

# WISH2 CONNECT

## TEAM LEAD MESSAGE

As we come to the close of this final quarter, I would like to pause and reflect on what we have achieved together across WISH 2 ESA, and more importantly, how we are positioning ourselves for what lies ahead.

Over the past months, our teams and partners have continued to demonstrate resilience, adaptability, and a strong shared commitment to advancing SRHR across diverse and often complex contexts. This quarter has marked steady progress across all outputs. A key milestone this quarter was the Reset Workshop with FCDO, partners and WISH 2 stakeholders. This was an important moment to step back and collectively reflect on the evolving development landscape, including shifts in funding, increasing humanitarian pressures, and the growing emphasis on systems strengthening and local leadership for sustainability. The discussions reaffirmed that WISH 2 remains highly relevant, particularly in reaching the most vulnerable populations and operating effectively in fragile and complex settings.

At the same time, the workshop made it clear that we are entering a period that requires sharper prioritisation and strategic focus. The planned budget reduction of approximately 20 percent is part of a broader shift across the development sector. While this presents challenges, it also provides an opportunity to strengthen how we work, deepen our contribution to national systems, and ensure that our impact is sustainable beyond the life of the project.

As we move into the next phase, our focus will be on translating these reflections into action. This includes reinforcing system-strengthening approaches, protecting critical humanitarian service delivery, strengthening local partnerships, and continuing to invest in evidence, learning, and communication of impact. The Reset Workshop has given us a clearer direction, but it will be through our collective efforts that this direction becomes meaningful in practice.

We will soon begin the annual planning process for the years ahead. This will be a critical moment to align country priorities, apply the learning generated so far, and ensure that our plans are realistic, focused, and responsive to both country contexts /priorities and the broader shifts in the development environment. I encourage all teams to remain engaged, collaborative, and solutions oriented as we navigate this transition together.

None of this progress would be possible without the dedication of our country teams, Member Associations, consortium partners, Ministries of Health, and all stakeholders who continue to champion inclusive SRHR. Your commitment to partnership, innovation, and learning remains the foundation of WISH 2's impact.

Thank you for your professionalism and hard work. As we close this quarter, I encourage you to take a moment to reflect on how far we have come together, and to stay focused on the opportunity ahead to shape a stronger, more adaptive programme.

I look forward to our continued collaboration, shared learning, and meaningful impact in the months ahead.

**Happy Reading!**  
Elias Girma, WISH 2 ESA Team Lead



## The Duchess of Edinburgh Visits Somalia

The Duchess of Edinburgh has visited Somalia, at the request of the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), to draw attention to the ongoing issue of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) and amplify the voices of survivors.

During her visit, Her Royal Highness toured a hospital in central Mogadishu, where she learned about the impact of a UK-supported sexual and reproductive health programme delivered through WISH 2. The programme, implemented by the International Rescue Committee, operates across 39 health facilities in regions affected by insecurity and displacement.

The Duchess received briefings on how the programme supports existing health services to provide care for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, while working to reduce stigma and fear associated with seeking support. She also met with survivors who shared their experiences, highlighting the impact of female genital mutilation, rape, and sexual assault, and the importance of access to safe, confidential, and quality services.

In addition, Her Royal Highness engaged with Somali organisations and local NGOs, who outlined the challenges of operating in a complex environment shaped by conflict, drought, and limited resources. Despite these constraints, grassroots organisations continue to play a critical role in supporting survivors and advocating for a more stable and resilient Somalia.

The visit underscored the importance of sustained investment in survivor-centred services and reinforced the role of WISH 2 in strengthening access to essential sexual and reproductive health services in fragile and humanitarian settings.

You can read more about the visit here: <https://www.royal.uk/news-and-activity/2026-02-25/the-duchess-of-edinburgh-visits-somalia-and-kenya>





## Strategic Reset: Aligning WISH 2 with a Changing Development Landscape

### 10–12 March 2026 | Nairobi, Kenya

In March, WISH 2 teams and partners came together in Nairobi for a three-day Strategic Reset and Realignment Workshop, creating space to reflect, realign, and move forward with clarity in a rapidly changing global context.

At a time of shifting development priorities and increasing pressure on health systems, the workshop focused on building a shared understanding of the UK's evolving development approach and aligning WISH 2's strategic direction accordingly.

The meeting brought together consortium partners, Country Managers, the WISH Hub team, representatives from Ministries of Health, and key stakeholders across participating countries. This diverse group ensured that discussions combined technical expertise with grounded country perspectives.

### Responding to a Changing Reality

Discussions were rooted in a set of interconnected challenges shaping SRHR programming across the region. Countries are navigating tightening funding landscapes, increasing rollback of SRHR policies and rights, and fragile and humanitarian contexts that continue to disrupt service delivery.

These shifts are redefining how programmes like WISH 2 operate and deliver impact.

### Aligning with Evolving Development Priorities

The workshop also unpacked the UK government's evolving development approach, highlighting four key shifts that are shaping future programming:

- From Donor to Investor: Expanding beyond traditional funding toward sustainable financing models
- From Service Delivery to System Support: Strengthening national systems for long-term sustainability
- From Grants to Expertise: Leveraging technical assistance, data, and policy engagement
- From International Intervention to Local Leadership: Prioritising country ownership and locally driven solutions

### Looking Ahead

The workshop marked an important moment for WISH 2, reinforcing a shared commitment to adapt, strengthen systems, and respond effectively to a complex and evolving environment. It also set the foundation for more coordinated, evidence-driven, and country-led approaches moving forward.



“This reset reflects a broader shift toward sustainability, local ownership, and smarter use of resources. It’s about ensuring programmes like WISH 2 continue to deliver impact in a changing global context.”

Dr. Sarah Goldsmith, Regional Health Adviser FCDO  
(Taken from the workshop)



“What stood out is the focus on working through national systems and building on what already exists. This is essential for continuity, especially in contexts where resources are limited and needs are growing.”

Representative of Ministry of Health - Zambia

### A Moment to Realign

The workshop was not just about understanding these shifts, but about translating them into action. Through open discussion and reflection, participants explored what these changes mean in practice for WISH 2 in Eastern and Southern Africa. There was strong alignment on the need to move toward more sustainable, system-focused, and locally led approaches, while continuing to deliver essential SRHR services, especially in fragile settings.

“From a project implementation perspective in Zambia, this workshop was valuable in helping us step back, reflect, and realign. The emphasis on sustainability and working through national systems is key to maintaining progress.”

WISH 2 Project Manager





## We Learned Together”: Acholla’s Journey to Family Planning in South Sudan

In Obbo Boma, Magwi County, conversations about family planning were once difficult for Acholla Viola\* (name changed). At 28 years old and a mother of three, she remembers how cultural expectations shaped decisions within her household, often making it hard for women to speak openly about their health and future.

“I fought a war with my husband right from the beginning of our marriage,” she says quietly. “When I suggested family planning, he thought it meant we would stop having children forever.”

Everything began to change during a visit to Magwi Primary Health Care Centre (PHCC). While seeking treatment for their sick children, Acholla and her husband joined a health talk led by RHASS midwife Achen Night, delivered through the WISH 2 project. The session focused on the benefits of spacing pregnancies and supporting families to make informed decisions together.

“Those health talks opened our ears and our eyes,” Acholla recalls. “My husband was still unsure, but I kept attending the sessions and bringing the conversations home.”

Over time, patience and continued dialogue made a difference. After the birth of their third child, the couple agreed to try family planning. Acholla began using pills and later decided, together with her husband, to move to an implant so they could give their youngest child time to grow before planning another pregnancy.

“I have used family planning for months without any problem,” she says. “Now we can focus on our children and our future.”

Like many families in South Sudan, Acholla’s household has faced economic challenges. She explains that spacing their children has helped them better manage daily needs and prioritise health and nutrition. The experience has also reshaped her husband’s perspective. Inspired by what they learned, he has started speaking with friends and colleagues about the benefits of family planning and shared decision-making.

“He promised to share our story so other families can find their own happy pathway,” Acholla adds.

Through the WISH 2 project, implemented by the Reproductive Health Association of South Sudan (RHASS), health education sessions and respectful counselling are helping families challenge misconceptions and make choices that support their wellbeing. For Acholla, the impact goes beyond services alone.

Stories like Acholla’s reflect the impact of integrated service delivery and community engagement under WISH2, where respectful counselling, inclusive dialogue, and accessible services are helping families make informed choices. By strengthening local health systems and creating safe spaces for learning, RHASS and its partners continue to support women, men, and young families across South Sudan to build healthier futures.



## Turning Influence into Impact: Male Champions Driving Change in Zambia

In many communities across Zambia, deeply rooted gender norms continue to shape women’s and adolescents’ access to SRH services, limiting decision-making and contributing to gender-based violence.

To address this, WISH 2 trained 96 male champions from Lusaka and Central Provinces, respected community figures including civic and traditional leaders, clergy, Neighbourhood Health Committee members, and Community Health Workers. The training, co-facilitated by JHCCP, PPAZ, and the Ministry of Health, used the Know, Do, Care approach to strengthen understanding of gender norms, GBV prevention, and SRH advocacy. Each participant developed a community action plan to guide immediate engagement.

The impact was quickly visible.

Male champions began leading discussions through churches, community meetings, and outreach platforms. In Luangwa District, one champion mobilised fellow religious leaders to address the link between SRH and GBV. As a result, the local health facility recorded zero GBV cases in December, compared to the usual average of at least one case per month.

Despite challenges such as limited transport and seasonal farming, champions adapted by integrating messaging into existing community spaces, ensuring continued engagement without additional costs. This experience shows that engaging trusted male leaders can drive meaningful change in social norms, strengthening community ownership and advancing GBV prevention in a practical and sustainable way.



## Engaging Men as Allies to Promote Gender Equality in Zambia

Male leaders and champions in Lusaka and Central Provinces promote SRH and GBV prevention following WISH2 training



As the champion reflected:  
“The training strengthened our knowledge on SGBV and gave us the confidence to engage communities in preventing GBV.”



# PARTNERS SPOTLIGHT

## 'We Decide Together, But Quietly...'

JHU

On a hot morning in Blue Nile, a small group gathered under a tree just outside an IDP settlement in Sudan. Among them was Hanan, a young mother of three, who had walked nearly an hour to attend. She listened more than she spoke at first, her hands folded tightly in her lap.

When the facilitator asked how decisions about family planning are made at home, the group hesitated. Then Hanan spoke softly.

"We decide together," she said. She paused, then added, "But quietly... so it doesn't look like I am deciding."

Her words stayed in the circle.

Across Sudan, in Red Sea, River Nile, and Blue Nile states, conversations like this unfolded during a series of small, carefully facilitated workshops. In places shaped by conflict, displacement, and uncertainty, people came together to talk about something deeply personal: how families make decisions about health, bodies, and futures.

The workshops brought together women like Hanan, but also men, young people, persons living with disabilities, community leaders, and health providers. Some had travelled from nearby towns, others from temporary settlements. Many had never been asked these questions before. Instead of being told what programs should look like, participants were invited to shape them.

They mapped their communities, described people like themselves, and walked through the everyday journeys of seeking care. They spoke about who influences decisions, who gets left out, and why. Slowly, patterns began to emerge.

In one group, a woman living with a disability described how she depends on others just to receive health information, let alone services.

"Sometimes," she said, "the message never reaches me."

For many, especially those displaced or living with disabilities, access itself is not just about services. It is about who speaks for you, who includes you, and whether you are seen at all.



Teams from the Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs, the Federal Ministry of Health, and Sudan Family Planning Association worked side by side, applying a human-centred design approach. It was not just about gathering insights, but about building a shared way of listening, adapting, and designing with communities rather than for them.

The journey was not easy. Moving across states required careful planning due to security risks. Time was limited. Some sessions lasted only a day. But even within those constraints, facilitators found ways to create safe spaces where people could speak honestly.

And they did.

What emerged is now shaping the next phase of the WISH 2 programme in Sudan. Messages and approaches are being adapted to reflect what people actually experience, not what is assumed. Efforts are being made to reach those who are often spoken about, but rarely heard.

Hanan's words still echo in that process

"We decide together... but quietly."

The challenge now is not just to hear voices like hers, but to create a world where they no longer have to be quiet.

## WISH 2's Adolescent Wellness Days Boost Youth Engagement in Zambia

IRC

Nimca Ahmed Ali is 27, a mother of six, living in Mogadishu. For years, her life moved from one pregnancy to the next, with little space in between. She had heard about family planning, but like many women around her, she was afraid. People said contraceptives could harm her health or affect her future.

Her husband saw how tired she had become. When her health started to decline, he gently encouraged her to visit De-Martini Hospital. At the clinic, Nimca met a provider who didn't rush her. Instead, she listened.

They talked through Nimca's fears, her health, and what she wanted for her family. Her husband was part of the conversation too. Together, they learned about different options, possible side effects, and what to expect. In Somalia, access to family planning services remains limited by widespread myths, misconceptions, and fear of side effects associated with modern contraceptives. These challenges are particularly acute in fragile urban settings, where women often experience closely spaced pregnancies with little opportunity for informed decision-making. For the first time, Nimca felt she understood.

She chose Implanon.

Months later, her life looks different. She feels stronger. Less anxious. More present for her children. She has time to rest, to care, to reconnect with her husband.

"I finally had time to breathe," she says.

Her journey is simple, but powerful: when women are given clear information, respect, and support, and when men are part of the conversation, fear can turn into confidence, and choice becomes real.



"I am grateful for my husband's support in helping me reach the health facility, and for the care and guidance of my healthcare provider, Sagal, who patiently explained my options. This support helped me make an informed decision about Child spacing, improve my health, strengthen our relationship, and give my family and children the attention they deserve"

Following method uptake, Nimca successfully delayed her next pregnancy, improving her physical health and emotional wellbeing. She reported feeling stronger, less anxious, and more able to care for her children while investing in her marital relationship. The supportive counseling process and her husband's involvement reinforced trust in health services and promoted positive attitudes toward FP.

Nimca now advocates for family planning in her community, encouraging other women to seek professional guidance and accurate information. Now, Nimca shares her experience with other women in her community, encouraging them to ask questions, seek real information, and make their own choices.

# PROJECT HIGHPOINTS

## IPPF Supports Regional Dialogue on SRHR Advocacy through FIGO Community of Practice

IPPF convened a regional workshop under the FIGO Community of Practice, in collaboration with the East, Central and Southern Africa College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology (ECSACOG), bringing together SRHR partners from across East, Central and Southern Africa to reflect on the evolving advocacy landscape and strengthen collective action.

The workshop created a platform for partners and members to share expertise, strengthen knowledge, and enhance advocacy activities to address reproductive and sexual health needs across the region, including access to safe abortion. Participants examined global, regional and national developments shaping SRHR, while sharing practical experiences, challenges, and promising approaches to advocacy. They explored how shifting political and funding environments are influencing SRHR programming and discussed ways to sustain momentum through stronger collaboration and coordinated engagement.

Key areas of discussion included sustainable financing for SRHR, stakeholder mapping, advocacy priorities linked to emerging global policy discussions, engagement opportunities around the FIGO/ECSACOG Congress, and strengthening organisational capacity through peer learning and shared expertise. The dialogue emphasised the importance of building aligned regional voices and reinforcing partnerships to advance rights-based reforms.

Looking ahead, participants highlighted the need for sustained government engagement, closer collaboration among SRHR organisations, and coordinated policy advocacy to protect progress and respond to emerging challenges. The workshop also recognised upcoming regional convenings, including the 9th RHNK Pan-African AYSRHR Conference, as important opportunities to deepen partnerships and amplify collective advocacy efforts.

Through convening platforms such as the FIGO Community of Practice, IPPF continues to support regional learning, strengthen alliances, and promote a unified approach to advancing inclusive and rights-based SRHR across Africa.



## Options Exits After Three Decades of Global Impact



Options Consultancy Services will conclude its role in the WISH 2 consortium on 31 March 2026, marking the end of more than three decades of global impact in strengthening health systems and advancing sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

Since its founding in 1992, Options has delivered programmes in over 60 countries and has been a key partner in the UK government's flagship WISH programme. Options Consultancy Services has been involved in the WISH programme since its earlier phase, WISH 1 (launched around 2018), and continued into WISH 2 (starting around 2024). Within WISH 2, Options provided strategic leadership and technical expertise, supporting health systems strengthening, policy engagement, and evidence-informed implementation across Eastern and Southern Africa.

Reflecting on its contribution, Julian Nyamupachitu, Regional MERL Lead for Options, said:

“Being part of WISH 2 has been an incredibly meaningful experience. We have worked closely with partners to generate and use evidence in ways that truly improve programmes and strengthen systems.”

As part of a carefully planned transition, the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) will assume responsibility for the technical areas previously led by Options. To ensure continuity, the Options ESA technical team will transition into IPPF from 1 April 2026.

Dr. Elias Girma, WISH 2 Project Lead, added:

“Options has been a valued partner in WISH 2, bringing strong technical leadership and a deep commitment to evidence and systems strengthening. IPPF will build on this solid foundation to sustain momentum and strengthen country-led approaches.”

This transition does not affect the scope or objectives of WISH 2 and reflects an ongoing commitment to sustainability, local leadership, and inclusive, high-quality SRHR services.

# PROJECT HIGHPOINTS

## Listening to Clients: How Feedback Turned into Better Care

On a busy outreach day at a health facility, a young woman paused before leaving and spoke quietly to the interviewer. She said the service had helped her, but she wished providers explained side effects more clearly. Her comment was simple, but it echoed across many facilities. These conversations became the heart of Client Exit Interviews (CEIs), helping programme teams see services through the eyes of the people they serve.

CEIs were conducted across most WISH 2 countries, covering a range of supported facilities. Field teams adapted data collection to align with outreach services and local access realities, ensuring that client perspectives were captured even in fragile and humanitarian settings. In Sudan, however, CEI data collection was not conducted due to ongoing conflict and access constraints that limited safe field implementation. The story of CEIs is not about a single facility or country. It reflects a quiet shift in how learning happens. By listening carefully and responding to what clients share, programmes move closer to delivering services that feel responsive and respectful. Client voices do not remain in reports; they shape decisions, strengthen provider practices, and help turn evidence into action across SRHR services.

Across ESA countries, CEIs evolved from a routine monitoring activity into a practical learning mechanism linking client voices to programme decision-making. By capturing real-time experiences from women, young people, and persons with disabilities, CEIs helped teams understand how services are perceived at facility level and where improvements are needed. Instead of remaining as data points in reports, client feedback became a direct feedback loop between communities, providers, and programme teams.

CEIs show that small, structured conversations with clients can shift how programmes learn and adapt. In order to turn feedback into action, WISH 2 countries are moving toward a model where evidence is generated with communities, not only about them, reinforcing quality, responsiveness, and sustainability across SRHR services.



“Every client voice matters. Through CEIs, we listen, learn what works and what doesn’t, and use that insight to improve the quality and responsiveness of SRHR services. Client feedback is not just data, it is a powerful tool for improving care.”  
Dome Jagalo, Research and Statistics Consultant, WISH 2



## IPPF Africa Welcomes Dr. Claudia Shilumani as Regional Director

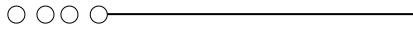
The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) Africa Region has appointed Dr. Claudia Shilumani as its new Regional Director.

Dr. Shilumani brings over 26 years of experience in global health, with leadership roles spanning Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas. She has worked with governments, international NGOs, the United Nations system, and major global health initiatives, including UNFPA, WHO, and the Global Fund. Her work has focused on expanding equitable access to health services and strengthening health systems.

She joins IPPF Africa at a critical moment for sexual and reproductive health and rights across the continent, where progress remains uneven and ongoing challenges continue to affect access to essential services.

The WISH 2 project team warmly welcomes Dr. Shilumani and looks forward to her leadership and support in advancing the project’s goals across the region.

Her appointment marks a new chapter for IPPF Africa, reinforcing its commitment to delivering impactful, locally led, and sustainable SRHR programming.



# NEXT ON THE CALEDAR

## Next on the Calendar (April - June 2026)

### Internal

### External

#### Apr - June 2026

#### Apr - June 2026

- April 2026 -WISH 2 Year 3 Planning
- May 2026 Youth Peer2Peer Learning/Webinar

- International Conference on Human Rights and Sexual Reproductive Health (ICHRSRH-26):**
  - o **Date:** 3 – 4 April 2026.
  - o **Location:** Istanbul, Turkey.
- World Health Summit (WHS) Regional Meeting 2026
  - Date: April 27–29, 2026
  - Venue: United Nations Office at Nairobi (UNON)
  - Focus: Addressing global health challenges, with significant focus on SRH and youth leaders.
- Multiple iterations of the International Conference on Sexual and Reproductive Health (ICSRH) are scheduled in Nairobi for those seeking local academic exchanges:
  - 13 April 2026: Nairobi, Kenya.
  - 3 June 2026: Nairobi, Kenya.
  - 10 June 2026: Nairobi, Kenya.
- 9th RHNK Pan-African Adolescent & Youth SRHR Scientific Conference:
  - o Date: 2 – 5 June 2026.
  - o Location: Sarova Whitesands Beach Resort & Spa, Mombasa, Kenya.

### Follow the Stories Behind the Impact

Behind every service delivered through WISH, there is a story of resilience, choice, and change. Across fragile and hard-to-reach settings, women, girls, young people, and marginalised communities navigate conflict, displacement, poverty, and inequality while striving to protect their health, rights, and futures.

We invite you to follow, read, and share these stories on the IPPF website, consortium partner websites, and across our social media platforms.

Stay connected. Follow the stories. Be part of the impact.

**IPPF:** <https://africa.ippf.org/our-approach/programmes/womens-integrated-sexual-health-wish-2>  
<https://africa.ippf.org/blogs/wish-2-client-stories-south-sudan-one-project-many-journeys>

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