

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS OF DEAF WOMEN AND GIRLS IN UGANDA

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Abstract

This study sought to examine sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) of deaf women and girls in Mbale District in Uganda. Specifically, the study sought to i) establish the lived experiences of deaf women and girls in accessing SRHR; ii) examine the challenges faced by deaf women and girls in accessing SRHR; and iii) establish the contribution of the Civil Society Organisations and the government towards implementing SRHR of deaf women and girls in Mbale. The study used a qualitative approach involving focus group discussions, key informant interviews and document analysis. It integrated the deaf epistemology and adapted data collection instruments to local needs of deaf women and girls.

The findings from the study revealed low levels of knowledge on SRHR and contraceptive use among deaf women and girls due to a lack of messages tailored to their linguistic needs; high unwanted pregnancies among deaf women and girls due to lack of sexual education especially on safe sex; and lack of appropriate maternal health programs and contraceptive messages tailored to the needs of deaf women and girls. While there were specific legal frameworks showing contribution of the government and CSOs toward access of SRHR, these were inadequate because they were not tailored toward the deaf women and girls. Conclusively, the study shows that deaf women and girls do not enjoy SRHR because they do not have to access to the information necessary information. The study recommends the adaptation of Deaf Epistemology that relies heavily on personal testimonies and personal lived experiences of deaf people. Adopting this paradigm can aid in developing policies and practices that can improve the quality of health care services and education for deaf women and girls.