

Reproductive Health

Background

Over the past few years, governments have made a number of powerful commitments that promote the fulfillment of the right to sexual and reproductive health. In particular, Sudan has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Moreover, four of the eight goals depend crucially on the availability and use of sexual and reproductive health services and information: to reduce child mortality, to promote gender equality and empower women, to combat HIV and AIDS and to improve maternal health, with two targets, reduction of maternal mortality ratio and achieving universal access to reproductive health.

The critical importance of reproductive health to development has been acknowledged at the highest level. At the 2005 World Summit, world leaders added universal access to reproductive health as a target in Millennium Development Goals framework. UNFPA is fully committed to mobilizing support and scaling up efforts to make reproductive health for all a reality by 2015.

Quick Facts:

According to the Sudan Household Health Survey (SHHS) of 2006, the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) in North Sudan is 638 deaths per 100,000 live births and the Neonatal Mortality Rate (NMR) is 36 per 1,000 live births. Moreover, for every woman who dies, approximately 20 more suffer long-lasting injuries, or disabilities such as obstetric fistula.

At present, Sudan's progress is insufficient to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 unless there is rapid investment to support Reproductive Health (RH) care provision. The most critical interventions for safe motherhood are to ensure that every pregnant woman will have access to a skilled (trained) attendant at birth and emergency obstetric and neonatal care services

UNFPA supports a gender- and rights-based approach to reproductive and sexual health, one that empowers women throughout their lives. Reproductive rights become tangible, however, only when reproductive health services that offer a high quality of care

are made widely available. Availability includes both affordability and convenience, which generally implies a range of services under one roof. Reproductive health encompasses key areas of the UNFPA vision – that every child is wanted; every birth is safe, every young person is free of HIV and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect. Adolescent reproductive health is also an important focus of UNFPA programming.

International Law

The human rights critical to the realization of SRH contained in the ICESCR include:

Articles 2 and 3: the rights to equality and non-discrimination;

Articles 11 and 12: the rights to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (including SRH) and social security;

Article 13: the right to education

Article 10: the right to protection of the family and children

Article 15: and the right to benefit from scientific progress





In order to make universal access to sexual and reproductive health a reality, it is essential to focus on gender equality and women's empowerment. Gender equality should be a cross-cutting theme in all reproductive health plans and programmes,

Consequently, promoting sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights is inextricably tied to the promotion and protection of many other human rights. Sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights therefore, more than anything else, highlight the indivisibility, interdependence and interrelatedness of human rights. Reproductive rights derive from the recognition of the basic right of all individuals and couples to make decisions in their reproductive lives free of any form of discrimination, coercion or violence. As a result, they include many of the rights listed in the ICPD PoA.

Legal Grounding

The definition of sexual and reproductive health, as reflected in international human rights law and political consensus documents, is predicated on the realization of a range of human rights: civil, political, economic, social and cultural.

The International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action (ICPD PoA) articulated and affirmed the idea that reproductive rights embrace rights that have been established in national laws and earlier international human rights documents and other consensus documents. In the field of SRH, programs designed to improve SRH are more successful when they promote the underlying rights such as the rights to non-discrimination, information, participation, and association, free and informed decision making to consent and to dissent.

To comply with international human rights standards, SRH services have to be available, accessible, acceptable and of high quality. Availability means that sexual and reproductive health and health-care facilities, goods and services, as well as programmes, should be available in sufficient quantity within the country. These goods and services include, for example, safe and potable drinking water and adequate sanitation facilities; hospitals, clinics and other health-related buildings; trained medical and professional personnel receiving domestically competitive salaries; and essential drugs (including antiretroviral therapy). Acceptability implies that facilities, goods and services must be respectful of medical ethics and culturally appropriate, i.e. respectful of the culture of individuals, minorities, peoples and communities, sensitive to gender and life-cycle requirements, as well as designed to respect confidentiality and improve the health status of those concerned.. In addition, as well as being culturally acceptable, sexual and reproductive health facilities, goods and services must also be scientifically and medically appropriate and of good quality. This requires, for example, skilled medical personnel, scientifically approved and unexpired drugs and hospital equipment, safe and potable water and adequate sanitation.

Possible Constitutional Article/s

In view of the above, the constitution should have articles to demonstrate the following:

The State recognizes that all persons residing in the country have the right to the highest standard of mental and physical health. This includes the right to sexual and reproductive health.

The right to sexual and reproductive health includes the right to available, accessible, acceptable and of good quality of information and services. In the development of laws, policies and programmes, special attention should be paid to the specific needs and rights of persons with disabilities, youth, women, refugees, minorities and any marginalized group.