



**Submission to The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights upon the commemoration of the 75th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) with views from youth-led and youth-focused organizations and institutions to inform the Human Rights 75 Youth Declaration.**

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### **Sonke Gender Justice**

Sonke Gender Justice (Sonke) is a South African-based NGO that works across Africa to strengthen government, civil society and citizen capacity to support men and boys in taking action to promote gender equality, prevent domestic and sexual violence, and reduce the spread and impact of HIV and AIDS. Using a human rights framework to achieve gender equality, Sonke endeavours to create the change necessary for all to enjoy equitable, healthy and happy relationships that contribute to the development of just and democratic societies. Sonke has an expanding presence on the African continent and a growing international profile through its involvement with the United Nations and its role as a member of the Global MenEngage Alliance board and the Secretariat of the MenEngage Africa Network, as well as other international networks and affiliates.

### **Power to Youth**

The Power to You(th) (PtY) is in a multi-partner consortium that seeks to transform the promotion of gender equality, health and well-being of youth, women, girls and adolescents through youth-led accountability, strengthened civil society movements, progressive social norms and improved policy making and budgeting for youth and adolescent priorities and needs. This objective is in alignment with specific elements of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 on the promotion of health and well-being and SDG5 on gender equality. Funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), the programme focuses on eradication of harmful practices, such as Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C) and child marriage, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and unintended pregnancies.

The Power to Youth consortium is comprised of international partners Sonke Gender Justice, Amref Health Africa (AHA), and Rutgers along with technical partners Choice for Youth and the Dutch Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) supporting seven countries namely, Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Malawi, Ghana, Senegal, and Indonesia. Within the programme, Sonke supports MenEngage Africa partners in Uganda and Malawi.

### **MenEngage Africa**

MenEngage Africa, is part of the MenEngage Global Alliance, and consists of a network of civil society organisations and activists formed in 2006 with the goal of working in partnership to promote the engagement of men and boys in achieving gender equality, preventing HIV, promoting human rights and reducing violence at all levels across the continent, including questioning the structural barriers that drive gender inequalities. The membership of MEA includes civil society organisations representing women's rights, HIV/AIDS, LGBTQIA+ rights, youth and child rights, refugees and migrants, and social justice constituencies.



**1. What are the challenges the world is facing now, how they will affect the future of human rights, and what future do you want for human rights?**

Changes in the global geopolitics such as repressive laws passed by governments tend to have a spillover effect into the region. For example, after the passing of the Anti-Homosexuality Bill in Uganda some of the African countries showed support for the passing of the bill. In Malawi the religious leaders petitioned the president, the parliament and called for a national referendum in protest of same sex unions. The future we want for human rights is one where there is an understanding that denying and violating human rights is robbing people of a dignified life, where despite our differences we know that human rights are for all and not a select few.

**2. What are your recommendations to decision and policymakers, including governments, civil society, international organizations, the United Nations, and others, to advance human rights in the future?**

**Consultation:** when making decisions, laws, policies, and programs for young people, they must be consulted and included in every stage of development to ensure that there is understanding and ownership from the get-go. People should not be treated as passive recipients of laws, policies and programs but rather as co-creators and collaborators because they are affected by the laws, policies and programs.

**Inclusivity:** people in all their diversities must be considered when making decisions so that their lived experiences are considered and reflected. It is also important to note the intersectionalities of people because that determines whether they will be able to access and exercise their fundamental rights.

**3. What commitments and actions can young people take towards advancing human rights in the future?**

- Young people must continue to amplify their voices on any platform they are on, in their communities, in national and international advocacy spaces and on the media.
- Young people should leave no one behind, understanding that they are a diverse group of people with varied access to opportunities and resources.
- Young people should hold decision makers accountable when changes are made without the consultation and consideration of young people.