

'I kept having costly medical tests and performing rituals because of my childlessness...'

(Chameli, 22, married for two years without conceiving)

'Day in and day out I am verbally and physically abused by my husband and in - laws for not bringing in enough dowry ... There is nothing I can do about it.'

(Jamna, 19, bride of 6 months)

'My manhood will be damaged if I have a vasectomy.'

(Vishnu, 28, teacher, father of four children)

'My uncle sold me for Rs. 500 four years ago...'

(Banani, 18, sex worker with a sexually transmitted disease)

'I cried and pleaded with my family before going for sex selection tests ... I was pregnant with my third child ...'

(Woman panchayat member; to avoid being disqualified under the two - child norm)



“We must be courageous in speaking out on the issues that concern us: we must not bend under the weight of spurious arguments invoking culture or traditional values... the function of culture and tradition is to provide a framework for human well - being.”

Dr. Nafis Sadiq, Ex-Executive Director, UNFPA



United Nations Population Fund



Ministry of Health & Family welfare
Government of India



NATIONAL
HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMISSION

Uphold My Reproductive Rights

To be born

To be safe

and

To choose

with dignity



Good health is essential to leading a productive and fulfilling life, and the right of all women to control all aspects of their health, in particular their own fertility, is basic to empowerment. Neglect of women's reproductive rights severely limits their opportunities in public and private life, including opportunities for education, economic and political empowerment. The ability of women to control their own fertility forms an important basis for the enjoyment of other rights. Governments should, therefore, pursue social, human development, education and employment policies to eliminate poverty among women in order to reduce their susceptibility to ill health and improve their own health.

Beijing Platform for Action, 1995

The Indian Scenario

- Nearly one lakh women die from pregnancy related causes each year
- A fifth of all pregnancies are unplanned
- Of the 4 million infected by HIV/AIDS nearly one million are women
- Over a third of these women are adolescents

Rights Based Approach...

Women have the right to the enjoyment of highest attainable standards of health, where health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being. It includes their right to make decisions concerning reproduction free of discrimination, coercion and violence and as expressed in human rights documents. This right must be secured throughout their life cycle in equality with men. The promotion of the responsible exercise of these rights should be the fundamental basis for government and community-sponsored policies and programmes

Beijing Platform for Action, 1995

Enabling Human Rights Environment

- Establish a broad human rights approach which creates the context for the exercise of sexual and reproductive rights
- Put in place information and services that meet the full range of sexual and reproductive health needs in an atmosphere that fosters safety, non-discrimination, privacy and confidentiality

Empowerment of Women

- Promote the advancement of women's empowerment and rights as an integral part of political, economic, social and cultural development
- Encourage and strengthen women's grass-roots, community based groups
- Promote men's understanding of their roles and responsibilities to ensure that women's rights and empowerment is sustained

The broad components of reproductive health care are :

- Accessibility to good quality family planning services, counselling to suit the reproductive needs of individuals and couples, and prevention of unwanted pregnancy
- Provision of safe motherhood services and infant care during and after pregnancy
- Provision of services related to infertility
- Prevention and management of the consequences of unsafe abortion
- Prevention and management of reproductive disorders, including sexually transmitted disease, and prevention of HIV/AIDS
- Empowering adolescents by giving them reproductive and sexual health information and education in a comprehensive and sensitive way
- Ensure regular and uninterrupted availability of contraceptives, and quality family planning services, including counselling to individuals and couples

Reproductive Rights and the Media

India has a large and vibrant media network that can be used effectively to disseminate information on Reproductive Rights. Sensitizing representatives of the media to Reproductive Rights will result in a paradigm shift in the way the Rights are perceived in India, and there by create an active forum for debate, discussion and progress.

Legal Support and Safeguards

Fostering gender equality and further reproductive rights requires :

- Effective enforcement of laws relating to reproductive rights, such as the Child Marriage Restraint Act (1978) and the Prenatal Diagnostic Techniques Act (1994)
- Sensitization of law enforcement agencies
- Constant review and revision of existing laws from a gender perspective
- Both government and civil institutions must become more accountable for protecting rights
- Documentation of the violation of rights
- Education in the field of human rights and alliances between concerned institutions



The Right to Equality in Reproductive Decisions

The Right...

Everyone has the right to choose whether and when to marry and start a family. Marriage should be with the full, free and informed consent of both individuals. Everyone should have the right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children.

The Reality...

The legal age for marriage is 18 yrs. Two third of girls marry below the age of 18. This deprives girls of their childhood and forces them into a role for which they are biologically and psychologically unprepared.

The Remedy...

Design and implement policies and programmes that empower and enable women to exercise their choices.

The Right to Sexual and Reproductive Security

The Right...

Everyone has the right to a life free of gender based violence. Everyone has the right to protection of physical and mental integrity.

The Reality...

Women are subject to violence in many forms: rape, sexual harassment, incest, female foeticide, pre - natal sex selection, trafficking, prostitution and dowry-related domestic violence. Most of these go unreported due to social stigma, lack of support and an insensitive criminal justice system.

The Remedy...

Create fora to educate communities, especially women, on their rights regarding sexual security and provide sensitive, fair, and early redressal through the legal system.

Adolescent Reproductive Health and Rights

Adolescence is an age where girls and boys undergo physical and emotional changes. They acquire knowledge, values and skills that benefit them later in life. However, due to a lack of information, education, and counselling, many fall prey to problems such as trafficking, forced marriages,

Know your Reproductive Rights

The Right to Reproductive and Sexual Health Services

The Right...

Everyone has the right to safe and affordable methods of family planning, safe motherhood, management of gynecological problems, infertility, prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted diseases, and prevention of HIV/AIDS.

The Reality...

Nearly one lakh women die each year during child-birth. A fifth of these pregnancies are unwanted. The high incidence of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS reflects the practice of unsafe sex. Those living with HIV/AIDS have to live not only with the disease, but also the stigma that goes with it. This is especially true for women and indicates that often women are not involved in the decision making process.

The Remedy...

Reproductive and sexual health information and services should be available to everyone at an acceptable level of quality, consistent with the dignity of the client.

The Right of Access to Information and Education

The Right...

Everyone has the right to access information regarding sexual and reproductive issues on the basis of which to make informed decisions. The information needs to be provided in a manner that is clear, complete and sensitive.

The Reality...

Sixty percent of girls drop out of school at the elementary level. Socio-economic factors, cultural conditions and failure to guarantee safety of girls once they reach adolescence are impediments in their education. Reservations to providing family life education to boys and girls exposes them, especially girls, to unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortion, sexually transmitted diseases, and HIV.

The Remedy...

Provide sensitive reproductive and sexual health related information and education to men and women.

unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortion, and sexual diseases including HIV/AIDS. It is imperative to recognize that adolescence and sexuality are integrally linked. Any programme that deals with reproductive rights must keep adolescents in focus.

