



WGNRR COMMENDS MOZAMBIQUE FOR SIGNING INTO LAW ITS REVISED PENAL CODE, EXPANDING ACCESS TO SAFE AND LEGAL ABORTION

The Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights (WGNRR) welcomes the decision made by Armando Guebuza, the President of Mozambique to sign into law the Revised Penal Code unanimously approved by the Mozambican Parliament in July, 2014. Under this new law, abortion is permitted within the first 12 weeks when the pregnancy can subject the woman to physical, psychological, or mental harm, or place her life at risk. In cases of rape or incest, abortion can be performed up to 16 weeks into the pregnancy and up to 24 weeks in cases of severe foetal malformation.¹

As a global network of more than 1000 members around the globe advocating, promoting and defending sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), including access to safe and legal abortion, we commend the fundamental step taken by Mozambique in enacting a law which expands women and girls' access to safe and legal abortion. Such a decision demonstrates that Mozambique has undertaken a genuine concern into the welfare of its people, especially women and girls, as it embodies a renewed effort to ensure that the "right to health of women, including sexual and reproductive health is respected and promoted," as well as the provision of adequate, affordable and accessible health services, as outlined in Article 14 of the Maputo Protocol.²

We congratulate the Mozambican SRHR movement for its advocacy, networking, and mobilization efforts related to the new legislation, the National Assembly for approving the bill, and the President for signing it into law. This victory is huge step forward for women not only in Mozambique, but in Africa as a whole, as it embodies a strong commitment to respect, protect, and fulfill women and girls' sexual and reproductive rights, including their right to health, physical and psychological integrity, and bodily autonomy.³

While recognizing this important victory, WGNRR would like to caution that considerable efforts and vigilance will be needed to ensure full implementation of the law and meaningful change on the ground. We wish to remind Mozambican officials that any law without efficient implementation and accountability mechanisms effectively remains a dead letter.

We therefore urge the Mozambican government to:

- Efficiently monitor and supervise the implementation of the provisions of the law;
- Ensure that healthcare providers are equipped with the necessary knowledge, equipment and resources to provide safe abortion services as enshrined in the law;
- Ensure that religious institutions and fundamentalist groups do not influence the State's judicial, policy and programming efforts in relation to sexual and reproductive rights. The sexual and reproductive rights and dignity of all must be guaranteed, and not subjected to constraints imposed by religious authorities;

¹ The Daily Maverick, October 2014, "[Op-ed: Progressive New Abortion Law Shows Mozambique's Commitment to Women's Reproductive Rights.](#)"

² [Maputo Protocol](#), Art. 14.

³ Center for Reproductive Rights (2011), *Briefing Paper: Safe and Legal Abortion is a Woman's Human Right.*

- Provide comprehensive and youth-friendly information about the law to the entire Mozambican population, without discrimination, and take steps to limit related misinformation and any stigma women and girls may face when seeking abortion services;
- Remove all social-cultural, economic and implementation barriers to ensure access to safe, comprehensive, free and high-quality abortion procedures, free of requirements for marital or parental consent;
- Ensure universal access to a full range of voluntary contraceptive methods, including emergency contraception, that is of high quality and variety, is also user-friendly and appropriate to the needs of girls, adolescents and women, and ensures their confidentiality; and
- Encourage other countries in Africa to review their laws and policies to advance women and girls' SRHR, including access to safe and legal abortion.

Any government that cares for the health and wellbeing of its people must take the bold step like Mozambique to conform its laws and practices with the international treaties and human rights standards to which it has committed, such as CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol, and ensure the right of women and girls to safe and legal abortion.