

RIGHTS vs REALITY: SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH (SRH)



Fifty-one out of fifty-four African countries have signed a ground-breaking legal framework known as the Maputo Protocol; forty-one have ratified it. The Maputo Protocol is a powerful instrument enshrining women's and girls' rights. Fifteen years after the Protocol was conceived, progress has been made, yet many women and girls are still deprived of their fundamental human rights.

i WHAT IS SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH?



Sexual and reproductive health means a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being in relation to sexuality and the reproductive system and processes.



The right to the highest attainable standard of health, including SRH, requires all women and girls to be able to control their health and fertility, free from coercion and with full and informed consent.

? WHAT RIGHTS ARE GUARANTEED BY THE MAPUTO PROTOCOL?

According to the Maputo Protocol, every woman has the right to:

DECIDE

whether to have children, and the number and spacing of children

CHOOSE

any method of contraception

ACCESS

family planning education and services

Her government has the responsibility to:

PROVIDE

adequate and accessible health education and services to all women and girls

STRENGTHEN

health services for pregnant women and new mothers

AUTHORISE

medical abortion in cases of rape, incest, and danger to the life of the mother or foetus

WHAT IS THE REALITY?



In West and Central Africa, more than

1 IN 4 GIRLS

are pregnant before the age of 18

In **2 OUT OF 5** African countries, women cannot access safe abortion under the conditions specified in the Maputo Protocol



1 IN 5

married African women have an unmet need for family planning



MORE THAN HALF

of maternal deaths worldwide occur in sub-Saharan Africa

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE?

All countries who committed to the Maputo Protocol must:

- **Develop** comprehensive legal frameworks on women and girls' SRH, that enable women and girls to exercise and enjoy their reproductive rights and freedoms with full consent and without restrictions such as those related to age or marital status.
- **Ensure** high-quality, integrated, and gender-sensitive SRH services for all women and girls, and develop in particular youth-friendly services aimed at meeting and promoting the needs and rights of adolescent girls and young women.
- **Provide** information and education on sexuality and SRH that is comprehensive and age-appropriate.
- **Train** health workers on non-discriminatory and gender-sensitive service provisions and access.
- **Ensure** girls who are pregnant can continue their education.
- **Decriminalise** abortion, and develop statutory law on access to safe abortion that emphasises a human rights perspective and is in line with the Maputo Protocol.
- **Involve** men and boys as change agents to promote and realise women and girls' reproductive rights.

The #RightByHer Campaign works across Africa to reduce the gap between rights and reality. At #RightByHer, we analyse the status of inequality, raise awareness, facilitate empowerment and together advocate for change.

This factsheet is based on the State of African Women Report. Full report and more info at rightbyher.org Oct. 2018

This project is funded by the European Union



A project implemented by:

