

Lessons learnt form the implementation of the ministerial order on abortion in Rwanda

Background

Rwanda is dedicated to lowering unsafe abortion rates in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. As a signatory to international agreements, including the Maputo Protocol, Rwanda guarantees women the right to safe abortion under four legal grounds. To ensure effective implementation, the country has issued a ministerial order allowing medical doctors to perform abortions under five legal grounds at the Hospital or a polyclinic health setting.

Objectives

- To raise the community awareness on the Ministerial order on safe abortion
- To increase demand and Access to safe abortion services among eligible women and girls
- To strengthen the capacity of healthcare providers on the medical professional liability insurance law determining their responsibilities and the patients' rights.

Methods

Following the passing of the ministerial order on abortion by the cabinet, a coalition SRHR Civil Society organisations (CSOs) organized several outreach activities including radio programs, social media campaigns, and community outreach campaigns targeting potential service users(Teen mothers, and female sex-workers), stakeholders(local leaders, healthcare providers, parents of teen mothers and women opinion leaders) as well as law enforcement personnel across the country to disseminate the Ministerial order on safe abortion.

Results

The coalition reached 11781 people in all the 30 districts of Rwanda of which 25.1% were stakeholders, 25% were teen mothers, 25% sex workers , and other remaining 25% were parents of teen mothers, and over a million of people on social media. As a result, Before the dissemination of the Ministerial order on safe abortion only 7 cases were reported, whereas following the dissemination, there has been an exponential increase of women receiving abortion services by **29357% from 7 cases as of 2018 to 2,062 between 2020 and 2022.**

Conclusion

There are still persisting gaps that hamper full access to safe abortion services including; the only medical doctor requirement for performing abortion; the parental consent for minors; the referral requirement for those using national insurance scheme. Therefore, continued advocacy and policy actions are needed to remove persistent existing barriers to make a reality the right to safe abortion to all eligible women and girls.