

Sexual and Reproductive Health for Women in Africa: Adopting a Human Rights Based Approach to Overcome Cultural Barriers

Authors : Seraphina Bakta

Abstract : In many societies in Africa, it is a taboo to speak, let alone to practice or in any way to engage in matters relating to sexual and reproductive health. For instance, girls using contraceptives may be labeled prostitutes, and married women using family planning methods may be divorced on account that they are disobedient to their husbands as they do not want to bear children. As such, sexual and reproductive health as a right is still very far from reality to many men and women. To a large extent, the objections are mainly backed up in culture, which is deeply rooted in many African traditions. While such culture have both the good and bad side, the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights has identified the bad ones as ' harmful cultural practices. This paper argues that, while cultural norms may hinder the realization of human rights, adopting a human rights based approach to address harmful cultural practices is likely, the best approach to realizing women's rights to sexual and reproductive health rights in Africa.

Keywords : rights, culture, health, women

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