INFLUENCING POLICY CHANGE THROUGH ADVOCACY COMMUNICATION: SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS IN EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA

**Jyväskylä University
School of Business and Economics**

Master's thesis

2020

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ABSTRACT

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Title	
Influencing policy change through advocacy communication: Sexual and reproductive health and rights in East and Southern Africa	

Discipline	Level
Corporate Communication	Master's thesis

Time	Number of pages
November 2020	103 + appendix

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to find out what factors should be taken into consideration and what is the role of stakeholders when influencing policy advancements for sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in East and Southern Africa. This study seeks to especially explore how an enabling policy environment for the SRHR issues could be achieved. The case organization for this study is United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The research data consists of eight qualitative interviews, most of which were conducted in South Africa in 2019. To obtain as wide view of the researched topic as possible, in addition to UNFPA professionals, the organization's key stakeholders were interviewed. The interviews were analysed by thematic analysis. The research follows abductive reasoning meaning that the formation of the theoretical framework and analysis of the data are overlapping.

The findings suggest that organizations can influence SRHR policy advancements primarily through communication efforts. Strategic framing of the issues, agenda building practices and engaging key stakeholders and policy makers in dialogue results in achieving a more enabling environment and finally more beneficial policy changes for SRHR. Also the usage of different advocacy strategies is influential when engaging policy makers. To pursue the prevailing paradigm of development communication, participatory approach, is crucial since the local stakeholders should be seen as active and equal partners in the advocacy. Altogether, effective SRHR policy influencing needs communication to succeed but little attention has been given to research the phenomena from communication perspective. Further research on SRHR advocacy as well as on development communication questions could focus more specifically on the interlinkages with communication discipline.

Keywords

sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), East and Southern Africa, UNFPA, development communication, policy advocacy, agenda building, framing, multi-stakeholder engagement and dialogue

Place of storage

Jyväskylä University School of Business and Economics

TIIVISTELMÄ

Tekijä	
Nordbäck, Essi	
Työn nimi	
Influencing policy change through advocacy communication: Sexual and reproductive health and rights in East and Southern Africa	
Oppiaine	**Työn laji**
Viestinnän johtaminen	Maisterintutkielma
Aika	**Sivumäärä**
Marraskuu 2020	103 + liitteet

Tiivistelmä

Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on selvittää, mitkä tekijät tulisi ottaa huomioon ja mikä on sidosryhmien rooli vaikuttaessa seksuaali- ja lisääntymisterveyden ja –oikeuksien (SRHR) poliittiseen edistämiseen itäisessä ja eteläisessä Afrikassa. Tutkimus pyrkii erityisesti selvittämään, kuinka SRHR-kysymyksille voitaisiin saavuttaa mahdollistava poliittinen ymparistö. Tutkimuksen kohdeorganisaationa on United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Aineisto muodostuu kahdeksasta laadullisesta teemahaastattelusta, joista suurin osa toteutettiin Etelä-Afrikassa vuonna 2019. Jotta tutkittavasta aiheesta saataisiin mahdollisimman laaja katsaus, UNFPA:n työntekijöiden lisäksi organisaation tärkeimpiä sidosryhmiä haastateltiin tutkimusta varten. Aineisto analysoitiin teema-analyysillä. Tutkimus noudattaa abduktiivista päättelyä eli teoreettisen viitekehyksen muodostaminen ja analyysi ovat edenneet limittäin.

Tulosten mukaan organisaatiot voivat vaikuttaa SRHR-politiikan edistämiseen ennen kaikkea viestinnän keinoin. Vaikuttaminen mahdollistavampaan ympäristöön ja sen kautta suotuisaan muutokseen voi onnistua esimerkiksi strategisella viestien kehystämisellä, eri agendan rakentamisen keinoilla ja päättäjien sekä muiden tärkeiden sidosryhmien sitouttamisella dialogin kautta. Päättäjien kohdalla myös eri vaikuttamisstrategiat osoittautuivat hyödyllisiksi. Tärkeintä toiminnassa on huomioida kehitysviestinnän vallitsevan paradigman mukainen osallistava lähestymistapa, jossa paikalliset sidosryhmät nähdään vertaisina kumppaneina. Onnistunut SRHR-politiikkavaikuttaminen vaatii siis viestintää, mutta aiemmassa tutkimuksessa viestinnän roolia ei juuri ole tarkasteltu. Jatkotutkimuksissa sekä SRHR-vaikuttamisen että kehitysviestinnän kysymyksiin voitaisiin syventyä entisestään viestinnän kirjallisuuden kautta.

Asiasanat

seksuaali- ja lisääntymisterveys ja –oikeudet (SRHR), itäinen ja eteläinen Afrikka, UNFPA, kehitysviestintä, politiikkavaikuttaminen, agendan rakentaminen, kehystäminen, sidosryhmien sitouttaminen ja dialogi

Säilytyspaikka

Jyväskylän yliopiston kauppakorkeakoulu

CONTENTS

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEDAW	United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence and Discrimination Against Women
CSE	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
ESA	East and Southern Africa
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
GA	United Nations General Assembly
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HIV/AIDS	Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development
IGO	Intergovernmental Organization
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNFPA ESARO	United Nations Population Fund East and Southern Africa Regional Office

1 INTRODUCTION

For all individuals to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health is a fundamental right of every human being. The issue of this research, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), is an essential part of the right to the highest attainable standard of health, and interdependent from other human rights, which countries are obligated to uphold under international law. (Clark & Gruending 2020, 2; WHO 2020.)

The human right to health is recognized in numerous international instruments, with sexual and reproductive health and rights agreed to be protected for instance by the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence and Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), by UN World Conferences on Women, and by the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), which set a paradigmatic change for SRHR with shifting the focus from population control into the context of appreciating human rights and reaching gender equality as a pathway to development (Hadi 2017; Thomas et al. 2014).

Although the international recognition of sexual and reproductive health and rights has evolved in a positive direction, the political acceptance and grassroots realization of SRHR remains still deficient globally. The results of the political neglect on SRHR are especially prevalent in low- and middle-income countries[1], where gaps occur specifically in inequalities in access to sexual and reproductive health services and in quality of the services (Germain et al. 2015, 139). In some sub-Saharan African countries, SRHR issues remain as non-priority on the development agenda due to limited political commitment to the issues, resulting for example from patriarchal socio-cultural values (Oronje et al. 2011, 2 & 8).

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[1] According to the World Bank, low- and middle income countries have gross national income per capita in USD a) $1005 or less (low income), b) $1006-$3975 (lower middle income) and c) $3976-12275 (upper middle income). Although grouped by their economy size, there are economic policy differences and socio-cultural context diversities in these country groups. (Cabieses et al. 2014, 850.)

Despite these challenges, there have been achievements in building a more enabling policy environment for SRHR, with support of communication efforts. Studies show (Oronje et al. 2011; Theobald et al. 2005) that in sub-Saharan African countries, actors have for instance formed alliances and partnerships with stakeholders, utilized strategic framing of the issues, and cooperated with individuals within government as strategies through which positive changes for the policies and programmes can be realized (Oronje et al. 2011, 9-10). Also Theobald et al. (2005) have studied that strategic framing of SRHR issues when working with African government actors has been beneficial to achieve positive policy change.

Even though the evidence shows that policy advancements for SRHR can be attained through communication efforts, still, little attention has been given to researching the SRHR policy influencing strategies from communication perspective. For instance, Standing et al. (2011, 6) state that the question of how different stakeholders mobilize and negotiate to get the often contested SRHR issues onto policy agenda is an under-researched area.

Therefore, the purpose of this research is to examine the factors to be taken into consideration when influencing policy advancements for sexual and reproductive health and rights in East and Southern Africa. This study seeks to especially explore how an enabling policy environment for the issues can be achieved. An enabling policy environment in this research context means that perceptions towards the desired SRHR policy changes are supportive so that the advancements are feasible. Also, the role of stakeholders in the policy influencing is studied. The research questions are (RQ's):

RQ1: What factors should be taken into consideration when influencing policy advancements for sexual and reproductive health and rights?

RQ2: What is the role of stakeholders in the policy influencing?

This research focuses on case organization United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), since it is the leading United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency. Regionally the focus is narrowed to East and Southern Africa, since the research data is collected from UNFPA East and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO) professionals. The researcher worked at the case organization during the timespan of collecting the research data, which also determined the research region to East and Southern Africa.

In addition to UNFPA ESARO professionals, to get as comprehensive view of the researched phenomen as possible, data was collected from the organization's main stakeholders which were two NGOs, one partner UN organization and one government official from a related ministry. Rather than striving for generalization, this study focuses on the perceptions and thoughts of the case organization's professionals and stakeholders.

1.1 Structure of the study

The main concepts of this study are first introduced. First, the issue of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and its state in East and Southern Africa is presented, to show why its realization is particularly important in this region. Next, literature review of development communication and strategies for influencing policy change by organizations are presented; policy advocacy, framing and agenda building. Also, theory on multi-stakeholder networks is presented, focusing on stakeholder engagement and dialogue. In the methodology part, research and analysis methods as well as their implementation is discussed. After methodology, results of this research are presented and further addressed in the discussion chapter. Finally, conclusions, including implications for theory and practice, limitations of the research and suggestions for future research are presented.

2 DEFINING THE ISSUE: SEXUAL AND REPRODUC-TIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

This chapter presents the concept of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in this research's context. After first presenting an overview of the issue, international policy frameworks and instruments supporting SRHR are introduced. Because this research focuses regionally on East and Southern Africa, the state of sexual and reproductive health and rights in the region is discussed at the end of the chapter, underlining constraints as well as achievements in advancing SRHR policies and realization.

The right to have control over and decide freely on all matters related to one's sexuality, free from coercion, discrimination and violence is considered as fundamental human right (Ali et al. 2015, 32). The achievement of sexual and reproductive health relies on the realization of sexual and reproductive rights, which comprise of the human rights of all individuals to "have their bodily integrity, privacy, and personal autonomy respected, freely define their own sexuality, decide whether and when to be sexually active, choose their sexual partners, decide whether, when and whom to marry and freely decide the number and spacing of their children" (Starrs et al. 2018, 2646). To achieve these basic human rights, access to sexual and reproductive health information and education as well as services supporting these rights must be provided (Muturi 2005, 79).

Sexual and reproductive health services should meet public health and human rights standards and include for instance accurate information and counselling on sexual and reproductive health, including comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), prevention and management of sexual and gender-based violence, a choice of safe contraceptive methods, antenatal, childbirth and postnatal care, safe and effective abortion services and care as well as treatment of sexually transmitted infections including HIV (Starrs et al. 2018, 2646).

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) defines SRHR as major health and human rights issue, describing it as a state of complete physical, mental, and social wellbeing in all matters related to the reproductive system, when achieved. Its fulfilment entails that individuals can have a safe and satisfying

sex life and the freedom to decide on their reproduction (UNFPA 2019). World Health Organization (2019) states that sexual health can not be achieved without fulfilment of the rights to equality and non-discrimination, the right to privacy and the rights to the highest attainable standard of health and social security (WHO 2019).

The elements of SRHR are broad and the different SRHR components are interlinked with others. Starrs et al. (2018, 2652) present elements such as the HIV/AIDS epidemic and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs), issues regarding contraception, maternal and new-born health, abortion, infertility and reproductive cancers as relevant SRHR components. Also gender identity and sexual orientation, sexual expression, relationships and pleasure as well as more negative consequences such as gender-based violence including sexual violence and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage are considered belonging under the SRHR umbrella (WHO 2019; UNFPA 2019).

Although sexual and reproductive health and rights needs are universal, Starrs et al. (2018) remind that some groups in the society have clearly distinctive needs for SRHR. Data shows, that some marginalized groups, such as sex workers, displaced people and refugees and disadvantage populations like poor and less educated as well as people with disabilities, adolescents and young people and people of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities, are more vulnerable to the negative SRHR consequences and encounter considerable barriers to services and care. (Starrs et al. 2018, 2652.)

2.1   The evolving global political agenda

The first time sexual and reproductive health and rights started to be recognized in international political frameworks, was when fundamental human rights were agreed for the first time to be universally protected by The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a milestone document proclaimed by United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948 (UN 2019). The declaration states that "human rights are inherent to all human beings and they comprise of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, that are cast in international law through multiple treaties and declarations" (Gruskin et al. 2007, 450; UN 2019). However, the key declaration has been criticised for not precisely defining what human rights are and not including all population groups or minorities in it. Of the UN declarations published in later decades, especially relevant to SRHR is the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) declared by the UN General Assembly in 1979, which 189 member states of the UN have agreed to comply to date (UN 2019).

The concepts of health and human rights evolved in quite divergent tracks until the beginning of the 1980s. The HIV/AIDS epidemic as well as other sexual and reproductive health issues in the decade impacted the notion of how the

issues of health and human rights connect and influenced appreciation of the linkages between the issues (Gruskin et al. 2007, 449). Policy trends in 1980s, such as Alma-Ata declaration and Safe Motherhood Initiatives, shaped maternal health care services as well as influenced the realization of addressing universal access to SRH without discrimination and violence. Actual fulfilment for SRHR was enhanced during the next decade, which set the "golden age" for the topic in terms of global policies and initiatives. (Hadi 2017, 64-65.)

A paradigm shift for SRHR issues in the global health agenda occurred in the 1990s. The demand for universal access to SRH was first included in the agenda of the Vienna 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, followed by the Cairo 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) a year after. The ICPD conference is often described as the ground-breaking turning point for sexual and reproductive health and rights as it repositioned the global population and development programs with shifting the focus from population control into the context of reproductive rights, gender equality and women's empowerment. (see, e.g., Hadi 2017; Thomas et al. 2014.) At ICPD, 179 governments adopted Programme of Action (PoA) to implement three main goals, which were the reduction of maternal and child mortality, the provision of universal access to education and the access to reproductive health services (Hadi 2017). The initiatives sparked at the ICPD were further supported at the Beijing 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, an influential international population and women's conference, where governments adopted Platform for Action agenda for women's empowerment (Hadi 2017, 65).

The ICPD conference is referred as turning point for future progress as it was the first international agreement that created a common language for SRHR and therefore it continues to be a foundation for SRHR policy frameworks still today (Starrs et al. 2018, 2644; Thomas et al. 2014, 33). The Programme of Action -goals of ICPD determined the groundwork for the United Nations Millenium Development Goals (MDGs) released in 2000. In 2015, the international community reaffirmed its commitments with adopting the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), under which several aspects of SRHR are applied. Targets under Goal 3 that stands for "good health and well-being" address maternal mortality and universal health coverage including indicators for SRH services and family planning. Goal 5 of the SDGs standing for "gender equality" also contains a target on sexual and reproductive health and rights as it calls for elimination of violence against women and all harmful practices, such as child, early, and forced marriage as well as female genital mutilation. Also Goal 10 of the SDGs calls for "reduced inequalities". (Fukuda-Parr et al. 2019, 55.) Horton and Zuccala (2018, 2583) conclude that promoting SRHR internationally will be crucial in order to achieve the sustainable development goals as well as in order to tackle the gender disparities in health, education, the economy and politics.

2.2 State of SRHR in East and Southern Africa

Despite the political progress and the evolving international consensus achieved with the influence of United Nations acceptance and global policy initiatives protecting SRHR realization, the achievement and implementation of SRHR has still been uneven. For individuals to have their sexual and reproductive health and rights fulfilled, they must have the capability to make informed decisions and they must be provided with access to SRHR services. However, especially women and vulnerable populations encounter barriers to access these services and their freedom to decide remains often restricted, because of different socio-cultural and economic constraints. Muturi (2005, 79) have studied that in Africa, these barriers have caused many women to face different reproductive health problems such as unwanted pregnancies and STIs including HIV/AIDS as well as to experience harmful practices such as gender-based violence (Muturi 2005, 79).

The lack of SRHR achievement causes human rights violations, illness and even deaths. In sub-Saharan Africa, the negative consequences of sexual and reproductive health and rights neglecting are high in numbers. For example, East and Southern Africa (ESA) is most affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic globally, accounting for 45% of the world's HIV infections and 53% of people living with HIV globally (UNAIDS 2018). Out of all maternal deaths, it is estimated that roughly two-thirds (196 000) occur annually in sub-Saharan Africa. In addition, UNFPA annual report (2018) tells that in East and Southern Africa, 22% of women are living with an unmet need for family planning, meaning that they do not have the right to decide themselves whether to reproduce or not because they cannot access modern contraceptives. (UNFPA 2019.)

Also SRHR related harmful practices are prevalent in the region. According to UNFPA (2019), 28% of women and girls in East and Southern Africa are subjected to gender-based violence (GBV), which comprise also of female genital mutilation (FGM), child marriage and early childbearing as a common consequence of early marriage. In East and Southern Africa, 27% of women have given birth by age 18 and majority of these births occur within marriage. For example, in Malawi, statistics show that 42% of girls are married off before the age of 18. (UNFPA 2019.) Consequently, early childbirth remains one of the main causes of mortality among young women in sub-Saharan Africa, in addition to HIV related diseases (UNFPA 2019).

Barriers for advancing SRHR in the region

Studies (see, e.g., Oronje et al. 2011; Standing et al. 2011; Hadi 2017) show that the poor outcomes for SRHR acceptance and the fulfilment of sexual and reproductive health services in sub-Saharan Africa result mainly from sensitivity and controversy around the issues in countries where cultural, traditional and religious beliefs are strongly valued. The nature of these issues is often seen as con-

troversial and therefore they may clash with the socio-cultural beliefs. This is one of the reasons that the efforts to change SRHR policies receive strong opposition nationally from political, religious and community leaders.

Building an enabling policy environment to advance SRHR and to effectively implement the services remains as a problem, if there is no governmental or parliamentarian supports towards advancing the issues. Oronje et al. (2011, 2) describe, that socio-cultural barriers to SRHR advancement can result in different African governments either conducting discriminatory approaches in policy making and legislation or refraining to address the issues in the first place. Standing et al. (2011, 1) state that especially the concept of sexual rights remains poorly understood by policy actors and therefore it is not easy to operationalize the topic in policies or programmes.

Although the laws would be supportive towards an SRHR element in a country, it does not only ensure that the rights would be truly achieved or the harmful practices not performed. For instance, UNFPA (2019) states that most countries with high rates of child marriage have laws prohibiting the practice. However, it still persists because of strong traditional norms and the failures to reinforce and implement existing laws. Also in countries where legal age of marriage is 18, there are some provisions that allow marriages to occur earlier with parental consent. (UNFPA 2019.)

Oronje et al. (2011) studied the process of operationalizing sexual and reproductive health and rights in sub-Saharan Africa, and found three main constraints for SRHR advancement in the region; prohibitive laws and government's reluctance to carry out extensive rights-based approaches to SRHR, lack of political leadership and commitment to funding, as well as the prevalent negative cultural discourses around the issues (Oronje et al. 2011, 7). Based on these constraints, four strategies that organizations could take advantage of when promoting SRHR in sub-Saharan Africa, are "strategic framing of SRHR issues, forging strategic alliances, working with the government and strategic opportunism" (Oronje et al. 2011, 9). Strategic framing could be conducted utilizing for instance stories on people's personal experiences on the issues, focusing on vulnerable groups rather than the general public and thirdly, by using mass media to attract the policy makers attention and use positive narratives instead of negative ones in the media. Also, case studies from the region show, that active networking and taking advantage of different stakeholder's experiences around the issues could bring about positive policy change for SRHR in sub-Saharan Africa. (Oronje et al. 2011, 9.)

In addition to strategic framing and working with stakeholders, working in collaboration with governments is fruitful. Oronje et al. (2011, 10) stress that even when a government does not take public action on the issues, there could still be individual government actors more sympathetic towards the issues. Therefore, searching out and engaging government persons who might be more supportive was seen as an effective influencing strategy. Also, reaching out to relevant parliamentarians working in other related ministries could be useful. (Oronje et al. 2011, 10.) Standing et al. (2011, 8) add, that the learning of these

issues takes also often place in informal ways and increasingly via "new forms of social networking" on the internet which can affect the framing of these issues.

3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of this research portrays different theoretical factors describing the features of policy influencing activities taken by organizations. As this research is abductive, the theoretical background is built around the research data. The essence of policy advocacy and its practices, framing the issues and agenda building are discussed. In addition to important factors to be considered in SRHR policy influencing, this research aims to describe the role of stakeholders in this process, and therefore, previous research on stakeholder engagement in multi-stakeholder networks is presented. The concept of dialogue is especially important to this theory.

Additionally, in the beginning of this chapter, the concept of development communication and its prevalent paradigm, participatory approach, is presented as the conceptual basis for this research. It is important to take theoretical presumptions of development discipline into account because this research locates itself in the region of East and Southern Africa, where many countries are considered as low- and middle-income countries and therefore many development initiatives for economic growth, poverty alleviation and social justice are prevalent. Also, international development organizations have often a stake in these initiatives, which is the case for this research's case organization UNFPA as well. For the purposes of understanding this research's conditions better, it is important to involve a theoretical approach from development studies that can best speak for the context.

3.1 Development communication

Communication practice in the development field, referred as "development communication", has been broadly defined as a process including communication attempts aiming for social change, often initiated by institutions and communities (Mody & Wilkins 2001, 385). Melkote and Steeves (2015, 392-393) state that as the core of development is to achieve social justice in the societies, the

media and communication efforts as well as the different actors involved in these processes should be committed to this goal.

The outcomes of development communication activities have been described as broad. Mody and Wilkins (2001, 393) suggest that the communication efforts could help for instance to raise awareness, influence behaviour change, influence policy makers and finally shift frames of the development issues. Often the communication interventions are aimed at general population to influence behaviour change (Morris 2003, 225).

In addition to the wide outcomes that development communication practices are supporting, the development communication strategies are considered as widespread. Servaes (2016, 704) subdivided strategies for development communication into behaviour change communication, mass communication, advocacy communication, participatory communication and communication for structural and sustainable social change. In order to achieve long-lasting impact and sustainable change, participatory communication approach emphasizing involvement of those affected by development policies should be considered, as this approach pays more attention to the structural aspects of the environment and policy and legislation as well as to cultural elements such as religion, values, and socio-economic factors. (Servaes 2016, 704.)

To narrow the development communication strategies, Melkote and Steeves (2015, 394) distinguished between global and national and local and community levels in the media and communication efforts directed to social change. On global and national levels, communication actions include for instance social mobilization such as public communication along with participation and debate, media mobilization in order to influence public opinion and raise awareness, advocacy communication to influence policies and networking including building coalitions between different partners and strengthening stakeholder partnerships. (Melkote & Steeves 2015, 394.)

On local and community level, the actions were described as more bottom-up oriented consisting for instance of increasing the participation of local stakeholders, community mobilization as well as expanding public participation, debate and discussion, utilizing the local medias and co-equal knowledge sharing between all stakeholders. The results of these development communication actions should eventually move the perceptions of populations affected by the issues, from passive "patients" to active "agents". (Melkote & Steeves 2015, 393-395.)

3.1.1 Participatory approach to development communication

The development communication field draws on modernization paradigm originated after World War II in the 1950s, which concepts guided the development of West European and North American countries and was used later to set up development models for Asian and African countries (Melkote & Steeves 2015, 386). The early modernization paradigm communication models such as Rogers' "Diffusion of Innovation" published in 1962 and other diffusion models, viewed the practice as a simple process of one-way mass-media message

transmission from source to receivers, assuming that everything effective communication needed, was to inform the elite and the educated (Melkote 1991, 78). The modernization paradigm has been heavily criticized for its narrow Western-centric understanding of "development", seeing communication as technical top-down process brought by international agencies, viewing populations' only as simple beneficiaries of aid (Waisbord 2015, 152).

The modernization paradigm was criticised originally by participation theories that influenced the paradigm shift in the 1960s and 1970s. The participatory model is based on radical thinkers such as Frantz Fanon, Orlando Fals Borda and Paulo Freire, whose work "Pedagogy of the oppressed" (1970), focused on community involvement and dialogue as catalyst for empowerment in development. Participatory approach assumed that local communities should be involved in the processes of social change, rather than being "passive beneficiaries" of foreign decision makers and promotion of local knowledge and action. (Waisbord 2008, 507; Hasselskog 2020, 94.)

Thus, in opposition to modernization and diffusionism, the new paradigm of participatory communication involves local stakeholders in the communication efforts rather than seeing local cultures as obstacles to development. In the health context, participatory approach aims to help individuals to make informed decisions regarding their health. (Muturi 2005, 82.)

TABLE 1 Summaries of diffusion and participatory approaches in development communication (from Morris 2005, 124)

	Diffusion model	Participatory model
Definition of communication	Vertical information transfer	Horizontal information exchange and dialogue
Definition of development communication	Information dissemination via mass media	Grassroots participation via group interaction
Problem, solution and goal	Problem: lack of information Solution: information transfer from knowledge to attitudes to practice Goal: outcome-oriented behaviour change	Problem: structural inequalities and local knowledge ignored Solution: information exchange and participation Goal: process-oriented empowerment, equity, community
Frameworks	Modernization Diffusion of innovations (Everett Rogers, 1962)	Social change and praxis (Freire, 1970) Social mobilization and activism
Types of interventions	Social marketing Entertainment-education	Empowerment education Participatory Action Research (PAR) Rapid Participatory Appraisal (RPA) Community Involvement in Health (CIH)

As Table 1 presented by Morris (2005, 124) shows, diffusion model approaches communication from a top-down perspective, while participatory model practices it mainly from grassroots, bottom-up level using for instance dialogue in the practice. However, it is worthwhile to notice, that even though participatory

model is often defined as the total opposite of the diffusion model, the diffusion model has evolved in a participatory direction since its formulation. This means, that participatory projects in the development field may also include some components of information transfer (Morris 2005, 125).

Also, Muturi (2005, 82-83) stresses, that the new approach does not invalidate the former, as some health programs still use more top-down oriented information campaigns in their communication practices. Consequently, Servaes (2016, 705) criticizes that some approaches presented as only participatory by international development institutions still fall under both diffusionist and participatory perspectives, which makes the communication seem as "contradictory and illogical."

When participatory model to development communication is performed at the level of general population, the development initiatives are often directed towards local communities. In these community-level initiatives, it has been suggested that the community should itself be the key actor to define problems and further solutions to the issues. This helps the communities to achieve ownership over issues concerning them. (Aakhus & Bzdak 2015, 195.) Similarly, Bowen et al. (2010, 304) stress that increasing levels of community engagement from one-way information sharing, through two-way dialogue and collaboration, leads finally to community leadership and empowered communities.

When communities take partial leadership in framing issues concerning themselves as well as in handling solutions, it might enable the involved organizations to achieve outcomes that would have been elusive without community participation, as community's needs are included in the organization's decision making processes. This, described as transformational community engagement, results in shared control of the engagement process as well as shared benefits for both parties. When there is constant interaction between small numbers of actors, it finally leads to interpersonal relationships and mutual understanding based on trust. (Bowen et al. 2010, 305-306.)

As an example of a community engagement approach in health context, Obregon and Waisbord (2010) studied that in polio eradication initiatives in Africa and Asia, interpersonal communication activities, such as training sessions and horizontal community dialogues with opinion leaders have been able to influence positive behaviour change at the community level where resistance most often occurs (Obregon & Waisbord 2010, 39 & 43). Johnston (2010, 220) studied the typology of community engagement practices and stresses that community participation should be differentiated from consultation because in participation, community members are active participants developing jointly meanings and negotiating solutions to an issue through "dialogic processes with organizations".

When studying the notions of participation to the context of national policy making in the international development field, Hasselskog (2020) found out that the concept of local participation is often interlinked with the concept of national ownership. National ownership refers to the level of leadership a state receiving aid for development cooperation practices over its native policy mak-

ing (Hasselskog 2020, 92). In national ownership, it is important that the policy processes should be led by the recipient governments as they should be taking leadership over their development activities, meaning that the aid donors need to use the recipient countries' own systems (Hasselskog 2020, 95).

To conclude the essence of participatory approach to development communication discipline, studies show that emphasis is on communication endeavours that involve those affected by a given policy and letting these affected groups to have their say on the issues. At grassroots level in communities, participatory communication emphasizes community engagement activities with development of joint meanings and solutions through dialogic processes (Johnston 2010, 220). In development activities initiated through international development institutions and assigned to national government level, participatory approach to development communication is attained through national ownership as presented by Hasselskog (2020), where the recipient governments of development aid are in lead of development activities concerning them.

In the next chapter, strategies organizations can use for policy influencing are portrayed from communication perspective. These theoretical factors describe features of advocacy widely, focusing on theories from advocacy strategies and framing of issues to agenda building.

3.2   Strategies for policy influencing

This chapter explains broadly different theories for policy influencing from an organization's point of view. Different strategies that organizations can take advantage of in policy influencing are presented; a) the essence of policy advocacy practices, b) framing the issues, and finally c) the concept of agenda building. After this chapter, the final concept of the theoretical framework discusses theories on engagement and dialogue in multi-stakeholder networks.

3.2.1   Policy advocacy

Policy advocacy is central to the strategic application of social change. The role of policies and services in achieving social change is crucial, and therefore influencing the policy environment with advocacy is important (Waisbord 2015). For instance, Baleta et al. (2012) studied that without advocacy, it would have been difficult to influence the policy change to introduce vaccines for children's health in South Africa.

According to Waisbord (2015, 150), advocacy in the efforts to influence social change is essentially an exercise in communication, although communication discipline should give more recognition to the dynamics of policy advocacy. Advocacy practices comprise of wide efforts, which often are seen as communication exercises. Under the advocacy umbrella, actions such as raising public awareness about social problems, engaging and convincing policy makers about needed policy changes as well as supporting the implementation of poli-

cies are included (Waisbord 2015, 150). Melkote and Steeves (2015, 397) have a similar take on advocacy, stating that its' purpose is to influence policy debates especially on issues relating to unequal distribution of development's benefits in a society, with help of raising awareness of the issues and winning support of constituencies.

It is important that when conducting advocacy, the interventions are focused on the groups that are influenced (Servaes & Malikhao 2010, 47). When it comes to using the "right" advocacy strategies, Obregon and Waisbord (2010) point out that the agendas and motives of involved actors should be clearly understood. When communication and social mobilization in the advocacy efforts is based on local and cultural understanding, better success of the initiatives is ensured. When working with community stakeholders, it is important to remember that for instance religious leaders and informal social networks are essential social and political actors grounded in local contexts, and because they are involved in local and national political battles, they are well qualified to express the needs of their community. (Obregon & Waisbord 2010, 25 & 43.)

Only providing information to decision makers does not assure that change will happen (Servaes & Malikhao 2010, 47). Decision makers need to be engaged and thus, the content and pattern of advocacy messages must be adapted based on their needs, issues of concern and interests. In the organizational context, Taylor and Kent (2014, 391) have clarified the concept of engagement positioning it within dialogue theory. They state, that engagement between organizations and stakeholders or publics aims to enhance understanding between participants, reach decisions that profit all involved participants, decisions that stem from participative interactions involving stakeholders. In engagement, interactions should begin only after a proper research of different factors surrounding an issue, such as cultural factors, is made. Also positive orientation and interactions outside the issue for strengthening relationships are required. (Taylor & Kent 2014, 391.)

Obregon and Waisbord (2010, 43) stress that also resistance or opposition from the policy makers towards the advocacy efforts is an important dimension, since it may disclose new opportunities and methods for effective interventions. Reaching out to opposition in SRHR advocacy could be done through multiple avenues such as by approaching parliamentarians through their fellow members of parliament and other powerful actors who are more sympathetic towards the case than their counterparts (Oronje et al. 2011, 9-10).

TABLE 2 Criteria for the success of advocacy messages in health advocacy (from Servaes & Malikhao 2010, 48)

Relevance	The issue has to be considered relevant to the several stakeholder groups.
Timing	The issue has to be put on the agenda at the right time.
Validity	The information and statistics provided have to be valid.
Cultural sensitivity	The information should be tailored to the audiences and be in line with the understandings and expectations of people or stakeholders.

Orientation of the relevant stakeholder groups	Stakeholder groups have to be trained in interpreting data, so that they are able to understand them.
Planning	The public health advocacy strategies and health communication should be planned in advance to improve utilization of the information.
Communication	Interaction and reaching mutual understanding(s) between relevant stakeholder groups.
Action orientation	Advocacy strategies have to provide information for concrete action.
Dissemination of information	Advocacy messages and information can only be used by decision-makers if they are disseminated properly.

To ensure the success of the advocacy efforts, various factors should be taken into consideration. As indicated in Table 2, the issue should be relevant to the stakeholder groups, the issue should be put on the agenda at a right time, stakeholder groups should be trained to interpret the data, the messages should be culturally sensitive and in line with the audience's understandings and proper planning and communication regarding the issue utilized. (Servaes & Malikhao 2010, 48.)

Decision makers will make decision or change a policy only under certain conditions. Servaes and Malikhao (2010, 46) studied that in health advocacy, the shift is most likely to be made when they consider the issue economically or politically profitable, when the public pressure or support is wide enough, and the evidence is strong and need for prioritizing the issue identified. However, the competency of evidence may not always be most determinative factor, as the amount of support decision maker gets most likely depends on the structure and nature of his or her interpersonal relationships. (Servaes & Malikhao 2010, 46.) Also, the position of the decision maker in the power hierarchy and how the decision would affect the future status affects the decision making. Thus, the level of support by the decision makers' peers and outside lobby groups plays an important role. (Servaes & Malikhao 2010, 47.)

Reaching a mutual understanding of the issue between the main stakeholders is important (Servaes & Malikhao 2010, 47). Discussions and interactions should guide towards a shared understanding of the problem based on which messages would work towards solution of the problem. Additionally, interest groups should be involved, and coalitions built in order to gain common understanding and mobilize "societal forces". To achieve this, networking must be conducted with relevant groups and individuals. (Servaes & Malikhao 2010, 47.)

Different situations call for different advocacy approaches, but the approach might also depend on the organization's national origin and institutional arrangements, since they often determine the availability and structure of material resources in addition to the domestic institutional environment (Murdie & Stroup 2012, 427). For international non-governmental organizations

(INGOs), the different takes on the advocacy efforts could be explained by the nature of the donors. For organizations that rely heavily on government funding, the advocacy efforts tend to be rather cooperative than conflictual, for the purposes of ensure the funding in the future. Respectively, organizations that get their funding from private sector might perform more conflictual advocacy endeavors in order to ensure the continuation of the funding, as without being conflictual, it would be easier to fade from the public eye. (Murdie & Stroup 2012, 430.) Also, less policy access, meaning that the organization is excluded from the political process, might result in the organization adapting a more antagonistic strategy (Murdie & Stroup 2012, 432).

In democratic societies, policy makers remain accountable to their citizens. If the citizen's expectations are not fulfilled, to hold the decision makers accountable, they can for example vote them out of office in elections. Bäckstrand (2006, 295) stresses that such practice of internal accountability includes also other hierarchical accountability mechanisms, such as non-governmental organizations being accountable to their members and international organizations being accountable to their member states. Bäckstrand (2006, 295) distinguishes also between external accountability, which refers to less top-down oriented multi-stakeholder partnership accountability, where decision makers need to justify their functioning to the stakeholders being affected by their policy decisions. In these multi-stakeholder networks, reputational accountability as "naming and shaming" could be beneficial, as many actors give prominence to public credibility (Bäckstrand 2006, 300).

Murdie and Stroup (2012, 427) add, that also non-governmental organizations hold governments accountable to their commitments in their advocacy efforts. At the community level, decision makers remain responsible to the community and in the end, their right to decide stems from there. Thus, the community members could hold the decision makers accountable for their actions. (Servaes & Malikhao 2010, 47-48.)

The wishes of the communities should be appreciated in the policy advocacy efforts. This means, that cultural sensitivity should be adapted and optimally the local communities involved. Grabill (2000, 48) concludes, that policy written from the bottom up will work much differently than policy written from a distance, since the greatest influence is located at the bottom in local institutions in the communities and in the affected population.

3.2.2 Framing the issues

The idea of framing analysis was put forth by Goffman (1974), who used the idea of frames to label "schemata of interpretation", where people interpret what is going on around their world through their primary framework. In this process, people locate, perceive, identify and label different events and thereby conclude meanings and take actions (Goffman 1974). Frames work by "selecting some aspects of perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicating text, in a way that promotes a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation or treatment recommendation for the item de-

scribed" (Entman 1993, 52). Salience means making information more significant and meaningful to receivers, increasing their possibility of remembering the information (Entman 1993, 53).

In a similar notion, Hallahan (1999, 207) stresses that framing involves process of selection, where inclusion and exclusion as well as emphasis happens. Framing offers tools for both interpretation and action. Contextualization is present in the process of framing, as information is put into a context, defining how people should evaluate the information, make choices or take actions. (Hallahan 1999, 224.)

Entman (1993, 52) described four functions of frames in a text, which are defining problems, diagnosing causes, making moral judgements, and suggesting remedies as operations for the problems addressed. A single frame could include more than these four functions or none of these. In communication processes, frames have at least four locations; the communicator, the text, the receiver, and the culture (Entman 1993, 52).

Framing has played a key role in influencing SRHR policy change in sub-Saharan Africa. For instance, Oronje et al. (2011) studied that the frames used for SRHR issues in policy discussions affect the level of priority these issues receive from policy makers. Narratives of people's personal experiences regarding the issues and of vulnerable groups could make the reception of SRHR advocacy more supportive in the region. (Oronje et al. 2011, 8-9.)

Standing et al. (2011, 7) studied the more neglected SRHR issues and suggest, that reframing the issues could work in the contested environments to gain positive understanding. In this instance, SRHR issues could be reframed in regards to their contribution to national development. (Standing et al. 2011, 7.) Similarly, to gain support for gender-related issues in different African governments, gender advocates have framed the advancement of gender equality leading to better and more efficient health systems, as opposed to framing it using rights-based approach often provoking resistance (Theobald et al. 2005, 147).

Hallahan (1999, 217) presented framing of issues as one of the seven models of framing applicable to public relations. Issues are defined as social problems and disputes between two or more parties, resulting often from how specific groups are treated or characterized in a society. These issues can be presented differently by the different parties, and they often persuade the receiver to see the message from their preferred definition and perspective. (Hallahan 1999, 217-218.)

When framing gender issues in the government context in different African countries, technical narratives were used by bureaucrats whereas narratives on equity and rights were used by civil society in their framing approaches (Theobald et al. 2005, 147). This suggests, that the institutional contexts of the organizations may be a determinant for the different nature of the frames used. Gender advocates in bureaucratic and governmental environments tend to use strategic frames around technical and institutional narratives that fit better to the institutional environment. On the contrary, activists and NGOs draw their

frames more often from rights-based narratives of power and gender rather than emphasizing efficiency or sustainability. (Theobald et al. 2005, 144.) However, with this NGO-driven approach based on rights, it might be more difficult to convince change in the government context, as the government's financial resources are often limited and their hands tied in multiple demands. Thus, framing efforts should be built on the premises of the bureaucratic demands. (Theobald et al. 2005, 147.)

Different factors, such as the concept of "political opportunity structure" presented by Joachim (2003, 251), determines whether framing efforts will be accepted by governments. The structure affects framing processes by functioning as a gatekeeper for prioritizing certain frames and marginalizing others, by providing resources for social actors and by creating "windows of opportunities" for action. Political opportunity structure comprises of "access to international institutions, the presence of powerful allies and changes in political alignments or conflicts." (Joachim 2003, 248-251.)

For NGOs, access remains as most vital factor in the influencing efforts and it can be affected for instance by certain societal events and political crises that change perceptions of policies and programs. Usually access improves the chances for getting influential allies such as states, UN offices and agencies and media, which due to their better resources can legitimize frames of NGOs. (Joachim 2003, 251-252.) As policy processes are not direct and might include unexpected situations, it is crucial for advocacy practitioners to take advantage of different entry points provided for instance by government policy frameworks. For instance, in many African countries, national plans for education and health provide opportunities for partnering with the government to improve access to SRHR services for marginalized groups. (Oronje et al. 2011, 10.)

3.2.3 Agenda building

Cobb and Elder (1971) have presented the concept of agenda building examining the process of creating issues and reviewing why certain issues succeed to gain the attention of decision makers, while others fail. For any policy change to be possible, the issue must first enter the policy agenda (Cobb & Elder 1971). Carpenter (2007) studied issue emergence in transnational advocacy networks consisting of non-governmental organizations, international organizations, governments, and countless individuals in these spheres and bureaucracies, and found out, that effective advocacy in such networks is possible only if the issue enters the arena (Carpenter 2007, 101-102).

Usually, the number of potential public issues surpasses the decision-making institutions resources to process them and therefore different issues and their advocates must compete for a place on the decision-making agenda (Cobb et al. 1976, 126). Pre-decisional processes are in an important role in determining which issues will be taken into consideration and how the issue achieves a position on the political agenda. Firstly, for the issue to gain agenda status, support from at least some key decision makers should be achieved, as they serve as gatekeepers of the formal agenda. (Cobb & Elder 1971, 903-905.)

Not all advocacy practitioners have the same resources to build an agenda. Cobb and Elder (1971, 908) stress, that some groups have more power to do it than others and thus, those that have power can also prevent an issue from gaining agenda status. Identifying with specific groups, the group's resources for mobilization as well as the strategic social or economic location in the structure of the society are among factors affecting the level of priority given by decision makers. Also specific groups, such as church leaders or doctors, may enjoy greater public esteem in the society and therefore obtain an easier access to decision makers. (Cobb & Elder 1971, 908-909.)

In addition to political leaders, mass participation has a significant role in developing new agenda issues and also in redefining old ones. Media has a key role in translating issues into agenda items and therefore access to media remains important in this. (Cobb & Elder 1971, 905-912.) Hallahan (1999, 218) add, that framing has also an essential role in agenda building in the media, as advocacy practitioners attempt to communicate with either affected or sympathetic groups directly or indirectly via the media.

The mass media have the power to set the agenda and determine, which issues are perceived important by the public (McCombs & Shaw 1972). When influencing health-related policies, Bou-Karroum et al. (2017, 11) studied, that media interventions had a positive influence for instance by prioritizing and sparking policy discussions, raising policy makers awareness on the advocated health issues, influencing policy formulation as well as gaining support from the public, which again advances the policy change. Media interventions in policy change spark not only positive outcomes, as they can unintendedly mobilize the issues opponents too. Thus, media actions that are carefully planned and take such situations into account, are helpful. (Bou-Karroum et al. 2017, 12.)

For SRHR issues, Oronje et al. (2011, 9) emphasize that using mass media to raise awareness and spread positive messages of the issues is beneficial. In sub-Saharan Africa, the reporting of SRHR issues is considered often as weak due to lack of interest and capacity in using evidence by journalists. To tackle this problem, the media should be engaged. Media engagement could be done by training and engaging journalists, building capacity to improve the nature of the coverage and establishing both formal and informal relationships with them (Oronje et al. 2011, 9.)

In a later study, Cobb et al. (1976) distinguished between two types of agendas the issues can get and succeed on; public agenda and formal agenda, as well as presented a model and propositions describing different ways issues get on these agendas. Issues that gain attention and are demanded to act upon by a significant portion of the public and of some governmental units in the perception of community members, are the features of public agenda. Formal agenda issues receive serious attention from decision makers and are usually accepted for major consideration by policy makers. (Cobb et al. 1976, 126-127.) Issues often shift between these agendas and get mobilized on either of these. In their study, Cobb et al. (1976) presented three conceptual models describing how

agenda building takes place and political agenda changes, explaining the translation between public and formal agendas as well. (Cobb et al. 1976, 126-127.)

In outside initiative model of agenda building, pressure on decision makers to advance the issue onto the formal agenda is conducted by groups outside the government. Simultaneously, the interest in the issue from other groups outside the government is aimed to be expanded, so that the issue would reach the public agenda as well. (Cobb et al. 1976, 132.) However, although the issue would reach the formal agenda status, it does not necessarily mean that the policy change would end up to be exactly in line with what the groups wanted to achieve (Cobb et al. 1976, 132).

Secondly, the mobilization model focuses on issues that are initiated within the government and do not rise from the public agenda, although they still need support of the public for implementation. Issues instituted inside government reach the formal agenda status almost automatically, but successful implementation requires placement on public agenda as well. (Cobb et al. 1976, 135.) Final model, inside access model, attempts to exclude the participation of public from agenda building and policy formation. In this model, issues are discussed within governmental units or in groups that have an easy access to policy makers, and the public is not highly involved at any point. (Cobb et al. 1976, 135-136.)

Agenda building process includes four steps that occur in each conceptual model, which are categorized as initiation, specification, expansion and entrance. In outside initiation model, initiation phase includes a simple "articulation of grievance" by a group located outside formal government structure. Within the phase of specification, general grievances are translated into more specific demands by a specialized person or groups that may or may not be united. In expansion phase, the decision makers' interest is drawn by expanding the issue to new groups and by connecting the issue to already existing ones. This includes a possible risk of the initial group ending up losing control of the issue entirely, as more powerful groups enter the conflict making the original participants less important. These groups are identification group, attention group and within the mass public, attentive and general public. (Cobb et al. 1976, 128-129.)

The entrance phase includes issue expansion and placement on public agenda following it. At this stage, movement from public agenda to formal agenda is made and the issue can be taken into consideration by decision makers. How the transition is made between the two agendas, varies largely across different political systems. (Cobb et al. 1976, 129-130.)

For mobilization model, initiation phase takes place when a new program or policy is announced by a major political leader putting the item automatically on formal agenda and marking the end of formal decision-making phase in many political systems. Following the policy announcement, mobilization of the public happens in the next specification phase. This phase determines what is expected in terms of cooperation or support, material resources, work or behaviour change. Implementation is mobilized in the expansion phase, and it usual-

ly depends on the public acceptance and changes in behaviour of the public. In entrance phase, the issue finally moves from formal to public agenda and thereby majority of the population recognizes the initiative as important. (Cobb et al. 1976, 132-134.)

Cobb et al. (1976) remind that the processes of agenda building are more complicated in practice, and they can combine and use features of the different models as well as the levels of the agendas and the issue may appear parallel on many agendas. Therefore, efforts to achieve the agenda status may be pointed at one of these agendas, some or both of them and the models may be used in many variations. (Cobb et al. 1976, 137.)

3.3   Engaging in dialogue in multi-stakeholder networks

Development problems are often considered as complex, so-called 'wicked problems', that have no single right way to solution and in which many stakeholders are involved, framing the issues from their preferred perspectives. Thus, Servaes (2016, 708) suggests, that solutions to these problems should be settled together in multi-stakeholder platforms in the communication for development and social change practices.

In a study evaluating effectiveness of partnership networks in transnational context, Bäckstrand (2006, 291) suggests that multi-stakeholder partnerships that aim for sustainable development can be understood as a new form of global governance with a possibility to link multilateral norms and local action together, by including multiple actors from civil society, government and business. These multi-stakeholder networks perpetuate the concept of "governance from below" and promote a participatory approach in their nature. The thought is that more participation by affected groups will result in more successful collective problem solving, which is conducted through "deliberative mechanisms for enhancing stakeholder consultation." (Bäckstrand 2006, 291-295.)

The nature of these networks is voluntary and they are intended often for implementation and common problem solving (Bäckstrand 2006, 293). According to Bäckstrand (2006, 304) the most usual leaders in these multi-stakeholder partnerships are multilateral organizations such as the United Nations agencies in consort with some governments. Although the partnerships may have an organization in lead, their participatory nature entails that balanced representation of different stakeholders and arena for discussion between the different actors remains (Bäckstrand 2006, 294). Institutionalization of these partnerships, meaning their clear linkages to global goals and targets in multilateral agreements, profits their effectiveness by giving measurable targets and a framework for the partnerships (Bäckstrand 2006, 301 & 303).

Issues are in the main focus in these collaborative activities of multi-stakeholder networks. In a study on issue-focused stakeholder management, Roloff (2008, 234) stresses, that the purpose of the different actors coming to-

gether is to seek a common approach to an issue affecting them all and that is often too complicated to be solved without collaboration. The common approach in the multi-stakeholder network is achieved by communicative action of exchange of arguments (Roloff 2008, 245). Similarly, Aakhus and Bzdak (2015, 189) state that issues and shared problems are in the centre of "value-creating networks" where value is created by jointly solving a common problem. The problem solving actions involve multi-stakeholder engagement efforts, which should be based on dialogue, to create evidence-based solutions to the issues and shared learnings about the problems. When shifting from consultation and information sharing to a shared responsibility between the stakeholders, relationships are built and trust improved. (Aakhus & Bzdak 2015, 195-196.)

Concerning gender equality improvement through advocacy with different African governments, Theobald et al. (2005, 147) came to the conclusion that dialogue is critical to build alliances for the issues advancement. In this context, dialogue was seen as helping to raise awareness of the institutional, personal and political experiences that construct different actors' understanding of the advocated gender issues. (Theobald et al. 2005, 147.) This indicates that the communicative actions in multi-stakeholder networks could involve dialogic elements. The concept of dialogue is often quite ambiguous and confusion over its meaning remains in the public relations literature (Lane 2020, 3). In her study, Lane (2020, 5) proposed a conceptualization of dialogue to clarify distinctions between the different definitions, where the concept of "true dialogue" is seen as the most progressive form of dialogue constituting all dialogic characteristics from two-way communication finally to true dialogue.

The concept of true dialogue draws on five pillars presented by Taylor and Kent (2002, 24-25), where dialogue is based on mutuality, propinquity, empathy, risk, and commitment. In these orientations to dialogue, mutuality can be seen as the acknowledgment of relationships between the organization and the public, where participants should be viewed as true persons instead of objects and there should be a feeling of mutual equality between actors. Propinquity refers to communication actions that involve persons in matters that concern them, who are also willing to communicate their needs to the organizations. (Taylor & Kent 2002, 25-26.) This orientation requires engagement where participants are reachable, respect their discussion partners and pursue fondness, leading to more extensive viewpoints to draw the decisions on as well as benefits equally all involved parties. (Taylor & Kent 2002, 26.)

In the empathic principle of dialogue, empathy is expressed through supportiveness and common orientation such as positive reactions to other's inputs (Taylor & Kent 2002, 27). Risk in dialogue means that the participants allow themselves to be exposed to vulnerability caused from sharing confidential information and personal desires, unexpected outcomes may occur due to spontaneous interaction of individual beliefs and attitudes as well as recognition of otherness where participants bring their differences to the dialogue (Taylor & Kent 2002, 28-29). These above-mentioned four pillars of dialogue create the base for the final dialogic principle, which is commitment. Dialogic commit-

ment emphasizes, that dialogue should be rather seen as process where all parties attempt to understand and value the interests of the others, than as an agreement. The process is usually guided towards finding common understandings. When the participants are committed to dialogue, they are willing to continue the conversation with an aim to understand each other and reach satisfying outcomes for all involved parties. (Taylor & Kent 2002, 29-30.)

Later research on dialogue has further supported these dialogic principles constructing the "true dialogue". For instance, Lane (2018, 657) concluded that the prevailing thought of dialogue in public relations is indicated by the participants common positive orientation at one another, where dialogue happens when the players are willing to communicate honestly, hoping that interactions will lead to mutually beneficial and acceptable outcomes. Similarly, Theunissen and Wan Noordin (2011, 10) stress that dialogue calls for engaging with the participating actors as human beings and not just as interest groups and focusing on listening, speaking and establishing situations that urge the participants to speak without control. There should be commitment to the process. Davidson (2016, 150) reminds that sometimes the dialogue participants use might include only one or a few of the true dialogic principles, which might end up making the dialogue weak to its meaning.

Additionally, the concept of engagement can also be tied into dialogue. Taylor and Kent (2014, 384) present that when engagement is part of the dialogue, organizations and publics can make decisions that produce social capital and engagement influences the communicative actions as well as operates as an approach guiding the process of interactions among different participants. This process of dialogic engagement entails that dialogue should be in the center of stakeholder engagement, and every dialogic intervention involves elements of conversational engagement such as being present, interaction happening at the same time, respect towards the participants and focus on the dialogue. (Taylor & Kent 2014, 389.)

When the communicative actions follow dialogic principles, the participants must be willing to be changed by the encounters despite their organization's interests. In such situations, dialogic engagement encourages understanding and mutual views of reality. In engagement, also interaction outside of the deliberated issue is required, in order to establish relationships between stakeholders. (Taylor & Kent 2014, 390-391.) On a similar note, Roloff (2008, 246) studied that in issue-focused stakeholder management, interactions with the different stakeholders tend to happen on a more interpersonal level, due to more time-consuming communication processes requiring repetitive meetings and thus, ending up in the development of interpersonal relationships.

Roloff (2008, 238) studied the process of dialogue in the multi-stakeholder networks dividing it into different life-cycle phases. He reminded that these networks are often initiated by respectable actors like a politician or an organization. In the first initiation phase, different participants discuss the problem until the next deliberation phase. After deliberation, participants discuss their views on the issue in order to understand its complexity and other stakehold-

er's positions on the issue, which comprise the phases of acquaintance and agreements. (Roloff 2008, 239.) In order to implement the desired issue, establishing a common language and open communication should be the base for the cooperation. Therefore, the phases of agreement are aimed to agree upon common description of the issue, to compare approaches and finally, to select the best for implementation. (Roloff 2008, 239-241.)

3.4 Conclusion of the theoretical framework

The theoretical framework, presented below in Table 3, portrays different theoretical factors that picture the essence of policy influencing efforts by advocacy organizations. As this research is theory-bounded, the theory was taken into consideration in the early stages of the research. Some of the key theoretical concepts were taken into consideration already when forming the research interview themes, and therefore the concepts ended up guiding the formation of the interview questionnaire.

Firstly, the concept of development communication and its prevalent paradigm, participatory approach, is presented. As this research concerns the region of East and Southern Africa where many countries are considered as low- and middle-income countries and is focused on international development organizations, it is important to take the development context into account. Thus, development communication stands as the conceptual basis for this research.

After, different strategies for influencing the policy environment by organizations are presented; the essence of policy advocacy practices, framing the issues and agenda building. Furthermore, previous research on stakeholder engagement in multi-stakeholder networks is discussed. In this notion, the concept of dialogue is especially important. The table below presents main items of each theoretical concept as well as the key authors.

TABLE 3 Key theoretical concepts and authors of this research

Concept	Key themes	Key authors
Development communication	Participatory approach to development communication Community engagement	Servaes (2016), Muturi (2005), Morris (2005), Bowen, Newenham-Kahindi & Herremans (2010)
Policy advocacy practices	Criteria for the success of advocacy messages in health advocacy presented by Servaes & Malikhao Institutional origin of organizations affects the advocacy approach	Servaes & Malikhao (2010), Murdie & Stroup (2012)

Framing	Concept of framing	Entman (1993), Hallahan (1999)
	Framing of issues	
Agenda building	Two agendas; public and formal agenda	Cobb & Elder (1971) Cobb, Ross & Ross (1976)
	Three models of agenda building; outside initiative model, mobilization model, inside access model	
Engaging in dialogue in multi-stakeholder networks	Multi-stakeholder networks, issue-focused multi-stakeholder networks	Bäckstrand (2006), Roloff (2008), Aakhus & Bzdak (2015), Taylor & Kent (2002), Taylor & Kent (2014)
	Dialogue	

The theoretical background presented in Table 3 shows, that organizations can take part into policy influencing processes in various ways and that multi-stakeholder engagement through dialogue remains important in these practices. As this research is focused on studying the policy influencing regarding sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in East and Southern Africa (ESA) region, in addition to the theoretical concepts, elements of SRHR as well as features of the policy environment around the issue globally as well as regionally in ESA were portrayed in the preceding chapter.

4   METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the methodology of the research, justify the use of the method the researcher chose to use and describe the implementation of the study in terms of data collection. The features of qualitative research are discussed first, after the data collection method and finally the analysis method. Additionally, the chapter underlines how the interviewees were selected and how the qualitative interviews were conducted. The reason for using each method will also be explained. This chapter also describes the details of the case organization UNFPA.

4.1   Qualitative research

The nature of this research is qualitative. Qualitative research was chosen to analyse how influencing policy processes are perceived and what are the approaches used in the process. Also, the role of stakeholders in these processes were explored. Data was collected in the early stages of the research, but the earlier studies and related concepts were reviewed simultaneously and during and after the data collection.

Rather than striving for generalization, qualitative research aims to represent a single phenomenon or occasion, to understand a certain event and to give theoretically meaningful interpretation to a phenomenon (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 85). When quantitative research sees the reality as objective and consistent, qualitative research perceives reality as subjective. The target of the research and the researcher are in constant interaction with each other, meaning that also the researchers are involved in creating the item that is explored. (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2009, 22-23.)

When conducting qualitative research, it is good to remember that even the process of forming the research problem is not free from any theories or values of the researcher. Although it can be said that the research problem predominantly determines the research type, strategy and methods used, still,

the process of forming the research problem is never free from any initial beliefs. Similarly, when conducting qualitative research, the phases of data collection as well as the analysis take ontological and methodological premises of the research into account. In this case, the possibility of understanding one another returns to the methodological premises of the research. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 75-77.)

Even the more practical and working life -oriented studies are based on numerous hidden presumptions that are called philosophical axioms. The philosophical assumption for this study is ontology. Ontology means that rather than studying the relationship between the researcher and research subject, the researcher is trying to understand the researched phenomena. An ontological study investigates the nature of reality of the researched phenomena, and what is seen as the evidence behind it. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2007, 126.)

4.2 Thematic interviews

The data collection method chosen for this research is semi-structured thematic interview that is based between structured and non-structured interview in qualitative research (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2009, 47). Semi-structured thematic interview was seen as the most suitable data collection method for this research, because it gave the interviewees the possibility to freely speak about their experiences and feelings on the researched phenomena. Thematic interview presumes that any experience, thought, belief and feeling of an individual can be interpreted (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2009, 48). With asking specifying questions from the interviewee, it is possible to deepen the quality of the answers (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 88). In thematic interviews, themes chosen prior to the interviews and possible focused specifying questions regarding the themes guide the interview situation (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 87).

The idea of semi-structured interview is based on The Focused Interview, a book published by Merton, Fiske and Kendall (1990). Merton et al. (1990) picture focused interview as a method where the interviewees have experienced a certain situation and the researcher has tentatively clarified the presumably important aspects, processes and sections of the researched phenomena. Based on this situational analysis, the researcher has ended up with certain assumptions as a result of the defining features of the situation and consequences for those involved. Based on this, the questionnaire for the interview can be created and finally, the interview focusing on the individual's subjective experiences of the situation can be conducted. (Merton et al. 1956, 3-4.) Similarly, in thematic interviews the emphasis is on the experiences and definitions of the situation as experienced by the interviewee (Hirsjärvi & Hurme 2009, 48).

As qualitative method, interview is very flexible. The interviewer can present the questions in any order that feels appropriate and has the possibility

to repeat a question, correct a possible misunderstanding, clarify the wording of expressions and have an actual conversation with the informant. The interview is not perceived as 'quiz' competition, rather, it is important to get as much information as possible from the studied theme. Keeping this in mind, it is justified to give the interview guideline or at least the research themes to the interviewees beforehand, so that they can familiarize with them prior to the interview. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 85-86.) When preparing for the interviews during this study, the interviewees were asked whether they wanted to see the guidelines beforehand. For those that wanted, the guideline was sent either one or two days before the meeting, so that they had enough time to familiarize with the questions. For those that did not wish to have it, the main themes of the research were sent by email prior to the interview meeting.

In thematic interviews, it is important to seek meaningful answers in accordance with the research problem. In principle, the themes chosen prior to the interviews should be based on the study's frame of reference, meaning what is already known about the topic. Depending on the openness of the thematic interview, the thematic questions' relationship with the frame of reference varies between accepting intuitive and experiential observations to staying strictly with the previously set questions. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 88.) In this research the implementation was somewhat between. During the interviews, space was left for improvisation and open answers regarding the themes, but the researcher often returned to the initial guideline to keep the right track and get answers to all questions that were seen relevant for this research. If the informant was comprehensive in the answers, less questions were needed to ask by the interviewer.

Methodologically people's understanding of issues as well as how the interpretations form in interaction are underlined in this research method (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 88). According to Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2009, 48), when interviews are rather based on themes than questions, it gives more voice for the interviewees. The interpretations and thoughts of the interviewed individuals are central in thematic interviews.

4.3 Introduction of the case organization UNFPA

The foremost inspiration to study the subject of SRHR policy influencing was sparked by the researcher's working experience at UNFPA. While working in an intern position at UNFPA regional office in Johannesburg, South Africa, the researcher expanded her knowledge around SRHR issues in the region. The deepened knowledge around the issues made the researcher convinced on the importance of advancing the policies and tackling the challenges in the policy environment in order to realize SRHR in the region. Thus, the researcher got further interested in researching the factors fostering positive policy change for SRHR, and decided to take advantage of having a good access to UNFPA and its stakeholders to collect the research data. With UNFPA ESARO being chosen

as the case organization of this research, it also determined the regional context of East and Southern Africa. Although the researcher's personal experience of working at UNFPA stands as the originator for this research, the organization did not have any official contribution in any phase during the study.

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is the United Nations sexual and reproductive health agency established in 1969. The organization's focus is on addressing population and development issues with an emphasis on reproductive health, gender equality and the realization of reproductive rights for all. It operates within the ICPD Programme of Action and international development goals, supporting the access to sexual and reproductive health services, which include for instance voluntary family planning, maternal health care and comprehensive sexuality education. UNFPA is a subsidiary organ of the United Nations General Assembly (GA) and it receives policy guidance from the GA and Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which is one of the six main organs of the United Nations. UNFPA collaborates with other development and humanitarian agencies within its work. (UNFPA 2018.) In general, the United Nations is an intergovernmental organization (IGO). What differs intergovernmental organizations from non-governmental organizations, is that IGOs active members are governments of national states. An IGO must consist of two member states at the fewest. (Wallace & Singer 1970, 245 & 247.)

In 2018, UNFPA launched three results that the organization aims to achieve in its' work globally by 2030. These are 1) ending unmet need for family planning, 2) ending preventable maternal deaths and 3) ending gender-based violence (GBV) and harmful practices such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage. An additional goal was launched for East and Southern Africa region, which is to end the sexual transmission of HIV by 2030, as the region is most affected by HIV globally. (UNFPA 2018; UNFPA ESARO 2018.)

UNFPA works in more than 150 countries and territories and its' offices comprise of headquarters in New York, regional offices in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Caribbean, Arab States and Eastern Europe, sub-regional offices, liaison offices and country offices. The UNFPA East and Southern Africa regional office (UNFPA ESARO) operates in 23 countries in East and Southern Africa (ESA), providing strategic support, such as policy advice and technical expertise to the region's country offices and partners that work on the ground. The regional office collaborates with governments, other United Nations agencies, civil society (NGOs), regional economic communities and the private sector. (UNFPA 2018; UNFPA ESARO 2018.)

4.4   Selecting the interviewees

The main aim of this research is to study the features of policy influencing efforts regarding sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in the regional context of East and Southern Africa. Additionally, this research aims to clarify the role of stakeholders in this process. This was reached by focusing on

a case organization, UNFPA East and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO), and interviewing individuals linked to its work and subject.

As building coalitions and working together with stakeholders is central to policy influencing, the case organization's stakeholders were also interviewed. According to UNFPA Regional Interventions Action Plan for East and Southern Africa (2018-2021), regional relationships at multiple levels is one of the major recognised strengths of the organization's East and Southern Africa regional office, this research's case organization. According to the plan, establishing partnerships with multiple stakeholders and partnering with other United Nations organizations through joint interventions increases the effectiveness of the interventions. (UNFPA 2018.) Additionally, to get a wide and realistic picture of the researched issue overall, the interviewees were purposively chosen from different institutional contexts.

To get as comprehensive picture of the studied phenomena as possible, eight individuals were interviewed; four professionals working at UNFPA ESARO, one professional working at partner UN organization UNESCO, two NGO representatives from the field of SRHR and one government official working in health related ministry and the government person also being the UNFPA focal point at the ministry.

As introduced by Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009, 86), elite sampling is used when choosing the interviewees, when it is important for them to have a wide and specific knowledge of the researched topic. As this research focuses on case organization UNFPA, it was reasonable to interview individuals that had knowledge of the researched topic but who were also representatives of the case organization. Hence, the interviewees needed to have work experience with advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights on regional level in East and Southern Africa (ESA). The UNFPA professionals interviewed were chosen based on their occupation in the organization. To make the interviews relevant to the topic, most (three of four) of the UNFPA interviewees were advisors or programme employees working in the surface of policy processes. They work directly with important stakeholders such as governments, policy makers and regional economic communities, such as Southern African Development Community (SADC).

UNESCO was chosen as the United Nations partner organization, because the two organizations collaborate in some initiatives and work together on SRHR elements such as comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in the region. An example of a policy initiative the two UN agencies share together is the ESA Ministerial Commitment, a joint commitment led by the ministries of health and education from the ESA region supported by the United Nations, Southern African Development Community (SADC) and East African Development Community (EAC), with its main aim to improve the lives of young people with sexuality education and health services. The NGO stakeholders were chosen based on the fact that they had previous experience and knowledge of working in collaboration with UNFPA. The ministry representative was chosen on this basis as well. It was important that the interviewees were identified at

regional level, so that rather than having knowledge of one country, they were familiar with regional themes in whole East and Southern Africa. This, however, does not mean that each interviewee would be perfectly familiar with all of the respective East and Southern African countries.

TABLE 4 Profiles of the interviewees

INT1	UNFPA ESARO representative
INT2	UNFPA ESARO representative
INT3	UNFPA ESARO representative
INT4	UNFPA ESARO representative
INT5	NGO representative and UNFPA ESARO stakeholder
INT6	NGO representative and UNFPA ESARO stakeholder
INT7	UNESCO Regional Office for Southern Africa representative and United Nations partner agency stakeholder
INT8	Government official from health-related ministry and UNFPA ESARO stakeholder

Pilot interview

A pilot interview was conducted prior to the official interviews on 6ᵗʰ of May 2019 at the UNFPA ESARO office in Johannesburg. The purpose of the pilot interview was to practice and test the initial interview guideline. The pilot interview was conducted with a communication professional that works at UNFPA ESARO and is familiar with the topic of sexual and reproductive health and rights and advocating for it. The fact that the person for the test interview was knowledgeable of the topic was important for the feedback on the questionnaire. The pilot interview was not included in the analysis.

The pilot interview helped the researcher to note some overlapping and reiteration in the questionnaire, which resulted in refining the interview guideline. For instance, the initial questions for the pilot interview emphasized too much on the term "advocacy", which could have over-directed and predetermined the answers. After the pilot interview, the interview guideline was finetuned and reassembled to better fit the purpose of this research. The final interview guideline can be found in the Annex 2 of this research.

4.5   Implementing the interviews

The interviews were held in between May 2019 and January 2020. Most of the interviews were held during the summer period of 2019 (May to August) and the final interview was conducted in January 2020. Five of the interviews were held face to face in Johannesburg, South Africa at the UNFPA ESARO and

UNESCO offices, and the remainder three interviews were conducted virtually via Skype or WhatsApp calls. Face to face interviews in Johannesburg took place either in the interviewees' office rooms or in a general meeting room. The interviews did not require face to face contact, even though the researcher preferred it.

The interviewees were asked to reserve time from 30 minutes to maximum one hour to the interview. The research topic and themes were introduced firstly in the interview proposal emails, secondly in the emails reminding about the approaching interview and thirdly in the beginning of each interview, to make sure that the interviewees were informed and on the same track about the topic. The interviewees were informed that their responses will be kept confidential and data handled anonymously, and therefore there would be no possibility to identify one from the research. They were also told that there is no need to prepare for the interview, as the interview focused on their own thoughts and experiences.

Before each interview, the interviewees were asked to read a privacy notice and consent form for the data collection and give their consent. As requirement of EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), a privacy notice and official consent must be approved by the research subjects. In addition to emailing the documents beforehand, the privacy notice and consent form were brought to the interview situation for the participants to be signed. In Skype or WhatsApp call interviews, the GDPR documents were emailed and asked to be read prior to the interview, with no signing and scanning required as this would have caused additional work for the interviewees. The consent to take part in the research was ensured verbally in the very beginning of each remote interview.

The purpose of this research was to explore what factors should be taken into consideration when influencing the policy advancements regarding sexual and reproductive health and rights in East and Southern Africa. Additionally, role of stakeholders in this process was examined. The content of the interviews was divided into three main predetermined themes based on the research questions; practical aspects of policy influencing process, advocacy and communication approaches and the role of stakeholders. In addition to the three themes, background questions were asked in the beginning of each interview. The purpose of the background questions was to establish a profile of the interviewee and the main themes and projects the person works with. It helped forming the interview questions more precisely and determine the right direction of the questionnaire.

When conducting the research interviews, the interviewer had an interview guideline, a two-sided A4 paper with the three predetermined themes, each including several sub-questions. The researcher wanted to have a variety of predetermined questions under each theme to guide the interview and to have a possible question for different situations. Not all of the predetermined questions ended up being used, especially if the interviewee was comprehensive enough in the answers. All interviewees were not asked the same questions.

For instance, questions about stakeholder roles differed, whether they were asked from the case organization representatives or stakeholder representatives. All interviews were conducted in English.

4.6 Research data

The eight interviews conducted lasted from 32 minutes to 70 minutes, with an average of 48 minutes. All interviews were transcribed, even though not all transcribed material was used in the analysis. For instance, some clearly unrelated material for the research topic was left out, such as information about the interviewees' backgrounds and previous working experiences. Also, some repetitive words were excluded. One interview had to be conducted in two parts and therefore caused some repetition in the interview questions and hence, it was not transcribed thoroughly. After transcribing and analysing the data, all tapes were destroyed.

All interview material was pseudonymized, meaning that all personal identifiers in the data were replaced with artificial identifiers or pseudonyms (Achatz & Hubbard 2017, 7). To ensure the anonymity of the interviewees, the interviewees names were replaced with artificial codes as seen in Table 4; INT1, INT2, INT3, INT4, and so forth. Also, meanings that would reveal the identity of the interviewee or other persons were replaced with different codes that stand for similar meanings. The GDPR defines that personal data shall be "kept in a form which permits identification of data subjects for no longer than is necessary for the purposes for which the personal data are processed." Therefore, all recorded data material was erased after used for this research's purposes.

4.7 Thematic analysis

The data of this research was analysed by using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is recommended method for a research that aims to find an answer for a practical research problem (Eskola & Suoranta 2005, 178). To succeed, thematic analysis needs dialogue between theory and research data, and they end up interlacing in the written research (Eskola & Suoranta 2005, 175).

As this research is theory-bounded, theoretical assumptions are included in the analysis to help with the analysis process. Still, the analysis is not directly and completely based on theory, as the units of analysis are chosen from the research material with the theory and previous knowledge guiding and helping in it. The influence of theory is present in the analysis, but the purpose is not theory-testing as it rather aims to open new thoughts. The stage of the analysis when theory is taken into consideration depends on the researcher. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 109.)

Theory-bounded research is usually driven by abductive reasoning, which is the case with this research as well (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 110). Abductive reasoning presumes that forming theories is possible when making observations from the data is based on some presumptive clue (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 107). In the researcher's thought cycle, material-bounded approach and utilization of existing theories are varying, meaning that the approach includes features from both material-bounded and theory-bounded analyses (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 111).

This research follows an approach to thematic analysis introduced by Moules et al. (2017). This approach determines six phases for thematic analysis which are 1) familiarizing with the data; 2) generating initial codes; 3) searching for themes; 4) reviewing themes; 5) defining and naming themes and 6) producing the report (Moules et al. 2017, 4).

The analysis was started with re-reading the transcribed interview material. Hirsjärvi and Hurme (2009, 143) suggest giving time for the material reading phase and to read it several times, as this usually initiates questions and thoughts on the material. In qualitative research, reading is not passive, rather, it results in gaining understanding for the analysis. The interviews were first analysed individually, as it is typical for qualitative research that the researcher goes from individual findings and considerations to more general claims (Eskola & Suoranta 2005, 83). Reading was done gradually, being aware that the first assumption was not the last one. According to Eskola and Suoranta (2005, 151), the researcher should pay attention to thoughts that arise from the first readings and recognize that these thoughts are usually not the last ones to avoid an "odyssey" and bias in the analysis.

Themes that are included in the interviews can as such represent the parsing of the data and the researcher can start the analysis based on these (Eskola & Suoranta 2005, 151). Therefore, the reading of the data started bearing the themes of this research defined by the research problem in mind. The researcher focused on two main themes based on research questions: features of the policy influencing process and the role of stakeholders in this process. These themes were further deployed in the research interviews, which questions were based on three predetermined themes: practical aspects of policy influencing process, advocacy and communication approaches and the role of stakeholders.

After familiarizing with the data and re-reading it several times, underlining relevant thematic units and making notes loosely, initial codes were generated. Coding means that the data is split into units that are easier to interpret. It allows the researcher to simplify and focus on specific characteristics of the data. During coding, researchers identify important sections of text and attach labels to define them. (Moules et al. 2015, 5-6.) When creating codes, it was reviewed along the coding that the themes were not interchangeable, although, similar meanings might be present under some codes. Coding was conducted with labeling each initial code with a different abbreviation describing the meaning of it. These codes were then further placed on separate documents grouped according to the research questions.

After the initial coding and grouping the codes in different documents presenting the research questions, initial themes were raised from the research data. Once identified, themes are concepts that link substantial portions of the research data together (DeSantis & Ugarriza 2000, 354). As this research follows abductive reasoning, the themes were generated abductively with the theory and researcher's previous knowledge of the topic guiding the analysis. Thus, reading and writing the theoretical part and the analysis phase overlapped.

In the phase of searching for the themes and generating initial ones, the researcher focused on firstly on factors relating to the process of influencing the policy environment and on factors related to stakeholders in the process. After that, factors that were seen as important and enablers for policy change were searched from the data. Consequently, aspects that were seen as restricting the advocacy work were underlined from the data. After painting a picture of the enabling and hindering factors, the researcher started to search for meanings suggesting how these different causes and circumstances should be taken into consideration in the policy influencing.

When stakeholder factors from the data were identified, the researcher started to look for instruments explaining dimensions of these stakeholders and their mutual relationships. The researcher focused especially on searching for advantages and disadvantages of working with stakeholders as well as on how the representatives of the different interviewed organizations, two UN agencies, two NGOs and a government official from a ministry, perceived their own as well as each other's features in their work. The researcher thought that this would allow to do a comparison on their different role in advocacy in the analysis.

In the fifth phase of thematic analysis as introduced by Moules et al. (2017, 10), defining and naming the themes occurs. In this phase, the researcher determines what aspects of the data each theme captures and writes a detailed analysis which identifies the story the specific theme tells (Braun & Clarke 2006, 92). In this phase, the researcher focused on the linkages between the different initial themes and combined the ones with similar meanings. The researcher ended up in having three main themes; a theme explaining multi-stakeholder engagement, theme on communicative factors such as framing and a theme describing the role of stakeholders and features of organizations in SRHR policy influencing. Once the themes were fully established in the final phase of the analysis, producing the analysis report was conducted.

In thematic analysis, some overlapping between the themes might occur as some parts of the data might be included in multiple themes (Moules et al. 2017, 10). This is the case in this research as well, as some aspects raised from the research could be categorized in multiple themes. Next chapter presents the findings of this research divided into three main themes based on the thematic analysis.

5 FINDINGS

The findings of this research are presented in this chapter. Since this research follows abductive reasoning, the theoretical background was reflected with the research data during the analysis, and the findings from earlier studies are also discussed within the results. Previous research was guiding the units of analysis chosen from the research data. Although theoretical assumptions are included in the analysis in theory-bounded research, the findings are not completely based on theory (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2018, 109).

The findings are divided into three main themes and their subthemes. The first theme, multi-stakeholder engagement, explains how engagement with important stakeholders in the SRHR advocacy should be conducted. The engagement with stakeholders is described at different levels; with local communities at grassroots level, with development partners and finally with national policy makers at government level. When engaging the local stakeholders, meaning communities and those affected by the policies, participatory approach is especially important to be taken into consideration. With development partners, adhering to dialogue in the stakeholder collaborations was seen as crucial. Engagement with national policy makers sets the need for utilizing different advocacy strategies.

The second theme, clear communication furthers influencing efforts, stresses the importance of strategic framing and utilizing mass media when communicating around SRHR issues. Third and final theme, stakeholder collaboration brings mutual benefits, describes the role of stakeholders and their different features in the advocacy. Since many of this research's issues can be seen as cross-cutting, the themes might include parallel meanings. The first subchapter gives answers to RQ1 and partly to RQ2, the second theme answers to RQ1 alone and the final theme answers mostly to RQ2 but also partially to the first research question.

After presenting findings of this research, the following chapters of discussions and conclusions portray a summary of the main results and how they answer to the research questions. The main findings are also further reflected with this research's literature. Along with conclusions, implications for theory

and practice, as well as this study's limitations and suggestions for future research are presented.

5.1 Multi-stakeholder engagement

Working together with stakeholders is crucial to influence SRHR policy change. Generally, each interviewee of this research highlighted the importance of collaborating with stakeholders in their work. Whether these collaborations were referred to as partnerships, coalitions, alliances or networks, all interviewees came to the same conclusion that effective policy influencing is first and foremost about multi-stakeholder collaboration. In a similar notion, Servaes (2016, 708) stresses that development issues, often due to their complexity, should be settled together with different actors in multi-stakeholder networks.

It became clear from the interviews that aiming for an enabling policy environment for SRHR issues faces different challenges in the region of East and Southern Africa. The most significant type of challenge the attempted SRHR policy advancements encounter, is resistance springing from socio-cultural factors, such as from religious and traditional values. The opposition is present at different levels of society, from the general public to the level of national governments where high-level policy decisions are made. The interviewees of this research stressed that to achieve positive policy change for SRHR, these constraints should be first of all taken into consideration in the advocacy. Sustainable stakeholder engagement is feasible only when the socio-cultural environment around SRHR is acknowledged and respected.

When identifying relevant stakeholders that should be involved in the SRHR advocacy, the interviewees stressed the importance of engaging those affected by the policies, which often are local communities and different community groups at the grassroots level. The basis for any advocacy effort should be participatory, meaning that the affected populations should be involved in the efforts. When adhering to participatory approach, the affected populations are the key actor in defining problems concerning them.

Another stakeholder group that was seen as important to be engaged, were other development partners from the SRHR field. When partnerships with relevant stakeholders are established, approaching the policy makers with leveraged synergies between the organizations is perceived as more credible. When engaging with these stakeholders, dialogic discussions intended towards reaching mutual understanding around the advocated issue was seen as a prerequisite for the collaboration's effectiveness.

Finally, aiming for engagement with policy makers, who in this study are often decision makers at the level of national governments in East and Southern Africa, is crucial. As with the development partners, advocacy practitioners need to aim for mutual discussions also with policy makers and stay active during the policy processes. Although the countries should always "own" their policy processes and their legal environment should be respected, different ad-

vocacy strategies to be taken advantage of especially in settings where the policy environment is not that enabling, were elaborated by the interviewees. Sometimes it was seen as more beneficial to approach the policy makers through their peers, who might be more supportive towards the issues. Also, taking advantage of windows of opportunities arising from government's activities or other relevant political events was seen as an effective advocacy strategy.

Next, what engagement means for each above mentioned stakeholder group is discussed in more detail. First, participation of local stakeholders in the advocacy efforts, then, multi-stakeholder dialogue with development partners and finally engagement with policy makers are elaborated. The socio-cultural constraints SRHR faces in the East and Southern Africa region are also presented along with the first subchapter on local participation, as the interviewees stressed recognition of the hindrances as the fundamental basis for any advocacy effort.

5.1.1 Local stakeholder participation

Organizations practicing advocacy to advance SRHR policies, should have understanding of the policy environment and the factors that might pose challenges for the advocacy. Only when having a wide contextual understanding of the policy environment, a right influencing approach can be chosen. As Servaes (2016, 704) states, to achieve social change in a sustainable way in development efforts, it is vital to pay attention to cultural factors such as religion and values as well as to other aspects of the policy environment. At the level of global health programs, this might require especially understanding the motives and agendas of the involved actors (Obregon & Waisbord 2010, 25). For example, one interviewee stressed, that without understanding the pre-existing, either enabling or mitigating, conditions for an issue, it becomes harder to choose a right tool for the advocacy efforts.

> I think that advocacy without spending a lot of time in understanding what is status quo, what are the factors that are either enablers or constraints or mitigate, without understanding it, the tool of advocacy you then use could be different. (INT6)

Starting point for any effort to influence SRHR policy change should be increasing awareness of the different socio-cultural sensitivities surrounding the issues. The interviewees of this research emphasized that the most pressing challenges they face in their work on SRHR advancements, arise usually from patriarchal social systems, where topics around sexual and reproductive health and rights are perceived as sensitive. When patriarchy, as a male-dominated power structure, is present throughout the society, it was often seen as resulting in general negative attitudes opposing SRHR advancements. Also other hindrances due to socio-cultural values, such as highly religious values, were seen as an obstacle to advance the issues. Earlier research (e.g. Oronje et al. 2011; Standing et al. 2011) has described SRHR advancements challenges similarly, stating that the weak acceptance and realization for the issues in sub-Saharan Africa occurs

mostly because of the issues sensitivity in countries where different cultural, traditional and religious beliefs are strongly valued.

> And that [patriarchy] has been one of my biggest, biggest challenges, because people got to ask themselves permission and they got to ask millions of other people permission just to think outside of that paradigm. And wherever I want to look at, it surfaces in every training session that I've had or any interaction I've had on SRHR. Patriarchy, whether it is tradition, whether it is religion, whether it is cultural, whether it is societal, it just raises its ugly head everywhere. And that is what my biggest challenge is, it is patriarchy. (INT1)

> Some of the challenges are cultural, some are religiously driven, some are political. What I mean, HIV is a very sensitive area. For instance, religious people may not understand why you want to be as UN talking about men who have sex with men. Because some may think it is immoral. Some of the cultures may think why you would be concerned about people who sell their bodies. They may think it is immoral. Some people when we talk about giving capacity to a 10-year-old to avoid HIV, they may think you are promoting sexuality among young people. So those are some of the challenges you face. (INT5)

The negative attitudes due to different socio-cultural values towards SRHR advancement are present throughout the society, from personal level to the policy arenas. It was seen as important to remember that the policy makers themselves are individuals, with their individual beliefs and values also affecting their policy decisions and positions on the issues. The interviewees mentioned that at the level of local communities, the resistance can result in for example hindering the elimination of SRHR related harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage.

Another concrete disadvantage resulting from the above mentioned negative views on SRHR issues, are often the misconceptions and false beliefs concerning especially the more sensitive SRHR issues. Standing et al. (2011, 1) state that the concept of sexual rights is sometimes deficiently understood by many policy actors in sub-Saharan Africa and thus, its elements are not always easy to promote in policies. The interviewees stressed similarly that concepts of sexual and reproductive rights, such as the rights of sexual and gender minorities or abortion related issues, are most often seen as sensitive.

Also SRHR elements touching adolescents and youth receive often contradictory reception. Most common misunderstanding stated by the interviewees was regarding comprehensive sexuality education (CSE). In many East and Southern African countries, the laws are supportive and accept CSE delivery at schools, but still, the implementation of the subject is not comprehensive enough or resistant groups are trying to have it removed from curriculums. This results often from the misunderstanding that the CSE promotes sexual activity among young people when, in fact, the evidence shows that delivering CSE as part of the school curriculum has positive effects on young people practicing safer sexual behaviours and reducing transmissions of HIV and other STIs. To tackle this problem, the interviewees emphasized the importance of having the opposition, in this case the resistant parents and other groups, involved in the policy influencing efforts.

> We also have parents as the key stakeholders because of the sensitivity of CSE, we have to buy in the parents, there tends to be a lot of opposition and the government does not want to go against what the communities are saying so that is a very important partner to have onboard as well. (INT3)

> I think that sometimes we do four steps forward, and then we do three or six steps backwards. Because of the nature of this work, every single time, since I started working, there is not a single time that we do not have fires that we need to put out. There are in Tanzania, Eswatini they are very well coordinated and that has been one of the main challenges, so while we make progress like in Uganda they had banned CSE from being taught in schools and then we managed to intervene and advocate and work with the government, and then they said "fine, we are going to develop a CSE framework that should allow delivery of CSE in schools and the framework was done", and then the religious groups came again and said "no, we don't want this" and then you go backwards. (INT3)

Often the groups who oppose the advocated change are the ones preventing the realization at the grassroots level, and therefore they should be optimally involved in the process. If the people in the communities do not accept the policies, their implementation among individuals can not be truly realized.

To convert the opposition at the community level was also seen as crucial to further influence the high-level policy change at the level of national governments, because as stated in the above interview quote, the governments do not want to go against what the communities are saying. Although the decision-maker is responsible for making a decision, in the end, he or she remains responsible to the community and the consent of the community determines the policy maker's right to decide (Servaes & Malikhao 2010, 47-48). Thus, a decision maker acting against its community would possibly affect his or her legitimacy in the community.

Overall, the local communities should be optimally part of the policy discussions and have their say on issues affecting them. These stakeholders are the groups affected by the policies, and therefore they should also be involved in the policy formulation. The interviewees stressed, that involving local stakeholders leads to empowered communities and therefore also to better success for the complete realization of the initiatives. The involvement of communities and affected groups is also highlighted in earlier studies on participatory approach to development communication. For instance, Muturi (2005, 82) stresses that participation in development efforts means involving local stakeholders in the activities, rather than seeing them as obstacles to development. Previous studies on stakeholder and community engagement indicate that to make engagement more bottom-up oriented, initiatives at the community level should have the community itself as the key actor to define problems and solutions to the issues, as this will embrace their participation (Aakhus & Bzdak 2015, 195; Bowen et al. 2010, 305).

> So for me the key stakeholder in any project is your beneficiary. Because you can not work without including your beneficiary. Because that is where you see the impact and the change happening. And if you don't have the beneficiary on board, even if you are going to stand on your head, they are not going to do what you want them to do. Because you are not doing what they want you to do, because they want to see certain things. (INT1)

> And then there is community mobilization and that is engaging with traditional leaders, faith-based leaders, engaging with your communities themselves, mobilizing people affected, you know. So I think sometimes our biggest advocates are people that are directly affected, but unfortunately in our work we also deal with a lot of stigma. (INT4)

The interviewees referred to some specific local stakeholders as "gatekeepers", meaning that these groups have a dominant position to either encourage or hinder the SRHR realization in their respective communities. In some East and Southern African countries, traditional, religious and other community leaders can have a predominant position to affect the community's state on the SRHR issues. To win over especially the reluctant gatekeeper stakeholders, the interviewees stressed that they should be optimally involved in the advocacy activities already from the beginning of the process. This is something that earlier research has also found beneficial in the context of another global health initiative, as Obregon and Waisbord (2010, 42) studied that in polio eradication initiatives in Asia and Africa, especially the resistant communities were important to have involved already from the starting point of the activities.

> If a traditional leader says "you are not doing this in my village", nothing happens. You know, so you have to work with them as well. And often those gatekeepers are some of the hardest gatekeepers to convince. And I think the reason being is, we normally leave them for last. So we do everything and then all of a sudden we go "oops, what about that crowd?" And then we try to bring them in and if people are not involved from the beginning rightfully, they say "hey it is not my problem." (INT4)

Furthermore, the interviewees stressed that it is important to expand the participatory approach from local level also to advocacy directed towards national policy makers at the government level. When a participatory approach to policy advocacy is practiced, it makes the desired policy change more likely and as indicated, this kind of approach also helps the policies to speak truly for those that are affected by the SRHR hindrances. This is something that the theory also highlights, as Grabill (2000, 48) states that a policy written from bottom-up works much differently than a policy written from distance, because the greatest influence for policy change comes from the affected population and the local institutions in the communities.

One interviewee gave an example, that to show the importance of focusing on key populations in the efforts to end the HIV/AIDS epidemic, sex workers as well as sexual minorities were included in the high-level policy discussions. In advocacy activities to end the HIV/AIDS epidemic, it is important to take key populations disproportionately affected by the epidemic, for example sex workers and sexual minorities, into account. If these groups are ignored in the efforts to end the epidemic, it puts the whole response at risk. This utilization of participatory approach brought about positive change because it made the key populations more visible and concrete to the policy makers and also awakened their emotions.

> They [stories from the ground] are actually very powerful. Giving an example, when we were in Maputo last year, we were seeing members of parliament. There were people saying: "we have never seen a transgender, why are people doing that?" We invited the transgender, we invited sex workers. And as people were telling their stories, I saw a shift in members of parliament, beginning to understand the people. That this could have been my child. [...] So those things made members of parliament see the light. So similarly if you document that and write or do a video on that as part of the media, so that they really understand that you are talking about human beings. And that could be you, that could be anyone. That we really have a duty to understand, it helps. So yes, telling the story, it helps. That is why I was saying it is important that they are also part of the discourse so that people will understand their stories. (INT5)

These findings from the research data imply that participatory approach in the influencing activities to SRHR advancement should be a cross-cutting approach applied at all levels of development initiatives. Local stakeholders, meaning the ones affected by the policies, should be involved in the advocacy and development activities during the whole life cycle of the process and be truly listened to in the efforts. Participatory approach helps also to tackle the socio-cultural challenges SRHR faces at different levels of society. Bowen et al. (2010, 305-306) also stress in their research that when communities take partial leadership in handling solutions to issues concerning them, this enables organizations to achieve outcomes that would have been unattainable without community participation and ultimately, it leads to shared benefits for both involved parties.

Next, what stakeholder engagement in the SRHR advocacy means between different development partners, such as the United Nations agencies, NGOs, government officials, regional economic communities and other development institutions, is discussed. The findings focus especially on how an effective collaborative approach can be achieved through engagement.

5.1.2 Dialogue with development partners

Establishing partnerships with different development actors was seen as a precondition for SRHR advocacy. One reason that collaboration with multiple stakeholders was seen as important, was because the collaboration helps to leverage the synergies between the different organizations. A combined effect is greater than the sum of the stakeholder's separate effects, because several organizations with similar and coherent needs are perceived as more credible by the policy makers and governments. The interviewees explained that if different organizations aiming for similar results would reach the policy makers at different times, this would not be efficient as it would only confuse them.

> I think there is value in terms of benefits, I would say it is – you cannot do it without partnership in the countries we are working, because only UNFPA cannot deliver the response that the governments are looking for partnerships. […] [Strategic partnerships] will help produce duplication of efforts, they will help leverage synergies, they will help have efficient gains, and transactional cost will be reduced. You can imagine these governments who are trying to think through their economies and five or six partners are coming to say the same things at different times. They just will not take it seriously. So that coalition is important. (INT6)

To leverage synergies from the partnerships, achieving consensus between the involved stakeholders is first and foremost required. The collaborative efforts should be aimed at achieving a mutual understanding around the advocate issue. This is something all interviewees agreed on, stating that "one voice from all" is important, because it reinforces the message and therefore makes the outcomes more efficient. Only when consensus is reached, a common approach on how to engage the policy makers can be determined.

Consensus between the different partners is achieved by working together in a close collaboration. The interviewees stressed that deliberations and continuous communicative actions should be conducted between the stakeholders, to finally reach a common ground to the issue. Similarly, previous studies also suggest that in multi-stakeholder engagement efforts, focus should be on dialogue where solutions to the issues and shared learnings about the problems are created (Aakhus & Bzdak 2015, 189). In the concept of true dialogue presented by Taylor and Kent (2002, 29-30), commitment between the stakeholders is present, entailing that all aim to understand and value each other's interests and the process is guided towards reaching common understandings. Stakeholders committed to dialogue are willing to continue the conversation and reach fulfilling outcomes for all parties.

> Communication is very important in advocacy. Because for you to be able to get the end product out of advocacy, it has to be built up with communication. You should communicate with different people on a different level and get an opinion, and once they have as I said consensus, then we can advocate for that. (INT2)

> So when we brought them [all stakeholders] together, there was that coordination and working together and I think that made it [an advocacy initiative] successful. (INT3)

The interviewees pointed out similar factors on the multi-stakeholder engagement as Aakhus and Bzdak (2015, 195-196); when there is a sense of shared responsibility in the collaboration between stakeholders, it leads finally to strengthening relationships and to building trust. The continuous dialogues between involved parties with similar goals on SRHR leads to building of interpersonal relationships, with strengthening the collaboration and ultimately, to better success of the policy advocacy. Similarly, in the theoretical background of this research, Roloff (2008, 246) stresses that when interactions with stakeholders include repetitive meetings, the communication tends to happen on a more interpersonal level leading to development of interpersonal relationships.

> I think that it is more consistent with this developmental space that it usually comes to more to an individual rather than institution. [...] For us as organization I'd say it is more, we do a lot of what I term as choosing, so I fundamentally handle much of the choosing and it basically means going on coffee dates with people, doing dinners with people, building really strong interpersonal relationships with other individuals and seeing people beyond their job descriptions and their terms of reference. Always finding ways to support people, because people are always looking out for help, as are we always so it is really about seeing how you can meet people half-way and be there for people when they need someone to be there for them. And that usually leads to institutional success. (INT8)

What the above quotation from the research data shows, is that sometimes the relationship building with the individuals of development stakeholders happens also intendedly outside of working hours and scope of the advocated issue, with an actual purpose to establish interpersonal relationships. An interviewee from an NGO tells in the above example that it is important for the organization to engage in building strong interpersonal relationships, because it leads to better success of stakeholder collaboration. The interviewee also felt this way of working as common for the entire development field. This notion of relationship building portrays especially the theoretical concept of dialogic engagement presented by Taylor and Kent (2014, 391), where interaction outside of the discussed issue is also required, in order to build relationships between the stakeholders. Similarly, Theunissen and Wan Noordin (2011, 10) stress that in dialogue, engaging and approaching the participants as human beings and not just as representatives of interest groups is required.

Only when consensus on the issue through multiple deliberations is achieved, a common approach to policy advocacy between involved partners can be established. Common approach refers to how the policy makers are approached in the advocacy effort in practice. Previous studies on issue-focused stakeholder management suggest similarly that a joint approach to advocacy in multi-stakeholder networks is achieved through engaging in multiple discussions between the partners (Roloff 2008, 245). The interviewees stressed that a common approach to any mutual action in the policy influencing efforts, is crucial for the success of the stakeholder collaboration. As stated earlier, if organizations with similar interests approach policy makers at different times, it will make them disoriented and at its worst, refrain them from taking actions on the wanted policy advancement.

> Because, when you engage with people you actually go into discussion and conversation, and you actually increase knowledge that way and you increase awareness that way. And when you go through that discussion you can actually come up with a joint plan of action, and with the joint plan of action it is not just you being held responsible, but a range of stakeholders being held responsible. So advocacy is then shared through that team of people and you have spoken to, so that is the one thing. (INT1)

To reach consensus and finally a common plan of action to SRHR advocacy does not always come easy. The interviewees elaborated that when multiple parties are involved in the advocacy efforts, their approach to the SRHR issue might sometimes differ. One interviewee stressed that for instance, the partners commitment to human rights might be different, meaning that they have a different standpoint on the rights-based attribute of the advocated SRHR issue. This constraint to the stakeholder collaboration was seen as possible to be tackled, meaning that a common stance on the issue is reached, with continuous mutual discussions among the participants. This is something that previous research on stakeholder engagement also considers as important; Taylor and Kent (2014, 390) stress that when communication between stakeholders con-

forms to dialogue, the groups must be willing to change their views and establish mutual views of reality.

> In terms of the drawbacks, it takes more time to get something done. Because you want to bring everyone around the table and them to agree, that is the direction you need to go. That process sometimes can be frustrating and it can delay action, but it is also very important to be held. And also you tend to be at different levels, so not every partner's commitment to human rights is the same, others more than others, so that tends to be a drawback. Because at the end of the day you need to make consensus so you kind of come to say: "all right, this is where we are, this is what they are saying, what do we really need to give and what do we really need to do. (INT3)

> The drawback is that it normally takes longer, because people are coming from different spaces, they have different perceptions, and they have different value systems so that may tend to make the policy product take much longer. But at the same time, once it has been agreed, it makes the practicality of implementation more likely. (INT5)

In addition to the sometimes differing standpoints on SRHR issues, the interviewees mentioned slowness being another constraint of the multi-stakeholder engagement with development partners. An effective collaboration that includes dialogic elements requires multiple discussions, tends to make the process more time-consuming. However, as indicated in the above quote, the discussions were seen as important to be held because only with commitment to dialogue it is possible to reach consensus, especially among the stakeholders having a different take on the advocated issues. An interviewee from the government side also stressed that although the process of collaborating with partners is often slow, it is important to have, because there should be commitment to the stakeholders and the process should be as transparent as possible. One UN interviewee added that especially at the regional level the collaboration can be more time-consuming and require more resources because the meetings cannot take place as easily and more effort goes into the collaboration's coordination.

In the next chapter, engagement between advocacy practitioners and policy makers is elaborated in more detail. When speaking of policy makers in this research's context, the interviewees referred most often to policy makers at the level of national governments in the respective East and Southern African countries, which the next chapter also focuses on.

5.1.3   Policy maker engagement

To influence an enabling policy environment for sexual and reproductive health and rights in East and Southern Africa, the organizations aiming for change should aim to engage with the policy makers in their advocacy practices. Policy makers are important to be reached since for an issue to gain agenda status, it must achieve support from at least some key decision makers (Cobb & Elder 1971, 905). The interviewees stressed that most importantly, the engagement efforts in their work are directed towards policy makers at the level of national governments, as they are usually ultimately responsible for initiating the

changes. The importance of policy maker engagement is also highlighted in the theory on communication for social change, as for example Waisbord (2015, 150) stresses that engaging and persuading policy makers about desired policy changes and supporting the policy implementations should be included in the advocacy.

The interviewees pointed out similar factors as Taylor and Kent (2014, 391); in engaging the policy makers, mutual understanding between the participants should be reached and the decisions should be beneficial for all involved actors. This outcome is reached with participative actions, such as multiple discussions, between the advocacy practitioners and the policy makers. Optimally, shared value between the stakeholders is reached.

> Advocacy to me is presenting information and evidence in thought-provoking and compelling ways, in such a way when you either deepen the understanding of the other individual on your subject matter or you basically shift their understanding to your position or perspective and but fundamentally by the end of the advocacy conversation it is really about establishing some sort of shared value where we believe in equality, we believe in dignity, we believe in collaboration, we must believe in something that can force us to work together. And this is about a series of conversations to move an individual's thoughts to better action in the future. (INT8)

Similarly as with the development partners mentioned in the previous subchapter, the interviewees stressed that their engagement with policy makers to influence policy change requires constant communication. Some interviewees qualified this process as dialogue. In the concept of dialogue in stakeholder engagement presented by Taylor and Kent (2014, 389), dialogue involves elements of being present and having simultaneous interactions and respect towards all participants. The interviewees mentioned in a similar vein that when engaging with policy makers, it is important to stay active and responsive during the conversations. Policy makers are most likely to challenge some of the stances presented so if required, more evidence to back up the arguments when critical questions and concerns emerge from the discussions should be generated. The interviewees also stressed that in a successful policy maker engagement, solutions for the issues should be provided.

> You are trying to either create a reform or a structural change, so they will not make that decision lightly, so you have to stay active, often times you have to generate more evidence after the first level of evidence, so you have to be able to have the skills set as well as the expertise of a multidisciplinary team that is backing that advocacy strategy. So as the questions emerge from the conversation and from the policy dialogue, you are responsive. (INT6)

> We have to provide solutions also, advocacy does not mean that we just talk, we have to provide solutions as well. So it is a procedure, a process, which is done in terms of identifying the issue, analysing it, talking to people, having different meetings, proposing solutions, and then to build up… what is it called. To build up consensus. (INT2)

Influencing a desired policy change does not happen overnight. The interviewees stressed that since a policy change is usually a fundamental and structural change in a country's policies, the multiple discussions during policy different

advocacy phases are time-consuming. Additionally, the fact that advancement of SRHR issues can sometimes spark resistance in East and Southern African countries was furthermore seen to make the advocacy process slower, due to obstacles caused along the influencing process. These challenges that different socio-cultural factors impose on SRHR highlight the importance of mutual discussions between policy makers, where the SRHR matters are explained thoroughly.

> And basically sometimes you have to go into SRHR one on one on a policy maker and you have to make them understand that, "as much as you have your prejudice and bias, I can't necessarily change your prejudice or bias but I can make you see things from a different perspective." So there is a lot of explaining that has to be done and that can be very time-consuming, because you find yourself repeating very often, but I'd say on the bright side that there are some genuinely nice people at least regionally in terms of legislators and policy makers, genuinely good people. (INT8)

When embracing a participatory approach in the advocacy efforts, engagement at the level of national governments should also be conducted in a participatory manner. Hasselskog (2020, 92) has studied that in the international development field, the concept of local participation is often interlinked with national ownership, which refers to leadership that a nation state receiving development aid practices over its native policy making. In the notion of national ownership, the "recipient governments" should be the leaders of policy processes concerning them (Hasselskog 2020, 95). The interviewees stressed similarly, that when aiming to influence SRHR advancements at the national level, advocacy efforts should be conducted sensitively with respect to the country's legal environment. Like with the local stakeholders, engagement with policy makers should also be participatory in the sense that national governments must "own" their policy processes. One interviewee underlined that national ownership makes the engagement in advocacy more sustainable.

> Countries, for example, national ownership, super important, they often know their context the best and it is always important for sustainability that the national government actually takes on what you are advising and promoting. (INT7)

> Member state ownership is tremendously important. As civil society and NGOs we can only do so much and fundamentally, if member states don't recognize certain instruments and certain tools, it makes our lives significantly difficult in terms of getting them to do anything in their respective countries. So for instance, I will give you an example of Botswana. Botswana only ratified the Maputo Protocol last year, Maputo Protocol has been around since 2005 and it is probably Africa's best document when it comes to anything around recuding gender-based violence and harmful practices, when it comes to adolescent girls and young women in general. One couldn't really have any constructive discussions that yielded any positive outcomes with the Bostwana government until they had ratified the Maputo Protocol… so you know, that is really difficult if the country does not recognize the tools and instruments. (INT8)

Being open for feedback was seen as an important feature of a successful policy engagement. Since national ownership has to be embraced in the advocacy, the interviewees reminded that therefore the policy maker's suggestions should

always be seriously taken into consideration. If the policy makers were not seen to be happy with the advocacy approach, the advocacy practitioners need to adapt to a different approach.

> Exactly, to listen to what they [policy makers] have to say. And to be able to take on board what they say. And if you need to change your strategy, be flexible enough to change your strategy. (INT6)

As highlighted earlier, the socio-cultural values that sometimes hinder the SRHR policy advancements, are reflected also at the level of national policy arenas. When engaging with the policy makers, the legal as well as socio-cultural environment towards SRHR in the respective East and Southern African countries should be taken into account. The interviewees stressed similar fact as Servaes and Malikhao (2010, 48), that drawing on cultural sensitivity in the advocacy leads more likely to desired results of the efforts.

> And in some sense it is also to be aware of the political sensitivities of the some issues in the region, for example regarding abortion and key populations and of course we have to be bold and progressive and advance or achieve progress in the areas we are supposed to work with, so we should not shy away from that but we also have to cater or adapt our messaging to the different audiences and different countries we speak to. (INT7)

The controversial nature of some SRHR issues in East and Southern Africa might set hindrances to advancing certain policy enhancements. This sets the need to utilize different advocacy strategies in the engagement activities, such as approaching the policy makers through their peers and taking advantage of political opportunities.

The interviewees stressed that one strategy to achieve more positive policy changes for SRHR, could be approaching especially the reluctant policy makers through their peers. The peer groups could be individuals who the policy makers respect and who have a more supportive view on the respective SRHR matter. When the message is brought by someone the policy makers trust personally, they tend to listen more carefully. This advocacy strategy also embraces the fact that policy decisions are often made in informal ways and in informal situations.

> Because often times like I said, the truth of the matter is, policy decisions are often made in informal ways, we tend to always think it is only when they sit in their office and they make a decision. No, it is influenced by what they hear from the people they trust and respect that have to say: "why haven't you thought of this." And then you hear them come back and say to somebody "oh we need to find out this." They have heard it from someone, someone that they trust and respect has sold an idea, so political capital is very critical in advocacy. (INT6)

The advocacy effort might be more effective, when individuals with similarities are discussing with each other. One interviewee gave an example, that if an SRHR issue's advancement is debated among traditional or religious leaders in communities, identifying allies that could talk from the same communities could help. Another interviewee also stated that reaching out to the more pre-

judiced policy makers could be done through their fellow policy makers, who have a clear overall picture of the issue and are more sympathetic towards the issues advancement. This is something that earlier research has also found beneficial, as Oronje et al. (2011, 9-10) describe, that in achieving policy change for SRHR issues in sub-Saharan Africa, reaching out to parliamentarians through their fellow members of parliament and other powerful actors who are more sympathetic towards the issues has been successful.

One interviewee gave an example that when working at the regional level in ESA, using a pool of policy makers who have first been trained by the UN agencies at regional meetings to further disseminate the information and best practices in their respective countries to fellow national policy makers has been helpful. These examples of advocacy utilizing peer learning picture an understanding of agenda building, where different levels of priority from decision makers can arise from identifying with specific groups (Cobb & Elder 1971, 908-909). Additionally, the strategy of disseminating the information through a policy maker's peer was seen to work also in situations where the influenced policy maker would in itself be supportive to advance SRHR.

> Then we [UN agency] went to the next level, which was to develop the regional minimum standards for responding to key populations by members of parliament. So we then developed that document to help members of parliament to see, what can you do as people who make policies, what can you do as people who allocate the budget in your country, what can you do as a representative of your own individual constituencies. And based on that we then developed the regional minimum standards, represented them to members of parliament and they adopted it even though there was resistance. So the next step that we are doing now, because it was adopted at the regional level, is to then move to the countries' parliaments… now not regional. Use that instrument that they have used to build capacity on them to also to appreciate, so that you have a pool of people that actually understand. So that they can then influence an enabling environment in that country. (INT5)

The interviewees stressed that engaging the policy makers' peers and disseminating the advocacy messages through them works also as a peer pressure. The policy makers do not often want to feel left out from the regional policy improvements or push the regional average downwards, and therefore the influence of one's peer group benefits the policy advancement.

At regional level in East and Southern Africa, peer pressure was seen to work most efficiently when implying best practices from the region's countries to others. The interviewees, especially the representatives of UN agencies, saw working through different regional instruments, such as the regional economic community SADC and policy framework ESA Ministerial Commitment as an advantage to the policy influencing efforts. The relevance of peer pressure and influence of fellow policy makers was also highlighted in theory, as for example Servaes and Malikhao (2010, 46) suggest that decision makers are more likely to change a policy, if the level of support from peers and outside lobby groups is wide enough.

> And that name and shame sometimes work, because no country wants to go to that level to report and then realise that they are the only ones doing what they are not supposed to be doing so that is one good peer review mechanism. (INT3)

> And they [policy makers of national governments] discuss with peers and they see that a country X has done something, so they also get tempted and see "okay, if Lesotho has done it, we can also do it." [...] It [peer pressure] is important because if you are saying that you are a member of a club, you do not want to be an outlier. You want to move with everyone. So if things are presented before and then there is this country that has this problem, you feel pressured to do something that is different so that you catch up and you are not considered to be the ones that is doing... because for instance they will be saying: "as a region this is how we are performing, as a country this is how we are performing." So you do not want to be seen, to be pushing the regional average down. (INT5)

Although peer learning and pressure benefits advocacy directed towards national policy makers of the respective ESA countries, this advocacy strategy was also seen as benefiting the advocacy practitioners in their work. One UN interviewee stressed that they as an organization also learn from the countries and further apply and utilize the best practices in their policy influencing and supporting work.

In addition to engaging policy maker's supportive peers, taking advantage of political opportunities arising from the policy processes was seen as an effective influencing approach. The interviewees described, that opportunities that could be taken advantage of, include for instance right timing, many stakeholders being open to the idea at the same time and accurate data showing the gaps around the issue being available. Government processes can determine the optimal timing for SRHR advocacy approach. If policy makers of national governments are approached during unfavourable timing according to their processes, it might actually be harmful for the policy advancement.

> And the success factors for that [a successful advocacy effort], I think it was that the timing was right, there were many different partners at the same time who were open to the idea and a lot of data became available that showed that there were huge problems, so the timing was right. There is often a window of opportunity that arises and then, if you are lucky, you are able to take advantage of that window of opportunity. (INT7)

> So communication with the government is very strategic. First of all, you need to identify what it is that the government is doing. You need to understand the government processes, because it is no use going at a time, when there is no space and opportunity to provide input. They are just going to send you away and not listen to you, so you need to know government processes. Very important. Parliamentary processes are very important, then you are going to have to find a key person that you can lobby within the spaces, who has got your, who has got a sympathetic ear towards you. [...] Because when you are going at the wrong time, they are not going to be listening to you. (INT1)

With similar notion to the windows of opportunities described by the interviewees, Joachim (2003, 248-251) has presented the concept of political opportunity structure, which functions as a gatekeeper for prioritizing certain advocacy efforts and creating windows of opportunities. Access to institutions, the presence of powerful allies and changes in political alignments or conflicts affect the structure.

To reach the policy makers at the right time, advocacy practitioners should be aware of the government's or other policy making body's internal

processes. The interviewees stressed that an effective strategy could be scheduling the influencing activities accordingly, when the governments are about to renew their national strategies that include initiatives relevant for advancement of sexual and reproductive health and rights. One interviewee representing UN agency explained that when countries are going through a process of renewing their national strategies, which in the ESA region usually happens every five years, is when the organization starts to look for what could be revised in the strategies to enhance SRHR realization. This is something that also earlier studies have found important, as Oronje et al. (2011, 10) studied that to influence SRHR policy change in sub-Saharan Africa, it is essential to take advantage of entry points provided by government policy networks by for example partnering in drafting the national plans for education and health. Another example of political opportunities stressed by the interviewees, was to take advantage of different relevant political events such as elections and industry events like SRHR related regional conferences.

> So in other words, you need to have a political understanding of what is happening in the government, if it is elections, you need to understand that it is election time now. What are they interested in, who is going to listen to you. Why don't you think they are not going to listen to you. If they are going to listen to you, what is it that is going to influence you. So what are the kind of things you need to do, do you need to have a strong soundbite, or is it just… are they going to have an opportunity to listen to a portfolio or a long presentation. So you need to be strategic around how you communicate and what you communicate, when you communicate. (INT1)

Overall, engagement between advocacy practitioners and policy makers was seen to take some dialogic forms, such as mutual discussions and optimally achieving shared value between participants, but also the interaction was seen to embrace the fact that the national governments have to own their policy processes and thus, the advocacy practitioners need to sometimes defer to the policy makers needs. When engaging with policy makers especially on the more sensitive SRHR issues, advocacy strategies such as utilizing peer pressure and windows of opportunities arising from the government's processes, should be taken advantage of.

5.2   Clear communication furthers influencing efforts

Communication activities remain important in SRHR policy advancement endeavours. Any effective communication approach to influence policy advancement for sexual and reproductive health and rights starts with elaborating the evidence base, meaning information based on research, for the issues. Understanding the existing conditions around the issues helps to choose appropriate arguments and tools used in the policy influencing activities. The interviewees pointed out, that the evidence should also contain possible solutions and objectives that are aimed to be reached in the advocacy. When objectives are established, also targets and indicators for monitoring the progress can be set. Theo-

ry also supports the importance of evidence, because as Servaes and Malikhao (2010, 46) state, a policy shift is most likely to be made when the evidence is considered strong and need for prioritizing the issue identified. With creating a wider topical understanding of the issue, it also helps to justify the importance of the topic's enhancement to the advocacy practitioners.

> And know the facts on it [the issue], because if you know the facts you can defend yourself, back yourself up with the statistics and facts and you are also able to educate people around these issues. It is not just that "oh no, we must stop being nasty to people." But why? You must be able to provide good references around what you are doing, so "this is why I do what I do, I present information based on facts", so it is evidence. (INT1)

The evidence used in advocacy should also depend on who you direct your message to. The interviewees emphasized that prior to any action taken, it is essential to first recognize the target group or person and focus the messages on them. For example, one interviewee described that the message for a traditional leader would be greatly different from a message targeted towards a minister of finance. Thus, gathering evidence and studying the background information on the influenced individual benefits the tailoring of the message.

> And the messages depend so much on the issue that you are dealing with, you also need to tailor your message to who you are speaking. So the way you would address a traditional leader would be vastly different from how you would address the minister of finance when you are trying to get additional money. Your evidence would even be different, so your messaging needs to be tailored towards who you are trying to influence. You can not just have one message for everyone. (INT4)

The reception for the SRHR issues among the policy makers as well as the general public often depends on what kind of narrative is presented around the issue. When talking on how to communicate around SRHR issues, all interviewees pointed out the importance of strategic framing, as with the help of it, it is possible to influence a more supportive reception among the different recipients of advocacy messages. Framing plays a crucial part in the reception of the issues and therefore in furthering the SRHR policy advancement. Frames work by selecting preferred aspects of the reality with an aim to make them more salient in a message. Salience means, that the message is made more remarkable and meaningful to the receivers with an aim to increase their possibility of remembering the information. (Entman 1993, 52-53.)

Some strategies for framing the SRHR issues were particularly elaborated by the interviewees; national development frames and policy instrument frames. These frames concern mostly advocacy targeted towards policy makers at the level of national governments, who are responsible for policy advancements in their respective East and Southern African countries. When using mass media as a framing tool in the advocacy activities, frames underlining positive narratives around SRHR issues were seen as effective. These above-mentioned framing strategies will be further discussed in the next subchapters.

> I think that it is a massive framing issue that we constantly have to work around, and it is also something we have to do constantly in terms of explaining our position when it comes to sexual and reproductive health and rights. (INT8)

5.2.1   Framing the messages from the receiver's basis

Using framing as an advocacy strategy was seen as having a key role in SRHR policy change, because with framing, the issues can reach a higher level of priority from the policy makers. Hallahan (1999, 24) explains, that when framing issues, the message is built in a way that aims to define how the receivers should evaluate the information and make choices or take actions regarding it.

Different framing strategies that were seen to enhance the SRHR policy influencing efforts were underlined during the interviews. As the SRHR issues might be perceived negatively among the policy makers in East and Southern Africa, frames that enhance positive understanding of the issues should be considered. Frames enhancing positive understanding around SRHR that were particularly elaborated by the interviewees, were frames related to a country's national development, such as to health or economy related advancements, and frames that acknowledge the SRHR issue's relation to a regional or international policy instrument. These frames work especially when aiming to influence policy makers at the level of national governments.

National development frames

As policy makers often set initiatives to enhance a country's development, framing the advocated SRHR issue as a contributor to the country's overall development makes it stand out better. When the emphasis of the issues' advancement is pictured as beneficial for the common good of the country and its development's progress, it might make the policy makers feel more obligated to act on the matters.

Framing SRHR issues as contributing to the country's comprehensive development was something that previous research has also found beneficial. For instance, Standing et al. (2011, 1 & 7) state that as the concept of sexual rights is often misunderstood by policy actors in sub-Saharan Africa, reframing the SRHR issue rather in terms of its input to national development than as a right-based issue perceived as more provoking, can make a positive difference on the reception.

Specific frames contributing to national development that many of the interviewees emphasized, were health related frames. The interviewees elaborated, that health related frames could for instance aim for explaining the outcomes for better health for the citizens if the delivery of sexual and reproductive health services, such as access to family planning or prenatal care, is strengthened. This kind of framing strategy was seen as effective since health and well-being of the citizens is often a priority for national decision makers. This is something previous research on the framing of gender issues also supports; to gain support for such issues in different African governments, narratives show-

ing the issues enhancement leading to better and more competent health systems has been beneficial (Theobald et al. 2005, 147).

In addition to health frames, another national development frame the interviewees stated to be effective, was framing the SRHR issues as a booster of economic development in the country. The interviewees brought up the same fact as Servaes and Malikhao (2010, 46); in the context of health advocacy, achieving policy change is more likely when decision makers see the matter as economically profitable. When SRHR advancement resulting in better economic outcomes for the country is highlighted to the policy makers, the policy shift was seen as more likely to be considered.

One interviewee emphasized that although the evidence shows comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) at schools leading to safer sexual behaviours and a smaller rate of HIV and STI infections, misinformation and sensitivity of the issue hinder its acceptance. The most common misconception around CSE mentioned by the interviewees, was that the subject encourages kids and adolescents to be sexually active. It was suggested that to tackle this problem, alternative ways of framing the advantages of delivering CSE should be considered, such as utilizing narratives on the aforementioned economic or health related outcomes for national development. When using this framing strategy, it could be elaborated that for young people to be a productive workforce and for them to foster the economy, they need to have the knowledge and skillset to make appropriate and responsible choices on their sexual and reproductive health.

> In a lot of countries there is CSE, there are increasingly progressive laws [around CSE], but the CSE is not full-scale across all levels, neither it is not maybe as content that you would require it to be. So you need the Ministry of Education and you need the Ministry of Health [to be involved]. But you need it to be recognized enough, to have it mentioned that the life-skills of young people, for them to be a productive workforce, to spare the economy, they need to be educated and skilled and have responsible behaviours to do ABCD. (INT6)

Policy makers can often be concerned about cost related implications and especially the loss of costs due to the policy advancements. Therefore, redefining the decision makers perception of risk by indicating the cost of inaction from not advancing the SRHR issues could be fruitful for the influencing efforts. The risk for economic development is shaped according to the advocacy practitioner's own strategic needs and the policy maker's perception on the SRHR issue's importance is aimed to be influenced through that. In such a frame, also the benefits for the national development could be elaborated.

> To be able to provide additional information on the table, to convince the person and it could be some things that people ask "oh no but there is a constraint", to be able to put an argument that "this is a cost of inaction" and if you do it this is the benefit but if you don't, this is the cost of inaction in the next five or six years. (INT6)

> And then you need to take that data, formulate it into arguments that would work for policy- and lawmakers. So you cannot go into a meeting with a policy- and lawmaker with a generic message like "this is a good thing to do." They will ask a lot of questions like "where is your evidence, what is the benefit, what is the cost, what is the cost to the health system". So it is about, a lot of that work is building together

the portfolio of evidence that go into then influencing the policy change or the position change in government. (INT4)

These above-mentioned national development frames defining SRHR issues through their contribution to health and economic -related implications embody, that although the fulfilment of SRHR is according to various core human rights instruments considered as a basic human right and as a deliverer of the UN's sustainable development agenda, it is better to still consider the rights-based framings with alternative frames promoting for instance country's overall national development. From such practice of reframing, it is possible to paint a more positive picture of SRHR advancement's implications for the policy makers and also make it more likely for them to act favourably on the SRHR issues advancement in East and Southern Africa.

Although each interviewee underlined, that using frames presenting SRHR issues in relation to national development enhances the advocacy efforts, one interviewee representing a NGO mentioned using rights-based framings in addition to the commonly agreed national development frames. Such finding indicates some differences to the framing approach between the interviewed organizations, as rights-based frames in SRHR policy influencing were not mentioned by the UN professionals or the government representative interviewed. Hallahan (1999, 210) explains in his study that different social problems might be presented differently by various actors, as each wants the receiver's to see it from their perspective. Also, similarly to this finding, Theobald et al. (2005, 147) have studied that the nature of the organization might influence the framing approach chosen in gender advocacy and explain the differences between organizations, as bureaucrats often prefer using more technical frames underlining for instance efficient health systems, whereas civil society organizations are more likely to use narratives of equality and rights, which are often considered as more controversial by the policy makers.

Policy instrument frames

In addition to the national development frames, another commonly agreed framing strategy for SRHR issues was presenting the matters in relation to regional and international policy frameworks that the respective country regards as a priority. The interviewees stressed, that this increases the possibility of the policy makers showing interest in the issues. Countries in the region of East and Southern Africa have often agreed to follow specific policy frameworks and instruments enhancing their development, where different elements of SRHR might be included in.

The interviewees brought up international instruments such as the UN's Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's), where elements of SRHR are applied in targets under goal 3 for good health and well-being as well as under goal 5 for gender equality, and the International Conference on Population and Development's (ICPD) Programme of Action (PoA), which is often referred as a turning point for SRHR's political advancement and international

recognition by shifting the focus from population control into the context of human rights.

At the regional level in ESA, policy instruments the interviewees often mentioned were the Eastern and Southern Africa Ministerial Commitment on sexuality education and sexual and reproductive health services for adolescents and young people, often referred as the ESA Commitment, and the Maputo Protocol, which was described as Africa's number one policy document when it comes to SRHR elements like rights of women, improved autonomy in women's reproductive health decisions and reducing gender-based violence and other harmful practices.

The interviewees stressed that as such policy instruments mentioned above (UN Agenda 2030, ICPD PoA, ESA Commitment, Maputo Protocol), often set an overall guidance for policy interventions and give a guideline for policy makers to follow, presenting SRHR issues as part of the followed framework is effective. These documents might deal entirely with realization of different SRHR elements, or an element of SRHR might be included in some part the policy instrument, which is the case for example in the UN's Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In such situations, it was seen as worthwhile to remind the policy makers about the condition as this could establish a common basis for discussion between advocacy practitioners and policy makers.

> So if you have a SADC (Southern African Development Community) strategy on SRHR which we did last year with civil society, what we noticed was that the previous strategy had expired and was out of data, it was not aligned to the SDG's. So this is where you link to the global agenda. So you are going "okay, we need to update this to speak to the global agenda." And it also was not aligned to the African Union's Maputo protocol which was also revised in 2016 to have it aligned to the SDG's. So using that angle we were then asked by SADC to revise that strategy, and that strategy basically sets forward a vision on SRHR until 2030 for the region, so where does the region want to be by 2030 in relation to SRHR. (INT4)

The interviewees explained that if the country has not utilized some of the mentioned policy instruments advancing SRHR realization, an opportunity to align these instruments to national strategies might arise in situations where the governments are updating or drafting their strategies. As mentioned earlier, taking advantage of the political opportunities provided by the government processes should be noted in SRHR influencing efforts, and drafting of national plans could be one such entry point. One interviewee mentioned, that if the respective country has not recognized any of these frameworks, analyzing regional instruments that could support the national policy decisions could be taken advantage of.

Drawing on international policy frameworks while attempting to influence policy change is something that previous studies also support; Bäckstrand (2006, 303) suggests, that when global policy instruments are linked clearly to the multi-stakeholder networks work of advocating for sustainable development issues, it makes the outcomes more efficient. This will give the policy makers an extensive normative framework which to follow in their decisive

actions and messages tied around that framework can also work as an accountability method, where progress on the issues advancement is monitored.

While the national agendas should be respected and the country's position on the different policy frameworks acknowledged, sometimes a differentiation between the common national priorities and the policy maker's individual priorities should be made. One interviewee gave an example, that although a respective country has chosen a specific policy framework as their priority, there might still be variation between the preferred frameworks among policy makers nationally. The preferred approach may vary for example between different national ministries or between individual policy maker's positions. This further stresses the importance of focusing the messages on the basis of the receiver in the framing approach. Prior to any action taken, it is essential to recognize the target group or person, their priorities and focus the message on them.

> When it comes to dealing with high-level policy makers, you are dealing more with an individual's position and perception and his or her department's or ministry's perception or position on a policy piece, as oppose to state's approach to a policy piece. For instance, if an individual has more of a liking to the ICPD Programme of Action, then you talk to them from the language of ICPD Programme of Action. But if, for instance Zambia does not really regard ICPD Programme of Action as high priority as the ESA Commitment, then you talk to Zambia through the lens of the ESA Commitment. Because that is their administration's priority or that individual's priority. It all depends on who you are dealing with, which ministry you are dealing with. (INT8)

Although the political leaders are often approached with a formal soundbite and the narratives are drawn from technical data and evidence, this proposition does not work in all cases. The interviewees stressed that while respecting the facts around an issue and forming messages based on evidence remains important, sometimes policy makers will rather pay attention to narratives that resonate with their emotions and individual interests. At times, no differentiation between frames targeted towards general public in the communities and a high-level policy maker is needed, because the policy makers might as well themselves belong to communities, be parents or young people. Sometimes, when policy makers are addressed rather as individuals than high-level policy makers, they might perceive the issue as easier to approach and therefore be more supportive towards it.

> But when we go to a policy maker, then we go with: "in 1994, the ICPD was signed, these were the targets." You know… "95,9 percent too" and we forget that the policy officer is themselves maybe a parent or you know, a young person or a community member. So we don't have that feeling, the connection that we make with communities, we decide not to have it with the elite or the policy maker. And so you have these people that don't believe in what you are saying and they won't give you the results. I think that we really need to change the way we frame our content and communicate it, even to the most intelligent policy maker. Their feelings and emotions are very important. (INT3)

> So for us it is really about giving the highest respect to the evidence and data and always standing up for the facts, but at the same time understanding that in certain times and in certain spaces facts are not the only things that are going to work with our arguments. So looking at how we integrate both the facts and common sense and

logic and basically paint a picture for the policy maker who might not only be persuaded by the existence of facts and data. (INT8)

5.2.2 Mass media as framing tool

Mass media has an important role in supporting the SRHR framing activities. At its best, utilizing mass media in advocacy can have a positive effect on achieving desired policy changes. The interviewees explained, that when mass media is supportive towards the SRHR issues, it will help to raise public awareness and support for the issues as well as pressure policy makers on the wanted policy changes. This is something earlier studies also found beneficial; when using media as a tool to influence health-related policies, Bou-Karroum et al. (2017, 11) studied that media interventions have had a positive impact for example by gaining support from the public and therefore making the policy changes more likely as well as by raising policy makers awareness on the health issues in general.

However, as much as mass media can have a positive influence on the SRHR advancement, it might also hinder the influencing efforts or even enhance the opposition on the issues, if not mobilized correctly. The interviewees explained that SRHR issues are often sensationalized in the media and the issues are framed with "shock value" in order to draw public attention and gain visibility to the stories. This furthermore increases the already negative perceptions and misconceptions that some of the SRHR issues face. To tackle these challenges, the interviewees suggested that frames emphasizing a positive image would enhance better understanding and acceptance of the issues. Utilizing positive narratives in SRHR framing is something that Oronje et al. (2011, 9) has also found successful. A positive narrative for SRHR issues disseminated in mass media could for instance emphasize and focus on solutions, underlining the possibilities to solve the issues.

> Media can, if it is supportive it can play a critical role for success. If it is not supporting, it can play a critical role for failure. So it is always very important to make sure that you sensitize the media so that they are aware, so that their storyline does not support necessarily promote negativity but promote positivity image to contribute. (INT5)

> Showing that there is, there is progress, there is a way the problems can be addressed, even though, so make a positive narrative of it, while also recognizing that the needs are huge but it is possible to do something about it. And what our communications people say all the time as well is to make these human interest stories and since they are communications people I assume, I rely on them, so that is a good thing. (INT7)

It also became clear from the interviews, that disseminating "human-interest stories" meaning stories presenting the affected population's personal experiences and concerns regarding an issue in the mass media could be fruitful, because such storylines often awaken emotions such as sympathy in the reader. Similar methods were also pointed out by Oronje et al. (2011, 9), suggesting that utilizing stories of people's personal experiences of the issues is a beneficial way to frame some SRHR issues.

Additionally, an effective way to achieve more supportive media coverage, is to mobilize the journalists by working in collaboration by arranging media training sessions, where evidence-based information regarding the SRHR topics is taught to the journalists. Presenting the issues according to the advocacy practitioner's preferred framing approaches could be optimally included in these training sessions for the journalists. The interviewees emphasized that in order to build a supportive image of the issues in the mass media, journalists need to have a thorough understanding on which to base the stories on.

One interviewee added that in addition to journalists, the important role of the editors in the SRHR framing attempts should not be overlooked. The interviewee stressed that editors need to be involved in the media training sessions too, because the written material goes always through the editors prior to any publishing and therefore they have a critical role in how the story is framed in the end.

> You have to make sure that the media understands what you are saying because it is no use having someone who you think is in your court but who is actually going to ruin your whole campaign. So you need to have media on your side but you have to make sure that the media understands your point, you need to actually educate them, take time and provide them with the facts. (INT1)

> Media attention is important but not just one kind of media attention. Because the media can be the most dangerous tools in advocacy, if you don't engage with them right they can really mess up your advocacy efforts. The media personnel, they need to be made aware, to be trained to understand the issues and then be able to influence advocacy. (INT3)

While attempting to influence SRHR policy advancement in East and Southern Africa, all interviewed organizations of this research, meaning the UN agencies, NGOs and a government official from a ministry, saw the role of mass media in the framing activities as important. However, one UN agency interviewee added seeing the role of mass media as double-barreled, explaining that although mass media has an important role in SRHR advocacy, in certain situations it is better to conduct advocacy directly with the policy makers using formal structures.

> For me the media is yes and no. There are certain things that are better left to quiet diplomacy, where you engage governments directly using formal structures and things like that. (INT4)

This above quote by an UN interviewee stresses, that sometimes in the SRHR policy influencing efforts, it is better to work with the governments and policy makers directly. In their study on agenda building, Cobb et al. (1976, 135-136) present an inside access model explaining an issue entering the formal agenda for serious consideration by policy makers without including the public, and by discussing the issues directly within governmental units or groups that are close and have an easy access to the government. Similarly with the pre-decisional process of inside access described by Cobb et al. (1976), the interviewee underlines that in this process, public is not involved in the policy influ-

encing. As the NGO interviewees of this research did not mention excluding mass media from their advocacy efforts, this could refer to different levels of access to the high-level policy makers between different advocacy organizations, such as NGOs and the UN, and a different approach taken because of that. The UN as an intergovernmental organization, has governments of national states as its members (Wallace & Singer 1970, 245). Thus, it can be seen as having a closer position to where the national policy decisions are made.

When talking about tools that could be utilized in the SRHR framing activities, some interviewees stated that in addition to the mass media, new media interventions could be more often be taken into consideration. The interviewees stressed that especially on social media, there is a lot of misinformation going around SRHR issues such as comprehensive sexuality education, and this should be somehow addressed. Also policy makers were seen to follow social media and be influenced by the trends that build up in the social media sphere. Earlier research on SRHR framing also suggests, that the learning of the issues takes more often place on social networking channels, imposing a new challenge on the framing activities (Standing et al. 2011, 8).

5.3   Stakeholder collaboration brings mutual benefits

This research is interested in the role of stakeholders in SRHR policy influencing. This subchapter portrays the role of stakeholders in the advocacy by first describing why the stakeholder collaboration was seen as important and secondly, what are seen as the features of organizations involved in SRHR advocacy, focusing on advantages that their features bring. It is worthwhile to note that this theme's findings focus mostly on the case organization UNFPA and related NGOs, than on stakeholders such as policy makers and local communities, as the former organizations are the ones essentially initiating and influencing the policy changes in this research's context. First the interviewees perceptions of main stakeholders are presented more generally and after, the features of UN agencies and NGOs are differentiated more specifically.

Some of this theme's findings overlap with the first theme of multi-stakeholder engagement, where dialogue with development partners was described in more detail focusing especially on how an effective collaborative approach with the help of engagement and dialogue can be achieved.

Multi-stakeholder collaboration between development partners in SRHR advocacy was seen as important to influence policy changes. As stated earlier, a combined influencing effect was seen as more effective because it reinforces the message in the perspective of policy makers. To achieve the combined effect, constant mutual discussions and communicative actions often taking some forms of dialogue should be conducted between participants. To bring the desired benefits, reaching consensus and thereafter a common approach to the issues between the stakeholders was seen as an important.

Furthermore, the interviewees stressed the collaboration of multiple stakeholders being crucial, because no organization or individual has the capacity or resources to achieve fundamental SRHR policy changes using only their own inputs. SRHR issues are seen as complex and are defined as wide not only by their different elements ranging from contraception and reproductive health issues to harmful practices such as gender-based violence, but also by the many different ways to tackle them. This finding corresponds to earlier studies, as for instance Roloff (2008, 234) concludes that in issue-focused multi-stakeholder networks, different actors come together because the issue is too complicated to be solved without cooperation.

Fundamentally, collaboration with multiple stakeholders in SRHR advocacy brings better health outcomes for the affected populations. One interviewee stressed that in East and Southern Africa, many of the SRHR issues are crosscutting and prevalent parallely in multiple countries of the region. Therefore, with stakeholder collaboration at regional level, it is possible to combine the efforts and to achieve better health outcomes in the respective countries. The interviewee gave an example that for the HIV/AIDS epidemic, of which the ESA region is most affected by globally, better collaboration between stakeholders regionally in the epidemic eradication initiatives would finally lead to better health outcomes at the country levels too. Also, by the collaborative furtherance more rights to the people would be fundamentally achieved.

> I think that if we identify work as South Africa, as Botswana, eSwatini, Lesotho and Zimbabwe, we will definitely look at radically shifted trends and patterns of HIV infections and these variations. I mean, if we manage to manage the epidemic in these four countries, we could see significant reductions overall in terms of region. It also goes down to the fact that there are incredibly high levels of migration between these four countries, so the epidemic is also mobile. So fundamentally if we would collaborate better, we would see better health outcomes in these four countries, and regional. (INT8)

However, to achieve these above mentioned benefits stakeholder collaboration brings, the involved organizations need to acknowledge and appreciate their unique contributions in the collaboration. If the partners individual advantages are not recognized and a collaborative approach is not taken, the interviewees stressed that it might lead to competing priorities between the organizations. The interviewees explained that in the ESA region, many pressing issues compete for a placement on the decision makers agenda simultaneously, which also Cobb et al. (1976, 126) have described occurring in the process of agenda building. Usually the amount of potential agenda issues surpasses the national policy makers resources to handle them.

> But I think, when we have a common agenda that is basically informing everyone's work commonly, and it is really about seeing how we can all, rather than compete, how we can look at our unique contributions towards implementation of a strategy. So I think we've approached it from the angle of unique contributions and that is what the basis of our collaboration is so far. (INT8)

> The drawback that I have seen is when the partners still are not able to look at their collaborative advantages, their collective voice, when they still go to the table with individual interests. Then it neglects the purpose of partnerships. (INT6)

One UN interviewee gave an example of being disappointed especially in the work of SRHR NGOs in the region, feeling that they have not succeeded in appreciating the unique contributions in the partnerships to collaborate, and therefore their approach to the advocacy is weaker. This example further stresses the importance of appreciating the collaborative advantages and establishing partnerships based on them.

> So you open up as many avenues, you are reinforcing the messaging. So that is why the partnership and coordination is very critical. Unfortunately, civil society would have been a critical player in terms of influencing, but we have not seen that stronger role, maybe because they do not have a coalition, a single coalition, they are multiple coalitions so their voice is diluted. (INT6)

During the research interviews, the interviewees were asked to specify, who they see as the key stakeholders in their work, how these stakeholders are involved and what is their role. When asking who the key stakeholders involved in SRHR advocacy are, each interviewee mentioned that interaction with government and related ministries, UN agencies and civil society organizations is important. These organizations were also the organizations interviewed for this research as UNFPA and its stakeholders from NGOs, ministry and partner UN agency UNESCO were interviewed. Besides the scope of this research's data, interviewees mentioned for example donors and regional economic communities such as the Southern African Development Community (SADC) as key stakeholders.

As mentioned earlier, in a participatory approach to advocacy local stakeholders, such as the communities and affected populations, are important to involve. Features of collaborating with the local stakeholders are discussed more broadly in the first theme of this research. Few interviewees stressed that also stakeholders at the level of program implementation, such as health services and health care workers, should be seen as key stakeholders, because they are the groups providing the health services at the level of the general public of the policy initiative. In efforts to establish integrated health services for sexual and reproductive health, meaning that the patient would have the health services for different SRHR elements taken care of during one health service visit, the health workers need to be interacted with to realize the change.

> Now we are trying to bring them [different SRHR health services, such as family planning and HIV services] into one service package. Delivered by one health care worker. So the health care workers were initially resistant to it because it means now they have to provide, they think they have to do more. You are not doing more, you are basically looking after the interest of that client. Holistically. […] You've got to do advocacy with the health care workers to make them understand the benefits of the system that you are trying to bring in, because they are a key stakeholder. If they are not buying into it, it does not work. You can have all the laws and policies you want, but if the health care worker themselves says "I am not doing this", then you are stuck. (INT4)

For different ministries, especially the respective ministries of health, education and gender-related ministries were mentioned as crucial stakeholders because these are mostly working with SRHR-related issues. Interviewee from the health-related ministry highlighted the importance of working together with different line ministries because each ministry can give input from their area of expertise responding to the wide elements of SRHR, such as education, health, gender or population, and therefore strengthen the SRHR work. One UN interviewee reminded, that a critical ministry is also the ministry responsible for budget, because if the issues do not make their way into the overall development agenda informing resource allocation, the issues actual implementation is not possible.

Also two UN interviewees specifically highlighted that collaboration with and between different ministries nationally and regionally gives a sense of interconnectivity to the work, and therefore reinforces the messaging of the desired policy change. An example of a successful stakeholder collaboration brought up was the ESA Ministerial Commitment coordinated by UNFPA and UNESCO, which was seen as being successful because for the first time in the ESA region, all ministries of health and education came together and agreed on common objectives and on targets on the ESA Commitment policy initiative. Not only were the ministries involved in this policy initiative, but also civil society organizations, young people, policy makers and traditional and religious leaders were on board, all having an important role in the realization.

> The ESA Commitment is one of those projects or initiatives that was or is successful. Just a bit of a background, in 2013 we had the ministers of health and education from 20 countries come together and they affirmed the ESA commitment to commit to reduce HIV infections, to reducing early and unintended pregnancy, to providing CSE and services, to eliminating gender-based violence and child marriage. Why was the ESA commitment successful? Because for the first time in the history of this work in our region in particular, these two ministries came together. So previously you had health doing something and education doing something without that collaboration, and because they came together and agreed on common objectives and common targets, that sort of brought about the success of the ESA commitment. And also the involvement of young people and youth organizations as well as civil society, who in most cases are doing amazing work on SRHR, but you know, don't necessarily have the "buy in" from the government, so when we brought them together, there was that coordination and working together and I think that made it successful. And the last element was sort of the high-level commitment. (INT3)

This above example further highlights the importance of stakeholder collaboration in order to advance SRHR policies in East and Southern Africa. The interviewees of this research stressed that effective stakeholder collaboration with mutual understanding and common approach around the issue will benefit the advocacy efforts. Different stakeholders bring their different competencies to the collaboration bringing advantages only when the unique contributions are valued between the partners. Bäckstrand (2006, 294 & 304) studied multi-stakeholder networks aiming for sustainable development, and similarly to the interviewees, stresses that the participatory nature of these partnerships entails

that balanced representation of different actors is present, although the leader in these networks is most often a multilateral organization such as the UN.

The features of UN organizations and NGOs as well as the advantages that they bring to the advocacy, are further discussed in the following subchapters. Also some comparison between how the partners perceive each other's features in the advocacy work is made. The concept of civil society organization is used alongside with non-governmental organization (NGO) as their meaning is the same. When talking of the UN's role and features, the interviewees focused mostly on this research case organization UNFPA.

5.3.1   Role of UN

When speaking of the perceived role and features of the United Nations agencies in the policy influencing activities, some commonalities as well as differences between the interviewees were found. First, the UN interviewees' views on their organization's role and after, the NGOs thoughts on the UN and the collaboration between them, are discussed.

Each interviewed UN official agreed on their organization's role in the policy work. Generally, the UN's role in SRHR advocacy in East and Southern Africa can be divided into two strands; policy influencing role and technical support role. The interviewees stressed that shifting and influencing the policy environment should be seen as the normative role of the UN as something that always guides their work. However, to be able fulfill this normative role and to actually get the SRHR issues successfully on a policy agenda, providing technical support is needed. One UN interviewee stressed seeing technical assistance to the governments as a prerequisite for achieving policy change, highlighting that through the process of engagement from a technical perspective, it is possible to finally influence change. Another UN interviewee mentioned that doing advocacy should be a role for every UN official.

> I see myself [UN official] as a technical expert engaging government, from a technical point of view. And so it is through that process of engagement that you are then able to influence change in government. (INT4)

> It [advocacy] is meant to shift and influence the policy environment, so that you always have to have a goal of why you are advocating. And to be able to make sure that there is that enabling environment that allows every other program financing and all that flows. So definitely, it [advocacy] is a critical strategy, and mode of engagement for UNFPA. Everyone is expected to do policy advocacy, because that is what the normative role of the UN is, to be able to shift and influence and shape the policy environment. (INT6)

One UN interviewee reminded of the UN's role, emphasizing that fundamentally, the UN consists of its member states, and therefore the governments have a strong role in essentially defining the working approach of the organization. Thus, above all, a partnership with the government has to be established. According to the theory, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) such as the UN's

members are, like stated by the interviewee, the governments of national states (Wallace & Singer 1970, 247).

> Your alliance would be the government first. Because obviously they have to lead. So we have to form an alliance with the government and the government has to lead. Because remember that the UN serves at the grace of the governments, the UN does not serve at the grace of itself. So you have to form a partnership with the government and I think we do have very strong linkages with the government in terms of our work and relationships, so that is number one. (INT4)

The UN's institutional position impacts their approach to the advocacy. The UN interviewees stressed that due to their close position to the national governments, they have the ability to access information that for instance many non-governmental organizations would not have. The UN's access to different governments was also seen as an advantage at the regional level of the work because they are able to see what is happening in different countries and propose recommendations to other countries based on that. This indicates that having a favourable position to the government might make it easier to achieve decision makers' attention and finally placement on the policy agenda. In the process of agenda building, a group's resources for mobilization as well as strategic location can affect the level of priority given by decision makers (Cobb & Elder 1971, 908-909).

> I think that the role of the UN is sort of providing what we call normative guidance. Because we have to a large extent the evidence and the machinery to be able to interpret that evidence. Right, so to provide that guidance to countries and to civil society and any partners to say: "look, if you want to reduce infections on HIV in this population, these are the key things that need to be done. If you want to increase the investment that needs to be taken into account." And the other role that we also have is to, because governments are sovereign and they focus in their country, we have the advantage to see what is happening in Eswatini, or what is happening in Mozambique and helping these countries to share their lessons from different context. So if we see there is something that worked in Namibia, then we go to Zambia and say "you could try what Namibia is doing" and then work together on that. (INT3)

The UN interviewees explained that technical support means giving support in terms of policy guidance for different guidelines and strategies, providing consultancy on the SRHR issues in general and helping with capacity building activities. In prior for giving guidance, one UN interviewee stressed that it is important to understand the current state of play and evidence around the issue. Only when gaps around the issue are understood, it is possible to give guidance on how to advance the issue and reach the desired goal around it. In addition to technical assistance to the governments, support is given to civil society organizations too.

> So there are various levels of work. I would say that the work on the one level is around technical assistance to the countries, so it is about us [UN agency] supporting the countries in terms of monitoring the implementation of the work plan, ensuring qualities, reviewing documents that come in from the countries. It is also about… it is a broad technical assistance, if countries need assistance with capacity building or consultancy, we will get involved in helping them to find somebody and then I think it is increasingly becoming like a regional platform to support the countries. So for

example on our work with abortion, we work with WHO to give strategic assess-ments in 3 countries. So if the countries' request, we get involved and we will then support the countries but it is up to the country to request that support, we do not try to impose the support on the country. So that is one area of work. The other one is guidance, so you know, and testing models and things like that. Development of pol-icies, laws, strategies and guidelines, oftentimes as a regional caring house we aim to get better at this. (INT4)

Overall, the UN interviewees agreed that their role is to give technical support to the countries and through that influence SRHR policy changes. The inter-viewees saw UN's advantages as an organization being their wide resources and close position to the governments and therefore better access to the policy agendas. In addition to UN officials, interviewees presenting SRHR NGO's talked about their perceptions on partner UN organizations, which in this re-search concern mostly UNFPA.

The NGO interviewees felt that establishing partnerships and conducting joint initiatives with the UN strengthens their advocacy efforts due to the UN's wide resources and credibility to the policy makers. One interviewee stressed that collaboration with UN is beneficial, because the organization's resources are extensive in terms of funding but also by networks. Due to UN's wide net-works, they have access to some partners such as the governments, which the NGOs might not have as easy access to. In a similar notion to the UN inter-viewees, one NGO interviewee stressed that the UN provides them with tech-nical assistance, because they might not always have the necessarily technical expertise.

Although the NGO interviewees stressed that working in collaboration with the UN brings usually advantages, also disadvantages were seen to be present in this course of work. One interviewee felt that the bureaucracy of the UN can sometimes limit the effectiveness of the collaboration. The bureaucracy and stiffness are present in the nature of the organization, but also sometimes at the personal level of the organization's representatives. However, these limita-tions were seen to be possible to tackle with establishing deeper interpersonal relationships between the NGO professionals and the UN officials.

> [A person working at UNFPA] is one such person, I find [the person] to be very open, sharing everything on a computer with you, to make your work easier or if feeling you needing to know this information. And as a result of [the person], I found that my relationship with the UN has strengthened that way. So I find it easier to in-vite the UN to the meetings because [the person] is more engaging, you know. Whereas other experiences with the UN have been very stiff up you know, they come to the meetings, they sit there, they pretend to know it all… so for me it was about building relationships with the UN staff and then engaging them. (INT1)

One NGO interviewee felt that on many occasions, the effectiveness of the UN collaboration is project-based. With some policy initiatives the collaboration has been successful, such as with the ESA Commitment, whereas with others there has been struggling and it has not been easy to get UN onboard. The interview-ee explained that this might result from having competing priorities between the organizations, and could be tackled with explaining the organization's agendas better as well as with building stronger interpersonal relationships. In

the theoretical background on stakeholder engagement, Taylor and Kent (2014, 391) studied that to strengthen interpersonal relationships between the stakeholders, positive orientation and interactions outside of the issue are required.

> And I think again it comes down to personalities, because I think that if you have the ability to communicate well and understand your agenda, in regards to the agenda of the other partner. Then you are able to work together, I have been able to do that. But if you are going to be competing for resources and have a clouded view of what you are expected to execute, then you are going to be sitting with those things. But it exists and it is there and I think it is project-based. (INT1)

Another NGO interviewee felt other disadvantage with the UN collaboration being the UN's sometimes patronizing and top-down approach to civil society. This was seen to have occured in situations, where the UN has not first discussed with the NGO prior to approaching member states, especially in circumstances when the NGO felt having more access and long-standing relationships to the respective state level. However, on a positive note, the interviewee underlined of not having seen this type of action from the UN for the past one or two years, and was more satisfied with the collaborative advantages of the partnership today. Now there is understanding of both partners' individual features and appreciation of their collaborative advantages.

> I think the most recent developments of working together for the Nairobi Summit difficult environment really forced us to start understanding each other better and understanding the value that we add to certain processes as different developmental players, that fundamentally the UN understanding its' primary role at least in our East and Southern African context is to support civil society and to support member states in terms of creating conscious environment to work together on development agendas. So I think there is a better understanding and better nuance of our unique roles. (INT8)

5.3.2 Role of NGOs

Although the UN was seen to have more access to the governments and therefore to be in a fluid position to influence policy change through technical support and advocacy, the interviewees stressed that the UN can not do the policy influencing as the only entity. All UN interviewees saw collaborating with civil society organizations in their policy influencing efforts as crucial.

The NGOs were seen to have an important role especially in representing the communities and affected populations, which is important for implementing participatory approach in the advocacy (see, e.g. Morris 2003; Muturi 2005). As the NGOs represent the general population, they can also bring evidence from the ground and from the people SRHR hindrances are affecting, which the UN officials might not have as easy access to. One UN interviewee gave an example, that whenever they are designing a campaign on SRHR issues concerning young people, they are always firstly consulting the civil society organizations dealing with young people to give necessary information, because they can speak the best for the target group.

> Remember the NGOs are just like us, just like me. I might be advocating for key population, but I am not key population. You need also to have key population in the table. The advantage of NGOs is that they also bring evidence of some of the challenges that people are confronting, which we may not have as UNFPA, which may not be documented. (INT5)

An interviewee representing an NGO added that because civil society organizations represent the general public, it is easier for them to approach individuals at the grassroots level in the local SRHR initiatives. Compared to government programs, which the interviewee felt as more top-down oriented, it is easier for people to be taught by groups they perceive as their peers.

Red tape the UN has as a bureaucracy affects and sets certain limits to the kind of approach the organization can take in its policy influencing efforts. While the nature of intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) requires having states as the organization's members, this means that the IGOs remain accountable to their member states (Bäckstrand 2006, 295). Some UN interviewees underlined that therefore, an advantage of working with civil society organizations is that they can take a more confronting and critical approach in advocacy due to their more neutral institutional nature. This approach was seen as faster and more effective at times. Like Murdie and Stroup (2012) suggest, the tone of advocacy can be determined by the nature of organization. Organizations with less governmental funding and policy access, such as NGOs, can take a more confrontational approach, whereas organizations with higher rate of national funding, such as the UN, are often more cooperative in their efforts. (Murdie and Stroup 2012, 430-432.)

An interviewee representing a government body also stressed that collaboration with civil society organizations brings advantages to the advocacy work, because NGOs can take a stand in certain SRHR issues such as abortion that the interviewee as government representative cannot due to the national policy environment. Through NGOs it was seen as leaner to push through SRHR issues seen as more controversial in the respective countries.

> Because we have different strands. UN is considered a neutral player, NGOs are not neutral, they have an agenda but they have information that is useful and other stakeholders they are also important because at the end of the day, if you propose policies and they are difficult to operationalise because there is no engagement with the parliament, means that they will not actually be implemented. So the advantage is that it brings comparative advantage of everyone so that you can create a necessary signage to create something that is concrete. (INT5)

Additionally, NGOs were seen as important in SRHR advocacy because they are eligible to hold the governments and policy makers accountable for their actions. Policy makers remain accountable to their citizens and civil society organizations hold governments accountable to their commitments (Murdie & Stroup 2012, 427). The NGOs are more distant from the governments due to their institutional characteristics, and therefore they can better hold them responsible for their action. One NGO interviewee stressed also holding the UN organizations accountable by reviewing policies created by them, with ensuring

that preferred approaches, such as gender sensitivity for youth, is adequately presented in the documents.

> They [civil society] get things done really fast and they also help to bring the checks and balances in terms of advocacy and accountability to say "look, these are the commitments that governments met but this is not happening and we have to push for those". (INT3)

Altogether, the interviewees felt that every partner's input is needed in effective advocacy on sexual and reproductive health and rights in East and Southern Africa. Different stakeholders bring different comparative advantages to the collaboration, which benefits the policy influencing only when the advantages are recognized and appreciated mutually between the partners.

6 DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the main results of this research are summarized with answering to the research questions. Also, how the results link with previous understanding based on the theoretical background is discussed. As this research follows abductive reasoning, earlier research was also discussed within the findings in the previous chapter.

This research focused on finding out the factors to be taken into consideration when influencing policy advancements for sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in East and Southern Africa. It aims to especially describe, how an enabling policy environment for the issues can be achieved. Enabling policy environment in this research context means, that perceptions towards the desired policy changes are supportive so that the SRHR advancements are possible. Additionally, this research is interested in the role of stakeholders in the policy influencing. These factors are studied through two research questions, which are presented individually in this chapter, discussing how the findings answer them.

The regional focus of this research is on East and Southern Africa, centralizing on case organization United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and its regional East and Southern African office. Therefore, the research problem was approached by interviewing professionals of UNFPA East and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO) and the organization's important stakeholders which are NGOs, partner UN agency UNESCO and a government official from a health related ministry.

6.1 Factors to be taken into consideration in SRHR advocacy

First research question is interested in what factors should be taken into consideration when influencing policy advancements for sexual and reproductive health and rights in East and Southern Africa. Through this research question, studying especially the factors that would enhance a more enabling environ-

ment for the issues is emphasized. The results of this research indicate that main factors to consider when influencing SRHR policy advancements are a) participatory approach to advocacy, b) engagement with key stakeholders meaning development partners and policy makers and finally, c) strategic framing in the advocacy efforts. Next, these factors are discussed in more detail.

6.1.1 Participatory approach

The prevailing paradigm of development communication and one of the theoretical frameworks of this research, participatory approach, calls for involving local communities in the processes of social change utilizing for instance co-equal knowledge sharing and multiple mutual discussions in its activities (Waisbord 2008, 507; Melkote & Steeves 2015, 393-395). Ideally, in a shared engagement process where a community takes role in determining problems and solutions, shared gains for both parties, the people and the organization, are achieved (Bowen et al. 2010, 305-306).

Similar development communication actions that adhere to participatory approach were indicated as important by the interviewees of this research too. Engaging local stakeholders, such as affected populations and communities, in SRHR policy influencing by letting them have a say on issues concerning them, leads finally to better outcomes for the advocacy. Grabill (2000, 48) stresses that policy constructed from bottom up works differently than policy written from distance, because the most significant influence lies in the affected population. Likewise, the findings show that as a result of participatory advocacy, the policies were seen to truly speak for those affected by them and this also leading to more beneficial advocacy outcomes for the organizations.

Participation of local stakeholders should be included in advocacy efforts at all levels. If the SRHR change is not accepted at the grassroots level, its implementation can not be truly realized for the people. Thus, especially the groups in communities that have a more antagonistic stance on the respective SRHR issue, should optimally have a part in the policy discussions. This results in more supportive positions on the issues. The interviewees stressed similarly to Servaes and Malikhao (2010, 47-48) that the local communities' standpoints can also influence the policy makers' decisions, since governments do not often want to go against what the communities are saying.

The concept of local participation is also linked to national level in development discourses. When international development institutions, such as the UN, work with governments on development initiatives, and implement a participatory approach, the governments need to own and be in lead of their policy processes (Hasselskog 2020, 92). Results of this research also stress the importance of national ownership as the basis for advocacy efforts. The interviewees stressed that appreciating national ownership in policy influencing makes the efforts more sustainable.

Altogether, the findings of this research highlighting participatory approach imply that participation of local stakeholders should be a cross-cutting approach applied to SRHR initiatives at all levels from local initiatives to advo-

cacy activities with national governments. The purpose of participatory communication in the development field is to result in communities being active participants and key actors in defining problems concerning them (Melkote & Steeves 2015, 393), and this was also underlined as crucial by the interviewees of this research.

6.1.2 Stakeholder engagement

The results show that advocacy practitioners should aim for engagement with stakeholders at all levels in the policy influencing efforts. Engagement with local level stakeholders, development partners and high-level policy makers at national governments is important. This subchapter discusses specifically what engagement means between development partners and between advocacy practitioners and policy makers, as the local stakeholder engagement through participation was already discussed in the previous subchapter.

Dialogue with development partners

Precondition for any effective advancement on SRHR, is to aim for engagement with development organizations having similar goals on the policy advancements. These stakeholders were referred in this study as "development partners". Policy makers see a combined effect of multiple organizations as more credible, than organizations with similar needs approaching them at different times. To achieve the combined effect, consensus on the advocated issue between the participants should be reached. The results of this study indicate that consensus among the development partners is achieved through multiple discussions oriented towards reaching common understandings. This finding contributes to the concept of true dialogue presented by Taylor and Kent (2002), where dialogue includes valueing each others interests, commitment to the conversation with a goal to reach satisfying outcomes for all participants, which also the interviewees saw as crucial.

When multiple parties are involved in the advocacy efforts, their approach to the SRHR issue might sometimes differ and therefore, reaching mutual agreement between the partners does not always come with ease. However, the interviewees stressed that this constraint to the collaboration could be tackled with continuous common discussions between the partners. This is something that previous research on dialogic stakeholder engagement sees also as important with Taylor and Kent (2014, 390) stressing that when communication adheres to dialogue, the involved groups must be willing to transform their perspectives and form mutual views of reality.

Interpersonal relationships between the stakeholders might be built due to the multiple deliberations included in the SRHR advocacy activities. The interviewees highlighted similar facts on stakeholder engagement as Aakhus and Bzdak (2015, 195-196) and Roloff (2008, 246), stating that when there is a sense of shared responsibility and trust between the partners and the collaboration includes repetitive meetings, it more likely leads to communication on an inter-

personal level and consequently to strengthening of mutual relationships. What the results of this research add, is that sometimes the collaboration with development partners intendedly includes meetings outside of the issue, with an actual purpose to establish strong interpersonal relationships. Stronger interpersonal relationships were seen to lead to stronger results in the advocacy.

Next, what the results indicate on engagement between the organizations practicing advocacy and policy makers is elaborated. Although the policy maker engagement takes also some forms of dialogue, the results show that the nature of these interactions also take some slightly different forms.

Policy maker engagement

Advocacy calls for aiming to engage with policy makers during the policy processes (Servaes & Malikhao 2010; Waisbord 2015). The results show that also policy makers should be considered as stakeholders that need to be engaged in continuous discussions, to finally achieve positive policy change. Similarly to development partners, the interviewees stressed that discussions with policy makers should include elements of respect and mutual orientation to achieve shared value between the participants. The nature of policy maker engagement in advocacy entails that critical questions might arise from the discussions, requiring the organizations to be responsive and present more evidence.

Nature of the engagement with policy makers sets however some principles to the work. As mentioned, in sustainable engagement, participatory approach must be appreciated also at the government level meaning that the national governments have to own their policy processes (Hasselskog 2020). This means that the advocacy practitioners need to adapt to the policy makers needs and change their approach, if necessary. In stakeholder collaboration between development partners, as in the concept of dialogue, all participants are seen as equivalent (Taylor & Kent 2002), but when engaging in discussions with policy makers, they have to be in lead.

The controversial nature of certain SRHR elements due to socio-cultural values imposes sometimes challenges to the issues advancements. This sets the need for utilization of different advocacy strategies when engaging policy makers. The results of this research show that one advocacy strategy that could be in use to achieve positive policy changes, could be to approach the policy makers through their peers who have a more supportive and sympatethic standpoint on the issue. Similarly as Oronje et al. (2011, 9-10), the interviewees stressed that approaching the policy makers through their fellow colleagues or through groups having similarities to each other, is beneficial. Trust is also an important factor in indicating whether the policy makers will listen and take on board the suggestions or not.

Strategy that the results add to the existing SRHR advocacy literature, is peer pressure. The interviewees stressed that especially in the regional collaborations between East and Southern African countries, no country wants to feel left out from the regional developments, and therefore using "naming and

shaming" approach is fruitful. Bäckstrand (2006, 300) studied that in transnational multi-stakeholder networks many actors give prominence to public credibility and therefore reputational accountability is important. The results of this research strengthen the idea of public credibility as an accountability method, but also suggest that it can be used by organizations as an advocacy strategy when pressuring decision makers.

When aiming to engage with policy makers, another strategy that could be taken advantage of is political opportunities. Political opportunity structure prioritizes certain influencing attempts and creates opportunities that arise from conflicts or changes in political alignments (Joachim 2003, 248-251). In a similar vein, the interviewees stressed that taking advantages arising from the governments' internal processes or relevant political events such as elections, is beneficial. The renewal of national strategies is an example of an opportunity that governments' processes could offer in East and Southern Africa, where advocacy practitioners could partner to ensure that SRHR advancements are included accurately in the strategies. To reach the policy makers at the right time and put to account the opportunities provided, it is important to be aware of the governments' processes.

The interviewees stressed that the advocacy strategies of peer approaches and political opportunities work also in situations where the policy environment would be more enabling. Policy decisions are often made in informal ways and therefore policy makers are also influenced by groups near to them, besides outside advocacy groups. These findings suggest that factors affecting SRHR advocacy outcomes can be considered as wide. In the core idea of agenda building, Cobb et al. (1976, 137) present that the processes of achieving position on policy agenda are more complex in practice than in theory and they comprise features of different approaches, which the results also support.

6.1.3 Strategic framing

Narratives chosen around the SRHR issues affect their reception. The results of this research show that framing should be used as an advocacy strategy when communicating on SRHR as with its help, a more positive understanding leading to a more favourable policy change can be achieved.

In the practice of framing, the message is built in a way that aims to define how recipients should evaluate the information and make choices or take actions regarding it (Hallahan 1999, 24). Using framing as an advocacy strategy is in line with previous research on SRHR, as Oronje et al. (2011, 9) studied strategic framing playing a key part in achieving positive policy change for SRHR in sub-Saharan Africa. Framing strategies were seen to be useful especially when advocating for sexual and reproductive rights issues which are often perceived as more sensitive. Also the interviewees stressed that reframing of SRHR is especially beneficial on the elements seen as more sensitive in some contexts.

When directing the messages towards policy makers, *national development frames* were seen to enhance positive understanding around the issues. Frames that acknowledge SRHR issues linkages to a country's development in relation

to health or economic consequences, makes the policy makers feel more obligated to act on the matters as they are perceived as beneficial for the common good of the country. *Health frames* could describe better health outcomes for citizens achieved for instance by strengthening the delivery of sexual and reproductive health services. *Economic frames* could emphasize the economic consequences for the country, if SRHR advancement is furthered. The economic frame could describe either boosts to economic growth resulting from SRHR advancement or the risks to economic loss due to not advancing the issues. These frames can be seen to support previous research, as Standing et al. (2011, 7) found out that reframing SRHR issue regarding its input to national development makes a positive difference. Also, in the context of health advocacy, Servaes and Malikhao (2010, 46) studied that policy makers are more likely to advance an issue when they see it as economically profitable.

In addition to national development frames, another framing approach the results indicated as influential in policy maker interaction, were *policy instrument frames*. Policy instrument frames link the advocated SRHR issue to regional or international policy frameworks that the respective country has agreed to follow. Policy frameworks, such as UN's Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, ICPD Programme of Action and Maputo Protocol as mentioned by the interviewees, often set an overall guidance for the country's policy making and therefore presenting the isues as part of the followed framework is effective. Policy instrument frames add a new framing approach to existing theory on SRHR advocacy, as such framing approach was not mentioned by earlier research in communication efforts to advance the issues. These frames could be used to build a stronger and more credible narrative on SRHR advancement.

The above mentioned framing strategies were seen to work especially in discussions involving policy makers at the level of national governments. Outside of the policy arenas, the results show that mass media has a crucial role in supporting framing and promoting more favourable outcomes for SRHR policy influencing, by shaping a more positive public perception on the issues. These results further stress the important role of media in translating issues into policy agenda items (Cobb & Elder 1971). In previous research on framing of issues, Hallahan (1999, 218) stresses that framing has also an essential role in agenda building in the media.

However, if not mobilized in a right way, the mass media can also hinder the advocacy efforts by making for instance sensational headlines drawing from misinformation on SRHR and therefore further enhance negative perceptions around the issues. To prevent this from happening, frames emphasizing a positive image would enhance more supportive understanding of SRHR. A positive narrative disseminated in mass media could for instance focus on human-interest stories awakening emotions in the receiver, defined as *human interest frames*. This finding conforms to earlier research on SRHR framing, as Oronje et al. (2011, 9) also studied that utilizing stories of people's personal experiences furthers the advocacy.

What the findings add to SRHR framing strategies, is presenting the issues with emphasis on their solutions, as this will give a more hopeful image. Bou-Karroum et al. (2017, 12) studied that to hinder the opposition sparked by mass media, advocacy actions should take such negative situations into account. Findings of this research suggest, that to minimize the opposition increased by negative media coverage, engaging and arraging trainings to the journalists could be an effective way to achieve more supportive media visibility on SRHR.

When comparing framing approaches among interviewed organizations, in the light of the results, some slight differences in the preferred approaches could be found. While each interviewee underlined that using frames presenting SRHR issues in relation to national development enhances the advocacy efforts, one interviewee from NGO mentioned using a rights-based framing approach in addition to the mutually agreed national development frames. This supports the fact from earlier studies that in gender advocacy in Africa, bureaucrats, such as the UN officials, tend to use more technical frames underlining for example efficient health systems, whereas civil society organiations are more likely to use narratives of equality and rights, considered often more controversial by the policy makers (Theobald et al. 2005, 147).

Also, one UN interviewee regarded the role of mass media in framing as less important, stating that sometimes it is better to work with governments directly in the SRHR policy influencing efforts. This could refer to the UN's closer position to government groups as an organization, and therefore better chances to directly influence policy changes without involving public attention from mass media. This finding supports inside access model to agenda building presented by Cobb et al. (1976, 135-136), where an issue enters the formal agenda for policy makers consideration without including the public, usually by groups that have an easy access to the government.

6.2   Role of stakeholders in SRHR advocacy

The second research question is interested in the role of stakeholders in SRHR policy influencing. The results of this study indicate that collaborating with stakeholders is a crucial pillar to achieve success in the efforts to achieve an enabling policy environment for SRHR. Servaes (2016, 708) stresses that development problems are often considered as complicated problems, having not only one right way of solution and to which solutions should be searched together with multiple actors, to which the results also agree with. The main advantages stakeholder collaboration was seen to bring to the advocacy were a) reinforcing of the advocacy message, b) common contributions to complex problems like SRHR and finally, c) better health outcomes and more rights realized for the people affected by the policies.

Also the features of stakeholders involved in the SRHR advocacy were discussed in the results. The focus was mostly on the respective UN agencies and NGOs because in the context of this research, these organizations are the

actors most often initiating and influencing the policy change. When describing the features of the organizations, focus was on elaborating advantages that the different features bring to the stakeholder collaboration but also some disadvantages were indicated in the results. These above mentioned stakeholder roles are discussed in more detail below.

6.2.1 Collaboration brings mutual benefits

As indicated, a combined effect achieved between multiple stakeholders is more effective in the policy influencing, because it strengthens the advocacy approach from the policy makers' point of view. To achieve the reinforced effect, multiple discussions and commitment to the collaboration between the involved partners is important.

Positive results in SRHR advocacy cannot be achieved only by a single entity. The results showed that the issues of sexual and reproductive health and rights are considered as complex and some of the elements even as "wicked problems". Thus, they need to be solved together with partners that bring their individual expertise to the table. A similar conclusion in the theory was reached by Roloff (2008, 234), who stressed that different actors need to come together in issue-focused multi-stakeholder networks, to solve an issue too complicated to be solved without collaboration. As indicated, SRHR consists of various elements ranging from reproductive health issues to harmful practices such as female-genital mutilation practiced in parts of the East and Southern Africa region. The diversity of the problems calls for taking advantage of different stakeholders experiences around the issues (Oronje et al. 2011, 9).

Fundamentally, better collaboration between stakeholders brings better health outcomes to the people affected by the policies. Many of the SRHR issues are cross-cutting and prevalent across the whole East and Southern Africa region, meaning in all 23 countries. For example, the interviewees stressed that if there would be enhanced collaboration regionally in the advocacy efforts to eradicate the HIV/AIDS epidemic, this would lead to better health outcomes in the respective countries too.

As the results show, to achieve the above mentioned advantages of stakeholder collaboration, the involved actors need to appreciate the organizations unique inputs and be open for the cooperation. If the SRHR organizations reach the policy makers with their individual interests, it only neglects the purpose of the partnerships. Taylor and Kent (2002, 27) presented a principle of empathy in true dialogue between stakeholders, referring to supportiveness and positive reactions towards stakeholders inputs. Similarly, the results show that the stakeholders' different contributions in SRHR advocacy need to be valued. If the advantages that multi-stakeholder collaboration brings are understated, it might lead to competing priorities. In general, advocacy practitioners often need to compete for their placement on the policy agenda (Cobb et al. 1976, 126), and therefore taking advantage of collaborative benefits with a common approach is more effective.

6.2.2   Roles of UN and NGOs

The advantages brought to the stakeholder collaboration were often determined by the institutional nature of the organization. When focusing on the role and features of the respective UN agencies, which in this research context most often refer to UNFPA, the results show that the UN has two main roles which are the advocacy role and the technical support role.

The UN's fundamental role was seen to be to influence and shift a policy. However, to fulfill this advocacy role, technical support should be provided to the respective governments and then through that support, policy change is finally achieved. Intergovernmental organizations such as the UN's, members consist of nation states (Wallace & Singer 1970, 245). This position sets some preconditions to the organization's advocacy.

The results show that an advantage that the UN has due to its institutional nature is good access to the national governments and therefore, UN organizations are in a favourable position to achieve an issues placement on policy agenda. This finding supports the agenda building process presented by Cobb et al. (1976), stressing that groups being close to the government are in a more beneficial situation to achieve agenda status. Besides the UN interviewees, this finding was also confirmed by the NGO interviewees who stressed that an advantage the collaboration with UN brings, is the organizations relations with important networks, such as the government actors.

Other advantages that NGO stakeholders emphasized the UN collaboration bringing, were the organizations resources in terms of funding as well as the technical support given to the civil society. This indicates, that not only governments receive technical support but also NGOs are trained by the UN. The results show, that although the advantages are vast, the collaboration with the UN did not only receive positive remarks. Sometimes the bureaucratic nature the UN has is realized as stiffness at the level of stakeholder relationships. Also, at times, competing priorities were seen to be present between the advocacy organizations. However, these drawbacks in the NGO and UN collaboration can be resolved with building stronger interpersonal relationships between the stakeholders. The examples of successful UN collaboration highlighted by NGO interviewees indicate that the cooperation happens on a more interpersonal level with the UN officials' valueing the non-governmental organizations input.

While the UN was seen to have more power to influence policy change due to its institutional nature and close position to the governments, the results show that the UN can not influence policies as the only entity. Non-governmental organizations have an important role in initiating the policy changes, together with other partners. Bäckstrand (2006, 291-295) studied that when multi-stakeholder networks advocating for sustainable development epitomize bottom-up oriented governance, actors from civil society are included as it will lead to a more successful collective problem-solving. The interviewees stressed in a similar vein that for the advocacy to be sustainable as well as successful, the NGOs should be part of the partnerships.

The institutional feature of non-governmental organizations entail that they can best represent the people affected by the policies. NGOs are a voice for the affected populations and communities on the ground and therefore they also can best speak for the people. This was seen as important because as stated earlier, the SRHR advocacy has to be conducted in a participatory manner.

When the UN remains accountable to the states, NGOs hold the states accountable. This determines, that the NGOs can take a more confrontational approach in their advocacy efforts. This result is supported by Murdie and Stroup (2012, 430-432), who suggest that the advocacy tone is often determined by the nature of organization and organizations with less governmental funding and access take a less neutral approach in their activities. Similarly, organizations with higher levels of national funding, such as the UN, tend to be more cooperative in the efforts. The UN interviewees saw this position as an advantage to the collaboration, entailing that NGOs can take a stand in some issues that the UN cannot, due to their more controversial nature in some contexts. The critical approach NGOs can take was also seen as being sometimes more agile and therefore more effective in the mobilization of the advocacy.

Overall, the results of this research show that stakeholder collaboration is inevitable to effective SRHR advocacy. Input from different organizations is needed as every partner in the advocacy brings their value and competencies to the collaboration. When organizations participating in SRHR advocacy acknowledge each others benefits rather than compete, it sparks the collaboration and fundamentally, brings better health outcomes and more rights realized.

7 CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this research was to examine, what factors should be taken into consideration when influencing policy advancements for sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). Special interest was on researching, what factors could enhance a more enabling environment for SRHR advocacy in the regional context of East and Southern Africa. Achieving an enabling policy environment is important to this research's scope, because when the policy environment is enabling, it makes the SRHR realization more probable. Furthermore, the second aim of this research was to determine the role of stakeholders in SRHR advocacy.

The results of this research showed that building an enabling policy environment for sexual and reproductive health and rights in East and Southern Africa can be affected by various factors. Organizations can achieve change by applying for instance practices of strategic framing, raise public and media awareness, engage with policy makers and important stakeholders, and build multi-stakeholder relationships with relevant partner organizations in their advocacy activities.

Instead of using hierarchical top-down approaches, it is crucial to approach any policy influencing activity from bottom-up direction, ensuring the equal participation of affected individuals and local communities. Striving for participation is important in advocacy both at local level with community stakeholders and with high-level policy makers at government level, as it leads to beneficial outcomes for both to the organization and to the beneficiaries.

Engaging in mutual discussions with development stakeholder organizations as well as with the influenced policy makers remains important in SRHR advocacy. While collaborating with partner organizations, the conversations embody often dialogic elements where commitment to continuous discussions guided towards reaching common understanding on the issues, is present. Also challenges faced in the multi-stakeholder collaborations, such as the sometimes differing positions on human rights aspects of SRHR elements or competing priorities, can be solved through dialogic deliberations. The results of this research showed in a similar notion to dialogic engagement (Taylor & Kent 2014)

that when communication encompasses dialogue, the participants must be willing to change their perspectives and be ready to constitute mutual views of reality.

The position of the collaboration between advocacy practitioners and policy makers sets certain conditions to the cooperation. For the sake of sustainability, national policy makers have to own the policy processes meaning that advocacy practitioners need to sometimes adapt to their needs. Therefore, achieving mutually beneficial consensus is not always possible. However, the results show that using different advocacy strategies, such as taking advantage of political opportunities provided by the government's processes and approaching policy makers through peer groups can have pleasant outcomes for the SRHR policy influencing. The results stressed the importance of adapting the messages to the audience's understanding and needs, to achieve the desired results.

Strategic framing plays a key role in achieving a favourable position on the policy agenda. To obtain a more positive understanding for the SRHR issues among national policy makers, frames that portray SRHR elements in relation to enhancing the respective country's overall development, such as *health frames* stressing better health outcomes for citizens and *economic frames* highlighting either economic boosts due to SRHR advancements or losses from not advancing the issues, are beneficial.

The results suggested, that in addition to national development frames, another framing strategy is to link the SRHR issues to policy frameworks the respective country regards as priority, such as the Maputo Protocol or the ICPD Programme of Action. This strategic frame for SRHR advocacy was named as *policy instrument frame*. When moving from formal discussions to building an agenda through mass media, *human interest frames* presenting case examples from the general population awakening emotions, and narratives emphasizing possible solutions to SRHR, often increase more positive awareness and therefore more effective influencing outcomes on the issues.

Although this research did not strive to be comparative, the results indicated some interesting differences in preferred advocacy approaches between organizations. Distinctions were found especially in the narratives constructed around SRHR and in perceptions on the role of mass media. The interviewed NGOs indicated sometimes using rights-based narratives in SRHR advocacy seen as more controversial by the policy makers, whereas the UN officials emphasized technical frames more fit to formal environment, highlighting advancements for national development. Also, the UN interviewees stressed seeing the role of mass media as double-barreled as at times, it is better to leave the policy influencing out of public radar and to discuss the issues directly via formal structures. These findings stress the different institutional roles of the organizations affecting the chosen advocacy approach (see, e.g. Murdie & Stroup 2012; Theobald et al. 2005). Fundamentally, the UN's members consist of governments of national states. Thus, the UN can be seen having a better access to policy makers without involving the public, explaining the take on mass media.

For NGOs, less policy access affects the more conflictual advocacy approach used (Murdie & Stroup 2012, 432).

The different advocacy approaches on SRHR practiced by the development partners further highlight the inevitableness of multi-stakeholder collaboration and advantages it brings to the table in achieving policy changes. Multi-stakeholder collaboration reinforces the advocacy message, brings more feasible solutions to complex issues like SRHR and, fundamentally, better health outcomes and rights for the people are realized. When organizations, instead of competing, make use of their competitive advantages due to their different institutional arrangements and material resources, it makes advocacy outcomes more effective to realize SRHR change in East and Southern Africa.

7.1 Implications for theory

Previous research has indicated that the question of how different stakeholders mobilize and negotiate to get especially the contested SRHR issues on policy agendas, is an under-researched field (Standing et al. 2011, 6). This research contributes to a better understanding on how international development organizations and their stakeholders can influence a more enabling policy environment for the SRHR issues and eventually a policy change for them.

The results of this research suggest that to get the SRHR issues and especially the more contested ones onto policy agenda, communication efforts should be utilized. Previous studies on SRHR advocacy in sub-Saharan Africa (see, e.g., Oronje et al. 2011; Theobald et al. 2005) have also found using communication strategies such as framing of the issues as well as stakeholder engagement as beneficial. This research gives further contributions to the research on communication approaches in SRHR advocacy.

When framing especially the rights-based SRHR issues seen as more controversial in some parts of East and Southern Africa, building the messages around frames emphasizing national development, including health and economic consequences, was seen as beneficial similarly to earlier research. This study adds a new strategic frame, policy instrument frame, to be considered in SRHR advocacy as drawing on policy frameworks enhances the advocacy positively with putting the issue in a larger context. Overall, these findings strengthen the importance of strategic framing as communication strategy, especially when advocating for issues seen as more complicated and in environments that are not necessarily supportive.

Additionally, this work conforms to the importance of mass media framing in the efforts to achieve a placement on policy agenda (Cobb & Elder 1971; Hallahan 1999; McCombs & Shaw 1972). But, as there are many ways to build a policy agenda, the results show also that the public and the media should not always be included in the influencing efforts, as for some matters it is better to conduct it via "quiet diplomacy" directly with policy makers. This advocacy approach indicates the usage of inside access model as described in the theory

on agenda building (Cobb et al. 1976) where issues turn into agenda items formally through discussions within policy spaces. Mass media can also mobilize opponents and enhance misunderstandings if not used correctly and one contribution this study gives to its rightful usage in SRHR advocacy, is the importance of engaging journalists in trainings educating them accurately on the influenced issues.

It is important that the nature of the advocacy is participatory, which requires involving local stakeholders in the efforts. The prevailing paradigm of development communication, participatory approach, stresses horizontal information exchange in its practice (Morris 2005, 124), as opposed to the traditional diffusion model promoting top-down information transfer and seeing populations as obstacles to development (Waisbord 2015, 152; Melkote 1991, 78). The findings of this research strengthen the relevance of participatory approach to development communication, with stressing the significance of involving affected populations and community members in designing the advocacy practices.

Furthermore, this research brings forward strategies to engage with policy makers. Policy makers have to own policy processes concerning them and advocacy practitioners need to adapt to their needs. Within the compass of national ownership (Hasselskog 2020), the policy makers can be convinced by utilizing peer pressure and by taking advantage of political opportunities. Earlier research on SRHR advocacy highlights also importance of approaching policy makers through their fellow peers who are more sympathetic towards the issue, such as relevant members of parliament (Oronje et al. 2011, 9-10). Additionally, the results indicate that approaching the policy makers through someone they trust and using the approach as peer pressure, is beneficial.

In general, this research has shown that factors affecting the achievement of favourable outcomes for SRHR policy influencing and formulation can be considered as wide. The results indicate that for example, sometimes the issues route for policy makers' consideration needs spark from mass media to influence policy discussions and raise awareness of the issues, and at times the policy change is better to be realized through formal structures outside of the public eye. Overall, the results strenghthen the core idea of agenda building indicated by Cobb et al. (1976, 137), that the processes of achieving position on policy agenda are more complicated in praxis than in theory, often combining features of different advocacy approaches and transition between public and formal agendas.

Waisbord (2015, 150) stated that communication research should give more recognition to studying the dynamics of policy advocacy in the field of social change. The results of this research point out that efforts SRHR advocacy comprises of, are essentially communication efforts. This further strengthens the idea of communication being a crucial pillar of effective policy advocacy and contributes to the importance of focusing on the interlinkages between communication discipline and advocacy practices.

7.2 Implications for practice

The findings of this study offer some considerable implications for future practice. Practical implications are directed especially at international development organizations such as the United Nations agencies and other related organizations and their professionals that consider initiating policy advocacy as their function.

Giving voice to the local stakeholders, meaning the people affected by the policies, is important. Not only does the participatory approach to advocacy empower the local stakeholders but also leads to more effective advocacy outcomes for the organization (Bowen et al. 2010). Thus, development organizations should incorporate the participatory notion as an approach across their activities. The organizations should ensure that local communities' needs are taken into account in their decision-making processes internally as well as included externally in advocacy activities directed to policy makers.

One interviewee stressed that pursuing advocacy should be a role not only for professionals working directly with policy makers but for everyone in the organization. As the results of this research point out, effective SRHR advocacy is essentially based on communication efforts. This futher highlights the importance for communication professionals to be involved in the strategic planning and implementation of the advocacy activities.

Strategic framing of the issues was one important finding of this study. Reframing the SRHR issues is beneficial at the policy arenas but as indicated, the discussion and learning on the issues takes more often place in the social media sphere. Thus, communication professionals should pay attention how to build a suitable narrative for the issues on the evolving digital media platforms. As the policy makers were seen to be also influenced by what they see on social media, the frames of national development consequences and policy instruments could be used on the digital platforms too.

The outcomes of participatory development communication actions should shift the perceptions of affected populations from passive "patients" to active "agents" (Melkote & Steeves 2015). Therefore communication professionals of international development organizations should design their communication activities keeping in mind that the affected populations are represented as active and equal participants in the materials. One way to promote the participation could be to publish human interest stories reflecting people's personal experiences on the issues, but also keeping in mind of not reinforcing the often stereotypical image of helpless "victims" dependant on international aid, as the communities should be the key actors defining problems concerning them.

The international development organizations should pay increased attention to the nature of their relationships with important stakeholders. This study shed light on the practices of stakeholder engagement that increase the effectiveness of advocacy. Based on the results, it would be fruitful for the organizations to evaluate their stakeholder engagement approaches to observe whether

the engagement involves elements of dialogue, such as valueing each partner in the collaboration and commitment to continue the deliberations to reach mutually beneficial outcomes. Evaluation of the collaboration with development partners could be in place especially if it seems to lack effectiveness, as the results show that constraints faced in multi-stakeholder networks can be settled with adhering to dialogic discussions.

Altogether, the results of this research show that organizations aiming for the SRHR issues placement on a policy agenda are placed in a dynamic sphere, where many other issues compete for decision makers' attention at the same time. This stresses the importance for the advocacy practitioners to plan their policy influencing strategies thoroughly with firstly familiarizing on the prevailing conditions in the policy environment and then designing the activities based on the conditions as well as on the influenced groups.

7.3   Limitations of the study

Lincoln and Guba (1985) indicate four criteria for evaluating the trustworthiness of qualitative research; credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The credibility of this research has been assured with presenting direct quotations from the research data in the text. Also the process of coding and creating themes was elaborated in the text. Thereby, the reader can see the link between research data and findings of this research.

When considering the credibility, the researcher's position should also be taken into account. In addition to conducting the research, the researcher worked at the case organization UNFPA ESARO in South Africa during the period of collecting most of the research data. This position of being an "insider researcher" when conducting research interviews, sets some ethical considerations for the research compared to being a researcher with no relation to research case organization. Ethical issues can for instance arise for the interview situations when collecting data from those who are considered as more powerful than the researcher (Fleming 2018, 314). In this study, the researcher worked in an intern position and most of the case organization interviewees were operating on a higher level, for instance in specialist or managerial positions, resulting in them being higher in the hierarchy and having more power in relation to the researcher.

Challenges this power position set were that for example with one interviewee, it was challenging to agree on a date for the interview meeting, clearly due to the interview not being considered as a priority partly affected by the researcher's intern position. When the interview was finally ongoing, it was interrupted by a request for an ad-hoc meeting from someone higher in the hierarchy, which the interviewee prioritized and thus, the interview had to be held in two occasions. The interruption made the tone of the first interview stressful and not so focused, possibly affecting the depth of answers. Also, with one potential interviewee from the UN, the date was agreed and set, but in the

end the person ended up not responding which resulted in not conducting the interview at all.

Another consideration being an inside researcher sets to the credibility of the research, is the risk of premature conclusions (Fleming 2018, 316). On a positive note, researchers working at the studied organization are usually familiar with the language, jargon and acronyms used by interviwees and thus, it is less probable for the researchers to misunderstand the responses (Brannick & Coghlan 2007, 69). This also means that there is no need for researchers to spend time familiarizing with the research context. However, being vastly familiar with the research topic can impose a risk for premature conclusions if the researcher's preconceptions of the results seem to be confirmed and also lead to taking for granted some patterns of the data (Fleming 2018, 316). To overcome this limitation, the researcher paid attention to the possible presuppositions during the analysis and aimed for a thorough analysis interpreting the data with clear distinct phases. The researcher has also attempted to describe the whole research process as openly and transparently as possible, for the reader to assess the credibility of this study.

Also, to ensure credibility, the researcher aimed to explain the SRHR issues thoroughly in the findings with clearly elaborating the different acronyms and avoiding industry jargon, so that a reader who is not previously familiar with SRHR or the research's overall context can understand and follow the topic.

Regarding transferability, a broad view on the researched phenomena, SRHR policy influencing by organizations, is ensured by interviewing different stakeholder groups involved in the SRHR advocacy work; UN organizations, NGOs and a government department. This could allow transferring this research's results for other similar contexts and for different organizations to evaluate their policy influencing actions. Based on the results, the organizations could especially pay attention whether their advocacy practices follow communicative principles, such as dialogue with important stakeholders, engaging decision makers and utilizing strategic framing in their advocacy narratives. When transferring the research, it is worthwhile to note that although the research data represents widely different organizations according to their institutional nature, the research data is not itself evenly distributed. Four case organization UNFPA interviewees, one partner agency UNESCO interviewee, two NGO interviewees and one government department interviewee implies that the research sets a more prominent emphasis on the UN perspective. However, this division of the interviewees is justified for the scope of this research, since UNFPA is the case organization.

The size of the research data sets still some limitations to the study. The research data comprises of eight interviews, which for qualitative research can be considered as relatively small. The amount of research interviews is however justified with elite sampling, the method chosen to identify the interviewees. In elite sampling, the individuals interviewed need to have wide and specific knowledge of the researched topic (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 86).

Working at the case organization during conducting the research interviews helped with identifying the interviewees at positions relevant to the research context. The interviewees from case organization UNFPA and partner agency UNESCO were professionals working at the surface of policy processes and having several years of experience from health and SRHR field. The stakeholders from NGOs and government department were identified at meetings on mutual projects or events related to the work of UNFPA, to ensure their relation to the case organization and proper knowledge of it. The researched thought that using elite sampling would lead to comprehensive research data and not needing to collect more data, which in the end was realized. Additionally, elite sampling ended up being an optimal way to choose the interviewees due to a strict timespan for identifying the interviewees and collecting most the data while the researcher still was physically present in South Africa.

Finally, to apply dependability, the research process was executed in compliance with scientific practice. The research process is described in a transparent way, allowing the reader to evaluate how the data has been collected and processed. Also, the literature used consists mostly of peer reviewed scientific articles. A few book references are also included, but these sources do not perform a major role in the building of the theoretical background. Conformability of the research data is provided by linking findings to the theory, to not only display citations from the research data.

7.4   Suggestions for future research

In this research, SRHR policy influencing efforts from the perspective of international organizations and their key stakeholders in East and Southern Africa were examined. Based on the results, effective advocacy requires strategic communication. Participatory advocacy, stakeholder engagement with those affected by the policies to high-level policy makers, aiming for mutual dialogue with the stakeholders and strategic framing all need communication to be conducted. The conceptual basis for this research, development communication, involves communication activities initiated by international institutions intended towards achieving social change. Based on the results, this research opens a field for development communication to strengthen its focus and theoretical groundings by further focusing on transdisciplinarity and linkages with communication and public relations literature.

Development communication in praxis requires settling the development issues in multi-stakeholder platforms (Servaes 2016, 708). The dominant paradigm of development communication has made a transfer from the original diffusion-oriented modernization paradigm into a participatory model standard, where mutual discussions and horizontal information exchange is included (Lie & Servaes 2015, 244; Morris 2005, 124). This indicates clear interlinkages and relationships between the roots of stakeholder engagement and dialogue in

communication theory, which with further studying in the context of development, could provide insightful theoretical openings for the field.

The participatory approach of development communication emphasizes dialogue in its practice, described in the development literature for instance as co-equal knowledge sharing (Melkote & Steeves 2015), involvement and dialogue as catalyst for empowerment (Waisbord 2008) and as dialogic processes (Johnston 2010). However, these notions of dialogic elements are still quite ambiguous to their meaning. This research showed, that deliberations in the development sphere take often some forms of dialogue as elaborated by communication literature. These findings indicate that it would be beneficial study in more detail, how is the dialogue between stakeholders in development activities constructed.

In public relations literature, Taylor and Kent (2002) have presented the concept of true dialogue often stated as the most progressive form of dialogue (Lane 2020), where dialogic characteristics of mutuality, propinquity, empathy, risk, and commitment constitute true dialogue. Based on these dialogic pillars, it would be interesting to further deepen knowledge on processes initiated by international organizations in the development field, for instance through questioning; is there a feeling of mutual equality according to the involved actors? How is the commitment to dialogue shown between the involved stakeholders?

Additionally, it would be beneficial to further examine stakeholder dimensions and different stakeholder perspectives on the SRHR advocacy collaborations. As stated in the limitations, this study focuses most prominently on the United Nations perspective and advocacy approaches which, based on the results, are truly participatory. However, this finding does not take into account the perspectives of those affected by the policies at the grassroots level and those "participated" in the initiatives and thus, it would be sustainable to also assess how the affected groups perceive their involvement in the advocacy. It would be beneficial to further develop the understanding of what is really participatory and is the UN approach perceived as such.

Also, a comparative study among stakeholder approaches to advocacy could be conducted. The results of this research shed a light on the fact that an organization's institutional nature and source of funding might affect the tone taken in the advocacy communication. This finding would allow to further research, how for instance NGO and IGO approaches towards a specific advocacy campaign on SRHR differ and what elements are possibly mutual.

This research has been focusing on SRHR policy influencing as a whole. As the elements of SRHR are considered as wide, it would be beneficial to narrow the research scope and gain knowledge focusing on a specific SRHR element in East and Southern Africa region. For instance, there might be slight differences in efficient advocacy approaches and involved stakeholders between reproductive health issues and harmful practices such as female-genital mutilation (FGM). Thus, approaching each SRHR element as its own entity could give more issue-specific information in order to realize them in ESA.

Similarly, the scope of SRHR advocacy practiced by organizations in East and Southern Africa consists of various initiatives, campaigns and projects. As this research did not focus on a specific undertaking, it could be beneficial for future research to narrow the focus on a particular initiative. For example, some interviewees of this research gave examples of the ESA Commitment policy initiative, stating it being successful in terms of bringing together all key stakeholders from different sectors and for the first time fully recognizing the linkages between the partners. Future research could address the success factors of ESA Commitment more specifically; what made the stakeholder engagement successful? By what means were the stakeholders engaged? Narrowing the focus either on the ESA Commitment or any other relevant advocacy initiative on SRHR, would allow to do more specific conclusions and ultimately, pave the way for better health outcomes and more rights realized, when transferred to similar initiatives.

The amount of potential public issues often exceeds the decision-making institutions resources to handle the issues (Cobb et al. 1976, 126). In the light of the current COVID-19 pandemic, governments face major pressing issues, focusing on the recovery and building resilience to overcome the pandemic. Outbreak of a crisis often exacerbates the delivery of SRH services, especially in low-resource settings (Clark & Gruending 2020, 2). Evidence shows that even a modest decline in SRH service access due to COVID-19 can lead to additional 15 million unintended pregnancies and additional 28 000 maternal deaths in low- and middle-income countries (Riley et al. 2020, 74). Deepening inequalities caused by the pandemic also increase the prevalence of gender-based violence, which in low- and middle-income countries is expected to intensify with additional 15 million cases every three months lockdowns continue (UNFPA 2020).

Taken together, the deficiencies to SRHR realization and the new government agendas set by the COVID-19 pandemic, impose new challenges to the advocacy, making the importance of studying effective policy influencing approaches for SRHR even more topical. Results of this research showed that strategic framing of the issues emphasizing national development consequences when engaging governments, can make a positive difference. This raises an opportunity for future research to examine, how strategic frames towards realizing SRHR could be further developed to address the additional challenges of the "new normal".

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ANNEX

Annex 1. 23 countries where UNFPA works in East and Southern Africa region highlighted. (UNFPA 2019)
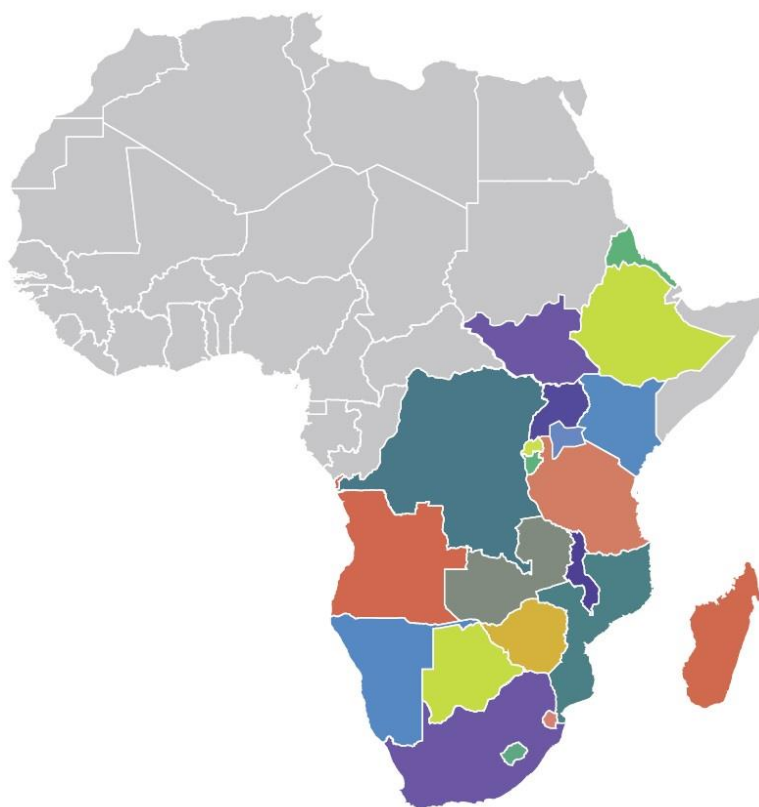
Annex 2. Interview guideline.

Background questions

The purpose of the background questions is to establish a profile of the interviewee and the main themes and projects he or she works with. It will help forming the further interview questions and determine the right direction of the questionnaire.

Title and gender

Years of experience in the organization and in the field

What is your function in the organization?

What kind of tasks does your work consists of and what would you consider to be your main tasks? Are there some initiatives you are working on at the moment?

Process of influencing the policy environment

- What kind of actions do you take when conducting tasks 1 and 2 (etc.)?
- What is the purpose of doing these documents or initiatives?
- What elements do you take into consideration when working towards achieving the project you described? Give some examples.
- What kind of processes are involved in these initiatives - what is the starting point and what is the ending point? Give some examples of activities between these lines.
- Who are the key actors/stakeholders that have to be involved in the process?
- How are the key actors/stakeholders involved in the process? What is their role?
- What are the benefits of working in alliances/with stakeholders? What might be the challenges?

Practical examples

- Give an example of a project or projects in your work that you think succeeded well. What made them successful?
- What are the challenges in your work? What are the obstacles in advancing laws and policies?
- Give an example of a project or projects that have not achieved their targets in your work. What made them unsuccessful?

- How could the current practices be improved to make the results more effective?

Advocacy and communication

- Would you identify the practice that you carry out at your role in UNFPA as advocacy work?
- How would you define the concept 'advocacy'?
- What do you see as the tools of advocacy work?
- What do you think is the role of communication when it comes to influencing the policy environment in the context of advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights?
- Who do you think are the key actors that should be involved in influencing SRHR? How are they mobilized?
- Do you think that media attention is important in this matter? What kind of messages would work towards positive policy change?
- What kind of change and in which actors would need to happen to achieve sexual and reproductive health and rights in the ESA-context?

Additional questions

- Would you like to add anything?
- Can I contact you later for more questions, if needed?

Additional questions asked from NGO representatives

- How would you describe the cooperation between the NGO sector and the UN, especially UNFPA in the East and Southern African region alike?
- Do you think that the cooperation/joint programs/partnerships strengthen the advocacy efforts and how?
- Is there something that could be done better/more in the partnership with UN/UNFPA?