 countries was issued, which articulated the basic non-negotiable principles and values that must define UHC in Africa.
- In December ARASA launched its flagship report titled: "[Sexual and Reproductive Health, HIV, TB and Human Rights in Southern and East Africa 2018 / 2019](#)." ARASA's human rights reports, produced since 2006, examine countries' commitments and obligations to ensuring an enabling legal and policy framework in the response to HIV, tuberculosis (TB) and sexual and reproductive health (SRH).

Our Training and Leadership Programme (TaLP) 2019 saw the graduation of 29 participants this year.

Finally, it is with great admiration and emotion that we bid farewell to our Director of the last 16 years, Michaela Clayton, who is stepping down for much needed rest after all her years of activism. We congratulate our Deputy Director, Felicita Hikuam in her promotion to ARASA's new Director.

ARASA would like to thank its donors, board, partners and allies for their continued incredible work in difficult circumstances to ensure that a rights-based response is at the centre of the sexual and reproductive health response in southern and east Africa.

We hope that you enjoy this newsletter and that you have a restful festive season.

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Please note that ARASA's offices will be closed from midday 20 December 2019 and will open again on 6 January 2020.

Should you have any questions, comments or contributions for future editions of the newsletter, please email ARASA Communications at communications@arasa.info.

For updates and more information on ARASA's work, visit our website www.arasa.info and connect with us on Facebook @ARASA, Twitter @_ARASAcomm and Instagram @arasa_network.

Until 2020!

The UHC We Want: Regional UHC Workshop



ARASA in partnership with Aidsfonds and Frontline AIDS through the Partnership to Inspire, Transform and Connect the HIV Response (PITCH), UNAIDS and Health GAP), hosted a two-day Universal Health Coverage (UHC) workshop on the 5th to the 7 November 2019. The workshop, titled “Building Universal Health Coverage We Want - Enhancing Inclusion of African Key and Vulnerable populations in the UHC Agenda”, brought together over 50 representatives of civil society, including key populations and young people, from 10 countries across sub-Saharan Africa, to reflect on the challenges and opportunities that Universal Health Coverage (UHC) poses for HIV and key and vulnerable populations.

As UHC roll out begins at country level, there is an urgent need to ensure that the UHC agenda builds upon principles and successes achieved by the HIV response – like ambitious and accountable service delivery and engagement of communities in advocacy and service delivery. Ensuring that “no one is left behind” will not be achieved unless UHC focuses on the most vulnerable.

The regional workshop brought together participants from 10 countries experiencing similar health related challenges due to various political, cultural,

economic, epidemiological and historical reasons, to build a common vision for the UHC that would work for the sub-Saharan Africa region.

On International Universal Health Coverage Day on 12 December 2019 ARASA on behalf of organisations represented at the regional meeting issued a Call to Action articulating the groups' views on the basic non-negotiable principles and values that must define UHC in Africa.



ARASA at ICASA

ARASA attended the 20th International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa AIDS (ICASA) held in Kigali Rwanda from 2-8 December 2019. The conference, theme was 'AIDS FREE AFRICA-innovation, Community and political leadership'.

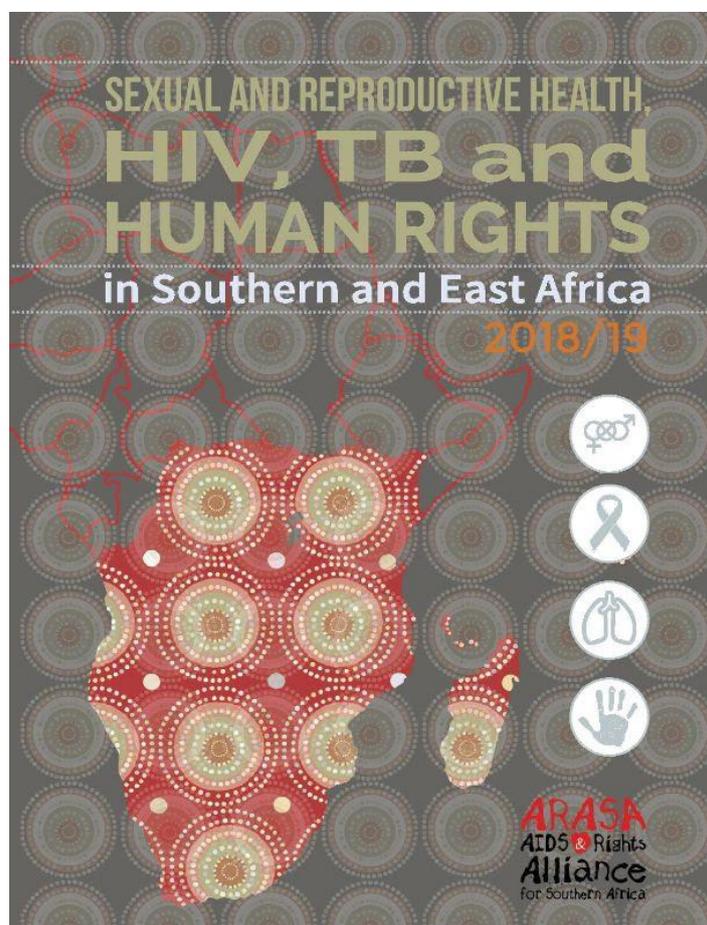
ARASA's participation in ICASA was premised on discussions around creating an enabling environment for Bodily autonomy and Integrity (BAI) with a focus on the Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). ARASA was represented at ICASA by our deputy director Felicita Hikuam and Bruce Tushabe, the Regional Training and Capacity Strengthening Officer.

The conversations we engaged in included;

- World Health Organisation meeting-Kick-starting integration of HIV testing within family planning services in 8 African countries for 2020 at which our Deputy Director Felicita Hikuam was a panellist.
- UHAI EASHRI funders and thought leaders study circle space themed Treading the last mile: Consolidating gains on funding movement to drive sustainable community-driven HIV programming for sex worker, sexual and gender minorities on the continent.
- UHAI EASHRI interface between community leadership in HIV programming with activists, funders and thought leaders.
- Poster presentation on “faith and human rights; changing perspective on faith healing and access to HIV and sexual reproductive health and rights’ presented by ARASA’s Training and Capacity Building Officer Bruce Tushabe.
- Meeting with International Drug Policy Coalition partners.
- The Aidsfonds satellite session on “put the last mile first-Making Universal Health Coverage work for key and vulnerable populations at which Felicita was a panellist
- Felicita moderated A Global HIV Prevention Coalition session titled “What is holding us back? Untapping community-driven responses to bridging the prevention gap in Africa.”
- A UNFPA, UNDP, SADC PF satellite session on: Parliamentarians protecting the sexual and reproductive health rights for key populations; the case of SADC parliamentary forum, UNFPA and UNDP at which Felicita was a panellist.



ARASA Launches 2018/19 Human Rights Report



On International Human Rights Day 2019, ARASA launched its Human Rights Report titled “[Sexual and Reproductive Health, HIV, TB and Human Rights in Southern and East Africa 2018 / 2019.](#)”

Since its inception in 2006, ARASAs’ human rights reports have served as a barometer to examine countries’ commitments and obligations to ensuring an enabling legal and policy framework in the response to HIV, tuberculosis (TB) and sexual and reproductive health (SRH). The reports have been extensively quoted in publications on HIV, TB, law and human rights and have been a significant resource used by regional and country partners, including activists, civil society, academics and other stakeholders over the last 12 years. The reports have been used to assess the state of legal and human rights

responses to HIV, TB and more recently, SRH in their countries and the region, and to prioritise areas for advocacy and action.

“The report finds that, in southern and east Africa, as with much of the world, people have insufficient access to comprehensive SRH services,” explained Michaela Clayton, ARASA's Director. “While there have been significant gains in increasing access to treatment for HIV and TB, contraception and in certain SRHR issues, adolescent sexuality, access to SRHR for vulnerable and key populations, sexual and gender-based as well as intimate partner violence, access to safe abortion and appreciation of and protection of sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI)- remain neglected.”

The report also recognises that progress in achieving global, regional and national SRHR goals and targets, including those outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals, requires addressing laws, policies and practices – particularly gender inequality – that create barriers to the enjoyment of sexual and reproductive health and rights. It requires improving peoples’ ability to make their own decisions about their SRH and their sexual and reproductive lives.

Following clear cross-cutting standards outlined in international and regional law and policies, and by expert bodies, the report recommends t, amongst others, that states:

- Remove legal, regulatory and policy barriers limiting access to SRH commodities, programmes and services including criminalization of sex work, same sex and the possession of drugs for personal use;
- Take all necessary measures to remove socio-cultural structures and norms that promote and perpetuate gender-based inequality;
- Ensure that the necessary legislative measures, administrative policies and procedures are taken to ensure that no woman is forced because of her HIV status, disability, ethnicity or any other situation, to use specific contraceptive methods or undergo sterilization or abortion;
- Enact anti-discrimination legislation to address HIV- and other sexually transmitted infections, related discrimination, stigma, prejudices and practices that perpetuate and heighten women’s risk to HIV and related rights abuses;
- Implement national HIV strategies that empower people living with, at risk of,

and affected by HIV, to know their rights and to access justice and legal services to prevent and challenge violations of human rights, including strategies and programmes aimed at sensitising law enforcement officials, members of the legislature and judiciary, training health care workers in non-discrimination, confidentiality and informed consent, supporting national human rights learning campaigns, as well as monitoring the impact of the legal environment on HIV prevention, treatment.

TaLP Class of 2019 Graduation



On 22 November, ARASA hosted a graduation ceremony at Premier Hotel in Johannesburg, South Africa to recognise the achievements of 33 participants who received certificates of competence for having completed the 11th intake of the regional Training and Leadership Programme (formerly known as the

Training of Trainer's Programme). "The graduation ceremony presented a platform for us to acknowledge the efforts of all the graduates and to recognise the exemplary performance of some graduates," explained Bruce Tushabe, ARASA's Regional Training and Capacity Strengthening Officer. "This year, we presented 7 awards for outstanding performance including Trainer's Trainer of the year, plus 5 prizes for those who performed exceptionally well in their assignments."

As in previous years, the graduates were selected through a competitive application process to represent a cohort of two representatives per country for each of the 18 countries in which ARASA operates. The 4 week-long modules of the programme have focused on key HIV, TB and human rights advocacy themes such as human rights monitoring and using media as an advocacy tool; sexual orientation and gender identity issues; the science of HIV and TB as well as HIV/TB prevention and treatment literacy (incl. viral load testing); intellectual property laws and access to treatment. Alumni of the programme from 2016 and 2017 moderated sessions on M&E, SOGIE and leadership respectively.

A Farewell to ARASA Director, Michaela Clayton



2019 was a year of transition for ARASA and with it came the retirement of our Director, Michaela Clayton. During her time at ARASA Michaela was a stalwart

pioneer and advocate for human rights in southern and east Africa.

As we sadly bid farewell to her, we look back at her at her illustrious career as an advocate for equality in the “space” that we call advocacy today. In order to do that we must look back at her history and how she influenced the change in the region that we appreciate today.

Michaela began her career as a human rights lawyer, working on HIV/AIDS and human rights issues in Namibia since 1989. As a young graduate from the University of Cape Town (UCT) Michaela joined the human rights movement in the midst of the apartheid era. As a young advocate she saw a gap in the human rights based response to the HIV epidemic that had taken over southern Africa. Through her tenacious advocacy, Michaela was one of the founding lawyers at the Legal Assistance Centre (LAC), where she was one of the establishing members of the AIDS Law Unit. The unit was designed to provide legal service for people living with HIV/AIDS, thus filling a much needed human rights approach to HIV/AIDS in the region.

During this time Michaela was pivotal in the drafting of many Namibian sectoral HIV policies, as well as in the drafting of the country’s national HIV/AIDS policy.

In 2002, Michaela initiated the establishment of ARASA as a project of the LAC.

Today, ARASA is an independent non-governmental organisation with over 100 regional partners throughout southern and east Africa. During her leadership the region has seen a pivotal shift in HIV, TB and LGBTI laws and policies.

It is with a heavy heart that we at ARASA bid farewell to our Michaela Clayton. We look forward to seeing her next imprint on the region as we know that her reign as human rights activist pioneer is by no means over.

Messages from the ARASA team:

“Dear Michaela, I am so glad that my debut in this sector was with you supervising my internship 2006. At that time ARASA had three staff members, yourself, your assistant and Lisias. I am in awe of what ARASA has become. I am honoured to be here at this moment in time. I know that first job fuelled my passion for health and human rights. You have mentored and coached many in this sector closely, while others have learnt by watching you from a distance. You are and will remain a stalwart in human rights and health advocacy. As you move on to your next adventure, we say *A luta continua!* We salute you!” (Nyasha C).

‘A mother, a mentor and a selfless leader I have known since 2013. Michaela treats every staff member equally and believes so much in supporting staff’s career growth and development. Michaela you are an icon in Civil Society Organisation spaces both internationally and regionally.’ (Bruce).

“What an amazing leader you are Michaela, great in recognizing potential in others, nicknamed me “magic” inspired by your boldness. Thank you for over a decade of valuable learning, lessons I will cherish forever. Wishing you a lot of beautiful adventures and relaxation.” (Maggie)

“Memorable time we had with Michaela is hearing her laugh, her laughter is just something else. For the time I have come to know she has come across to play a role of a mentor. I love calling her M and will miss her dearly.” (Magdalena)

Highlights

- 1 December 2019 World AIDS Day – Read our full statement [here](#)
- 10 December 2019 – Human Rights Day – Read full article [here](#)
- 12 December 2019 - International Universal Health Coverage Day – Read our full statement [here](#)



Thank you for your support in 2019!

Please note that our offices will be closed from Friday, 20 December 2019 till 6 January 2020. We look forward to continuing to work with you in 2020 as we advocate for fundamental human rights to health in southern and east Africa!

- The ARASA Team



