



Break Free!

Annual Report 2022

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FAWE Forum for African Women Educationalists
Forum des éducatrices africaines



Ministry of Foreign Affairs



**ROZARIA
MEMORIAL TRUST**
Creating Opportunities: Unleashing Potential



KIT Royal
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List of abbreviations

ARPM	Annual Review and Planning Meeting
(A)SRHR	(Adolescent) Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
AU	African Union
AYFS	Adolescent and Youth Friendly Services
BF!	Break Free!
CAG	Community Action Group
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CEFMU	Child, early and forced marriage and unions
CSE	Comprehensive Sexuality Education
CoE18+	Plan International's Center of Excellence 18+
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAC	Day of the African Child
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationalists
FP	Family Planning
GIMAC	Gender Is My Agenda Campaign
HRD	Human Rights Defenders
IATI	International Aid Transparency Initiative
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
KIT	The Royal Tropical Institute
L&A	Lobby and advocacy
OH	Outcome Harvesting
PMEL	Planning, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
RF	Results Framework
RMT	Rozaria Memorial Trust
PC	Program Committee
Plan	Plan International
SAT	SRHR Africa Trust
SCS	Strengthening Civil Society (MFAs policy framework)
SGBV	Sexual and Gender Based Violence
SoP	Standard Operating Procedures
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
TP	Teenage Pregnancy

1. Break Free! in 2022

Break Free! is a five year joint programme of Plan International, SRHR Africa Trust (SAT) and Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) in collaboration with technical partners The Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) and Rozaria Memorial Trust (RMT) and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs as strategic partner. Break Free! aims for adolescents to make their own free and informed choices about their sexual and reproductive health in order to combat teenage pregnancy (TP) and child, early and forced marriage (CEFM) and in some countries female genital mutilation and cutting. Three pathways of change lead towards this strategic objective:

Outcome 1: Adolescent girls at risk of CEFM and TP access quality and safe education

Outcome 2: Duty bearers and decision-makers develop, resource and implement laws and policies that respond to adolescents' needs

Outcome 3: Adolescents access quality SRHR information, education and services

Break Free! supports young people and (youth-led) organizations in their lobbying efforts to claim their Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) to improve, in particular for adolescent girls, their continued access to quality and safe education and quality SRHR information and facilities. The programme strengthens girls' agency and promotes social norm change in favour of the prevention of TP, CEFM, and FGM/C. Seven strategies are used to achieve success on the different outcome areas:

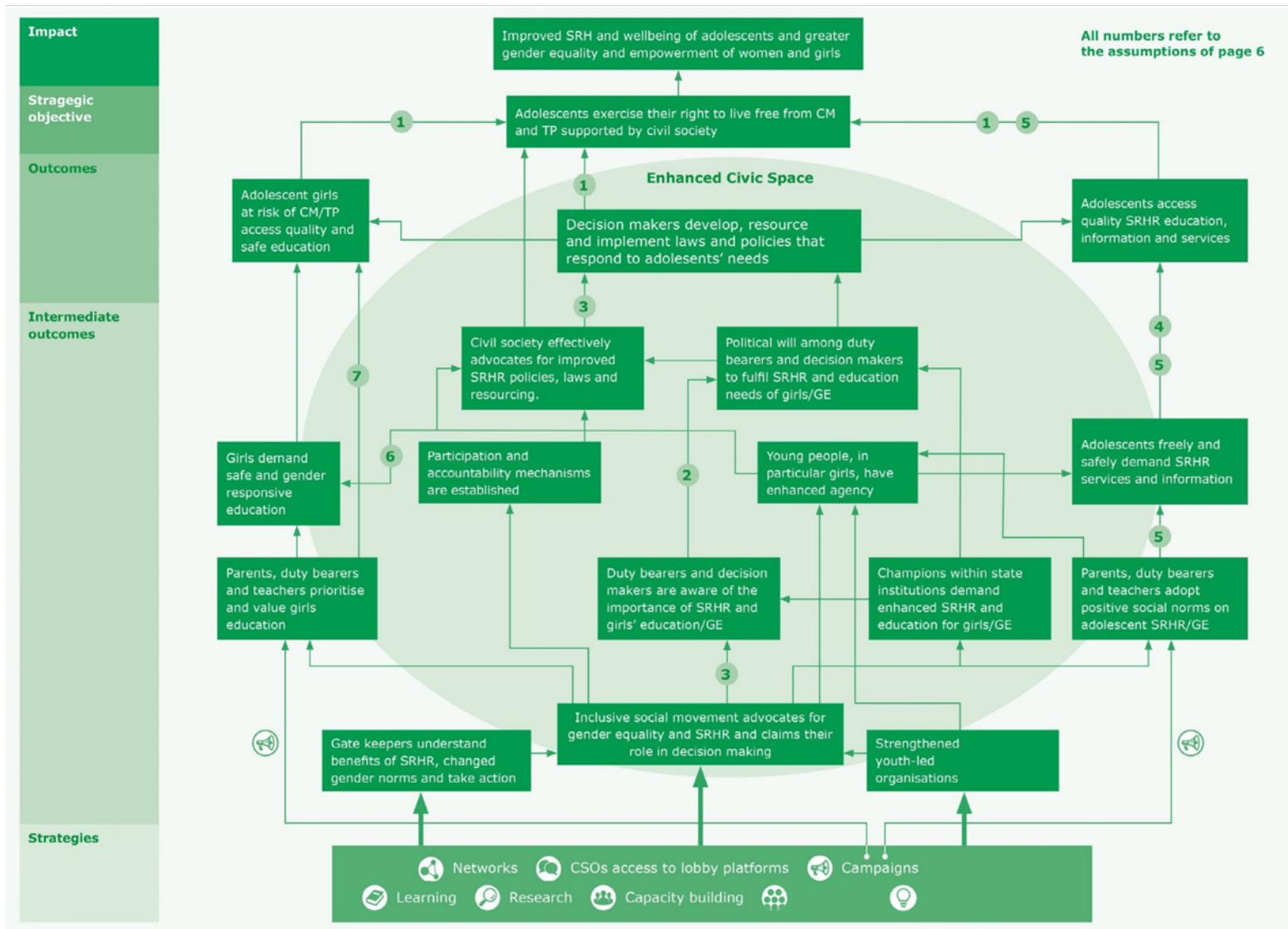
1. Social movement and network building for social norms change
2. Capacity building of CSOs and youth hubs
3. Lobby network building of CSOs and NGOs
4. Access to lobby platforms
5. Lobby and advocacy campaigns
6. Research
7. Learning and exchange

Break Free! is implemented in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Sudan and Zambia, as well as at the regional level targeting pan-African stakeholders and institutions.

This annual narrative report covers the implementation period January 2022 - December 2022. Building on the structures and processes established in the first year, the consortium focus shifted to program implementation in the second year. Duty bearers, policy makers, gatekeepers and youth groups were mapped and identified mostly in 2021 and they were fully engaged in the second year of the program: youth groups were trained on human and child rights, causes and impact of harmful practices including child, early and forced marriage (CEFMU), teenage pregnancy (TP) and female genital mutilation and cutting (FGM/C), the importance of education and information on adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights (ASRHR). They were also trained in methods to further disseminate the information with their peers and started doing this in 2022. The program furthermore engaged community leaders and parents as gatekeepers and teachers, school management and health workers as relevant duty bearers, equipping them with information and skills to protect children and advance their rights. Advocacy spaces, targets and allies were identified, with advocacy interventions focusing on improved laws and policies around access to education and improved adolescent SRHR. This report is a consolidation of 9 country consortium annual narrative reports and the annual report of the regional component, as well as outcome harvesting sheets and PMEL information. The narrative report is complemented with the financial report as a separate document.

This report describes significant changes in the operating context of the program and analyses risks, impact and mitigation strategies in [chapter 2](#), with the updated Risk Matrix included in [Annex 1](#). Key interventions in 2022, progress per result area and how this contributes to the Break Free! objectives is described in [chapter 3](#). Target and actual information on the basket indicators for Strategic Partnerships under the SRHR framework is

included in [Annex 2](#). Furthermore, the report includes a chapter on cross-cutting issues, including safeguarding, meaningful youth engagement and gender and inclusion ([chapter 4](#)). Progress against the learning agenda is included in [chapter 5](#), while the next chapters discuss the program sustainability ([chapter 6](#)) and partnerships ([chapter 7](#)). The report closes with a budget narrative in [chapter 8](#).



2. Key developments in the context of Break Free!

This section describes the most important changes and developments in the context in which the Break Free! program was implemented in 2022. It builds on the context analyses of the Break Free! program proposal (2020), annual report 2022 and the annual plan for 2023. The section reflects on which risks materialized in 2022, discusses the mitigation measures applied and the impact on program implementation, and presents newly identified risks.

2.1 Reflection on contextual changes

Changes in civic space in 2022

Civic space ratings by Civicus¹ have deteriorated from ‘obstructed’ to ‘repressed’ in **Mali** and Mozambique since 2021, while ratings for other countries have remained the same. For Mali, tighter control of CSOs was mentioned in particular. Programs financed with French government funds were suspended by the transitional government on 21 November 2022. Since December 2022, foreign NGOs are required to report monthly on their projects, including activities carried out, number of participants, amount of the budget used, and the sources of funding. The Break Free! consortium members and partners active in Mali have their registrations in order and maintain good relationships with the government. They have been able to continue implementation of the program. Civicus’ Civic Space Monitor specifically mentions more restrictive legislation for NGOs signed in Mozambique and Malawi. **Mozambique’s** civic space is characterized by restrictions on the freedom of expression and a deteriorating environment for journalists and civil society activists in particular: physical attacks, intimidation and harassment of journalists and HRDs have become increasingly common. The Break Free! program has not been affected directly, however, there is a fear that the revision of the Law that will regulate CSO interventions in the country, will limit civic freedom and will pose a risk for collaboration of CSOs in Mozambique. The consortium is part of a network of organizations working on SRHR and they monitor developments. Concerning is the provision in **Malawi’s** controversial NGO amendment bill: “management and staff of the NGO shall not engage in partisan politics, including electioneering and politicking”, which raised concern from CSOs because it could negatively impact the right to freedom of association and political rights². Civic Space for CSOs in Malawi continues to decrease as Human Rights Defenders (HRD) and dissenting voices have difficulty expressing their views to hold government accountable due to harassment, violations of their rights and appointing HRDs on government positions as a way of silencing them. The Break Free! program has not been affected directly, as it invested in work relations with Ministries and government authorities, as well as communities, and engages with other like-minded CSOs for joint advocacy. Another example of restrictions on civic space is **Ethiopia**, where access to internet and social media was cut off regularly. This affected Break Free! interventions, since social media platforms are used for advocacy and dissemination of (SRHR) information. A positive development in **Sudan** is that relevant Ministries are opening their doors for dialogue with civil society and religious leaders who were allied to the previous regime have become less powerful. Freedom of expression and opinion are generally restored and fear and intimidation tactics are less common.

The global pushback against SRHR is witnessed by the Break Free! consortium in for instance the backtracking on SRHR language at both African Union (AU) level as well as at country level, with the controversy being in the ‘ambiguity’ meaning of “R” for rights, leading to removal of the “R” in the AU language on the topic. There is serious push-back on the East African Community’s SRHR Bill. The controlled democracy on SRHR discussions contributed to the limitation of such discussions in public audiences. This affects the level of commitment

1 [Africa - Civicus Monitor](#)

2 [Restrictive laws, Abductions, Detentions, Vilification and Protest dispersal characterise downward spiral of civic space - Civicus Monitor](#)

needed from policy and decision makers and has implications on the allocation of human and financial resources for SRHR. A study by KIT on CSE commissioned by Break Free! and conducted in Kenya, Ethiopia and Zambia (described in [chapter 3.2](#)), highlighted how decision-making by office bearers is impacted by international conservative groups injecting funding to oppose SRHR progress, in particular on CSE. Interestingly, opponents of SRHR and CSE are concerned with the sexual reproductive health of young people but still believe that interventions like CSE “erode African Cultural values”. Due to political influence that presents with these connotations, governments tend to relax in prioritizing SRHR including allocating resources. In line with the study recommendations, Break Free! stresses the importance of linking CSE to local SRHR needs, accepting appropriate tradeoffs to avoid backtracking on progress made in previous efforts, for instance around finding alternative language for the term CSE.

Political change, conflict and crises in 2022

In the Annual Report over 2021, we reported that five of the nine Break Free! countries were affected in 2021 by ongoing or deteriorating conflict and crisis situations. Over 2022, situations of conflict and crises have worsened in Burkina Faso and Mali, while the situation in Niger continued to be worrying. The situation in Sudan remained stable in 2022³ and in Ethiopia, a peace agreement was signed regarding the conflict in Tigray. The program was affected in all countries mentioned. The program experiences that government attention, including human and financial resources is diverted away from routine service delivery and in particular from more sensitive services such as youth friendly SRH services, in times of political crises or conflict. Governments in the Break Free! implementation countries focused efforts on delivering emergency or humanitarian support to IDPs or in the affected areas. Even after the immediate conflict or crises may be resolved, government funds are often times needed to rebuild and equip damaged schools and clinics.

The security situation in **Burkina Faso** has worsened with 2 coups d'état in January and September 2022. Attacks by armed groups increased and the situation has led to internal displacement. Ten communes in the Centre-Sud region where Break Free! is active, host almost five thousand internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 5 *communes* of intervention of the program in the Est region, host almost eighty thousand IDPs⁴, while program participants in the localities of Yamba in the Est region have fled their homes. A rise in cases of gender-based violence and an increase in child marriages was noticed by the country consortium. Social tensions between host communities and IDPs lead to discrimination and stigmatization regarding access to resources, livelihoods and health services, weakening IDPs social capital. The crisis causes shortcomings in public service delivery, including the closure of schools. After each coupe, staff are replaced at the Ministerial Departments, their directorates and municipal functionalities that Break Free! engages with, forcing the program to re-invest in relationship building with new counterparts. These investments paid off: for instance at the reflection and planning workshops, which were attended by the heads of planning directorates and advocacy audiences with several Ministries. Nevertheless, it also caused delays in program implementation. Relay structures set up to share security information and the presence of zone supervisors helped to continuously readjustment implementation schedules to maintain continuity and reach program participants, although some delays were inevitable. The program readjusted to implement activities in Fada, where the Yamba population had fled to.

The security situation in **Mali** has been deteriorating for some time, with an increase in violence. This was exacerbated in 2022, leading to enormous difficulties of access for humanitarian actors and a large flow of displaced people in central Mali, in the regions of Gao, Timbuktu, Mopti and Segou. Break Free! project participants are more oriented towards survival and it was challenging to engage them with the program. The context of the transition and the organization of general and credible elections, leaves less room to mobilize politicians and government officials around social issues, including the promotion of girls' rights and abandonment of harmful practices. For example: the consortium in February 2022, filed an application for a

³ Conflict has erupted again since 15 April 2023 and program activities have been suspended up to the moment of submitting this report. The consequences for the program in the medium and longer term cannot yet be foreseen.

⁴ [Burkina Faso - Situation des personnes déplacées internes au 30 novembre 2022 | HumanitarianResponse](#)

Coordinators Salwa in North-Darfur and Esmat in Sudan on the importance of youth advocacy

One of the challenges girls face in Sudan is the situation in schools. While young people are often encouraged to have an education, the schools themselves are not always safe for girls. Salwa: “In rural areas girls travel long distances to go to school, with many dangers along the way. But also at schools girls are not safe, with a lack of suitable WASH facilities for girls, especially during menstruation. In our trainings girls learn to raise awareness about these problems, which is the first step towards change. And not just girls, we also actively engage boys and young men in our program. Through the awareness projects both girls and boys now advocate for better WASH facilities and security for girls, which are important to keep girls in school.”

Salwa: “We train the champions of change, as we call them, boys and girls between the age of 10 and 24 years in their rights and the way advocacy works. They discuss the topics among themselves but then also talk to their parents, teachers and community leaders, reaching a larger group.” Esmat Babiker, coordinator of the Break Free! Programme in Sudan: “We also set up social media groups to lower the bar for young people in Sudan to join the discussion on SRHR, to reach out to each other beyond their own communities, and so they educate not only themselves but also each other.”

“Despite the many challenges I feel it is going in the right direction, I really enjoy seeing the confidence of young girls and boys growing, discussing their concerns in their communities”, says Salwa Iddriss who coordinates the implementation of the Break Free! Programme in North-Darfur.

Advocating SRHR topics with lawmakers and duty bearers is difficult in Sudan, given the political circumstances. Since the military coup in Sudan in 2021, it has been hard to reach people who can change laws. Esmat: “We can still talk to local departments of the Ministry of Human Rights, stressing the importance of action against gender-based violence and harmful practises, and many civil servants are doing good work.” While change cannot happen overnight, both the youth advocates and the Break Free! partners are working relentlessly for the prevention of child marriage, teenage pregnancy and the sexual and reproductive health and rights of young people.

hearing to explain the objectives of the Break Free! program and preface the study on the articles analyzed in the MAPUTO protocol, but the team was only received in June 2022.

Niger's political situation remains calm, although the security situation is becoming increasingly volatile, with more recurrent attacks by armed groups in the department of Guidan Roumdji in the Maradi Region. The border regions, including Maradi, host an estimated 225,000 refugees from neighboring Burkina Faso, Mali and Nigeria⁵. The impact of natural disasters including floods has exacerbated the humanitarian needs, including food insecurity and child malnutrition, homelessness and displacement - increasing the vulnerability of social groups such as young people, especially women and girls. Although Break Free! implementation areas - the *communes* of Mayahi and Maijirgui in Maradi Region - were not directly affected by violence, the combined crises lead to both an influx of IDPs as well as people leaving the program implementation areas. The situation pushed young men to flee to urban centers to find work, this included program participants from the future husbands' clubs. Once there, they are faced with poverty, limited economic perspectives and similar (sexual reproductive) health problems. Generally, people focused on satisfaction of primary needs and the search of alternative sources for survival, affecting their ability and interest to participate in the program. It has been difficult to bring participants for program activities together.

Still no civilian government has been announced in **Sudan** since the military seized power on 25 October 2021, causing more demonstrations against the military rule and violence against protesters in return. Tribal conflict incidences have been reported in different areas of the country, although Break Free! implementation areas are not affected. Generally, Sudan is characterized by large numbers of IDPs, who often have been displaced for many years or decades; food insecurity; natural disasters; and high inflation. The combined crises leave a large part of the population vulnerable. Break Free! activities targeting parliament and state level government officials are delayed until 2023 or whenever a new government is in place. Activities targeting national and sub-national Ministerial Departments have been able to go ahead as planned, with positive interest from relevant departments. Since the military coup in 2021, it has proven more challenging to get government permission for program activities as local security forces sometimes demand that activities are stopped, in particular when concerning SRHR information sharing.

The **Ethiopian** government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) agreed on 2 November 2022 to cease hostilities and return to constitutional order. The agreement brought an end to the two-year-long civil war. However, the internal displacement and humanitarian needs brought by the war, has diverted the government's budget and attention to humanitarian and emergency responses. According to an OCHA report, more than 20 million people affected by violence as well as by climatic shocks such as prolonged drought and seasonal floods require humanitarian assistance and protection services until the end of 2022⁶. Government's priority being elsewhere, negatively impacted service delivery across all regions of the country including the Break Free! targeted intervention areas, where health and education service delivery was affected. SRHR being a sensitive topic already, means that less priority was given to it. Though the consortium addressed this by organizing frequent discussions and review meetings with relevant government stakeholders in the planning and implementation of the program activities, the understaffing and under resourcing of health facilities and schools remains a massive challenge.

Climate change and natural disasters

Most of the nine countries where Break Free! is implemented, frequently experience natural disasters and/or suffer from the impact of climate change, with already vulnerable groups usually hit the hardest. Findings of a Rapid Gender Analysis carried out by Plan International **Niger**, is exemplary for the impact of natural disaster on gender and social relations and norms, including harmful practices. It showed that the food and nutrition crisis in Niger had disrupted social roles and responsibilities related to gender: women and girls have been forced to

5 [Niger \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu)

6 <https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/ethiopia-situation-report-05-aug-2022>

work in the fields or selling food in the streets, making them vulnerable for SGBV and the risk of dropping out of school. The crisis has reinforced harmful social norms and practices, with increased discrimination against girls and women in access to food: they are usually the last to eat and in case of insufficient meals they find themselves deprived of food. The crisis has reinforced the prevalence of child marriage which has become a solution for reducing burdens for families in these difficult times. Natural disasters also put additional pressure on already over-burdened government services, as for instance in **Malawi**, that has been experiencing a widespread cholera outbreak since March 2022, with Break Free! implementation districts Lilongwe and Machinga amongst the affected areas. The cholera outbreak has put additional pressure on the government's capacity to respond to the outbreak, with less capacity available for regular health and SRHR service delivery, let alone improving this. In particular in combination with other crises described in the previous sections, government's attention and resources are easily shifted to emergencies and humanitarian situations. It is a challenge to mobilize government support for social and sometimes sensitive issues and to achieve resource allocation to improved implementation of favorable policies on access to education and SRHR services for girls and boys. Natural disasters and poor weather conditions, combined with poor security in some areas, also pose challenges to reaching communities and people involved in the program. In North Darfur, **Sudan**, for instance, schools are closed and families work on the land during the rainy season, which means that the program has to plan its activities carefully to reach youth and other participants. Less predictable weather patterns due to climate change make it harder to plan program activities and unexpected natural disasters have sometimes jeopardized planning. The drought in the East and Horn of Africa Region affected **Kenya and Ethiopia**. Although Tana River in Kenya was the only implementation area hit directly, the drought affected the program in both countries as governments' focus shifted to emergency support. **Malawi** was hit by two tropical storms and experienced floods, **Mozambique** was hit by cyclone Gombe, and Zambia experienced floods. The floods in part of **Niger** and the drought in other parts of the country led to displacement in the Break Free! implementation areas, including program participants who were already amongst the most vulnerable populations.

Economic developments in 2022

The high inflation rates that emerged during the Covid-19 pandemic and mentioned in the 2021 Annual Report, have aggravated due to the Russian invasion in Ukraine. All Break Free! country consortia report challenges to program implementation and the program participants, caused by high inflation. Combined with political crises, conflict and natural crises, the deepest impact is felt by vulnerable groups, including IDPs, and women and girls, who are often hit by multiple crises, with reinforcing impact on their livelihoods. Rising food prices lead to higher costs of living, forcing already vulnerable groups to find alternative sources of income and more people being focused on economic survival. This in turn puts pressure on the advancement of more equal social and gender norms and exposes vulnerable groups to risks of harmful practices including CEFMU and TP, as described in previous sections.

The situation of the economy of **Malawi** is exemplary for the countries where Break Free! is implemented and shows the impact of multiple recurrent crises: inflation rates were very high, partly due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine driving up fuel, fertilizers and food prices. Two devastating tropical storms, Anna and Gombe, affected crop production and crippled power production, resulting in a (further) rise in transportation and food prices. In May 2022, the Malawi Kwacha was devalued by 25%, triggering additional price increases. The World Bank adjusted Malawi's GDP growth projection for 2022 from 3% to 2.1%, which is 1.9 percent points below the government's 4% growth projection in the 2022-23 national budget, causing a budget deficit that may affect government's service delivery. This applies to most of the Break Free! implementation countries, putting more pressure on governments' capacities to deliver essential services such as health and education and de-prioritization of SRH services.

Rising costs affected program implementation in most countries as the same budget has a smaller reach: conducting activities was more expensive than budgeted for. Participant numbers for certain activities were reduced as a consequence, explaining why output targets set for 2022 were not met in for instance Burkina Faso. However, many country consortia managed to find other ways to achieve cost efficiency, by smartly

combining program activities that had been scheduled as separate activities or by otherwise organizing the planned activities differently. Activity budgets in some cases were slightly overspent, negatively affecting the 2023 budgets. If inflation rates continue to be as high as they are, the program will need to adjust its targets downward to be able to cope with the rising prices.

Internal context developments in 2022

Late transfer of funds from MFA in 2022 resulted in the late startup of activities by the FAWE country chapters. Although FAWE had unspent funds from 2021 at the regional level, this was not sufficient to cover the first tranche payment of 70% of the annual budget for the country chapters for 2022, as per the organization's internal MoU's. This caused some delays in program implementation, with some activities shifted to 2023.

The consortium experienced staff turnover at both country levels and global consortium level. Two new country coordinators were onboarded in 2022 and two interim coordinators were replaced by permanent staff for the role. Management and implementation structures, guidance documents, and clear procedures and processes for implementation, planning and monitoring have been established in year one, supporting more efficient on-boarding of new staff. Some of the staff changes constituted an investment in the continuity of the program: new PME officers in Niger and Burkina Faso were added to the Break Free! team in 2022, resulting in improvements in the quality of PME.

2.2 Risks and opportunities

Many risks identified in the Annual Plan for 2022 did materialize last year. Most of the envisaged mitigation strategies worked to prevent impact for program participants and to avoid delays in the implementation of the program. The updated risk matrix is included in [annex 1](#).

The risks related to operating in volatile, fragile, conflict regions have materialized in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Sudan. Implementation localities in Burkina Faso were affected, causing the displacement of the program participants. But the conflicts in all countries have a spill over effect on communities and program participants in general, as it causes anxiety, stress and pressure on their livelihoods. Continuous monitoring of the situation and the reorganisation of the activity implementation plans, have helped mitigate the consequences of the security crises on the program, although multiple postponements of activities were necessary. The continuation and multiplicity of crises in several countries and the severe impact on program participants will be an important avenue of analysis in the MTR, planned for 2023, to assess if program strategies and interventions remain best suited to achieve sustainable impact.

The effect of inflation and the global economic crisis materialized across all Break Free! countries. Mitigation strategies applied include for instance by reducing the number of days for trainings. Program activities in Zambia were organized at a central place in the district instead of separately in different communities and they were hosted within the communities to reduce the cost on venue hire. As an additional positive result, an increase of participants was achieved. The impact will be assessed at the MTR, including a review of program targets. The MTR will apply a bird's eye view of the multiple and intersecting crises and assessment how best to mitigate these trends by adapting our strategies.

The risk for natural disasters and effects of climate change is set to high in the updated Risk Matrix as almost all countries experience these, having a major impact on the livelihoods of the program participants, especially in combination with the global economic crisis and security crises in many countries. Where possible during disasters and crises, Break Free! coordinates and collaborates with humanitarian programs to link participants to livelihood and humanitarian support and to continue the implementation of SRHR interventions in times and areas of crisis. The program also advocates for continued funding and attention for SRHR services (if possible) during and after crises, and in non-affected areas.

The Annual Plan for 2022 indicated a heightened risk related to planned or expected elections for Kenya and possibly Mali. The national elections in **Kenya** were peaceful, although program implementation was suspended for a few weeks as per the annual plan. The election results led to changes in key government stakeholders, with new counterparts having to be oriented on the program. The country experienced several major demonstrations as a result of the elections, sometimes leading to adjustments in implementation schedules, but this has not resulted in major delays.

3. Progress update

In the first year of Break Free!, the consortium in all countries mapped community and district structures and identified program participants, in particular youth groups. Conducive relationships with communities in the implementation areas, duty bearers, and government agencies and civil servants at the local or district level in implementation areas, at national level and regionally at Pan-African level were established. This laid the foundations for effective program implementation, which got up to speed in 2022. This chapter provides an overview of key interventions in 2022 and describes how these contribute to the Break Free! objectives. Some early signs of change, collected through outcome harvesting, are included. Annual target numbers and realized actual result values on the output indicators for all Break Free! indicators related to the Ministry's basket indicators, are presented in [Annex 2](#).

3.1 Adolescent girls at risk of CM/TP access quality and safe education

This pathway of change focuses on improving the access of girls to quality and safe education, as education is a powerful means to enable girls to avoid child marriage and fulfil their potential. The longer a girl stays in school, the less likely she is to be married before the age of 18 and have children during her teenage years. Available and suitable education opportunities and a community supportive of girls' education will stimulate adolescent girls at risk of teenage pregnancy or child marriage to access and remain in school, while promoting the re-entrance of girls who have discontinued school due to pregnancy.

Break Free! works towards parents and other caregivers, duty bearers and teachers valuing and prioritizing girls' education. Achieving norms change is a long-term process in which the initial steps for influencing change are about creating awareness and sharing information, as a basis for next steps which aim for behaviour change and shifting of existing social and gender norms. In its first year, the program identified and trained champions in the communities and duty bearers in the education sector, on gender equality, child protection, SRHR, and in particular TP and CEFMU. In its second year, Break Free! continued to promote awareness of the importance of quality and gender responsive education in the prevention of child marriage and teenage pregnancy. Peer to peer sharing of information was a key method used in most countries: selected youth, often times members of (school) youth groups and youth Hubs, were trained on how to share information on sensitive topics including gender equality, child rights, causes and consequences of harmful practices and the importance of education with their peers in and out of school. The method extends the reach of the program and creates safe spaces for young people to exchange and learn. Peer educators in Mali for instance conducted a total of 192 awareness sessions in the second half of 2022 only.

Moving beyond information sharing, the consortium in several countries conducted intergenerational or community dialogues. With the support of Break Free! in Malawi, a total of 75 youth, traditional leaders, child protection committee members and Area Development Committees (ADCs) engaged in dialogue to allow adolescent girls and boys to share their needs in order to avoid CM, TP and harmful practices. The traditional leaders present understood their concerns and realized the need for them to act: they agreed to disseminate by-laws in their communities that address harmful cultural practices. In Ethiopia, multiple *Idirs*¹ revised their bylaws to ban child marriage and FGM/C, after different program interventions, including community mobilization, community conversations, and specific awareness-raising events, had been conducted in the area.

1 **Idir** is a traditional cooperative association that exist in Ethiopian society, that have the objective of providing social and economic insurance for the members in the event of death, accident or accident.

Youth activist Nènè (23) from Mali on how to keep girls in school

Youth advocate Nènè (23) from Mali was invited to speak (online) during the 'Keeping Girls in School' event organized by the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the United Nations in New York. She gave participants concrete recommendations on how girls in Mali can stay in school, such as by including sex education in primary and secondary school curricula.



“It is necessary to work towards strict compliance with the laws that are already in place to protect children, to ensure that schools are designed according to the specific needs of girls, especially in terms of water, hygiene and sanitation, with separate toilets. To then intensify communication in schools for positive behavioral change.”

“Keeping girls in school remains one of the major challenges of the education sector and is still a major issue due to barriers such as sexual harassment, physical and verbal violence, attitude of school staff and students, long distances between school and villages, household poverty, child marriages, religious beliefs, absence or insufficiency of minimally required health services at most schools, lack of security at some schools, heavy household duties, poor hygiene and lack of separate toilets for girls and boys.”

Nènè made the following recommendations:

- Create and animate spaces with inspiring girls and women to promote the self-confidence of other girls;
- Establish clear rules against sexual harassment, exploitation and abuse and other forms of gender-based violence in schools and post them in a visible place;
- Increase the number of adult women in the learning space to protect and reassure female students;
- Integrate age-appropriate, gender- and culturally-sensitive content on gender-based violence and reproductive health education into primary and secondary school curricula targeting both girls and boys;
- Prevent peer violence by developing programs that encourage conflict-sensitive and peace-building education.

Child protection mechanisms

The program in its second year also invested in the capacities of gatekeepers and existing structures for child protection to be able to act against CEFMU, TP and FGM/C. Effective child protection structures require a variety of actors to play a role in addressing child protection concerns and creating a favourable environment for children, in particular for adolescent girls, to safely attend their formal education. Break Free! has identified Community Child Protection Committees and Parent-Teacher Associations (PTA) as important actors within the child protection structure, and engages them as champions for the prevention of CEFMU and TP. In Burkina Faso for instance, the program conducted fifteen capacity building sessions for PTAs, attended by 300 PTA members. The sessions focused on prevention of CEFMU and FGM/C and aimed to increase school enrolment and retention of girls. The program in Niger collaborated with the local government to establish and train 20 village committees for the protection of children and six community child protection committees were established in Mozambique. As a concrete result of the training of the child protection committees in Mozambique, an individual that used to charge money to families in exchange of his silence about cases of child marriage in their families, was reported to the authorities. To enhance the knowledge and skills of members of community-based and school-based child protection committees in Ethiopia, the consortium conducted training sessions on the causes and consequences of child abuse and harmful practices, and mitigation strategies. As a result, they are now able to report harmful traditional practices, and in particular cases of CEFMU, to the concerned government structures. In addition, linkages were created between schools, community, kebele² administration, and district-level key stakeholders to coordinate actions to prevent CEFMU and to collaborate in addressing existing harmful social and gender norms. To encourage chiefs and local administrators to effectively address harmful practices, Break Free! in Kajiado and Tana River, Kenya, in close collaboration with the National Government Administration Department organized a training to familiarize them with existing laws and policies related to child rights in Kenya. The participants developed an action plan to address CEFMU, TP and FGM/C in their localities. Customary and religious chiefs of twenty villages in Maradi, Niger, together with members of school management committees and school directors, participated in a training conducted by Break Free! on girls' rights and the consequences of child marriage. They jointly identified obstacles to the realization of children's rights and came up with mitigation strategies. Participants agreed to conduct community sensitization sessions, promote education, prevent CEFMU and to establish a monitoring committee to follow up on the agreed actions.

Campaigns and (social) media

In order to reach a wider public and emphasize the same messages around gender equality, the importance of education and the impact of harmful practices, the different country consortia organized public events and campaigns as well as media campaigns. The consortium in Burkina Faso and Niger held multiple day sensitization caravans going from village to village, mobilizing over three thousand participants in total. A further hundred and thirty thousand people were reached in Burkina Faso, through 4 live radio broadcasts on the harmful consequences of child marriage on the well-being of adolescents (especially girls) and the need to raise the legal age of marriage for girls to 18. Break Free! In Sudan trained participants from ten youth-led organizations on designing social media campaigns: identifying tools and techniques for successful social media communication, understanding how to measure performance and success of campaigns, and advocating for specific interests and issues such as gender, health, and education. With these training sessions, the program aims to support and strengthen the network of youth advocates using social media to reach and engage more young people on issues related to SRHR. More country consortia used social media as a platform, for instance in Kenya where FAWE joined forces with the Kenya anti-FGM board and UNICEF and launched a mobile app, Pasha, to report and track cases of FGM/C. The app allows users to report anonymously by sending a message or share emergency alerts either in texts or voice recording. The information is received by the relevant authorities who then respond accordingly depending on the alert received. Plans are underway to have a non-internet-based app, and an SMS platform that will help remote places without internet access.

2 **Kebele:** Is the smallest administrative unit of Ethiopia.

Child protection at school

A safe and conducive learning environment can act as a catalyst to keep girls longer in school, thereby reducing the risk for child marriage and teenage pregnancy. To ensure that girls can safely and comfortably attend school, Break Free! collaborates with schools in the program implementation areas on strengthening safeguarding at school. The program introduces or popularizes Codes of Conduct and provides (refresher) training on child protection, to strengthen the role of teachers and school management in the child protection structure. The consortium in Niger for instance introduced a Code of Conduct to 20 schools and head teachers of 30 schools in Malawi were trained on the same. The schools in the implementation area in Mozambique re-integrated 15 married girls back to school after training sessions with the schools and communities. In the Southern province of Zambia, the program introduced community engagement models to 15 schools, utilizing the Community Action Groups (CAGs) which act as an interface between the community, including parents, headmen, nurses, teachers and youth representatives, the schools and District Education Offices on child protection issues. The twenty schools operating in the Break Free! implementation area in Southern Province of Zambia developed minimum standards on child protection, with support from the program. The District Education Planning Office in the implementation area recorded a total of 261 school drop-outs cases among girls in the risk age group 12-18 in 2022 compared to 903 cases recorded in 2021. A total of 852 girls returned to school in 2022 compared to 309 girls in 2021.

Lobby and advocacy for quality and gender-responsive education

Break Free! strives for improved laws and policies to promote access to quality and gender-responsive education. Many countries have laws in place that support girls' access to education, however the resourcing and operationalization of policies are often not sufficient. During program reflection meetings, it was highlighted that Department of Education budgets rarely include funds for infrastructural improvements and continuous schooling for teachers. Break Free! targets and engages the chain of decision makers from local to national level as well as the duty bearers at schools in advocacy efforts to improve the implementation of supportive policies for better access to quality education. Break Free! in Sudan conducted participatory budgeting and policy meetings with officers from the state ministry of education in North Darfur. Participants presented the challenges faced in their localities including unsafe school environments and the need to train teachers and build their capacity on child protection. The recommendations included putting pressure on the state government to increase the budget allocated to education, which the program will take on board by sharing the recommendations at national level events and platforms. The North Darfur ministry of education also set up a consultative process to develop policies, strategies and budgets that are sensitive to girls right to education and the program aims to facilitate meetings between youth trained by the program, duty bearers and the department, to improve operationalization and delivery of education strategies and budgets. The program in Mozambique provided training to 11 school councils, to introduce and discuss laws and policies related to education and child rights. Challenges witnessed by the school councils, such as high dropout and failure rates, in particular of girl students, are addressed in various laws and policies, however these are not always implemented as school councils are not aware or have limited resources. The training introduced monitoring tools to support the operationalization of education laws and policies. The school councils are committed to collaborate with other actors to advocate for improved resourcing of schools. To support improved skills and capacities of teachers in addressing gender differences in the classroom and through their teaching, the program in Burkina Faso supported the integration of FAWE's Gender Responsive Pedagogy (GRP) module into the initial training program for school teachers and early childhood educators. In Mozambique, Break Free! together with other CSOs supported the Ministry of Education and Human Development in the development of a Policy for retention and reintegration of pregnant girls in school. Similarly, in Kenya, the program supported the Ministry of Education with technical advice in developing a draft Guidance and Counselling Policy for Basic Education, which provides a basis for teachers and educators to support girls and boys with problems at school or affecting their education.

Break Free! research in Ethiopia on the availability of government provisions for married and pregnant girls provided insight into gaps affecting girls' education. A consultation workshop was organized to facilitate

discussion and exchange of experiences, perceptions and expectations of government officials, duty bearers and CSOs, and to prioritize the major problem areas and possible interventions and to agree on collaboration for advocacy work. At regional level, the consortium provided input on the draft of the African Union's continental strategy on education, health and wellbeing, in particular by sharing evidence on the challenges girls face in accessing quality and safe education. Furthermore, FAWE as the member of the CSO reference group, advocated for the increase of social protection, safety nets and sustainable school feeding programs to ensure school retention for girls and protection from child marriage and teenage pregnancy at continental level.

Youth agency

In the first year of Break Free!, the program in most countries established contact and build relations with youth groups and youth organizations in the implementation areas. The youth groups received information on their human and child rights, gender equality, the causes and impact of harmful practices, and the importance of education in the prevention of child, early and forced marriage. The youth and youth groups engaged in Break Free! play a key role in sharing this information with their peers in and out of school, through peer to peer education and champion of change methods. These activities were scaled up significantly in 2022. Break Free! aims to create permanent spaces for youth to be heard at decision making fora from community and school level, to district councils, national level technical working groups or youth councils and at high level platforms at continental level. The program has started to prepare and train youth to organize themselves and equip them with knowledge and skills to advocate to have their voices heard and their needs addressed. In some countries, youth groups were involved in advocacy actions in 2022. In Mozambique, the program trained young people on effective lobby and advocacy strategies and skills. Participants reported feeling empowered, had gained knowledge, and learned about practices they can apply to promote positive social change in their communities and beyond. The youth participants have committed to seek meetings with the District Government to influence decision-makers in order to create a functional Children and Youth Parliament for the District of Mogovolas; to carry out campaigns in favor of a gender-responsive and inclusive education with a view to promoting the retention of girls in school; to meet with caregivers, teacher-parent associations and community leaders to raise awareness about the consequences of premature unions and early pregnancy on girls' lives; and to hold dialogues with boys and girls in the community to spread messages about CM/TP and children's rights. From 2023, the program will focus more the involvement of youth and their organizations in lobby and advocacy activities and support the creation, inclusion and access of youth to advocacy and decision making spaces. Youth groups will be supported to initiate and lead advocacy for their rights.

3.2 Duty bearers and decision-makers develop, resource and implement laws and policies that respond to adolescents' needs

Policy change is at the core of the Break Free! objective, aiming to strengthen laws and policies to respond better to the needs of young people regarding their education and sexual and reproductive health and rights, and to protect civic space in the target countries. The ability of sub-national and local level civil servants and duty bearers at government facilities such as health clinics and schools to implement (newly approved) national policies and laws, is dependent on central instructions which are often not operationalized into guidelines, manuals or standard operating procedures (SOPs). Insufficient allocation of financial and human resources to the subnational levels, as well as sparse training opportunities for duty bearers further limit effective implementation of policies. Also noted is limited knowledge and understanding among CSOs, youth groups and networks, regarding the gaps and needs around implementation of CEFMU/TP laws and policies, affecting the ability to effectively set up and use accountability mechanisms and advocate for change. The Break Free! advocacy efforts in its first years focused on influencing policy and implementation guidance documents at the national level as well as information sharing and awareness raising at the local level. In its second year, the program started linking national and sub-national levels and facilitating rights holders to attend and participate in consultation and decision-making platforms. Analysis of the key signs of change identified using the Outcome

Harvesting methodology, shows that 51% of the signs are under result area 2, mostly concerning changes in laws or policy documents, or contributions to these, for instance through participation in technical working group. This indicates that good progress is being made against the second pathway of the Theory of Change for the program. In the long term, the effects of the changes realized in result area 2 are expected to positively influence the other two results area.

In our aim for strengthened resourcing and implementation of laws and policies, the program is currently finetuning its advocacy plans and strategies to better link and integrate its advocacy efforts at local, sub-national and national levels, for instance through budget tracking, supporting the development of budget proposals by duty bearers and bringing duty bearers or actors from local and sub-national levels to national dialogues with decision makers. The program works on strengthening the role of civil society, in particular CSOs and youth groups, in its advocacy to ensure that adolescents needs and concerns are addressed.

An important step taken in 2022 in the advocacy strategy in Mozambique was the re-establishment of consultative councils in 21 communities, in which women (minimum 30% of the seats), youth (minimum 20% of seats) and community leaders (minimum 40% of seats) are represented, and which have formal consultative status with District authorities. The District did not hold any of the mandatory meetings over the past two years due to COVID-19 restrictions, but with the re-establishment of the consultative councils and the pandemic restrictions lifted, this consultation mechanism is back up. The councils also provide a network where advocacy actions against CEFMU and for boys' and girls' access to SRH and education, as well as other topics, are coordinated. As a next step, the program supports the selected representatives in strengthening their advocacy skills for equal rights and the prevention of CM at the district level. Sub-national level advocacy goes hand in hand with lobby efforts at the national level. The consortium in Malawi lobbied the Ministries of Health, Education and Finance through Parliamentary Committees for increased budget allocation on SRHR and education, which resulted in a commitment by the Parliamentary Committee on Health as well as the Ministries of Health and Finance, to increase the budget allocation for health. Break Free! organized a session with civil society actors in Mali to prepare for their participation in the orientation day for members of the National Transitional Council (CNT) where (sub)national, regional and international laws and conventions for the protection and promotion of the rights of children will be discussed. The preparatory meeting was attended by national NGOs and coalitions, children's and youth organizations, a network of traditional communicators, community leaders and neighborhood chiefs, as well as the media. Discussions covered gaps and inadequacies noted in the implementation of protective laws. Young people and other members of civil society made recommendations for the improvement of SRHR for young people in Mali to the members of the CNT, including the establishment of a core group that would be responsible for negotiating a meeting schedule between civil society and the CNT's law commission. An important development in 2022 at continental level was the finalization of the African Union accountability framework on all continental and international human rights frameworks focusing on ending harmful practices. The accountability framework was developed by the African Union Harmful Practices Unit, with input from the Break Free! consortium and is meant to monitor and promote the implementation of Member State commitments, obligations and responsibilities on ending harmful practices. Break Free! will use the continental framework in our advocacy and lobby activities to hold member states accountable to fulfil commitments on ending harmful practices.

Engaging youth in Break Free! advocacy

Break Free! engages with a variety of civil society organisations to join forces in influencing decision making, through contracted implementation partners as well as by engaging other CSO partners to strengthen their advocacy power and to join forces. A mapping of these third tier partners in Break Free! shows that 53% of the 170 partner CSOs is youth-led, but it has to be noted that more partner CSOs focus on or work mostly with adolescents and youth. Most of the CSOs (75%) are registered with authorities, but of the youth-led CSOs only 55% are registered. The youth-led groups are primarily active at the community or local level, while other CSOs are also active at national and supra-national level. CSO partners are supported with training and other capacity development interventions, to strengthen their ability to organize, participate and communicate so



Youth advocate and medical student Leenah (20) from Sudan on speaking out against harmful practices

As a member of an international medical youth organization, youth advocate Leenah (20) from Sudan teaches sex education in communities and provides health care in remote areas. “Because of the lack of sex education, at home and at school, girls lack knowledge about their own bodies and sexual rights”, Leenah says. “When girls are married off, they often have no idea what awaits them. Moreover, sexual violence takes place in many marriages. While their bodies are not ready, many girls become pregnant at a young age.”

“As a medical student group, we speak out against child marriage and FGM/C. Although these issues are deeply rooted and such conversations often provoke resistance, doctors are held in high regard in Sudan. As a medical student, I can speak out against practices that harm girls.”

Leenah looks forward to speaking out internationally on sexual and reproductive health and rights. “The political situation in Sudan is unstable and issues such as sex education are simply not a priority. Also, young people hardly participate in politics and therefore cannot advocate for their rights. With the support of Break Free! I can raise issues such as sexual and reproductive health and safety of girls via international institutions. It is crucial that we speak out at all levels: from within our community to the African Union.”

they can claim better education and SRHR outcomes for girls and young women and can influence decision-making processes. Engaging such range of CSO partners helps to build linkages and an advocacy network that can elevate needs and gaps identified in the implementation of policies to higher decision-making levels. At the same time, Break Free! partners hold duty bearers accountable for implementing national laws and policies.

The program in 2021 mapped and engaged youth groups in most implementation countries and started orienting them on child and youth rights, on the impact of harmful practices, and on the importance of access to education and ASRH services in the prevention of harmful practices including CEFMU, TP and FGM/C. In its second year, the focus shifted to supporting the youth groups with training on organizational development, how to share information and encourage peers to finalize their education and seek SRH services. The program also started to support youth and their organizations with information on how advocacy works and the skills required to effectively engage in advocacy for improved service delivery for young people. The consortium in Niger for instance, identified 22 youth groups and conducted an analysis of their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. The main needs identified were around working in partnership and networks; knowledge and skills on conducting effective advocacy; better understanding of ASRHR for a better identification of their needs. The program takes these youth groups on a capacity development trajectory with the aim to engage them in the Break Free! advocacy efforts. Break Free! in Mozambique supported two girls and two boys who are spokespersons in the meetings of the multisectoral technical group that coordinates actions against CEFMU and TP in the district. The selected youth have shown confidence by not only attending the meetings but also to raise their voice for their rights. In 2021, youth in the Break Free! implementation areas in Malawi identified advocacy gaps through use of scorecard, which they were trained on by the program. The major gaps were the exclusion of youths in the community victim support units (CSVU) structure as well as in the CSVU Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). During a Break Free! facilitated exchange between the youth and the Ministry of Gender in 2021, the Ministry acknowledged the gaps identified and committed to review the CSVU SOPs. Upon request by the Ministry of Gender, Break Free! in collaboration with the Power to Youth Alliance supported the review process in 2022. With support from both programs, young people have been included in the review, which resulted in the inclusion of youth in the Community Victim Support Unit (CSVU) structure and amendment of the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) guidelines to incorporate response to young people's needs.

Break Free! aims to support young people to participate in decision making at all levels, including high level international fora and events, to allow them to address decision makers and share their concerns with them directly. The consortium organized two workshops in 2022 for selected youth from the Break Free! implementation countries, to get together and exchange and learn from each other about advocacy for the rights of young people. They were oriented on continental mechanisms and platforms relevant for the Break Free! topics as well as tips and tricks for international lobby. Lastly, the workshops facilitated linkages between the country level programs and international advocacy efforts. Following the workshops, opportunities were identified where young people could participate and the program has supported selected youth to attend and effectively advocate for their rights. Break Free! facilitated the participation of youth representatives in the GIMAC summits held twice a year at continental level, the SADC Parliamentary Forum and the Universal Periodic Review process. Following the concept developed by RMT, the consortium organizes *Nhangas*, intergenerational dialogues where young people interact and jointly prioritize advocacy messages. Young people are often the facilitators of the discussions. SAT and RMT in collaboration with other CSOs supported Southern Africa Development Cooperation parliamentary forum (SADC PF) secretariat to mobilize and coordinate youth-led submissions to the forum public hearing process. The submissions targeted the SADC MPs and Parliamentarians in November, 2022. The submissions were made on issues pertaining to development, health, finance and gender and SADC committed to include the reviews in the next strategic plan. Steps taken by AU member states such as South Africa and Ghana to mobilize fellow member States to include youth voices in high level events such as the review of SDGs and Global adolescent forum is crucial and an example used for further advocacy and lobby efforts.

CSE

Although comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is taken up in national policies and curricula in schools in some form in the Break Free! implementation countries, the implementation of the curricula, the language used and topics included have come under pressure. Resistance to CSE has become more vocal around the world. Break Free! engaged technical partner KIT to conduct a study aiming to improve our understanding of the nature of public and political polemics on CSE and how it has influenced the CSE landscape. The study report presents the main actors, their discourses and strategies around opposition and proposition concerning CSE in the three study countries: Kenya, Ethiopia and Zambia. In all three countries, most stakeholders agree that some form of SRH-related education is needed. Part of the debate around CSE is whether the name of the curriculum should be changed as CSE is considered too sensitive. The findings show that there is a need to move from a top-down to a circular approach where experiences from youth, educators and local leaders feed into the development of the curriculum. Inclusiveness in consultations around CSE is important: particular attention is needed for engaging parent and/or teacher associations, religious organizations and young people. Kenya and Ethiopia did not renew the ESA commitment in 2021, which points to a lack of political will in both countries: those in power are not particularly in favor of CSE. The study recommendations for the program include to focus advocacy efforts on the 'moveable middle' or 'in-between' actors, since strong opponents are often not open to dialogue at all. It also recommends to link the need for CSE to local SRHR issues and needs and to use value-based messaging and inclusive language. It stresses the importance of including young people's perspectives in conversations about CSE and to participate in technical working groups on CSE to influence the development or revision of curricula.

The Break Free! consortium in Ethiopia organized a workshop to present a policy brief stemming from a research conducted by the consortium, on the status of CSE planning, implementation in education policies and curriculum. Representatives from the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Women & Social Affairs, Addis Ababa Education Bureau, Ministry of Health and Amhara region education bureau from Bahir Dar, consortium partners, CSOs and the Dutch Embassy attended and discussed how we can collaborate on the recommendations of the policy brief. In June 2022, the National Assembly of Zambia facilitated the formation of a new Parliamentary Committee on SRH as a response to the calls by CSOs for greater involvement of the legislators in advancing the adolescent health needs of young people in Zambia. Further, Members of Parliament (MPs) developed a strategy to help strengthen implementation of CSE in line with the Eastern & Southern Africa (ESA) Commitments on SRHR. The SRH Caucus at National Assembly offers young people a great opportunity for engaging with this structure and to demand for increased support from MP champions on SRHR issues and to hold them accountable. Break Free! will support young people to access dialogue with the Parliamentary Committee and will mobilize and utilize national, sub national and district coalitions to accelerate responsive actions from duty bearers.

KIT also conducted a mapping on the status of CSE and key actors in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, to support the consortium to focus its advocacy efforts on the topic. Break Free! in Burkina Faso participated in the revision of the reproductive health modules of a reference document on family life education (FLE) which was adopted to replace comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in the country. Although the terms CSE were considered too sensitive, the consortium advocated for the inclusion of adolescent sexual and reproductive health topics in the FLE. The consortium in Sudan conducted a workshop with the ministries of Health and Education, the UNFPA and representatives from youth organizations to create more awareness regarding age appropriate CSE and to jointly identify gaps in the education curriculum in this regard. For next year, further meetings between the relevant ministries and NGOs are planned to develop a contextualized curriculum for CSE. Meanwhile, Break Free! technical partner KIT is conducting a study on reforming legal frameworks around child marriage in Sudan's pluralistic legal system.

COTLA and the role of traditional leaders

In response to push backs on (A)SRHR, especially CSE, Break Free! engages traditional leaders, including the Council of Traditional Leaders of Africa (COTLA), to discuss ASRHR topics and support behavioral change in the community. For instance through the formulation of by-laws that support prevention of CEFMU and TP and support access to education and SRHR services for young people. The Gender Is My Agenda Campaign (GIMAC) summit, held in Zambia in 2022, provided an opportunity to engage traditional leaders through the COTLA. Break Free! used the opportunity to facilitate girls' participation by organizing a *Nhanga* at the pre-summit: an intergenerational dialogue in a safe environment where girls involved in the program were able to speak with traditional leaders on the issues around harmful practices and adolescent SRHR. Break Free! invited the chairperson of the Zambian House of Chiefs to the *Nhanga*. The House of Chiefs, with representatives from all provinces, is a strategic and influential structure that operates under the Act of Parliament and meets at least twice a year to discuss traditional and cultural matters and the role of traditional leaders in national development. Others that participated in the intergenerational dialogue with the young people included representatives of the Islamic Council of Zambia, Zambia Network of Interfaith Organizations and Zambia Council of selected mother bodies. The African Union Goodwill Ambassador Dr. Nyaradzayi, director of Break Free! consortium technical partner RMT, supported and attended the *Nhanga*, together with the African Union Special Rapporteur. After the *Nhanga*, the House of Chiefs through Senior Chief Chikwanda pledged to table a motion for the development of the Transformative Manual for Traditional Leaders in Zambia. The religious leaders also made individual commitments to protect and implement programs that will help address the SRHR needs of adolescents and young people and pledged to support Break Free! in achieving its set goals. At the GIMAC summit, the Zambian chairman of the Council of Traditional Leaders of Africa (COTLA), Senior Chief Madzimawe, made a call to action to African traditional leaders to form national COTLA structures and to develop transformative by-laws that promote positive cultural practices. Break Free! also advocated for the formulation of by-laws to address negative attitudes and harmful cultural practices including child marriage in Malawi and Mozambique. Through dialogues facilitated by Break Free! in Malawi, traditional leaders made commitments to abide by national (legal) instruments, including the Awareness Handbook on child and gender related laws compiled by the Ministry of Gender, to protect children from abuse including child marriage and they expressed their interest to have by-laws formulated. The Machinga District council is in the process of harmonizing all relevant by-laws into one District by-law, following the guidelines from the government. This will then be spearheaded by the Chiefs Council, which was newly established and enacted under the Ministry of Local Government.

African Union Goodwill Ambassador on Ending Child Marriage

The term of Dr. Nyaradzayi as the African Union Goodwill Ambassador on Ending Child Marriage, was terminated by the African Union by the end of December 2021. This was unexpected and only communicated in the second half of the year. The Break Free! consortium believes that Dr. Nyaradzayi's strong and outspoken voice regarding the elimination of Child Marriage as well as related sensitive topics including CSE and youth access to SRHR, may have received resistance from Member States and we are disappointed about the decision to terminate Dr. Nyaradzayi's term as ambassador. Nevertheless, RMT and Dr. Nyaradzayi remain very valuable to the program. RMT will continue to be an active member in the regional lobby and advocacy team, for instance organizing Nhangas around high level fora, facilitating access to high profile decision makers and drafting and sharing joint advocacy messages. Break Free! actively contributed to the terms of reference for the next Goodwill Ambassador and will advocate for a progressive candidate in the role.

Youth advocate Perrykent (24) from Zambia on how gaps in implementation of laws are limiting girls



Sex education in his country is limited, and as a young person you can't simply visit a health clinic, says Perrykent. He is a board member at SRHR Africa Trust (SAT) and has been advocating for child rights in the media since the age of 15. "Internationally, African government leaders agreed that young people have the right to sexual health care that meets their needs and access to contraception. At the same time, the number of teenage pregnancies is still alarmingly high."

"Although marriage in Zambia is only legal from the age of 21, in practice girls are more likely to be married off with parental consent. Many girls then quickly become pregnant. Once married, they rarely return to school and with no education or income of their own, these girls are later totally dependent on their partners. Sexual and reproductive rights are therefore not a cost, but an investment in a better future."

Important to realize is the sensitivity in Zambia around sexual health and reproductive rights, says Perrykent. "Talking about methods to prevent pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases, other than abstinence, is controversial. So are programs in schools about contraception. The government claims to prioritize sexual health, but then it needs to discuss it and take appropriate action. Break Free! provides young people with access to institutions like the African Union, where we can call on government leaders to honor their commitments so that our rights are guaranteed."

3.3 Adolescents access quality SRHR information, education and services

Strong understanding of the benefits of SRHR among parents, community leaders, duty bearers and government actors is key to change gender norms and take relevant action. The program used commemorative dates such as International Youth Day (12 August), World Safe Abortion Day (28 September) and International Day of the Girl Child (11 October) to disseminate SRH information and promote SRH services for adolescents. The theme of the Day of the African Child (DAC, 16 June) in 2022 was 'Eliminating Harmful Practices Affecting Children: Progress on Policy and Practice since 2013'. The DAC 2022 presented an opportunity to review the status of harmful practices affecting children and most country consortia held awareness sessions and organized dialogues with duty bearers or politicians. Break Free! also conducted awareness and advocacy events during the 16 days of activism campaign. In Emarti, Kajiado East, Kenya, the consortium conducted community outreach to raise awareness about gender-based violence and its effects on individuals and communities, and to encourage people to act to prevent and end violence against women and girls, including child, early and forced marriage. The program in Burkina Faso and Mali organized awareness caravans, to share SRHR information in hard to reach communities, using the screening of films, community dialogue sessions and distributing contraceptives. Break Free! in Kenya engaged a local radio station known as Bus radio, to contribute to content on the topics of TP, CEFMU and FGM/C, providing SRHR information and encouraging adolescent girls and boys to access SRHR services. Topics of discussion also included emerging topics such as the proliferation of misinformation on social media. Break Free! in Niger recorded a debate in the Hausa language on consequences of CEFMU and the importance of SRHR, that was broadcast on national television.

Peer to peer SRH information sharing

Break Free! invested in peer to peer sharing and discussing of SRH information, by training members of youth Hubs, school youth groups and champions of change. They were taught on how to share information on sensitive topics including gender equality, child rights, causes and consequences of harmful practices, the importance of education and the benefits and importance of adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights, with their peers in and out of school. The training includes information on how to create a safe environment to discuss sensitive topics among each other and how to mobilize local communities toward changing the harmful social gender norms. The country consortia in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi and Zambia also trained selected youth advocates in theatre for development, using drama to conduct community awareness, advocate against harmful social practices, and to promote the uptake of SRH services by adolescents. The consortium in Kenya rolled out the youth hubs approach in Kajiado county and trained the first fifteen members on meaningful youth participation and skills for advocacy and provided them access to quality SRHR information. The organization held subsequent online trainings with the youth to continue capacity building them on the same. Adolescent champions of change in Malawi were supported with mentorship skills to conduct community meetings with traditional leaders, religious leaders, teachers, and other youth at community level. They conduct regular community engagement meetings using the Community Action Groups. Peer educators in Sudan included promotion of positive masculinity for boys, to promote social norms change, and the sessions for husbands and future husbands clubs in Niger included the same. The program in Niger supported 36 new health ambassadors and 32 peer educators in an out-of-school setting, contributing to the capacity development of young adolescents and the creation of an environment conducive for the discussion of sexual and reproductive health rights.

YouthWyze

The key intervention used by Break Free! to increase knowledge on SRHR, HIV, contraceptives, healthy relationships and gender equality, contributing to a higher uptake of SRH services adolescents and youth by connecting them to SRH services, is YouthWyze. The YouthWyze model links online dissemination of information with offline outreach sessions, where possible liaising with and referring to available (youth friendly) health

services. YouthWyze was introduced by Break Free! in 2022 in Burkina Faso and Mali by consortium partner AfriYan and in Kenya by Malkia Initiative. The intervention was introduced to administrative, religious and community authorities as well as to youth groups and online Facebook pages were created where SRHR information is shared. Capacity building workshops on SRHR, advocacy and resource mobilisation have helped to inform and sensitise the members of the youth hubs that were created by the YouthWyze intervention in Burkina Faso. YouthWyze already existed as an intervention by SAT in Malawi and Zambia and was introduced by Break Free! in Ethiopia and Mozambique in 2021. The Facebook pages in most countries draw high numbers of visitors: the YouthWyze page in Mozambique has 2,400 followers and 2,8 million people viewed the posts, while a total of 22,611 individuals reacted to the SRHR messages posted on the page. The YouthWyze Facebook page in Zambia had a total of 3,6 views on SRHR posts in 2022, with 6,839 adolescents and young women recorded as active and consistent followers. In Malawi, the consortium introduced games on the YouthWyze Facebook page to promote the use of the platform and thus increase access to SRHR information among adolescents and young people.

The (offline) community outreaches under YouthWyze, aim to increase knowledge on SRHR, provide basic SRH services and make referrals to SRH services in health facilities. The consortium in Mozambique organized 8 community health fairs for the provision of SRH services, including HIV testing services, contraceptive methods and measurement of blood pressure and blood glucose. The events were held in partnership with the District Health Services of Mogovolas and the INGO Médecins Sans Frontières. Youth hub leaders in Mozambique conducted door-to-door community sensitization campaigns to disseminate information on SRHR and create demand for the health unit: 9,230 adolescents were reached and 347 of them were referred to a youth friendly health facility. SRH outreaches reached a total of 8,234 young people in Malawi in 2022. The outreaches are also used to distribute condoms and in some cases a health worker joins the outreach, providing basic SRH service and referrals for SRH service at health clinics. The program in Zambia tracks referrals to health facilities made through YouthWyze and reports over 200% increase in youth presenting to health facilities with a referral from YouthWyze. This monitoring system may be introduced to other countries too, when collaboration with health facilities is ready.

Upon request by the consortium, KIT conducted a study into YouthWyze in Malawi and Zambia, where the intervention has the longest history, to distract lessons which can be applied in the roll out and scaling up of the intervention by the Break Free! program in other countries. The study found that young people found the YouthWyze online content relevant, attractive, age-appropriate and complete and users praised that the page is easy to access and anonymous. However, limited access to mobile phones and internet in rural areas, and the use of English on the page excludes some young people. This was reflected in the finding that in urban areas, YouthWyze was often associated with its online page, while in rural areas youth often referred to offline activities. Behavior change observed in study participants included an increase in knowledge about SRHR (28 of 31 respondents) and they seemed to also source further information since the arrival of YouthWyze, and young people encouraged each other to make use of the services offered during outreaches. Several respondents reported to use SRH services, including contraceptives, more frequently. However, the YouthWyze intervention lacks routine monitoring data on behavior change. Recommendations from the study include that sources of information for young people need to be complementary and diverse. To ensure that information and services are used to the fullest, the information needs to be relatable and easy to understand, for instance by providing information in local languages. The linkages between the online and offline components can be strengthened, by linking offline users to online information and vice versa and by building better linkages with other Break Free! activities, such as radio or tv broadcasts. Furthermore, to promote the sustainability of results, it is important to sensitize more SRH service providers on the availability of YouthWyze and to extend the investment in mechanisms of linking and collaborating with government providers of SRH services. Lastly, the program can build on the potential and reach of YouthWyze to advocate for better SRH services.

Youth claiming SRH services and rights

Young people are the most effective advocates for their own rights, when provided with the opportunity to express themselves and to know and learn about their SRHR. With increased knowledge and skills, young people will take control of their own lives and fight for them by demanding available and accessible services, education and information. Break Free! in 2022 supported young people in all implementation countries by training members of youth organizations, youth hubs and youth groups on accountability mechanisms such as health facility scorecards, leadership and public speaking skills and effective advocacy strategies. The program in Mozambique for instance, provided youth hub leaders with skills to influence decision-making processes at local level and to advocate for the provision of more friendly health services. In order to collect data and evidence about access and provision gaps in the access to SRHR for adolescents, an annual social audit was conducted using community scorecards in Mogovolas. The data showed little or no support of SRHR, prevention of early pregnancy and child marriage. A follow up workshop was held to share the results with district stakeholders. A joint plan of action was designed, in which stakeholders committed to specific targets in accordance with specific roles and responsibilities, for instance around awareness creation at community level and sharing of SRH information. The consortium in Kenya links school health clubs and health facilities, by providing referrals and organizing round table discussion between youth and health care workers to identify issues around access to SRHR information and services and follow up joint review meetings to monitor progress. Following the training of youth hub members in Malawi on the health facility scorecard tool and processes to monitor delivery of quality SRH services, the findings of the scorecards were presented and discussed with young people and duty bearers. A Member of Parliament from the Break Free! implementation area in Machinga, committed to construct a designated youth friendly health SRH corner at Nainunje Health Centre, as a result of the meetings. In Zambia, youth hubsters lobbied the local health centre management committee to increase the number of days for provision of youth friendly services from one per week to at least three days in a week. The youth also lobbied and advocated for increased number of hours from 2 hours to at least 5 hours per day and adjustment of opening and closing hours to enable adolescents and young people who attend school in the morning to access SRHR services.

Health facilities

Health and education service providers own attitudes as well as their religious and cultural values and beliefs often hinder the provision of quality (A)SRH services and information. Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) assessments of youth friendliness of SRHR services, using and score cards were conducted in 2021 and 2022. Barriers and gaps identified, formed the basis for advocacy for better SRH services, such as the example in Zambia as described above. The findings also provided input into training sessions for duty bearers to improve SRH service delivery to adolescents. The consortium in Niger conducted training for health workers to define the key concepts in SRHR, identify the package of essential SRHR services for better care of adolescents in the health services, and to equip health workers with skills to provide better SRH services to young people. Similar training was provided by Break Free! in Tharaka and Tana River in Kenya, focused on building positive attitudes towards ASRHR with health facility staff and setting up adolescents and youth friendly services (AYFS), AYFS policies, guidelines and standards. The absence of knowledgeable and skilled youth friendly SRH service providers was one of the challenges identified by Break Free! in Ethiopia in 2021, impeding adolescents to fulfill their SRH needs. In 2022, the program organized three days of training on AYSRH for front-line health workers in the district intervention area. The main aim of the training was to make adolescent and youth health service providers technically competent in addressing youth-friendly and gender-responsive SRH services for adolescents and youth in public health centers. Adolescent and Youth Responsive Health Systems, ASRH packages, the roles of SRH service providers, and standards and procedures to provide quality youth-friendly services, were some of the major training topics covered. The training was facilitated by experienced and knowledgeable health professionals from the local Health Department and Health office. Data from health facilities indicate that the referral linkage created between health centers and schools in Ethiopia, brings a significant improvement in the service utilization of adolescent youths compared with the pre-intervention of the program.

Lobby and advocacy for improved SRH services to adolescents

Data from health facilities and observations and reflections by the program teams identify the general break down of health systems, and in particular insufficient budget allocation and human resources for SRH services and training of health personnel, and supply chain issues which result in stock-out of contraceptives and family planning and SRH commodities, to be the major barriers to effective SRH service delivery to young people. Most of the health facilities in the Break Free! intervention areas in Malawi for instance reported contraceptive stockouts, and reports and observations from the program teams in the other Break Free! countries confirm the same challenges. Break Free! provides large numbers of young people with information about SRHR and promotes the uptake of SRH services. As a result of the activities, the consortium starts to witness an increase in referrals made to health facilities in many countries. Health facilities in Zambia reported higher numbers of young people accessing their service in the past year. It is alarming that (A)SRHR services in many countries can't keep up with the demand as they often times lack contraceptive commodities, trained staff or adolescent friendly spaces for SRH service delivery. Break Free! addresses these barriers by supporting the training and professional development of health professionals in facilities in the implementation areas and the program advocates for higher budget and resource allocation to improve (A)SRH service delivery, in particular to young people.

The consortium in Malawi organized a round-table discussion with the Ministry of Health at national and district level, on the availability of SRHR commodities in service delivery points, jointly exploring how this can be improved. In 2022, the government budget for health was increased from 9.4% to 10% with the SRHR budget allocation doubled from K200 million to K400 million in the 2022/2023 financial year, after Break Free! and like-minded CSOs. Initial engagement meetings with Parliamentary Committees on Health, Finance, and Ministry of Health conducted in 2021, resulted in commitments to increase budget. Upon constant follow-ups in 2022 eventually the budget was increased. However, the increase has not been felt considering the economic dynamics such as devaluation and inflation. In Zambia, Break Free! collaborated with UNAIDS, UNESCO, Churches Association of Zambia (CHAZ), Hivos, and the Zambia Youth Platform, on the Regional Adolescent Health Indaba that was held in Lusaka from 8th-10th April, 2022. The event was attended by the Minister of Health and over 500 adolescents and young people across the Southern African (SADC) region participated. The Minister of Health pledged to support holding of the Indaba at the provincial and district levels by as a way of enhancing agency among young people for increasing access to adolescent youth friendly health services.

The consortium is finetuning its advocacy strategies for all countries. An important avenue in these strategies is to support duty bearers and local level governments to advocate for resource allocation to improve service delivery to young people. Working with SRH clinics and local health facilities also helps in influencing facility-level decisions on the importance of developing budgets that are responsive towards Family Planning needs. And parallel to this, the program will continue to engage young people as rights holders and duty bearers responsible for the delivery of SRH services, to advocate with decision makers at the national level to make them more aware of the needs at local level and to lobby for adequate resource and budget allocations. The consortium is exploring new ways to use our program information, data and stories to support building evidence and cases for budget, training and infrastructure requirements to present to decision-makers at facility level as well as to sub-national and national government departments.

3.4 Reflection on the Theory of Change

Country consortium teams held annual reflection (and planning) meetings in August 2022 and February 2023. These reflections generally, confirmed the relevance of the assumptions as well as the envisaged pathways of change in the contextualised Theories of Change. Some countries identified additional strategic allies that were not outlined in the Theory of Change. Related to the challenges around the limited stock of contraceptives and SRH medical supplies, the country consortia identified actors in the health sector that act as critical players in addressing bottlenecks in SRH service provision for adolescents and young people: for instance nurses unions, medical supplies authorities, pharmaceutical associations.

Such lessons and insights from the past year, inspired the country consortia to sharpen the focus of specific pathways of their contextualized Theories of Change. An important challenge, in particular in countries hit by crises, concerns how to engage people around the Break Free! topics, when their daily existence is threatened and their primary focus is one of survival. This challenge features as a question in the MTR in 2023.

4. Crosscutting themes

Meaningful Youth Engagement

The active involvement of girls and boys, young women and men is a key component and the Break Free! consortium has fully committed to partnering with adolescent girls and boys and youth to support their collective action on issues that matter to them. **Chapter three** describes how young people are involved in the program. Break Free! in all countries provided young people with information about child rights, gender equality and sexual and reproductive health. Selected young people in all countries received tailored training to strengthen their skills as peer educators and were subsequently engaged in cascading the information to their peers as through school groups, youth groups, youth Hubs, or their youth organizations. This ensures that SRHR information has a much wider reach of young people in the Break Free! implementation areas. Youth and their organizations, whether informal youth groups or established youth organizations, are also supported with knowledge and skills building to support them in voicing their needs and advocate for their rights with duty bearers and policy makers. Break Free! supports young women and men to be agents in their own rights that need to be taken serious at decision making spaces. Over the next years, as more youth are trained and feel confident to speak out and represent their constituency, the program will extend its advocacy for the (permanent) inclusion of young people in governance structures and decision making spaces.

The consortium has also made steps to give youth a place in Break Free! country governance structures. In the past year, youth representatives were usually invited to join country reflection and planning meetings. Some country consortia have a formal representation of young people in the coordination or governance structures. The consortium in Zambia for instance, included a representative from the youth hubs on the board and a dedicated SRHR youth officer ensures that youth perspectives and contributions are tabled. Youth are engaged to input on the design, implementation and monitoring of the operational studies conducted by KIT. A recommendation from the two international Break Free! youth workshops was to establish a youth advisory panel for international lobby and advocacy and the regional team has started drafting a terms of reference.

One of the objectives of the program Mid Term Review in 2023 is to review to what extent Break Free! meaningfully involves youth in the program, in particular in its lobbying and advocacy; and to extract enabling factors for strengthened youth L&A.

Safeguarding

With the strong focus on youth involvement in the program and in advocacy efforts, Break Free! is committed to ensure that our structure and practices provide an enabling environment for their safe and meaningful engagement. In 2022, no safeguarding incidents (or suspicion of incidents) were reported to the Break Free! desk and to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the past year, new staff received training on safeguarding and some country consortia organized a consortium-wide refresher session on the safeguarding principles, protocols and reporting mechanism. Nevertheless, the lack of reports or signals of possible breaches of safeguarding shared with the consortium desk, could be an indication that our safeguarding processes and procedures may not be known or understood by all or that there may be factors preventing colleagues and stakeholders to share any concerns. The consortium will continue its efforts to strengthen capacities and awareness on safeguarding across organizations, actors and stakeholders.

The child protection strategy put in place for Break Free! In Burkina Faso, ensures that activity planning takes into account the most suitable locations and time slots for participants to make sure they are comfortable and safe. Consent of parents and a guardian was ensured for minors who had to travel for Break Free! activities.

Similarly, the Kenya consortium ensured that all activities that include or target children and young people have been assessed for any potential risks and that mitigation measures were put in place. Contracted service providers like consultants, research assistants, and hotels, were briefed on safeguarding prior to being engaged and signed a Code of Conduct as a commitment to protect children and young people from any harm in the course of their work. The consortium in Mali organized information sessions with parents to explain the program activities, to jointly explore risks, and to seek parental consent for the participation of children and young people in program activities. A mitigation strategy stemming from these sessions, are chaperones to accompany minors on their travel to the program activities. Peer educators, members of husband's clubs and members of village protection committees involved in the program in Niger, attended two training sessions on safeguarding and PHSEA.

Gender and social inclusion

The consortium works in rural and remote areas, reaching young people who are often not 'visible' for policy makers at the national level. The program invests in their agency, confidence in public speaking and other advocacy skills. As a next step, Break Free! will work towards their inclusion in policy development and decision making spaces. The consortium continues to learn about improving inclusion in the program. For instance, (young) people living with disabilities, people with refugee status and people with diverse gender identities are not well represented. Gender diversity is taboo in many of the program implementation countries, making it hard or impossible to record participants' gender identity. CSE in most countries doesn't cover gender identity, but information and training sessions of Break Free! include information about non-heterosexual relations and diverse gender identities in language and ways appropriate in the local context.

Youth activist Paituma (20) from Malawi advocates for youth inclusion in gender-based violence survivor support guidelines

Youth in Machinga District say their exclusion from the community gender-based violence (GBV) survivor support unit guidelines by government is subjecting them to various abuses in their communities, as reported by Malawian daily The Nation.

“The youths made their demand during a meeting between Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare, Plan International Malawi, SHRH Africa Trust and Forum for African Women Educationists at the district’s council hall. One of the Youths, Paituma (20) from Mtokoma Village said despite the availability of community GBV survivor support units in their areas to handle their complaints, the youth are not being supported. She said: ‘This discourages us from reporting further abuses, thereby, perpetrating our suffering.’

In his reaction, Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare deputy director of child affairs Justin Hamela said government is in the process of reviewing standard operating procedures for the GBV survivor support guidelines. ‘We promise to consider them’, he said.”

Patuma is passionate about advancing adolescents and young people’s sexual reproductive health and rights as well as meaningful youth participation. She is an active member of a Youth Hub, that is supported by Break Free! by providing members mentorship, leadership and advocacy skills and exposing them to different opportunities. In 2021, the Break Free! program provided Patuma and other Youth Hub members with training in lobby and advocacy. They were provided with knowledge and skills on how to identify advocacy issues using the Scorecard tool, which is used to assess youth friendliness of services at health facilities, as well as how they can engage duty bearers for action. The knowledge and skills acquired during the training motivated her to become an advocate.

A major gap identified in the scorecard assessment by the Youth Hub members of the community (GBV) victim support units (CVSU) at health facilities, was the exclusion of youth in the CVSU Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). Break Free! facilitated an exchange with the Ministry of Gender to present the issue in 2021, during which the ministry acknowledged the gap and committed to reviewing the CVSU SOP. Upon request from Ministry of Gender, Break Free! in collaboration with the Power to Youth Alliance supported the review process in 2022. Eventually, in 2022, SOP was revised and has incorporated youth in the guidelines and community structures. These results contribute directly to outcome 2 of our ToC where we want duty bearers to respond to the needs of young people by resourcing, developing, and implementing laws and policies related to education and SRHR.



LINK TO NEWS ARTICLE: [HTTPS://MWNATION.COM/YOUTHS-DEMAND-INCLUSION-IN-VICTIM-SUPPORT-GUIDELINES/](https://mwnation.com/youths-demand-inclusion-in-victim-support-guidelines/)

5. Learning in Break Free!

Learning from doing is central to the Break Free! learning approach. Much of the learning in 2022 therefore, like in 2021, took place at the level of the country consortia and regional lobby & advocacy team. The Annual Reflection (and Planning) Meetings in August and February were important avenues. Capacity support in the form of online webinars and refreshers by the consortium desk and the PMEL working group, and the revision of the PMEL handbook contributed to significant progress in the application of the Outcome Harvesting methodology notably, resulting in more in-depth reflection and learning on the effects of program interventions and strategies – among other things.

With implementation up to speed in all program countries and learnings from year one as a basis, 2022 marked the start of more cross-country learning and exchange. A consortium learning group was established and activated, and has taken up preparations for the development of a digital learning platform. This platform will facilitate access to information and knowledge products, and will be designed to promote exchange and learning across country consortia and the regional lobby & advocacy component, including contracted partners.

Other topics and common challenges that the learning group has identified for cross-country learning and exchange in the coming period include Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) – based on the extensive studies by knowledge partner KIT (Royal Tropical Institute) in 2021 and 2022 - and the further strengthening and facilitation of Meaningful Youth Participation (MYP) in Break Free!. A strategic lobby & advocacy approach was identified as another important area for further learning and support. A working group was established, that developed guidance and templates for the development of a strategic L&A plan. A first webinar was convened in 2022, and follow-up is planned for 2023.

The learning group in 2022 moreover collaborated with knowledge partner KIT (Royal Tropical Institute) on the following knowledge gaps and learning priorities:

1. YouthWyze

To inform the roll out of YouthWyze in other Break Free! program countries, KIT undertook a study into the experiences with this digital platform in Malawi and Zambia. The study looked into types and quality of SRHR information, channels used for SRHR information sharing, and challenges faced by young people in accessing SRHR information. It also considered the relationship between the use of YouthWyze and behavior change. The study included data analytics of the platform, an online survey, youth focus group and in-dept individual discussions and key informant interviews. A youth reference group was also set up to guide the study. The findings of the study are outlined in [chapter 3](#) and were discussed at a global consortium-wide webinar, which focused on the lessons and recommendations for the Break Free! program. The study findings and recommendations were also made available as a youth friendly flyer which can be shared with youth groups, other CSOs, health clinics and government actors to inform their work.

2. Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE): forces and counterforces

KIT undertook a study in Ethiopia, Kenya, and Zambia to improve our understanding of the nature of public and political polemics on CSE and how these have influenced the CSE landscape. The study moreover included a desk study to get a better overview of the actors and perspectives on CSE in West Africa. The studies mapped key actors involved, their rationales for the promotion or opposition to CSE and the strategies used in their lobby. The findings (shared in [chapter 3.2](#) of this report) were not only shared with the countries involved in the studies, but were also discussed with the other country consortia to inspire and inform their advocacy efforts on the promotion of quality CSE. A one-pager was developed for easy access to the key findings and recommendations.

3. Youth-led advocacy

To inform the consortium's strategies and interventions around youth-led advocacy and how best to involve youth in advocacy concerning SRHR, KIT has started studies in Ethiopia, Mali and Mozambique in 2022. The results are expected to become available in 2023.

4. Community bylaws on SRHR in Malawi

In response to a specific learning question from the Malawi consortium, KIT has started a study on community bylaws concerning SRH and to what extent these are responsive to young people's needs. Break Free! supports the development of bylaws related to SRH and the prevention of CEFMU and TP in particular, in multiple countries and the findings of the study in Malawi are expected to inform program interventions across the countries.

5. Child Marriage legal frameworks in Sudan

Finally, in 2022, KIT addressed a knowledge gap identified by the Sudan country consortium. The study on reforming of legal frameworks around child marriage in Sudan's pluralistic legal system was launched but suffers from the unstable situation in Sudan.

Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)

Capacity support in the form of online webinars and refreshers by the consortium desk and the PMEL working group, and the revision and translation into French of the PMEL handbook contributed to significant progress in the application of the Outcome Harvesting methodology, better understanding of the program's result framework and its monitoring systems and tools, and more consistent documentation and tracking of progress in program implementation. The Annual (Planning and) Review Meetings by the country consortia yielded 107 outcome descriptions of mostly better quality than in the first year. The outcome harvesting registers provide the basis for external substantiation of selected key signs of change, planned for mid-2023 as part of the Mid-Term Review. A newly developed the monitoring tool tracks CSO engagement, providing valuable insights into the progress and work done by the portfolio of third tier organizations in the program across the countries as presented in [chapter three](#).

Compliance with the MFA IATI requirements in 2022 again took much more of a toll on staff and organizations than anticipated. Adjustments to Plan Netherlands' CRM system to accommodate for changes in MFA reporting requirements and to ensure correct display of financial information are an example. More generally however, IATI was found especially draining on resources of organizations new to the transparency initiative, with virtually no added value to the organizations or the program itself.

Break Free! is involved in embassy initiated processes for Third Party Monitoring (TPM) and Data Quality Assessment (DQA) in Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia and Ethiopia explained further in [chapter 7](#).

6. Sustainability

The Break Free! Theory of Change and program strategies inherently promote sustainable change:

- Lobby for changes in laws, legislation and policies that respond to young people's needs;
- Strengthening civil society, in particular young people, to organize themselves to voice their needs and advocate for SRHR and education services that suit these needs;
- Promotion of long-lasting social norms change with young people and their parents, caregivers and surrounding communities, as well as with duty bearers and decision makers, to create an environment where youth rights are respected.

In 2022, country consortia built on the foundations for sustainability of program outcomes that were laid in 2021. Relationships with national and district level government institutions were further strengthened, just like those with duty bearers at schools, clinics and other services. At community level, the program continued to engage religious, traditional and other community leaders, parents, caregivers and other key stakeholders to achieve social norms change. Across Break Free!, program manuals, research findings and learning documents were endorsed by and shared with government and other stakeholders, to allow use beyond the Break Free! program. Research studies conducted under Break Free! moreover provided evidence that can feed advocacy by rightsholders beyond the program.

Examples of engagement with national and subnational government institutions in 2022 include Break Free! in Niger, where the consortium involved municipalities throughout the program cycle, from administration and the facilitation of collaboration to implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The consortium in Malawi used dialogue, capacity building and joint advocacy to consult and involve communities. In Mozambique, Break Free! revitalized multisectoral working groups that have become important avenues to advocate different government sectors for holistic and coordinated actions against CEFMU and TP. The program in Sudan as well, involved community leaders and local level government officials in program implementation and promoted the application of information and approaches beyond the program.

Important follow-up was also done on groundwork from 2021 to strengthen civil society, notably on advocacy. After mapping and initial engagement with (sub)national and local CSOs and CBOs including youth groups, 2022 witnessed the establishment of peer-to-peer networks of youth groups, the creation of safe spaces for these groups and the training of these and other CSOs and CBOs to advocate for access to education, SHRH information and services. Youth groups are moreover supported to participate in decision making structures and platforms such as Ministerial technical working groups or community councils – linked to active lobby by Break Free! to open up these spaces for youths.

The program in Kenya for instance strengthened the capacity of youth groups on various aspects including advocacy, SRHR and safeguarding, so that they will be able to continue this work beyond the project. The groups were also linked to technical working groups to allow them to participate in government processes such as budgeting. Young people were involved in review and planning meetings of most country consortia and were in many cases supported and trained to participate meaningfully. This promotes ownership and the introduction of new ideas, and fosters young people's initiatives to take lead in project activities.

A program exit strategy will be elaborated by 2024, in which consortium members, implementing partners, local government bodies, duty bearers and program participants jointly plan for wrapping up the program and the continuation of strategies and lessons after 2025. In addition, the consortium continues to create and develop partnerships with other groups and individual institutions around cross-referrals, joint advocacy, project development and sharing of resources.

7. Partnerships

Developments in the collaboration between FAWE, Plan International and SAT

The first year of Break Free! focused on establishing the consortium structures for program implementation and coordination, management, monitoring and reporting. This also included the recruitment of staff, building work relationships and establishing processes and procedures. During the second year of Break Free!, it is observed that collaboration at country and international level has taken off and deepened. The processes for reflection and outcome harvesting at the start of the year and the planning process for 2023 at the end of the year, showed familiarity with the processes and tools used. Investments were made in conducive work relations and improved communication lines and information sharing. As a result, consortium staff of the different partners are better able to find each other and function more as a team with less fragmentation across the board. In Malawi, this has been achieved for instance through alliance building activities such as joint monitoring and evaluation exercises, joint quarterly reviews and joint implementation of lobby and advocacy activities. More countries have initiated joint activities, and the consortium aims for more integrated work plans and interventions, for instance on advocacy, from 2023 onwards.

The country consortia function quite independently and make their own decisions on program coordination, strategies and implementation. Country specific procedures and routines for the coordination of program implementation, reflection and reporting, have been set up by each country consortium in accordance with the country context and the needs of the consortium partners. The country consortia in Kenya, Ethiopia and Mozambique for example decided to hold quarterly coordination meetings, while the consortia in Malawi and Zambia have a bi-weekly exchange at operational level, and the consortium in Mali conducts a monthly consortium call. Local implementing partners have been brought on board in most countries and are involved in reflection and planning meetings. These joint reflection and planning sessions have overall harmonised the understanding of program strategies, and in some countries paved the way for the development and implementation of the first joint activity plans. The joining of contracted partners of SAT in the Sahel countries (AfriYan) early 2022 uplifted these country programs with the introduction of YouthWyze. It also contributed to improvements in meaningful youth participation, since AfriYan is a youth-led organization. Some countries, including Zambia, have established mechanisms for youth involvement in program governance, as described in [chapter 4](#).

To keep structures light and avoid overburdening of staff, it was decided in 2021 not to establish regional governance structures for West, East and Southern Africa. This helped indeed to keep the structure light and workloads manageable, but it also limited opportunities for cross-country learning and exchange – which, in turn, limits the flow and uptake of needs, ideas, inputs, lessons and feedback from country consortia that is necessary for the shift of power that Break Free! aspires. To address this, the program committee has started dialogue sessions with the country coordinators to explore how to strengthen their mutual linkages, their engagement with the governance structure and their involvement in decision making. Creating more opportunities for linking and learning and cross-country exchange (hybrid, in person or virtual) is on the Break Free! agenda for the coming year, as this can contribute to broadened perspectives and new solutions to key challenges.

Developments in relations with MFA and embassies

Country consortia have participated in regular exchange meetings with the Dutch embassies in 2022, together with other partnership programs funded under the SCS framework. The agendas of these meetings focused mostly on progress updates and exchange between consortia and with the embassy. Some embassies and Break

Free! country consortia have established direct contact and have started inviting the partnership programs to contribute to agenda setting. Break Free! in Mozambique participated in a workshop led by the Dutch Embassy aimed at strengthening civil society organizations (CSOs) on their lobbying and advocacy role. Specifically, the workshop introduced organizations and partners within the SCS framework active in Mozambique to each other and their respective areas of interest. The Embassy also shared their priorities in the country and explored possible synergies between different partnerships. One on one contact with specific embassies, for instance in Ethiopia and Sudan, has resulted in linking the country consortium with other programs or organizations funded directly by the embassies, and the exploration of opportunities for collaboration or coordination.

Break Free! is involved in embassy initiated processes for Third Party Monitoring (TPM) and Data Quality Assessment (DQA) in Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia and Ethiopia. It involves assessing the progress the SCS partners are making, based on the key indicators of SCS policy framework, as well as evaluating the monitoring system with a view of encouraging learning and knowledge sharing. Despite some improvements, both the regular meetings as well as the TPM/DQA processes are often perceived as top-down initiatives with limited participation or consultation of (country) consortia in agenda setting and prioritization. Break Free! is furthermore involved in the Ministry's Power of Learning program in Niger and Sudan, for which kick off meetings held in 2022.

The country coordinator (SAT) and FAWE's program manager in Malawi participated in the online basic course on Strengthening Civil Society (SCS), offered as part of the learning programme of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The course provided an opportunity to get familiar with the objectives and core elements from the SCS policy framework and was meant to share knowledge between CSO actors and civil servants or diplomats. The participants from the Break Free! consortium in Malawi gained a better understanding of the dynamics of civil society and of civic space as a precondition for a flourishing civil society and enabling environment and developed a shared understanding of power dynamics, its impact and strategic partnerships. They gained better understanding of the rationale of strengthening the lobby and advocacy role of CSO actors and how it contributes to the achievement of other policy objectives. Participation of other country coordinators in new rounds of the training course will be encouraged.

The Embassy of the Netherlands in Niger is cooperating with Plan International Niger on the establishment of a national platform to allow for reflection and learning and constitute a force for combined advocacy actions on SRHR by civil society stakeholders.

Collaboration with other strategic partnerships and other organizations and institutions

In 2022, Break Free! country consortia have collaborated with other SCS funded partnership programs and networks active on the same agenda. Break Free! in Malawi initiated collaboration with the Power to Youth Alliance for the review of Standard Operating Procedures (SoP) of the community victim support units (CVSU). The collaboration jointly supported the review process financially and ensured that young people from both Power to Youth and Break Free! implementation areas participated in the review process. In Burkina Faso, Break Free! is member of the National Coalition Against Child Marriage (CONAMEB). The coalition shares data and information and conducts joint data collection, develops joint advocacy plans and offers advocacy workshops. The country consortium in Mozambique became a member of CECAP, a national network of organizations that fight against CEFMU. By facilitating exchange between the She Leads and Break Free! program staff in Kenya, Plan International continuously explores opportunities to integrate mutually reinforcing actions. FAWE Kenya is member of both the Break Free! and Make Way consortia and has used this role to organize joint staff training sessions for partners of both consortia on meaningful youth participation.



Youth activist Peace (24) from Malawi on the importance of sex education

Youth advocate Peace (24) from Malawi spoke about the far-reaching consequences of the taboos around sex and relationships during a Regional Break Free! youth meeting in Niamey, Niger. For three days, youth advocates from different African countries gathered for training and exchange on youth political participation around the topic of sexual rights and health.

“The most important thing is to break the taboo around sexual health and harmful stereotypes about girls”, Peace says. “In Malawi, and in many other African countries, that starts with religious leaders in our community. If they recognize and speak out that something needs to change, chances are the rest of the community will follow. That’s why it’s hugely important to talk to them about girls’ rights in our country.”

“Sex and relationships are not talked about, so young people don’t learn how to protect themselves. As a result, many girls in Malawi and in other African countries become pregnant. Their parents then see no other option but to have their daughter marry the child’s father. Going to school is then often out of the question.”

Peace stresses the importance of proper sex education for a girl’s education. “My younger sister got pregnant while she was still in high school. This made me realize that one of the biggest problems is the taboo around sex and relationships. My sister and I talked about all kinds of things, but not sex. I didn’t even know she was sexually active and that she didn’t know how to protect herself from getting pregnant. That gave me the motivation to join the Break Free! program. I want to help girls by talking about their rights around sex and relationships.”

The challenges Peace faces as a youth advocate are enormous, but step by step we are working toward a better future for girls in Malawi. “This year we were able to get more budget from the Ministry of Gender for our mission. It is a small step, but one that is going to lead to many more big changes. This really shows the Ministry that they want to engage with young people and listen to their concerns and plans. With this, we can really make a change.”

8. Budget narrative

The actual spending of the program in 2022 was € 5,425,518, which is 89% of the available annual budget for the year.

Late transfer of funds from MFA had an impact on the FAWE country chapters, since they had depleted their budgets from 2021. Although FAWE had unspent funds from 2021 remaining at central level, these was not sufficient to cover first tranche payments of 70% for 2022 to their country chapters as per their intra-company MoUs. This led to delays in starting up of activities until May/June of 2022. In most countries, the backlog was caught up with though.

Most BF! implementation countries experienced *high inflation rates*, impacting activity costs. However, cost efficiency was achieved by lowering the numbers of participants, combining activities or organizing activities in a different way. The high inflation rates in 2022 therefore did not have a major impact on the program. Extended high inflation may cause a bigger impact in 2023, as salaries, office rent and other major recurrent costs need to be adjusted to keep up with inflation rates.

The slow starting up of program studies in 2021 due to delays in priority setting and identifying knowledge gaps, continues to affect the expenditures of KIT in 2022. Studies are now on track and up to speed, but not yet at a point where they're fully catching up from 2021. Remaining funds from 2021 were used for work in 2022 and the next transfer of funds for 2022 was only done in October of the year, together with the under-expenditure on the regional lobby and advocacy component (see below), contributing to lower than planned expenditure rates under II.A.

Due to multiple staff of Plan Netherlands being on prolonged leave and the replacement mid-2022 of one program management staff member who left Break Free! for another program as well as the replacement of the dedicated PME support staff member, some temporary arrangements had to be made. Extra time was needed for hand-over and new staff induction, but this also generated some efficiency (I.A), as the temporary arrangements allowed for collective actions for all involved countries programs together and country level staff was skilled and capable to take over where necessary. However this also brought a restraint in the amount of support that could be provided by Plan Netherlands, limiting the number of hours dedicated and booked to support each country project involved.

Break Free! in 2022 had *lower than budgeted travel expenditures (II.C)*. Not every country was travelled to due to Covid restrictions, mostly during the first part of the year, or because of security issues. Some of the activities that required travel were implemented virtually after reviewing that the quality would not be impacted. Multiple staff at Plan Netherlands were on prolonged (sick/care) leave, during which the monitoring and program management was taken over by one colleague. This temporary situation left little time to visit all the countries. More travel is anticipated for 2023, because of the MTR and, where needed, catching up on necessary travels to support program management and implementation.

More need for external advisors was anticipated (I.C), but instead, the consortium leveraged on expertise available within the consortium organizations, a positive outcome of working in the partnership. For several countries, projections for procurement of equipment (II.E) were made based on assumptions that newly contracted organizations would need more equipment. However, the organizations contracted were well established and did not need as much as anticipated - this caused under-expenditure.

Country specific explanation of deviations against budget:

The regional lobby and advocacy component spent 84% of its budget for 2022. This stems mostly from under-expenditure in this component by FAWE. Research on innovative practices for the promotion of retention

and completion rates in primary, secondary and higher education was planned to start in 2022, however the contracting of research partners took longer than anticipated. Cost savings from 2021, as a result of more online working since the Covid-19 pandemic, was not spend in 2022 and will be re-budgeted to the remaining years of the program.

Expenditures in Mali were only 66% of the budgeted costs. This is due to high turnover of local staff at Plan International Mali and the late contracting of an implementing partner by SAT. Prolonged leave of staff at Plan Netherlands contributed to cost savings and security issues made travelling impossible, leading to a lower expenditure than originally budgeted for.

Expenditures in Zambia exceeded the budget with 10%. Zambia hosted the African Union Summit in 2022, which was strategic to the project because it was a once off opportunity during the life of the project to engage with duty bearers at continental, national and sub-national around the same event. This resulted in organizing additional meetings with Members of Parliament and Traditional and Religious leaders. In addition, implementing partners in Zambia received more than what was planned to cover for activities not implemented in the previous year.

Annex 1 Updated Break Free! Risk Matrix

Updates to the risks are indicated in the matrix in **bold**.

Risk	Probability	Impacts	Mitigation	Result
Avoidable risks: related to internal factors				
Consortium organisation(s) not meeting grant requirement	Low	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership agreement Addenda details grant requirements and formalises organisations' commitments Ongoing dialogue at Directors' level, in Programme Committee and technical working groups on grant requirements and necessary capacity at organisational level Guidelines for (financial) management, planning, monitoring and evaluation have been developed Advocate with MFA for workable and relevant reporting requirements and timely disbursement of annual funds 	Formal commitment to compliance, awareness on requirements, tools and technical support available and an open culture to discuss and address challenges.
Safeguarding incidents in consortium chain	Medium	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All consortium organisations compliant with ORIA and self-assessment, plans of action for follow-up where necessary Consortium organisations mutually accountable for ensuring third parties under contract comply with safeguarding standards Development and formalisation of safe-guarding protocol Safeguarding is integrated in programming, influencing, PMEL, media and campaigning, with relevant tools and guidelines (incl. risk assessment, Codes of Conduct, consent forms, ethical standards) Safeguarding focal points in every organisation, mappings of legal system and support agencies available Informing beneficiaries and stakeholders on safeguarding reporting mechanisms Refresher training and dialogue within and between organisations, partners, beneficiaries and other stakeholders 	Policies and procedures in place at different levels, tools, mechanisms and guidelines available and known to all stakeholders, and a culture of openness which promotes signalling and reporting of (imminent) risks and issues.
Fraud and/or corruption cases in consortium chain	Medium	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All consortium organisations comply with standards of internal organisation and financial administration and have policies and sanctions for fraud and corruption in place Consortium organisations are mutually accountable for ensuring third parties under contract comply with these standards Partnership Agreement Addenda details and formalises reporting requirements for (suspected) incidents of fraud and corruption in line with grant requirements Ongoing awareness creation and dialogue within and between organisations, partners, beneficiaries and other stakeholders 	Policies and procedures in place at different levels, tools, mechanisms and guidelines available and known to all stakeholders, and a culture of openness which promotes signalling and reporting of (imminent) risks and issues

Risk	Probability	Impacts	Mitigation	Result
External risks: cannot be avoided				
Covid-19 incidence and/or measures	Medium	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invested in online and remote working technology (access and capacities) Maintain, through partners, members or local affiliates, close communication lines with CSOs and girls- and young women-led groups in order to assess their needs in times of lock-down Maintain, through different layers in the consortium, contacts with relevant emergency response networks Timely information, communication with MFA Invest in engaging government officials with the program and advocate to keep ASRHR issues on the agenda. 	Timely adaptation of programme interventions, based on the actual needs of girls and young women and in line with requirements of the Ministry
Natural disasters Epidemics/ health emergencies	High	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain, through partners, members or local affiliates, close communication lines with CSOs and girls- and young women-led groups in order to assess their needs in times of natural disasters/ epidemics/ health emergencies Maintain, through different layers in the consortium, contacts with relevant emergency response networks Guidelines for developing adjusted activity plans and budgets Where possible, merge with or coordinate with humanitarian activities, adding SRHR interventions. Advocate for continued funding and attention for SRHR services (if possible) during and after crises, and in non-affected areas. Timely information, communication with MFA 	Quick response and adaptation of programme, based on the actual needs of girls and young women and in line with requirements of the Ministry
High inflation rates	High	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advocate for continuation of funding and attention for ASRHR, CEFMU, TP, FGM/C despite economic challenges in implementation countries Link affected target groups struggling to maintain their livelihoods to other programs, organisations and government actors to support fulfilment of basic needs. Monitor developments and adjust budgets, workplans and activity targets accordingly Discuss if and how adaptation of strategies is needed, including during the MTR. Timely information, communication with MFA 	Timely adaptation of strategies, interventions as well as activity planning and budgets, based on analysis of local context and in line with requirements of the Ministry
Political or social unrest	Medium High for Sudan, Burkina Faso, Mali	Medium High for Sudan, Burkina Faso, Mali	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing monitoring of changes in external context and changes at the level of key stakeholders (incl Outcome Harvesting) including conflict sensitivity assessments Regular review and analysis of the situation during quarterly review meetings Adaptive programming, based on periodic monitoring of Theory of Change and underlying assumptions Guidelines developed, including for adjusting activity plans and budgets Timely information, communication with MFA 	Timely adaptation of strategies and interventions, based on analysis of local context and in line with requirements of the Ministry
Elections and changing political contexts	Medium High for Mali, Sud	Medium High for Mali, Sudan		

Risk	Probability	Impacts	Mitigation	Result
Staff changes	High	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidelines have been developed for (financial) management, planning, monitoring and evaluation. Realistic budgeting for HR capacity 	Continuity of operations and collaboration
Budget cuts by the MFA	Low	High	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure high quality plans and reports Communications strategy and plan to make results of our programme visible through clear narrative and impact-ful and powerful images in online and offline media Agreed on principles and mechanisms for absorbing budget cuts. Guidelines have been developed, including for adjusting activity plans and budgets 	Timely identification, reducing likelihood of budget cuts for lagging performance and/or low visibility, ensuring quick adaptation
Strategic risks: inherent with strategic choices, ambitions and expected 'value'				
Lack of capacity for L&A and supporting girls' and youth agency and activism (at the level of consortium organisations, local offices, implementing organisations and/or partners)	Low	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adapted timeframes for programme countries where consortium organisations have no history of collaboration Guidelines have been developed, for (financial) management, planning, monitoring and evaluation. Development of policy briefs and content for online learning and exchange on key themes and topics Further capacity support and consortium building, online platforms for peer exchange and learning, with a focus on strengthening MYP and youth-led lobby and advocacy. 	Realistic timeframes, capacity strengthening and support in place, culture of openness to discuss and address issues.
Power differences between and within consortium organisations, local offices and chapters, member affiliates, partner organisations, CSOs and girls- and young women-led groups.	Medium	Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Embrace key principles that address power differences Ongoing dialogue on safeguarding, power dynamics and key principles of Break Free! Power analysis integrated in planning and monitoring cycles at all levels Build in capacity building of consortium partners and their partners as a key element of the partnerships with the goal of handing over power during the programme run-time Governance structure takes power differences at various levels into account: more regular exchanges between program committee and country coordinators and explore if adaptation of the formal governance structure is needed. Periodic evaluation of governance structure, including at the MTR 	Consortium organisations continuously challenge themselves to balance power differences and to act on their key principles.

Annex 2 Break Free! 2022 target and results on the MFA basket indicators

Actuals versus targets of the basket indicators that require annual reporting, are presented below, including a descriptive explanation to the numbers. Basket indicators that are required to be reported 3 times over the course of the program will be reported against next, in the Mid-Term Review report.

SCS 6: # of CSOs included in SPs programs

Contributing program indicator: CB-1b&c: Number of CSOs included in Break Free! program

SCS6

Code	Disaggregation	TOTAL Target 2022	TOTAL Actual 2022	Ethiopia		Kenya		Sudan		Burkina Faso		Mali		Niger		Malawi		Mozambique		Zambia	
				Target 2022	Actual 2022	Target 2022	Actual 2022	Target 2022	Actual 2022	Target 2022	Actual 2022	Target 2022	Actual 2022	Target 2022	Actual 2022	Target 2022	Actual 2022	Target 2022	Actual 2022	Target 2022	Actual 2022
SCS061	women-led	10	7	0	0	1	1	1	1	5	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	1	1	0	0
SCS062	youth-led	17	19	6	6	7	9	0	0	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	2	0	0	1	1
SCS063	neither youth- nor women-led	5	14	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	2	27	1	2	1	2
SCS064	youth- and women-led	4	7	0	0	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

The figures reported on indicator SCS-6 above are in IATI, cover second tier partners in the Break Free! consortium. These are contracted partners, involved in the implementation of the program. They also participate in country consortia annual review, reflection and planning workshops. We did not include the consortium members themselves in the numbers reported as they are active in most or all of the countries, which would lead to double counting. Break Free! also works with a large number of informal CSOs and CBOs, third tier partners, of which many are (non-registered) youth groups. These groups and associations are important for a vibrant

civil society, especially since youth rights and needs are not always well represented in formal CSOs. The third tier partners are trained by the program to support their agency as rightsholders. Although not contracted by Break Free!, these organizations and their members are included in Break Free! organized trainings and activities. They gained skills in for instance understanding their rights as well as national laws, public speaking skills and were introduced to conducting lobby and advocacy activities. The Break Free! consortium across the nine countries engages with 170 CSOs in total (second and third tier partners): 53% of all CSOs are youth-led and only 11% are

women-led. Most of the CSOs are registered, although 45% of the youth-led CSOs are informal. The youth groups are primarily active on community level, while the neither women nor youth-led L&A groups' are usually active at the national and supra-national level.

Burkina Faso:

2nd tier organization that joined in 2022 is AfriYan, a youth-led network mobilizing youth-led and youth-serving organizations with the goal of increasing meaningful youth participation in Africa's development while addressing the intersecting challenges in the lives of young people.

Ethiopia:

2nd tier organization that supports advocacy activities at the community level with aim of increasing knowledge child protection, SRH information, reaching out of school youths, influence the government agencies on strengthen youth structure at both local levels. During the period under review, they identified 6 CSOs per district and provided different capacity building training. They plan to cascade the activity in 2023 by providing the CSOs with microgrants to sustain their activities on lobby and advocacy.

Kenya:

2nd tier organizations are women- and youth-led that advocate for increasing opportunities for both women and youth to be included by government in the available platforms and seats at the decision-making table.

Malawi:

PLAN, FAWEMA and SAT collaborated to achieve set targets for 2022 working with targeted youth- and non-youth led CSOs. The consortium achieved its targets but under increased difficulty at national level as Human Rights Defenders were facing difficulty in holding government accountable and accessing fundamental freedoms amidst worsening human rights conditions. There were violations of rights, harassment of civil society actors and enactment of repressive laws with unclear, overbearing, overstepping or outright brutal enforcement parameters by government agencies. This

hostile environment led to the actors in Malawi making efforts to engage government to create a conducive/enabling operational environment for CSO activities. It was noted through these engagements that government was showing willingness to engage and work with CSOs.

Mali:

Two 2nd tier women-led CSO's were contracted by Plan for the implementation of field activities : Collectif des Femmes pour l'Education, la Santé Familiale et l'Assainissement (COFESFA Yiriwaton) and Association pour la Promotion des Filles Descolarisées (APROFID). Three Youth and Children's Organizations (YCOs) were contracted by FAWE, of which 1 on woman-led and 2 are male-led.

Mozambique:

2nd tier organizations are engaged in Lobby and Advocacy; Youth Empowerment; and access to SRHR services & items. These 3 CSO's include women-led organization MEPT (contracted by FAWE), Coalizao and Muleide (both contracted by SAT). Muleide is no longer contracted by SAT in 2023. SAT is exploring the need to contract a partner to replace Muleide. FAWE and Plan International are not are not planning on contracting additional 2nd tier organizations but are planning on increasingly working with 3rd tier local Youth organizations, networks etc. in the remainder project years. The second tier CSO's are included in the consortiums governance structure on country level, representing their contracting partners that do not have in-country offices. Also, they are actively involved in the full project cycle and program activities related to Lobby and Advocacy, youth Empowerment and increasing access to SRH information and services.

Niger:

2nd tier organizations are AfriYan (youth led) and Lafia Matassa (neither youth or women led) which are responsible for the implementation of the SRHR packet.

Sudan:

2nd tier organization is the Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa

(SIHA) Network, an indigenous African women's rights organisation that works as a regional civil society organisation in politically volatile contexts and which works at district, national and regional levels.

Zambia:

Break Free! works with Chisomo, Young healthy, happy and safe (YHHPS), and Restless development in Eastern province covering Kasenengwa, Chipata and Chipangali districts. Restless development also has a presence at national level. The implementing partners have enabled the consortium to increase the reach of lobby advocacy against teenage pregnancy and child marriage, and increased sexual and reproductive health services for adolescents and young people. The program is on track to achieve its five year target for second tier organizations in the BF! Program.

SRHR-B # of young people reached with comprehensive, correct information on sexuality, HIV/AIDS, STIs, pregnancy and contraception
Contributing program indicator: O3-2: Number of adolescents aged 10-24 reached with SRHR information/education

SRHR-B

Code	Disaggregation	TOTAL Target 2022	TOTAL Actual 2022	Ethiopia		Kenya		Sudan		Burkina Faso		Mali		Niger		Malawi		Mozambique		Zambia	
				Target 2022	Actual 2022	Target 2022	Actual 2022	Target 2022	Actual 2022	Target 2022	Actual 2022	Target 2022	Actual 2022	Target 2022	Actual 2022	Target 2022	Actual 2022	Target 2022	Actual 2022	Target 2022	Actual 2022
SRH003	female	10,250	63,157	900	13380	0	1245	50	100	3000	3006	0	4989	800	814	0	33855	5500	5768	0	0
	male	6,450	43,196	900	11574	0	467	50	80	2000	1400	0	68	0	953	0	25192	3500	3462	0	0
	other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	gender non-specified	44,000	62,828	0	0	0	23232	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	29.000	0	0	0	15.000	39.596

Burkina Faso:

AfriYan (contracted partner of SAT) has joined the country consortium as planned and introduced YouthWyze into the already existing SRHR related activities with adolescents and youth. Youth and adolescent clubs have been created by the consortium partners, these adolescents and youth received trainings on SRHR and life skills and spaces were created for exchange and debate amongst these young people and their peers. Digital challenges between youth clubs were organized around sexual health and family planning. The administrative, religious and other community authorities were introduced in the YouthWyze and other SRHR related activities and sensitized on the importance of the issue. The target is not reached at the male level because during the activities more girls and women came forward to participate. In addition, awareness campaigns on SRHR mobilized fewer people than expected. This is also partly due to the insecure situation in the program implementation districts/communities.

Ethiopia:

The targets for both this indicators were met. The achievement includes awareness creation activities and trainings for both in and out of school youth, with the aim to increase their knowledge around SRH information.

Kenya:

The total number of adolescents aged 10-24 reached with SRHR information/education was 24,944. The adolescents were reached through school health clubs and teen mother support groups.

Malawi:

The internet, radio, SMS and physical meetings were used to disseminate SRHR information to youth, educating them on HIV and AIDS, contraceptives, relationships and gender equality. Twenty-two champions of change clubs were formed in Njewa

and Chiwalo. The Clubs provided safe spaces for discussion on critical matters of SRHR, gender equality and social norms. BF!'s weekly radio program on Timveni radio called "Timasuke pa zaumoyo wathu" reached 47,394 (28,436 female, 18,958 males) listeners and 1, 200 were also reached through SMS. The broadcast informed youths on SRHR matters and offered an opportunity for youth to ask and receive expert advice on matters which are not readily discussed in their communities. A Facebook page of YouthWyze games was also used to disseminate SRHR information. The YouthWyze Games were adapted and extended to youths without internet access using outreach and in-reach activities in hard to reach areas. The initiative proved to be effective as 8,234 (4,742 females and 3,492 males) were reached out with comprehensive Sexual Reproductive-Youth Friendly Health Services education, information, and services hence increased knowledge on SRHR.

Mali:

The gap is due to the delay in the implementation of 2021 activities and also the non-implementation of 2022 activities by an implementing partner for the Kita zone.

Mozambique:

The reported youth (age range 10-24 years old) received CSE education and information via through community sensitization sessions and equipped health providers. This includes both in and out of school youth. The community sensitization sessions used the YouthWyze approach where trained youth hub members disseminate information to their peers in the communities. Trained health care professionals provided youth with adolescent friendly services and information. Within the communities where this project is implemented this information is too sensitive for youth to openly identify as 'other gender'. The consortium will furtherly discuss opportunities and reassess if it is possible to operationalize this indicator for the following implementation years.

Niger:

AfriYan (contracted partner of SAT) has joined the country consortium and introduced YouthWyze into the already existing SRHR related activities with adolescents; ASRHR

related information was provided to young people from community structures in Maradi district set up by Break Free!, such as safe spaces, clubs for future husbands and youth clubs where trained peer educators shared information on ASRHR with adolescent and youth.

Sudan:

The reached youth were part of the training workshops and sessions on SRHR using social media and participatory planning. The capacities were assessed using pre- and post-tests.

Zambia:

The target was 15,000 and the Break Free! overachieved on this target reaching 39,596 (22,276 girls and 17,320 boys) with comprehensive and correct SRHR information. The program employed a series of interventions including training youth peer educators and convening 16 youth hubs and 15 school based clubs, and health facility youth focal point persons. BF!'s lobby and advocacy on government officials led to the appointment of youth and adolescence health focal point persons in 16 health facilities in the Eastern province which helped improve facility-in reach SRHR services. Online YouthWyze services and radio broadcast programs were key tools in reaching youths and addressing negative cultural norms and practices using subject matter experts.

SRHR -J # of communities, CSOs and advocacy networks with increased lobby & advocacy capacities

Contributing program indicator: CB2-a&b: Number of CSOs or youth led CSOs (15 - 25 years old) who report having strengthened lobby & advocacy capacities

SRHR-J

Code	Disaggregation	TOTAL Target 2022	TOTAL Actual 2022	Ethiopia		Kenya		Sudan		Burkina Faso		Mali		Niger		Malawi		Mozambique		Zambia	
				Target 2022	Actual 2022	Target 2022	Actual 2022	Target 2022	Actual 2022	Target 2022	Actual 2022	Target 2022	Actual 2022	Target 2022	Actual 2022	Target 2022	Actual 2022	Target 2022	Actual 2022	Target 2022	Actual 2022
SRH022	youth-led	131	135	6	6	70	18	8	10	5	0	8	2	8	22	10	53	7	15	9	9
SHR023	SHR023	69	69	6	6	25	9	2	0	10	0	2	3	2	1	10	40	5	3	7	7

Burkina Faso:

The trainings have not yet been conducted with these CSOs. They will be carried out during the year 2023.

Ethiopia:

The CSOs were involved on different lobby and advocacy activities. The level of their involvement includes participation in research validation workshops, L&A workshops, Jointly organized national level campaigns, engagement on national level workshops with the house of people representatives.

Kenya:

2 CSOs were involved in carrying out youth empowerment workshop with the White Ribbon Alliance, Plan Kenya trained 4 CSOs on advocacy and 12 local CSOs held advocacy meetings in Tana River. The advocacy meetings were to call on stakeholders to embrace collective action and not operate in silos. 2 CSOs carried out MYEPL trainings with Make Way consortium and Plan Kenya trained 7 youth led groups on advocacy. In total 9 youth-led CSOs against a target of 25 CSOs were reached.

Malawi:

A CSO self-administered capacity assessment tool is used to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of CSO structures and functions. Capacity building training and guidance were undertaken to improve CSO’s conduct of advocacy initiatives with duty bearers at community, district and national level around SRHR, education, adopting positive social norms and meaningful youth participation, and leadership. BF! also collaborated with the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) to expose its partner CSOs to capacity strengthening in value clarification, attitudes transformation and sexuality education. Improved performance was seen in partners as they jointly advocated for the revision of Community Victim Support Unit (CVSU) guidelines, increased health budget allocation, addressed stock-out challenges through engagements with relevant stakeholders, interface engagement on scorecard findings. Specific CSOs were targeted with training on the National Girls Education Network in advocacy as well as oriented on the President of Zambia’s UNGA commitments to transform education. BF!-led CSO trainings also resulted in preparing action plans for joint advocacy initiatives related to girls’ education and SRHR issues.

Mali:

The capacity of the NGO partners of Plan has been strengthened on advocacy and lobbying.

Mozambique:

The CSO's reported on, include 15 (informal) Adolescent Networks and the three 2nd tier in-country consortium partners. Their capacities and expertise was developed to equip them to be able to in future perform political roles and to implementing advocacy strategies. The adolescent networks received training on knowledges and skills related to lobby and advocacy work and were guided to develop action plans, focusing on L&A natured activities within their communities. In order for the second tier CSO to improve their capacity, they received training on L&A knowledge and skills with a specific link to applying this towards L&A of the key BF thematic teams. Also, training was provided for PME tools that can be used to measure the progress made such as a one day training on Outcome Harvesting. The adolescent networks and CSO's showed to have improved their capacity. This was showcased through the quality of the developed advocacy plans, the carried out interventions by the trained partners and through monitoring of the results of these interventions. The desired future capacity is not considered to be fully achieved. Therefore, ongoing strengthening in the areas of improvement has been planned in for 2023.

Niger:

The youth structures Break Free! works with have received a number of trainings on communication, advocacy and the technique of speaking in public with a view to strengthening their capacities and enabling them to be able to carry out advocacy actions in accordance with the standards. Of the communal structures the program works with, only one is not youth-led.

Sudan:

The following activities were done in the area of the capacity building: Youth-led organizations (Nisswa Association, School feminist society, Amna organization, PNDS, Med-SIN, Banat Ummdur, Zahrat al Mustagabal, Almalaz Alamin and development

Hub organization) have been trained in social media using for advocacy on SRHR.

Participatory Planning and accountability training was done for a youth group in North Darfur.

Zambia:

The reported CSOs are BF! implementing partners who demonstrated increased knowledge and awareness on advocacy and lobby. Through their efforts, 18 young people have been included in various strategic sub national and provincial Technical Working Group. additionally, 28 young entered into a Social Contract making a commitment with traditional leaders and school authorities that they will not fall pregnant until they complete their education. The IPs also lobbied for establishment of Child Protection. Committees in two villages in the two schools that have high practice of child marriages.