

The FIGO Advocacy for Safe Abortion Project (ASAP) in Mozambique



AMOG
Associação Mozambicana
de Obstetras e Ginecologistas

About ASAP

The international Advocacy for Safe Abortion Project (ASAP) was implemented with national societies in ten countries: Benin, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Panama, Peru, Uganda and Zambia from April 2019 to March 2022. In Mozambique, the Mozambican Association of Gynaecologists and Obstetricians (AMOG), founded in 2006, implemented ASAP with the aim to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity from unsafe abortion by advocating increased access to safe abortion. This summary of main activities and key achievements per pathway draws from the findings of the mixed-methods final project evaluation.¹

Pathway 1: A strengthened national society

Project implementers received training from FIGO and other experts to improve their knowledge and skills around advocacy and communication, social media, finance, monitoring & evaluation, research and data and fundraising. Further, AMOG developed several new governance documents during the project, such as, for instance, a position statement on safe abortion and strategic plan (2022–2027). The society also initiated a newsletter that is being shared regularly through WhatsApp, Facebook and email.

- Stakeholders who received training through the project felt a strong improvement in their knowledge and skills, while the project also supported AMOG in developing various policies and systems that strengthened AMOG as an organization.
- Surveyed gynaecologists acknowledged that AMOG's leadership role in SRHR for women was strengthened and rated AMOG's communication on various aspects, including its position on safe abortion, as good or excellent.

Pathway 2: Strengthened networks

Through the SRHR network (Rede de Defesa dos Direitos Sexuais e Reprodutivos, or Rede DSR) and the technical working group (TWG) on safe abortion hosted by the Ministry of Health, AMOG worked with and influenced a variety of actors such as the Ministry of Health (MoH), health staff, journalists, teachers, youth, police officers and AMOG members. In these partnerships, AMOG shared expertise and brought in international perspectives, produced a national message document for safe abortion approved by the TWG, offered trainings and organized joint activities with the network, especially around commemorative days.

- Despite competing challenges, the Ministry of Health continues to openly support the implementation of the safe abortion law in Mozambique.
- Strengthened cooperation with the SRHR network in Mozambique supported a wider reach while AMOG enabled stronger engagement of the network with the MoH.
- Stakeholders, including the MoH, acknowledged and appreciated the leadership of AMOG in the celebration of commemorative days.
- Engagement of the network with the Ministry of Health was strengthened, with AMOG's expertise in this recognized.

Pathway 3: Healthcare providers deliver comprehensive abortion care services to the full extent of the law

To support the implementation of the operational guidelines on safe abortion, AMOG developed, in conjunction with the MoH, a value clarification and attitude transformation (VCAT) training for various actors, including AMOG members, parliamentarians and youth. The VCAT package included new subjects, such as conscientious objection, which were adapted from materials developed by FIGO and other countries of ASAP implementation.

1. Egberts, F. and Cumbe, Z.A. (2022). Advocating for safe abortion. Mozambican Association of Gynecologists and Obstetricians (AMOG). Final evaluation

During the project, 15 VCAT trainers have been capacitated, 28 workshops delivered and 1,563 people participated.

- Healthcare workers and service personnel feel more equipped to assist women seeking safe abortion services.
- AMOG members feel well positioned to advocate safe abortion and to conduct VCAT training.
- Nearly half of surveyed AMOG gynaecologists stated that their position towards safe abortion had changed over the past years and that the project was a contributing factor to this.
- Fewer women present at the health clinic with unsafe abortions and when they do, they disclose that they had an unsafe abortion.

Pathway 4: Communities have increased awareness of sexual and reproductive health and rights, including acceptance of safe abortion and its legalities

Under the project, six sensitization sessions including information about the law on safe abortion were organized with journalists and one with lawyers and related professionals. AMOG also carried out four sensitization sessions on safe abortion in the communities across the country and involved high-level government officials, the police, Ministry of Social Gender, Children and Social Welfare, the Secretary of State for Sports and social groups like the Runners and the Mozambique Council of Religions (COREM). In addition, the project worked with Radio Moçambique to reach out to women in the communities in their language through interactive weekly radio shows and engaged around 700 students and trained 130 teachers.

- Training with journalists brought more self-reported nuance to their reporting and contributed to a less sensationalist and less judgemental way of reporting.
- A national radio programme discussed safe abortion and voluntarily played song 'Dura Realidade' ('Difficult Reality'), in Maputo Province, Tete, Manica, Zambézia, Nampula and Sofala.
- The police voluntarily trained staff on safe abortion with the involvement of AMOG.

- Community leaders initiated presentations and discussions about safe abortion in their area.
- Active participation in radio shows on safe abortion hint towards more awareness and interest in the topic of safe abortion among the general public.
- Youth reportedly felt more confident sharing SRHR information, including on safe abortion, after having participated in sensitization sessions with AMOG staff.

Pathway 5: Generation and the use of evidence

AMOG conducted a few studies throughout the project, but overall this strategy received least attention in ASAP in Mozambique up until this point. Nevertheless, the final evaluation showed that generating and disseminating evidence for safe abortion was the role for AMOG that was most highlighted by the survey respondents.

- A study on the availability of supplies and the readiness of health facilities was completed under the project. The findings were discussed at a task force, who jointly prioritized increasing the readiness of health facilities and district hospitals as an advocacy priority for 2022. AMOG also presented these findings at the 2021 FIGO World Congress.
- The execution of smaller studies, such as on the topic of conscientious objection, will be continued in the next project phase after March 2022.

Looking forward

The organizational sustainability of AMOG has been strengthened during the project, with investments in systems and procedures and active fundraising ongoing but sustaining the dedicated work on safe abortion seems to be fragile without funding. The AMOG membership is a key asset that is instrumental in continuing to advocate SRHR. Current efforts, like accreditation for VCAT training, are good and innovative initiatives to mainstream safe abortion activities in professional education, while further work and analysis of subsequent impacts would be fruitful.

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