



# 2024

## ANNUAL REPORT

# Contents

<b>Executive Director's Report</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
Who We Are	5
Vision	5
Mission Statement	5
<b>2024 Country Networks Membership Figures</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Key Highlights</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Capacity Building</b>	<b>10</b>
INERELA+ Country Networks Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Training Workshop	10
Tanzania: Training Of Religious Leaders on Child Rights, Gender and Advocacy, Citizens' Rights Monitoring	11
Hands Off Project Capacity Strengthening Workshop For INERELA+ Country Networks	11
Save The Children Civil Society Strengthening Project – INERELA+ Country Network Representatives Attending a Capacity Building Training Workshop	12
<b>INERELA+ Annual Learning Forum-2024</b>	<b>12</b>
INERELA+ Training of Trainers (Tot): Life & Relationship Skills Training Workshop	13
Meetings And Workshops	14
REPSI: MHPSS Advocacy Training Workshop Under Save The Children Project	14
Advocacy Through Cop- 29	15
SANERELA+: Stigma Index Training Workshop in Thailand	15
<b>Project Activities and Implementation</b>	<b>16</b>
Stakeholders Call for Action to End Child Marriages	16
Zimbabwe Commended for Raising Legal Consent Age for Sex	16
Passage Of Strict Bill Regarding Human Sexual Rights and Family Values, Commonly Referred to As the Anti-LGBTQ Bill In Ghana Parliament	16
International And Regional Events	18
Aleph 2024: A Regional Conference on Law Enforcement and Public Health in Sub-Sahara Africa – Taking Action for Women's Rights and Gender Equality	18
Harnessing The Power of Collective Action in The Fight for Gender Equality at Csw68	19
Together For Child Rights Through The 25th Session of the Civil Society Forum	20
Aids 2024 Preconference "Emphasises Sustaining Hope for All"	21
<b>Audited Income &amp; Expenditure</b>	<b>22</b>

# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The year 2025 began with a chaotic storm that continues to this day. Significant policy shifts, including the US withdrawing from the World Health Organisation (WHO), the Paris Agreement, the abrupt suspension of all foreign aid through USAID, and the halting of vital programmes like the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) have had profound consequences for global health and climate initiatives. This has severely affected HIV programmes, access to contraceptives, and reproductive health services and INERELA+ is not an exception. We have purposefully utilized our social media channel to present messages of hope for our communities. In the face of adversity, we are more resolute than ever in our belief that the collective power of Religious Leaders, young people, children, women and girls is our greatest strength to fight harder for their rights, inequality. It is their fearlessness, commitment and strength that will guide us forward, leading the way towards a more just and equitable future for us all. We remain a staunch partner with other networks globally, and we maintain our grassroots connections.

The ongoing conflict in DR Congo has resulted in destruction, suffering and loss of life and property. Displaced families are faced with uncertainty and fears for their safety. We are inspired by our Religious Leaders who are bringing comfort to the displaced people, the young people who remain hopeful and women who are protecting families. INERELA+ remains committed to amplifying their voices and promoting interventions that promote peace and security.

Temperatures are rising. Ecosystems are disappearing and pollution remains a deadly threat. These are global problems that require global solutions. The world must pull together to build a fairer, more sustainable planet. Projects that INERELA+ implement are making a tangible difference in the lives of community people by enhancing resilience and reducing vulnerabilities. We are thrilled by the fact that the work that we do garnered accreditation by the UN environment Program.

As you will see in this report, our advocacy efforts gained momentum in 2024 as we collectively raised awareness about the importance of empowerment of women, girls, young people and children. Through strategic partnerships and participation in global forums such as the **International AIDS Conference, Global Law Enforcement and Public Health Forum, Generation Equality, Education Plus. International Conference Of Family Planning and Regional Forums like Civil Society Forum and COP 29** INERELA+ worked alongside partners to represent the interests of vulnerable groups in the global development space.



Munya Mandipaza | INERELA+  
Executive Director

In 2024, we made tremendous progress – not only by strengthening our connections with technical partners and the broader philanthropic community but also through stepping boldly into advocacy driven by the belief that we have the vision and strategy to create lasting, systemic change at the local level. Our collaborating and technical Partners are our treasured allies. They make our work possible through assisting us to **increase the visibility and the work of our Country Networks** while pushing for positive change within our communities. We value their input and partnership. The Faith Actors for Justice Award from our Partner Faith To Action Network recognises trailblazing individuals who have shattered barriers and advanced opportunities and the rights for women and girls. INERELA+ **Executive Director Munya Mandipaza** was one of the individuals who was recognised for her vision, courage, and impact which broke glass ceilings and created pathways for future women and girls' leaders in 2024 under the **Leadership Excellence in Promoting Gender Justice and Women's Rights in Faith Communities** category.

Find out more about the awards ceremony [here](#).

A new Love Alliance Project funded by Aidsfonds will go a long way to promote equality and inclusion of women and girls in Mozambique and Zimbabwe. Faith Movement for Gender Justice is another new project that will be implemented from January 2025 to December 2026 in a consortium with other partners whilst being hosted by our partner Faith To Action Network. Through this Project we will mobilize faith actors to promote gender equality, inclusion and non-violence within their communities.

Looking ahead to 2025, we are committed to expanding this work – through mobilizing resources, driving impact, and growing our community of Religious Leaders and changemakers. This moment calls for bold action, and I am grateful to each of you for standing with us.

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the board of directors for their incredible support and outstanding work. I also want to thank the staff members who make up the INERELA+ Secretariat for their amazing work. I have had the privilege of working closely with INERELA+ Country Networks staff. Their talent and dedication to the INERELA+ work is exceptional. Thank you for making INERELA+ great!

As INERELA+ we owe our success to the unwavering support of our generous donors, global regional and national partners, who have joined forces with us to amplify the impact of our projects. We deeply appreciate their commitment to the INERELA+ cause. We are proud of what we've accomplished and look forward to continuing this journey with all of you.

**With gratitude,**

**Munya Mandipaza – INERELA+ Executive Director**

# INTRODUCTION

The changing context with its various emerging demands, escalating cost of living, funder fatigue, rampant human violations, inequality and climate change has prompted INERELA+ to double its efforts towards reformations, reorganisation and proactive towards approaches and strategies that cushion the vulnerable in society.

## WHO WE ARE

The International Network of Religious Leaders Living with or Affected by HIV and AIDS (INERELA+) is an international, interfaith network of Religious Leaders (RLs) – both lay and ordained, women and men – who are living with or personally affected by HIV and AIDS (INERELA+). We mobilise the collective voice of our member RLs who are influential within their respective communities and congregations. Religious Leaders are respected as community insiders and often seen as moral authorities, providers of spiritual guidance. Because of the trust they have from their communities Religious Leaders play a central role in influencing the decisions and buy-in of their followers or communities on issues, ideas, innovations, interventions, and programmes.



## VISION

All people realize their right to healthy, peaceful, just, and quality lives driven by comprehensive faith-based interventions

## MISSION STATEMENT

INERELA+ empowers religious leaders to be transformational and transformative change agents in reclaiming social justice, dignity, health, and well-being of all people.

# 2024 COUNTRY NETWORKS MEMBERSHIP FIGURES

Over the years, the networks have grown; there are now more than 45 407 member Religious Leaders across the globe who mobilise their respective faith communities to drive positive change through our holistic SAVE toolkit (Safer practices, Access to services, Voluntary and regular HIV Testing Services, and Empowerment toolkit).

INERELA+ interventions are implemented through 16 Country Networks in the following African countries: Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Rwanda, Uganda, Madagascar, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Membership numbers per country are as presented in Table 1.

COUNTRY NETWORK	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
Botswana	78	102	180
Burundi	149	90	239
DRC Congo	119	41	160
Ghana	32	18	50
Kenya	1856	2156	4012
Madagascar	70	47	117
Malawi	18 723	16 277	35 000
Mozambique	9	40	49
Nigeria	571	592	1163
Rwanda	82	114	196
Sierra Leone	265	205	470
South Africa	260	590	850
Tanzania	212	98	310
Uganda	285	174	459
Zambia	607	736	1343
Zimbabwe	594	469	1063
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23 912</b>	<b>21 749</b>	<b>45 661</b>

# Bridging the Gender divide



The  
World Will Be a Better  
Place If More Women And Girls  
Understand The Power Of Their  
Voices

The triple planetary crisis weighs heavily on women and girls, deepening gender inequality and trapping millions in poverty. To counter that, INERELA+ proactively ensures that women participate equally in environmental restoration while creating economic opportunities that make people more resilient to climate change.

# Climate Action

INERELA+ is working to reverse the unprecedented decline of the natural world, while supporting communities that depend on nature for their survival.



# KEY HIGHLIGHTS

340

INERELA+ trained 340 Religious Leaders on Hand Off manual, 110 Zimbabwe; 110 Zambia; 60 South Africa, and 60 Mozambique

28

INERELA+ Trained 28 young people on Life Skills including gender responsive climate adaptation and mitigation interventions in six different countries (Malawi, Rwanda, South Africa, Zambia) Save the Children project while Mozambique, and Zimbabwe was under Love Alliance project.

10

INERELA+ Rwanda and INERELA+ Tanzania trained 10 participants on child rights, gender, advocacy and citizens rights monitoring. The participants included 5, Rwanda (3 Religious leaders, 2 young people/youth champions); 5, Tanzania (3 Religious leaders, 2 young people/youth champions)

10

INERELA+ Rwanda and INERELA+ Tanzania trained 10 participants on on Child rights, CEFMU and GBV. The participants included 5, Rwanda (2 Religious leaders, 2 young people/youth champions, 1 duty bearer); 5, Tanzania (2 Religious leaders, 2 young people/youth champions, 1 duty bearer).

21

INERELA+ South Africa conducted a training workshop for Religious leaders to become agents of change on key issues affecting key populations including climate change, human violations, MHPSS and SRHR using the Religious Leaders Training Manual in Johannesburg TAC center. At least 21 Religious leaders from different congregations attended.

22000

INERELA+ South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Rwanda, Botswana, Mozambique, Tanzania printed IEC material (banners, leaflets, pamphlets) with the message of raising awareness against CEFMU, GBV and Teenage Pregnancies (at congregational level) among Faith Communities led by Religious Leaders and Youth Champions. The message is estimated in the local communities and the among congregational members is estimated to have reached and impacted over 7000 congregational members and the snowballing effect on the public and beyond the local communities is estimated at over 5000 people. Further impact was realised as the INERELA+ South Africa, trained Religious leaders, and the youth champions utilized online banners on their social media groups to spread the message which is estimated to have reached more than 10000 followers.

# CAPACITY BUILDING



## INERELA+ COUNTRY NETWORKS MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT TRAINING WORKSHOP

On November 13, 2024, the INERELA+ Secretariat effectively arranged a Virtual Training Workshop focused on Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS). At least 14 INERELA+ Country networks participated in the workshop. The workshop was facilitated by two highly qualified facilitators from REPSSI, Monica Moatsi and Johnson Fani-Matenga. The workshop covered several subjects related to mental health and psychosocial support, including Principles of psychosocial support programming; Psychosocial well-being; The dynamic relationship between psychosocial and social effects; Psychology and social world dynamics; Mental health overview; Symptoms indicating probable mental health problems among many. INERELKA+ Country network participants increased their knowledge that depression, anxiety, and trauma are prevalent issues in many of the countries with participants sharing local statistics and personal anecdotes that underscored the urgency of addressing these common conditions. Participants identified a range of barriers to accessing mental health services such as stigma, a lack of trained professionals, limited funding for mental health programs, and insufficient public awareness campaigns. Furthermore, they realised the importance of culturally sensitive approaches was emphasized throughout



INERELA+ Country Networks attending virtual MHPSS training workshop on the 13th of November 2024

the training. Many participants stressed the need for mental health strategies that align with local cultural beliefs and practices to enhance acceptance and effectiveness. A consensus emerged regarding the importance of integrated service delivery, where mental health services are combined with other health and social services. This approach can foster a more holistic response to individuals' needs. Participants underscored the need for collaboration among government bodies, non-governmental organizations, and community groups to effectively address mental health challenges and develop comprehensive strategies. Several participants noted the growing impact of technology on mental health, including both its potential benefits (e.g., access to online support) and challenges (e.g., social media-related anxiety). The workshop provided a comprehensive overview of critical topics and principles aimed at enhancing the capacity of participants to support their communities effectively.

## TANZANIA: TRAINING OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS ON CHILD RIGHTS, GENDER AND ADVOCACY, CITIZENS' RIGHTS MONITORING

After a successful training workshop conducted by INERELA+ Tanzania on the 14th of May 2024 in Dar es Salaam, Archbishop Charles Asher Howard one of the six participants (2 Religious leaders, 1 duty bearer, 2 male/one- female youth champions) confessed the new knowledge he acquired during a day workshop facilitated by Mr Shaabani Rulimbiye a Human rights advocate working as a consultant in Tanzania. The Pentecostal Archbishop who leads worships at Mbezi Evangelical Fellowship Church of Tanzania in Ubungo District for over 38 years started by saying: "I will take this knowledge gained to uphold the rights of different groups including children."

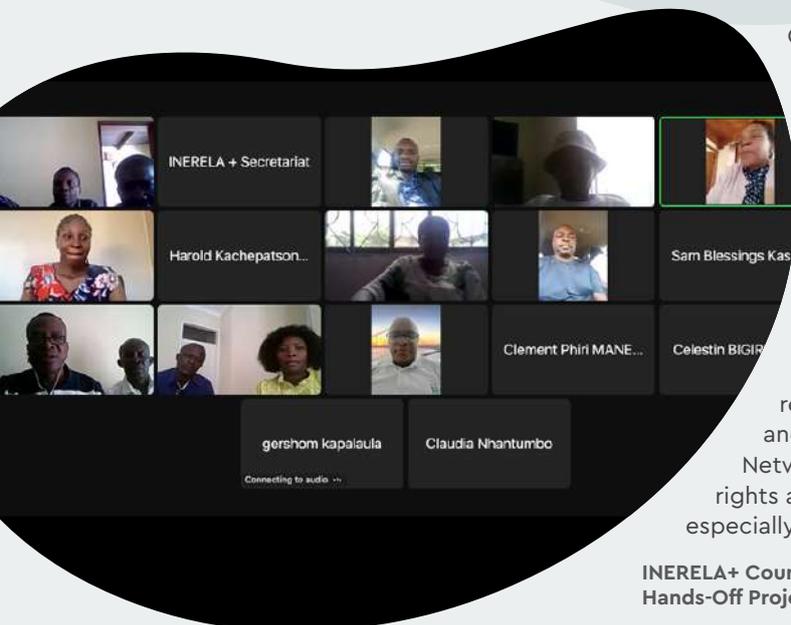
Since the training, the archbishop now shares from the pulpit human rights issues and encourage his congregants across Ubungo District to uphold human rights and treat all humanity equally. Archbishop is a member of the Religious Leaders' National Peace Committee and is taking advantage of their meetings to further the cause of women and children as far as. Protecting their right is concerned. In his testimony, Archbishop committed to hold the government accountable by also ensuring that policy and legislative reforms aimed at enhancing human rights protection by the government are shared through his churches and amplify the need for positive masculinity among men and boys.



Bishop Charles Asher Howard testifying on the knowledge he acquired during INERELA+ Tanzania training workshop on child rights, gender and advocacy, citizens' rights monitoring

## HANDS OFF PROJECT CAPACITY STRENGTHENING WORKSHOP FOR INERELA+ COUNTRY NETWORKS

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of April 2024, four INERELA+ Country Networks (Zimbabwe, Zambia, South Africa, and Mozambique) that are implementing the Hand-Off project participated in a virtual workshop on capacity strengthening in line with Capacity Building Plans. The workshop was facilitated by Natasha Ntini, A Gender and Policy Advocacy Specialist from the Southern African Parliamentary Support Trust (SAPST). The training workshop was conducted in line with an internal Organisational Capacity Assessment (OCA) conducted by INERELA+ Secretariat to evaluate Country Networks' strengths and weaknesses in programming, governance, operations, institutional capacity and how they relate to external stakeholders. The workshop titled Legislative and Policy Advocacy in Parliament focused on how Country Networks can improve their approach to advocacy on human rights and hold authorities accountable on human rights violations, especially the law enforcement agencies. Country Networks were



INERELA+ Country Networks Attending Capacity Strengthening Workshop Under Hands-Off Project 30 April 2024.

made to understand parliament and how parliament operate or how policies are adopted, signed, and amended through the three arms of parliament which are the Executive, Judicial and the Legislature. The facilitator provoked discussion on the best practices when Country Networks approach parliamentarians, parliamentary committees and other stakeholders on policy advocacy, policy issues and policy amendments. Country Networks were coached on how they can strengthen their relationship with Members of Parliament in their constituencies through MOUs. The need to develop an informative and effective MOU key to convincing parliamentarians to take up advocacy matters with committees in parliament.

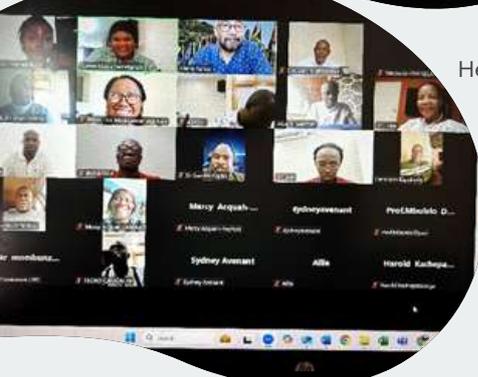
## SAVE THE CHILDREN CIVIL SOCIETY STRENGTHENING PROJECT – INERELA+ COUNTRY NETWORK REPRESENTATIVES ATTENDING A CAPACITY BUILDING TRAINING WORKSHOP



Country Networks implementing SAVE the Children project attending a capacity building training workshop on 30 April 2024

On the 30<sup>th</sup> of April 2024, six INERELA+ Country Networks (Rwanda, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, South Africa, and Botswana) that are implementing the SAVE the Children project participated in a capacity-building workshop facilitated by Natasha Ntini the Gender and Public Policy Specialist from Southern African Parliamentary Support Trust (SAPST). The training workshop was conducted in line with the SAVE the Children Civil Society Strengthening Organisational Development Plan (OD) derived from initial assessment Organisational Capacity Assessment (OCA) conducted internally by INERELA+ Secretariat to evaluate Country Networks strengths and weaknesses in programming, governance, institutional capacity and how they network with external stakeholders. The workshop titled Legislative and Policy Advocacy in Parliament focused on how Country Networks can improve their approach to advocacy for child rights, against CEFMU, GBV and Teenage Pregnancies. Country Networks were made to understand parliaments, and how parliaments operate. The facilitator provoked discussion on the best practices when Country Networks approached parliamentarians, parliamentary committees and other stakeholders on policy advocacy, policy issues and policy amendments. The facilitator coached Country Networks on how to strengthen their relationship with Members of Parliament in their areas through an MOU. The need to develop an informative and effective MOU that convinces parliamentarians to take up advocacy matters with their committees in parliament.

## INERELA+ ANNUAL LEARNING FORUM-2024



The INERELA+ virtual annual Learning Forum workshop held on the 18<sup>th</sup> of November 2024 marked a significant milestone in fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange among INERELA+ Country networks. Building on the foundation of past workshops, this event encouraged resilience and innovation across the network. At least 14 Country Networks participated, demonstrating their commitment to confronting mutual challenges and enhancing operational effectiveness. The 2024 Learning Forum which was running on the theme of Governance was saw Mr Glenn Farred governance guru encouraging Country Networks to reflect on some of the key challenges Country Networks always face that included: financial constraints as a barrier to operational effectiveness and navigation of both internal and external conflicts remaining an ongoing challenge for the sustainability of organizations. As a response to the challenges, Mr Glenn Farred indicated the need for improved reputation and risk management; partnerships and networks consortiums; development of smart project proposals, and donor management. He further coached the participants on effective board management and essential strategies for managing board dynamics, which included: Professional engagement with board members; Criteria for selecting board members, including thorough reference checks; Developing a strong Board Charter or Code of Conduct; Establishing leadership induction processes and clear term limits to bolster organizational

INERELA+ Country Networks attending a virtual Learning Forum on the 18<sup>th</sup> of November 2024

integrity; Implementing effective measures to address member misconduct and ensure accountability. Discussions further underscored the critical functions of Country Network Directors, detailing their expectations, responsibilities, and the importance of formal mechanisms for reporting any misbehaviour to the board with special emphasis on the necessity of drafting resolutions that prioritize organizational protection.

## **INERELA+ TRAINING OF TRAINERS (TOT): LIFE & RELATIONSHIP SKILLS TRAINING WORKSHOP**



**Virtual Life Skills Training Workshop Training of Trainers (TOT) 22-24 October 2024**

The INERELA+ Secretariat successfully organized a virtual Training of Trainers (TOT) workshop focusing on Life and Relationship Skills from October 22 to October 24, 2024. This event marks a continuation of training efforts that began in 2021, aimed at enhancing the skills of trainers within our networks. The goal of the Life and Relationship Skills training is to raise awareness and equip trainers to better assist adolescents in making informed and responsible choices that will have a positive impact on their lives. Representatives from five (5) Country networks participated in this training: South Africa, Malawi, Rwanda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Their involvement highlighted the collaborative approach of INERELA+ in advancing life skills education across various regions. To facilitate this training successfully, the INERELA+ Secretariat engaged the services of two esteemed consultants, Ms. Bongie Moyo-Bango, and Mr. Tapiwa Prosper Chimbadzwa. The first day focused mainly on Life and Relationship Skills with topics such as the importance of Life Skills; Self-Awareness and Personal Development; Effective Communication Techniques; Decision-Making and Problem-Solving skills. Day two was more interactive as the youth now had a clear background of what Life skills were all about, they were more engaging, participating in some practical interactive exercises and group discussions. The sessions were more focused on the practical application of the skills learned previously, reinforcing the concepts through hands-on activities. The training not only enhanced the competencies of each participant but also strengthened their commitment to fostering supportive networks within their communities. The knowledge and skills acquired serve as a valuable resources as they endeavour to promote healthier relationships and life skills among adolescents, thereby advancing the core mission of INERELA+. Day three facilitated by a Climate Advocate comprehensively covering topics on Climate Change, Climate Justice, Climate Security, and Environmental Rights. Through informed discussions, participants gained valuable insights into the disproportionate impact of climate change on marginalized communities and the urgent need for equitable policy advocacy.

# MEETINGS AND WORKSHOPS



## REPSSI: MHPSS ADVOCACY TRAINING WORKSHOP UNDER SAVE THE CHILDREN PROJECT



SAVE the Children partners attending MHPSS training workshop from the 27–29<sup>th</sup> of August 2024 at Holiday Inn, Johannesburg

From the 27<sup>th</sup> to the 29<sup>th</sup> of August, INERELA+ Secretariat represented by the MEAL Advisor joined seven (7) other partners under SAVE the Children Civil Society Strengthening programme to participate in a Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) training workshop which was facilitated by the Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative (REPSSI). This training workshop was a continuation of an MHPSS mainstreaming workshop which was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in October 2023. The training workshop was conducted under two specific objectives i.e.:

- To introduce the participants to the concept of MHPSS advocacy
- To build the capacity of participants in MHPSS advocacy planning, advocacy methods, and skills

To achieve these objectives participants were engaged by REPSSI through presentations, scenario building, and practical simulations on how as partners can effectively advocate for MHPSS nationally, regionally, and internationally. After thorough coaching, and presentations on how to advocate, participants as part of individual assignments produced Advocacy plans reflecting on their organization's implementation of MHPSS. Going forward partners and REPSSI will utilize the advocacy plans by working with the government led Technical Working Groups on MHPSS Advocacy processes in Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe to increase children's access to MHPSS services within Child Protection programmes

## ADVOCACY THROUGH COP- 29



The 29<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP29), took place in Baku, Azerbaijan, from 11 to 22 November 2024. It was a pivotal opportunity to accelerate action to tackle the climate crisis. The year 2024 is on track to be the warmest year on record after an extended streak of exceptionally high monthly global mean temperatures. With global temperatures hitting record high, and extreme weather events affecting people. Economies and communities around the globe, COP29 brought together leaders from governments, business and civil society to advance concrete solutions to the defining issue of our time. A key focus of COP29 was on finance, as trillions of dollars are required for countries to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions and protect lives and livelihoods from the worsening impacts of climate change. The conference was also a key moment for countries to present their updated national climate action plans under the Paris agreement, which are due by early 2025. These plans are meant to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and double investment plans advancing the Sustainable Development Goals.

## SANERELA+: STIGMA INDEX TRAINING WORKSHOP IN THAILAND



SANERELA+ (INERELA+ South Africa) attending a Stigma Index Training Workshop in Bangkok, Thailand 24–28 September 2024

SANERELA through the SANERELA Country Coordinator (Prof Mbulelo Dyasi together with other participants from 11 countries around the globe (Belarus, Cambodia, Indonesia, India, Jamaica, Malawi, Nigeria, Vietnam, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, and South Africa) attended a Stigma Index Training Workshop in Bangkok, Thailand 24–28 September 2024. This workshop aimed to bring together participants from national PLHIV networks to enhance their understanding of research design and data-related work, including data cleaning, data analysis, interpretation, and intersectional gender analysis. PLHIV Stigma Index Research Protocol Development and Data Interpretation Workshop in Bangkok, Thailand. Participants fully engaged through this capacity-building workshop to understand research protocol development and data interpretation where the discussions and exchanges of knowledge during the workshop

were invaluable, contributing significantly to the International Partnership of PLHIV Stigma Index in enhancing the development and optimization of research tools for the future. In the build-up to the workshop, in South Africa, the Stigma index study is being conducted by several organizations, including the National Association of People Living with HIV and AIDS (NAPWA), SANERELA+, the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), the Positive Women's Network, and the Positive Action Campaign (PAC). The Human Sciences Research Council provides technical support for the study. NAPWA is responsible for hosting and employing the data collectors, while the PLHIV Sector offers advisory assistance.

# PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND IMPLEMENTATION

## STAKEHOLDERS CALL FOR ACTION TO END CHILD MARRIAGES

One woman out of three in Zimbabwe aged 20 to 49 was married before the age of 18. 5% of girls are married before the age of 15. Child marriage is one of the most widespread forms of violence against children. Child marriage disrupts childhood and deprives girls of their right to be a child. Child marriage often leads to school drop-out, not allowing girls to develop their full potential, and early pregnancies when a girl is mentally and physically not yet able to give birth and take care of a young child marriage deprives children of their right to acquire appropriate skills to enter the labour force as adults and pushes them further into poverty. Child marriage also increases the girl's risk of domestic violence, psychological and physical violence, including sexual violence, and HIV infections. Zimbabwe has recently experienced an increase in teenage pregnancies. One-third of maternal deaths occur amongst adolescents.

### Poverty is a major correlation of child abuse:

Poverty is a major correlation between child abuse and exploitation, including child marriage. Girls in the poorest communities are six times more likely to experience child marriage than their counterparts in higher wealth countries. For INERELA+ ending child marriage in Zimbabwe and protecting girls against the negative consequences of early marriage needs more than only legislation. It needs behavioural change in the communities. INERELA+ capacitates Religious Leaders, community leaders and influential champions to advocate in their communities and at national and regional level against child marriage. INERELA+ Zimbabwe role model as the East and Southern Africa HIVOS (SRHR) Fund ambassador Elder Paul Juru (INERELA+ Zimbabwe Country Coordinator) is continuing to influence at Regional, national and community level where he advocates and raise his voice in favour of a positive change in perception of the role of girls in society. During HIVOS, Elder juru and other stakeholders reemphasize their position against abuse of girls by calling for action to end child marriage at all levels of society.

## ZIMBABWE COMMENDED FOR RAISING LEGAL CONSENT AGE FOR SEX

Cabinet in Zimbabwe on Tuesday 5 December 2023 approved principles to the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Amendment Bill that criminalise sexual activity with anyone below the age of 18 as the government seek to harmonise laws relating to age of consent. The principles were of raising the age of sexual consent from sixteen to eighteen years was finally codified into law on Monday 15 January 2024 after immense pressure from INERELA+ and other civil organisations. The Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) Amendment Bill criminalises child marriages and proposes a maximum penalty of up to ten years in prison for violators who permit, aids or coerces a minor into marriage. At times parents are tempted to marry the child off hence a deterrent sentence of up to ten years in prison goes for a long way into curbing child marriages. INERELA+ hailed the development as this protects the rights of young girls against abuse. Children are not able to make decisions such as whether or not to marry. The change in legislation came to complement the amendment to the Marriages Act that prohibits the marriage of anyone less than age of eighteen years old. Fifteen million girls marry before the age of eighteen years each year the equivalent of one girl in every two seconds. As INERELA+, the two legislations are critical legal instruments that will come towards ensuring that children, especially adolescent girls are safe and protected.

## PASSAGE OF STRICT BILL REGARDING HUMAN SEXUAL RIGHTS AND FAMILY VALUES, COMMONLY REFERRED TO AS THE ANTI-LGBTQ BILL IN GHANA PARLIAMENT

Ghana's Parliament passed the Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill on 28 February 2024. It criminalized LGBTQ relationships, as well as people who support LGBTQ rights. The bill, known as the Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill, was introduced by Sam Nartey George, the Member of Parliament for Ningo-Prampram. The bill prohibits LGBT activities and makes it illegal to promote, advocate, or fund them. Individuals caught engaging in the activity could face a jail sentence ranging from six months to three years, while those who support or promote the activity may be sentenced to three to five years in prison.

The Human Sexual Rights and Family Values Bill is one of the toughest pieces of anti-LGBTQ legislation in Africa. Homosexuality is already illegal in Ghana and punishable by up to three years in prison. Under the new law, the maximum

sentence will increase to five years. It would also bring in a custodial sentence for people convicted of advocating for LGBTQ rights and make the distribution of material deemed supportive of LGBTQ rights illegal.

The bill, which was privately sponsored by a group of traditional leaders from Ghana's Christian and Muslim communities, now must be signed into law by President Nana Akufo-Addo. He's widely expected to do so, though he has not said publicly whether he'll sign the legislation. The Big 18 & Human Rights Coalition, an umbrella group of lawyers and activists in Ghana said that the bill "criminalizes a person's identity and strips away fundamental human rights" and urged the president to reject it.

As the debate over the bill increased in recent weeks, so did attacks on members of the LGBTQ community. Students have been attacked and expelled from school, people have been robbed, and many have been subjected to extortion from community members. Some people have been banished from their hometowns, losing their jobs and all support from their own families. The United Nations warned in 2021 that the proposed law would create a system of state-sponsored discrimination and violence against LGBTQ people in Ghana. INERELA+ is deeply concerned about the passing of a bill that criminalizes same-sex relationships in Ghana, the latest in an upsurge of anti-gay political acts in Africa. Namibia's lower house of Parliament recently passed a bill that bans same-sex marriages. In Kenya bill before Parliament seeks to ban gay relationships, same-sex unions, and LGBTQ activities and campaigns. In all instances, the bills propose harsh prison sentences and hefty fines. If these bills become laws, they will set back the substantial gains made towards ending the HIV pandemic as a threat to public health and individual well-being. In Africa, 33 of the 55 countries punish gay relationships with imprisonment. INERELA+ is concerned with the bill as it seems the bill might exacerbate fear and hatred, could incite violence against fellow Ghanaian citizens, and will negatively impact free speech, freedom of movement. If it becomes law, it may obstruct access to life-saving services, undercut social protection. Some of the LGBTQ are also PLHIV and to achieve the goal of ending AIDS as a public health threat by 2030, it is vital to ensure that everyone has equal access to essential services without fear, stigma, or discrimination.

# INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL EVENTS

## ALEPH 2024: A REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON LAW ENFORCEMENT AND PUBLIC HEALTH IN SUB-SAHARA AFRICA – TAKING ACTION FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUALITY



Africa Law Enforcement And Public Health Association (ALEPH2024) was the first Regional African Conference on Law Enforcement and Public Health held from December 1<sup>st</sup> through 4<sup>th</sup> 2024 at the University of Pretoria. The conference was convened by the University of



Pretoria. The conference was convened by the University of Pretoria Faculty of Health Sciences together with the Global Law Enforcement and Public Health Association (GLEPHA) and the African Policing Civilian Oversight Forum (APCOF), and with support from the Secure Communities Forum. The conference themed **Aligning Policing and Public Health: Working Together for Community Well-being, and (De) Criminalizing Public Health** was attended by different actors such as members of the Police from around Africa; Public health practitioners; UN representatives; Civil Society/ NGOs including Religious Leaders; Researchers from Universities; the Judiciary; Human Rights Activists; Social Workers and Professors from Universities. The conference which officially started on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2024 had guests and participants welcomed by Professor C de Jager, Dean, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Pretoria. As proceedings began, Jane Marie Ogola Ongolo from UNODC Regional Representative for Southern Africa was the first speaker of the day who alluded to the need for integrating public health approaches in law enforcement, relation to strategies for addressing harm reduction and who use drugs. Jeanette R Hunter, Deputy Director for UNODC came through and spoke about bridging public

especially in substance use among people General Primary Health Care for health and law enforcement for healthier former President of South Africa Kgalema Motlanthe, now Commissioner of the Eastern and Southern Africa Commission on Drugs (ESACD) and a member of The Global Commission on Drug Policy. The 2<sup>nd</sup> day had several sessions lined up including sessions on **addressing violence in prisons** and other closed settings as a Human Rights and Public Health Strategy which included conditions in immigration detention; child and youth care in detention; and personal experiences of sexual violence in detention while the 3<sup>rd</sup> day was highlighted by a session on how law enforcement can play a vital role in protecting key populations which including challenging criminalization of communities which has consequences in lack of access to HIV, health-related care and public health. Sessions on the 4<sup>th</sup> day highlighted key issues including Crisis on Trial: Exploring the Intersection of Public Health and Policing through Judicial Lens; and joint decision-making, human security, and response to gender-based violence while the last session of the day saw the Launch of the African Regional Law Enforcement and Public Health Network (ALEPHN). The Network is expected to promote joint learning and joint action, strength through collaboration and partnership. On that note, INERELA+ Executive Director learnt a lot and had a great chance to create/form/suggest beneficial and new collaborative networks with other civic organizations and police from different African countries and globally.

## HARNESSING THE POWER OF COLLECTIVE ACTION IN THE FIGHT FOR GENDER EQUALITY AT CSW68



Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68) 11 – 22 March 2024

March

women's organizations through robust, flexible and multi-year financing equality. Globally 10.3 per cent of women live in extreme poverty and progress towards ending poverty needs to be 26 times faster to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. At CSW68, governments, civil society organizations, experts and activists from across the world came together to agree on actions and investments that can end women's poverty and advance gender equality. The 68th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68) delivered robust commitments by UN Member States to strengthen financing and institutions to eradicate women's and girls' poverty. The agreed conclusions recognize that women and girls living in poverty become shock absorbers in times of crisis, and that further efforts are needed to increase resources to address women's and girls' poverty. Having acknowledged that the international financial architecture is not fit for a crisis-prone world, the Commission called for reforms to enable countries to mobilize and invest resources in gender equality. These measures include debt relief and progressive taxation and ensuring that public resources are allocated to address the needs and rights of women and girls.

The Agreed Conclusions also recommended the mobilization of financial resources from public and private sources, strengthening the international financial architecture, ensuring a gender lens in national budgeting processes, and preventing regressive taxation that disproportionately impacts women and girls with low or no income. The outcome document also noted that official development assistance has to be increased to address women's and girls' poverty. The Commission also called for the implementation of gender-responsive economic and social policies, including increased women's representation, leadership and participation in economic institutions, enforcing core labour standards to ensure equal pay for work of equal value, and implementing policies to support women-owned businesses.

During the session, the Commission also adopted a resolution on HIV-AIDS led by the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), which calls to increase investment in gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in the HIV-AIDS response. CSW68 adopted, by consensus, a resolution focused on advancing the rights and empowerment of women and girls as part of efforts to end AIDS. The updated resolution 60/2, Women, the Girl Child and HIV and AIDS, underscores the urgent need to prioritize the health and rights of adolescent girls and young women in the context of the ongoing global AIDS pandemic. It recognizes that adolescent girls and young women are still disproportionately affected by HIV due to various socio-economic factors, including gender inequalities, poverty, and lack of access to education and healthcare.

The 68th annual Commission on the Status of Women (CSW68), the UN's largest annual two week gathering on gender equality and women's empowerment, took place from 11 – 22 March 2024. Diverse women, feminist networks and social movements converged at the (csw68) to advocate for substantive equality by calling for norms and frameworks that centre gender, economic, and environmental justice. The priority was, **"Accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls by addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing with a gender perspective"**. CSW68

also brought together world leaders including two Heads of State, three vice-presidents and over 100 Ministers and 4,800 representatives of civil-society organizations, marking the second-highest attendance in CSW records. CSW68 ended on 22

2024 with the acknowledgement of the need to further engage and finance

## FAITH ACTORS UNITED IN FAITH FOR GENDER JUSTICE



Faith Actors Participants at The East and Southern Africa Gender Justice Regional Workshop, Mombasa, Kenya 11 – 15 November 2024

From the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> of October 2024 Faith to Action Network united faith actors from East Africa, the Horn of Africa, and Southern Africa who champion gender justice and tackle pressing challenges within faith communities. The event took place in Mombasa, Kenya where faith actors shared perspectives on advancing gender justice and women's rights across their regions.

The Objectives of The Regional Communities of Practice Workshop Were:

- To exchange insights on the role of religious actors in advancing women's rights, highlighting both challenges and successful strategies.
- To share information and explore opportunities for joint advocacy actions on gender justice in the region, allowing participants to align their efforts and maximize their impact.
- To celebrate successes, where participants motivate and inspire one another including joining an awards ceremony recognizing outstanding contributions to women's rights advocacy.
- Build connections, share experiences, and establish lasting networks that will support ongoing advocacy efforts.

Most worrying is women's inherent dignity is routinely violated, with one in three women globally experiencing violence. The rising femicide figures and brutal killings of women in Africa are worrying. Day one kicked off with inspiring discussions on faith-based advocacy, gender justice, and collaboration. Panellists shared powerful stories and concerns that women's leadership and participation are questioned, hindered and rolled back in families, communities, societies and politics. Day two opened with Religious Leaders and experts covering perspectives on gender justice from a religious perspective. A gallery walk to poster presentations was done by the participants where they exchanged ideas and strategies for innovative work. Day two ended with Faith to Action Network recognising innovations within the faith sector through an awards evening. Fifteen outstanding individuals were awarded for their incredible contributions to advancing women's rights and among them were the INERELA+ Executive Director, Munya Mandipaza.

## TOGETHER FOR CHILD RIGHTS THROUGH THE 25th SESSION OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM



Participants At the CSO Forum, Avani Hotel Maseru 29th September to 2 October 2024

INERELA+ Executive Director joined other actors at the CSO Forum, held at Avani Hotel Maseru in Lesotho from the 29th of September to 2 October 2024. The CSO Forum is a Platform for Civil Society Organisations on the African Charter on the rights and welfare of children. This forum offers a unique opportunity to strengthen partnerships between civil society organizations (CSOs) from all five regions in Africa through effective advocacy and discussions about issues of children. At the 25th session of the CSO Forum and the 44th Session of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), Save the Children Pan African office and ESA Regional programs office led a strategic session highlighting the importance of the Safe Schools Declaration (SSD). The SSD, which was adopted in 2015, is a global intergovernmental initiative that aims to advance the protection of students, teachers, and schools against attacks and limits the use of schools and universities for military purposes. The INERELA+ Executive Director Munya Mandipaza actively engaged children, Civil Society partners namely Childline, SONKE Gender

Justice, Plan International, SAVE The Children International, Southern Africa Parliamentary Support Trust, and REPSSI through this event co-hosted by the East Africa Child Rights Network and Child Rights Network of Southern Africa. The CSO Forum reinforced the SSD as a critical political commitment to secure education for African children, especially in conflict zones where schools are vulnerable to attacks and military occupation. As of September 2024, 33 African countries endorsed the Safe Schools Declaration (SSD) but challenges remain in translating these commitments into action. The 25th session of the Civil Society Forum was an opportunity to remind member states that have not endorsed the SSD yet to do so and those that have done so, to strengthen their implementation and reporting mechanisms. At the event, Munya Mandipaza the INERELA+ Executive Director shared country-level policies and practices for making schools safe through the protection of education from attacks. A wealth of practice and experience was shared from various African countries who attended the CSO forum.

## AIDS

### 2024 PRECONFERENCE "EMPHASISES SUSTAINING HOPE FOR ALL"



From the 21<sup>st</sup> to the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July 2024 faith leaders, faith-based organizations, and faith actors gathered for a two-day interfaith pre-conference themed "**Sustaining Hope for All** – Through 2030 and Beyond." ahead of the International AIDS Conference which was scheduled to take place from 22–26 July at the Messe München in Germany.

The pre-conference was coordinated by the Interfaith Health Platform of the UNAIDS – PEPFAR Faith Initiative. Collaborating organizations included the World Council of Churches (WCC), Caritas International, the Africa Christian Health Association Platform, the International Network of Religious Leaders Living with or Personally Affected by HIV and AIDS (INERELA+), Islamic Relief, the Academic Consortium of the UNAIDS – PEPFAR Faith Initiative (Emory University, Atlanta and St Paul University, Limuru Kenya), UBtheCURE, HIV Vaccine Trials Network Faith Initiative, United States HIV/AIDS Faith Coalition, the Interfaith Health Platform, and the International Partnership on Religion and Sustainable Development.

As a passionate individual of faith, the **INERELA+ Executive Director Munya Mandipaza** together with others convened to discuss inclusivity, compassion, and support for all affected by the HIV epidemic. The aim of the pre-conference was to inspire lasting hope and resilience to ensure that efforts of faith communities prioritize the wellbeing of every individual impacted by HIV.

Discussions at the pre-conference focused on fostering a future where dignity and support for all are central thereby creating a response that is not only effective but deeply human-centred. This approach aimed to build bridges among different religions and sectors for a more coordinated and impactful response. In her welcoming remarks,

**Christine Stegling, the Deputy Executive Director of Policy, Advocacy, and**

#### Knowledge

**Branch at UNAIDS**, praised the work of faith communities and committed to enhancing collaboration. She highlighted the historic role of faith-based communities in responding to HIV challenges by indicating that, "Faith communities were there before the programmes came to communities, and they will probably be there when the programmes leave."

Rev. Dr Kenneth Mtata, the Director of Public Witness and Diakonia from World Council of Churches (WCC) emphasized the importance of collaboration enhancement over competition in ensuring sustainability in the faith-based HIV response. He alluded that collaboration should extend beyond faith actors to include science, international agencies, medical institutions, and government and political entities. He asserted. His remarks were "Faith by itself, if not accompanied by action, is dead."

INERELA+ through its **Patron Canon Gideon Byamugisha** and **Rev Jide Macaulay** the INERELA+ board member joined other panelists to engage in deep and challenging discussions, reaffirming their commitment to raising faith communities' unique, credible, and consistent voices to address stigma and discrimination which is very crucial for the most at risk populations.

**Rev. Dr Sande Bailey-Gwinn of Foundations for Living, USA**, reminded participants that the HIV work of faith communities is not just a program but a ministry. She emphasized the need for physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual self-care among those doing this work. There was recommitment by people of faith to promote compassion and understanding, provide support and care, prevention, testing, treatment, advocating for inclusivity and non-discrimination, educating and raising awareness.

# AUDITED INCOME & EXPENDITURE



## Inerela NPC

(Registration number 2004/007199/08)

Financial Statements for the year ended 28 February 2025

### Detailed Income Statement

Figures in Rand	Note(s)	2025	2024 Restated *
<b>Other operating income</b>			
Income from funders, donors, etc		5 858 377	5 618 202
Other sundry income		25 461	-
	7	<b>5 883 838</b>	<b>5 618 202</b>
<b>Other operating gains (losses)</b>			
Fair value (losses) gains		(187)	187
Foreign exchange (losses) gains		(68 343)	54 649
Losses on disposal of assets or settlement of liabilities		(9 635)	-
	8	<b>(78 165)</b>	<b>54 836</b>
<b>Other operating expenses</b>			
Administration and management fees		-	900
Adolescents - SRHR		674 683	789 440
Auditor's remuneration - external audit		23 174	126 022
Bank charges		34 947	52 343
Capacity building		35 333	59 922
Communication Campaign Costs		421 241	62 541
Consulting and professional fees		225 829	495 533
Covid prevention & monitoring costs		89 898	2 020 767
Depreciation		77 617	118 549
Employee costs		2 810 201	3 118 329
Fines and penalties		31 837	-
Gender & Stigma Awareness		666 258	679 479
Insurance		58 929	65 651
Medical expenses		32 961	10 585
Printing and stationery		27 781	17 635
Program Support Costs		268 955	381 152
SAVE Toolkit Costs		-	101 683
Short-term leases		304 961	332 758
Technical service fees		31 990	53 158
Telephone and fax		173 759	164 367
Training		28 443	116 489
Travel - local		524	2 463
Travel - overseas		125 993	116 659
		<b>6 145 314</b>	<b>8 886 425</b>
<b>Operating loss</b>		<b>(339 641)</b>	<b>(3 213 387)</b>
Investment income	10	14 884	38 354
<b>Loss for the year</b>		<b>(324 757)</b>	<b>(3 175 033)</b>

\* See Note 11



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