



# WOMEN'S REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

*A human rights issue*

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*“It is time for...the world to hear that it is no longer acceptable to discuss women’s rights as separate from human rights. Human rights are women’s rights and women’s rights are human rights.”*

*- Hilary Clinton, U.N. 4th World Conference, Beijing 1995*



# HUMAN RIGHTS

- The right to *life*
- The right to be *free from torture*
- The right to ***health***
- The right to *privacy*
- The right to ***education***
- Prohibition of discrimination

# VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS FOR WOMEN

- Denial of access to services that only women require or poor quality services
- Subjecting women's access to services to 3rd party authorisation
- Performance of procedures related to women's reproductive and sexual health without women's consent, including forced sterilisation, forced vaginal examination and forced abortion
- Forced genital mutilation and early marriage

- Why are they violated? Because of deeply ingrained societal values pertaining to women's sexuality.
- Patriarchal concepts of women's roles within the family; women often valued based on their ability to reproduce

WHEN MEN ARE  
OPPRESSED,  
IT'S A TRAGEDY.  
WHEN WOMEN  
ARE OPPRESSED,  
IT'S TRADITION.

*Letty Cottin Pogrebin*



# IMPLICATIONS OF VIOLATIONS

- Early marriage and pregnancy
- Repeated pregnancy spaced too closely together in the effort to produce male offspring because of preference for sons
- Women are often blamed for infertility and are ostracised and subjected to some form punishment



# A TIME FOR CHANGE

- Cairo, 1994: International Conference on Population and Development
- 179 countries gathered to discuss a variety of population issues including immigration, infant mortality, **birth control/family planning, education of women, protection from unsafe abortion services.**

They adopted a forward looking, 20 year programme of action that served as a comprehensive guide to people-centered developmental progress.



**The programme of action recognised that reproductive health and reproductive health rights as well as women's empowerment and gender equality are cornerstones of population and development programmes.**

- It recognised that the right to voluntarily choose whether or not to marry, whether or not to establish a family, the right to decide on the number, timing and spacing of children, the right to have access to the information and means needed to exercise voluntary choices, the right to the highest attainable standard of health are human rights.
- They are also rights that women and young women in particular are unable to access.

# THE RIGHT TO SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

- CEDAW recognises the right of women to sexual and reproductive health and as a result the governing state is obligated to *RESPECT, PROTECT & FULFIL* those rights.

*“When women are healthy,  
educated and can fully  
participate in society, they  
trigger progress in their  
family, community and  
nations.”*

Dr Babatunde Osetimehin,  
Executive Director UNFPA



# FAMILY PLANNING

- It is central to gender equality and women's empowerment and is a key factor in reducing poverty.
- Access to safe, voluntary family planning is a human right
- Yet 225 million women who want to avoid pregnancy are not using safe and effective family planning methods for reasons ranging from **lack of access to information or services** to **lack of support from their partners or communities**

## *Family Planning ..... SAVES LIVES*

- Contraceptives prevent unplanned pregnancies, reduce the number of abortions and lower the incidence of death and disability related to complications of pregnancy and childbirth.
- Also, when used correctly & consistently, male and female condoms provide dual protection against both unintended pregnancy and STIs, including HIV.



- If all women with an unmet need for contraceptives were able to use modern methods, an additional 24 million abortions (14 million of which would be unsafe), 6million miscarriages, 70000 maternal deaths and 500000 infant deaths would be prevented.
- Increasing access to modern contraceptives among adolescent girls is a crucial starting point for improving their long term health. It is is also essential for improving maternal and newborn health.
- In low and middle income countries, complications from pregnancy and childbirth are leading killers of adolescent girls (15-19 y.o.). Their babies also face a higher risk of dying than the babies of older women.

## *Family Planning ..... EMPOWERS WOMEN*

- When women and couples are empowered to plan whether and when to have children, women are better enabled to complete their education and their earning power is improved
- Women's autonomy within their households is increased
- All together this strengthens their economic security and well being and that of their families



Cumulatively, these benefits contribute to poverty reduction and development.

## *Family Planning...brings ECONOMIC BENEFITS*

- For every \$1 invested in contraception, the cost of pregnancy-related care is reduced by \$1.47
- The lifetime opportunity cost related to adolescent pregnancy ranges from 1% of annual GDP in a large country such as China to 30% of annual GDP in a small economy such as Uganda.
- If adolescent girls in Brazil and India were able to wait until their early twenties to have children; the increased economic productivity would equal more than \$3.5 billion and \$7.7 billion, respectively.

- A measure of the annual income a young mother misses out on over her lifetime.
- Family planning can also help countries realize a 'demographic dividend'; a boost in economic productivity that occurs when there are growing numbers of people in the workforce and falling numbers of dependents.
- In 2014, UNFPA delivered a year's worth of contraception and averted an estimated 29,000 maternal deaths, 10.7 million unintended pregnancies, 3.3 million unsafe abortions and 174,000 child deaths.

# IMPORTANCE OF REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS

1. Most maternal and newborn deaths could be prevented by improved access to reproductive health services and specialised care.
2. Family planning offer choice and opportunity for women to make informed decisions and have more control over their lives.
3. Enabling young women to avoid pregnancy too early in life, when they are at much greater risk of complications, reduces maternal and child deaths.
4. Better spacing of births reduces child mortality and improves maternal health.
5. To prevent HIV and AIDS through sexual and reproductive health information and services.

Therefore upholding women's rights to sexual and reproductive health is important.

WHEN DO YOU  
KNOW A WOMAN IS  
EMPOWERED?

WHEN SHE CAN MAKE  
HER OWN DECISION  
ABOUT, IF AND WHEN,  
SHE HAS CHILDREN.

ACCESS TO FAMILY PLANNING MASSIVELY  
BOOSTS WOMEN'S CHANCES OF  
SURVIVING PREGNANCY.



UK

CONTRACEPTION PREVALENCE RATE 86%



CHAD

CONTRACEPTION PREVALENCE RATE 3%

# IN CONCLUSION...

- Women's rights are human rights
- Still 215 million women in developing countries lack access to effective family planning and are not able to exercise their reproductive rights
- Too many women give birth too young, too often or with too little time between pregnancies to survive; everyday 1,000 women die giving life, 1 every 90 seconds. Last year it was estimated that 5.8 million newborns would die before their 1st birthday. These tragedies leave gaping holes in families, diminish the prospects of the surviving children and weaken communities.
- Improving sexual and reproductive health will save and improve lives, encourage gender equality, stabilise population growth, reduce poverty and create opportunities for economic growth.

- Women have more at stake in fertility control than anyone else.
- Contraceptives are meant to be used by women to empower themselves by maximizing their choices, and controlling their fertility, their sexuality, their health and thus their lives

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!



# REFERENCE

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