

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**CEDAW SHADOW
REPORT ON
RWANDA'S SEXUAL
AND REPRODUCTIVE
HEALTH AND RIGHTS
(SRHR)**

CENTER *for*
REPRODUCTIVE
RIGHTS
AFRICA

Introduction

This summary report is a collaborative submission by the Center for Reproductive Rights (the Center), the Health Development Initiative (HDI), and the Great Lakes Initiative for Human Rights and Development (GLIHD) to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). It provides key highlights of the supplementary information on Rwanda's compliance with its obligations under the CEDAW Convention, focusing on the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of women and girls (SRHR).

Key SRHR Issues

Highlights to the CEDAW

Inadequate Access to Maternal Health Services:

- Despite improvements, Rwanda's maternal mortality ratio (MMR) remains high at 203 deaths per 100,000 live births, far from the SDG target of less than 70 by 2030.
- Challenges include insufficient antenatal and postnatal care, with only 47% of women attending the recommended four antenatal visits.
- Barriers: lack of qualified personnel, inadequate facilities, high costs, and loss of income for seeking health services.

Lack of Access to Contraceptive Services:

- Contraceptive use among married women is 64%, but significantly lower among unmarried sexually active women (50%) and girls aged 15-19 (18%).
- High unmet need for contraception among sexually active unmarried women (37%), with even higher rates among young unmarried women (59.1% for 15-19 years).
- Barriers include conflicting legal provisions, social stigma, and limited access to services due to the Catholic Church's dominance in healthcare provision.

Lack of Access to Safe Abortion:

- High rates of unsafe abortions, with 28 per 1,000 pregnancies ending in abortion, contribute to 8% of maternal mortality.
- Legal barriers: restrictive laws requiring abortions to be performed by doctors and parental consent for minors, inadequate medical personnel, and criminalization of abortion leading to imprisonment.

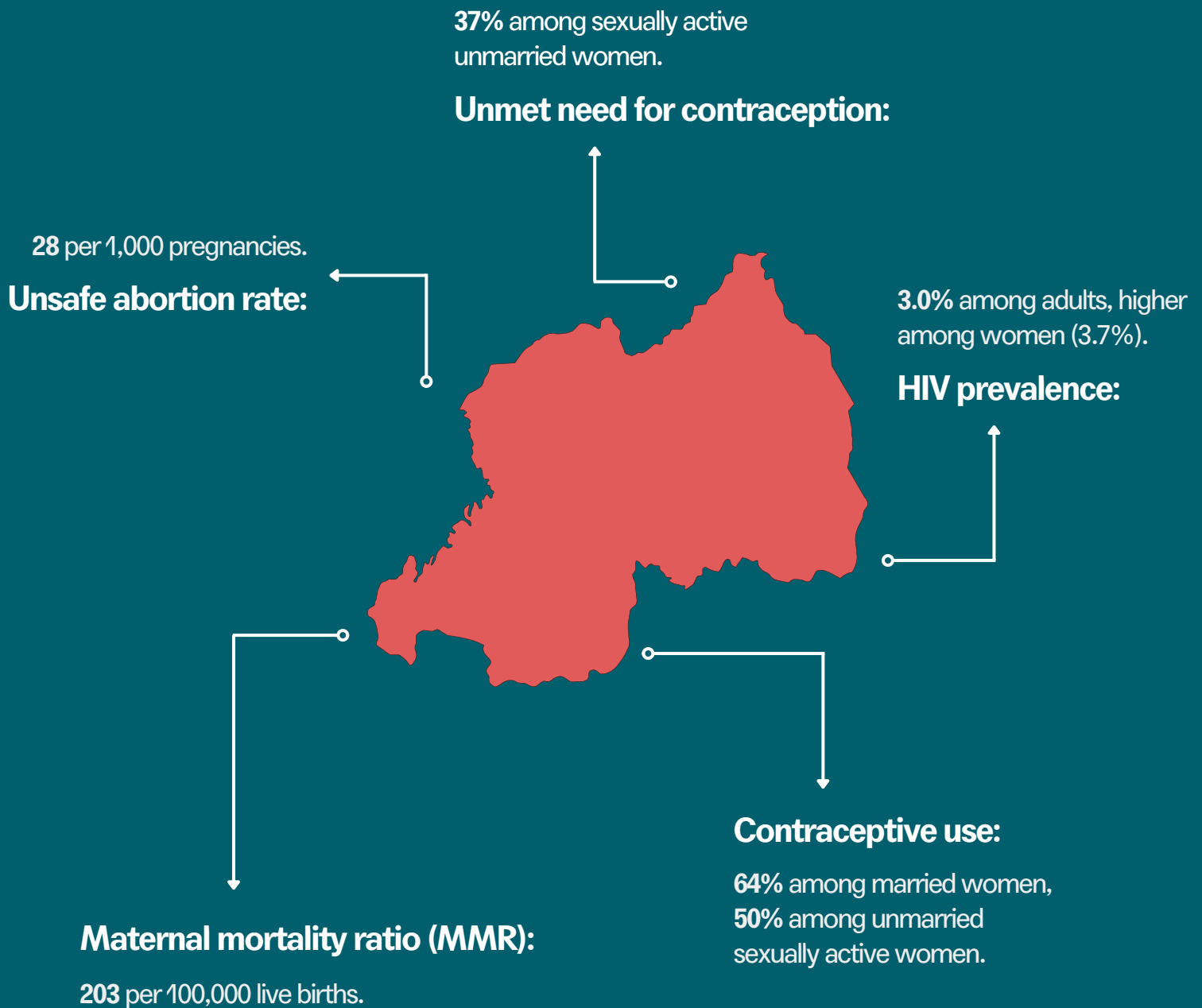
Mandatory HIV Testing:

- High prevalence of HIV among adults (3.0%), with more women (3.7%) than men (2.2%) affected.
- Concerns over mandatory HIV testing infringing on rights to autonomy, privacy, and informed consent due to ambiguous legal provisions.

Disparity in Geographic Distribution of Health Human Resources:

- Significant disparities in the distribution of healthcare professionals, with rural areas severely underserved.
- Challenges in retaining skilled health professionals due to low salaries and limited career advancement opportunities.

Key Statistics



Recommendations

Increase Awareness Campaigns:

Promote comprehensive SRHR, maternal health care, contraception, and safe abortion services.

Address Preventable Maternal Mortality:

Ensure access to skilled care, reduce disparities in health resource distribution, and retain health professionals.

Adopt Legislation to Lower Age of Consent for Contraception:

Allow minors aged 15 and above to access contraceptives with considerations for evolving capacity.

Legal Reforms for Adolescent Healthcare:

Enable minors to access healthcare services without parental consent.

Enable minors to access healthcare services without parental consent.

Train and authorize nurses and midwives to offer abortion services in line with WHO guidelines.

Release Imprisoned Women for Abortion-related Offences:

Implement presidential pardons for those imprisoned on abortion charges.

Clarify Mandatory HIV Testing Regulations:

Define "competent organs" and circumstances for mandatory HIV testing in the law.

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