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## **Access to emergency contraception and safe abortion services for survivors of rape and defilement in sub-Saharan Africa: A regional overview**

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# Access to Emergency Contraception and Safe Abortion Services for Survivors of Rape and Defilement in sub-Saharan Africa: A Regional Overview

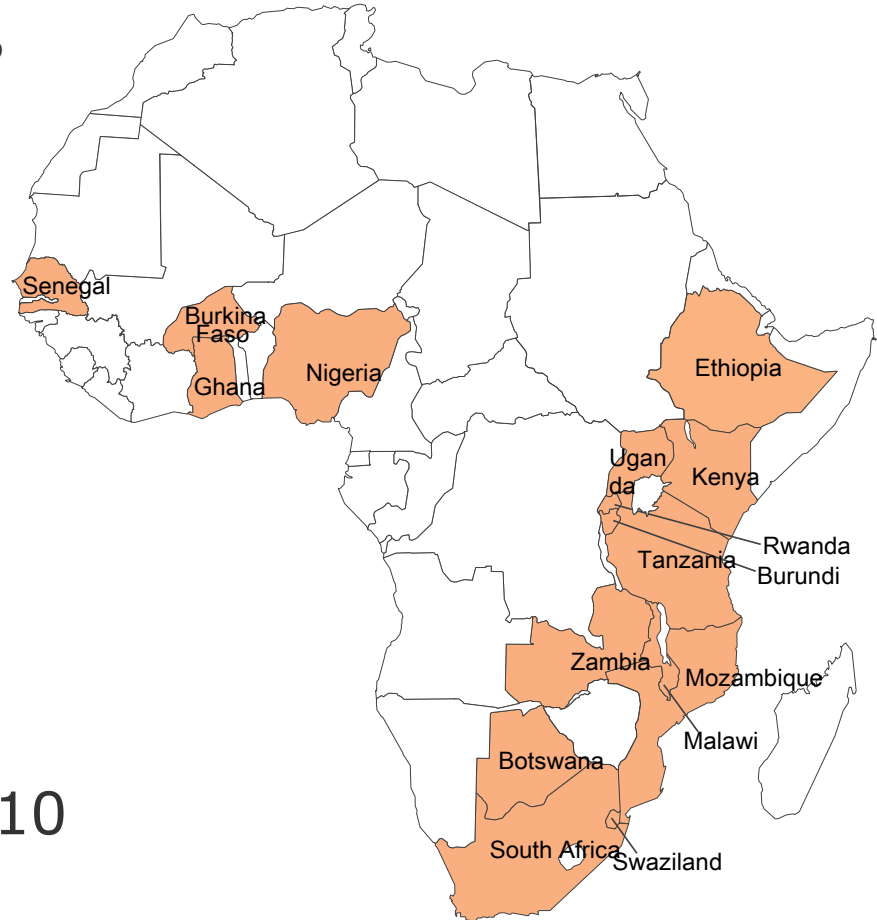
**Jill Thompson, Chi-Chi Undie and Ian Askew**

SVRI FORUM 2013: Evidence into action  
14 – 17 October, Bangkok, Thailand



# Study methods and countries

- 16 countries purposively selected
  - PC regional network or STEP UP projects
  - PC offices
  - Revising policies/guidelines
- Desk review:
  - ✓ Published and grey literature
  - ✓ Global/regional instruments
  - ✓ National legislation
  - ✓ National policies and guidelines/protocols
- Key informant interviews in 10 countries



# International Human Rights instruments

Maputo Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2005):

*"Protect the reproductive rights of women by authorising medical abortion in cases of sexual assault, rape, incest..." Article 14(2)(c).*

SADC Protocol on Gender and Development (2008)

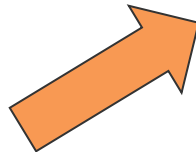
*"State parties shall, by 2015, ensure that laws on gender based violence...shall include emergency contraception..." Article 20, 2(a)*

57th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (2013):

*"States must address all health consequences...of violence against women and girls by providing accessible health-care services that are responsive to trauma and include...emergency contraception, safe abortion **where such services are permitted by national law, ...**" (Agreed Conclusions 22 and 34(iii))*

# WHO guidelines on EC and abortion for SV response

1. "Guidelines for Medico-legal Care for Victims of Sexual Violence" (2003)
2. "Clinical management of rape survivors: developing protocols for use with refugees and internally displaced persons" (2004)
3. "Safe Abortion: technical and policy guidance for health systems"(2012)
4. "Responding to Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence Against Women: WHO clinical and policy guidelines" (2013)



## Recommendation 14

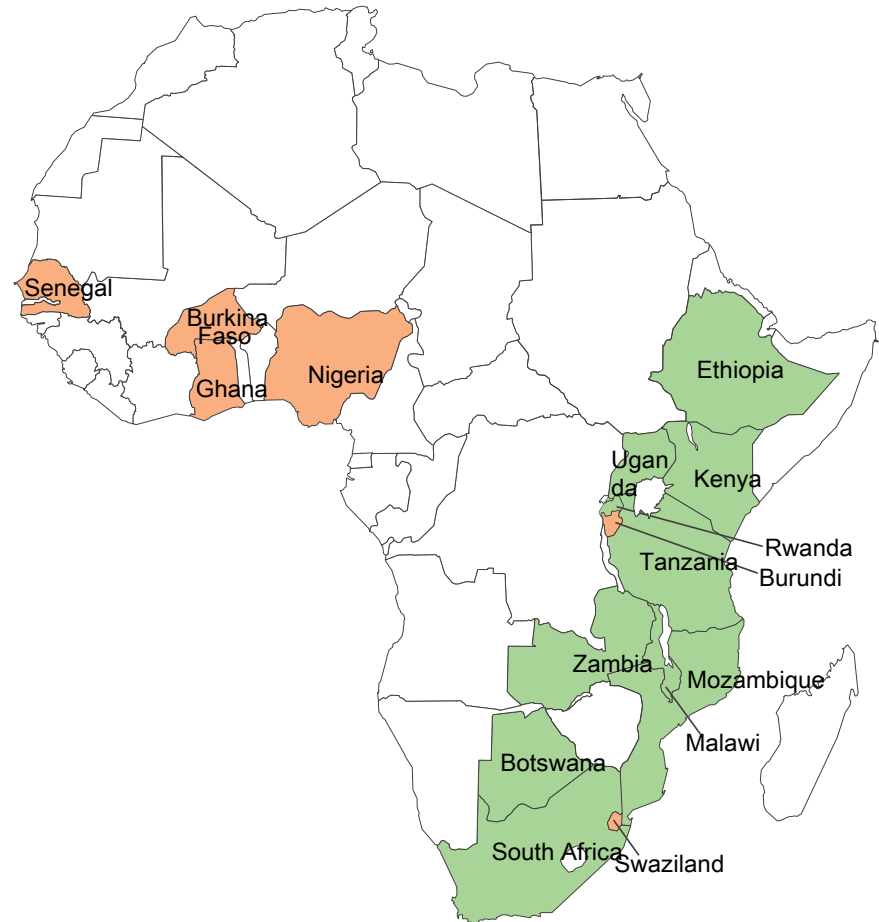
*If a woman presents after the time required for EC (5 days), EC fails, or the woman is pregnant as a result of rape, she should be offered safe abortion, in accordance with national law.*

### Remarks

*Where abortion is not permitted, other options such as adoption should be explored with the survivor*

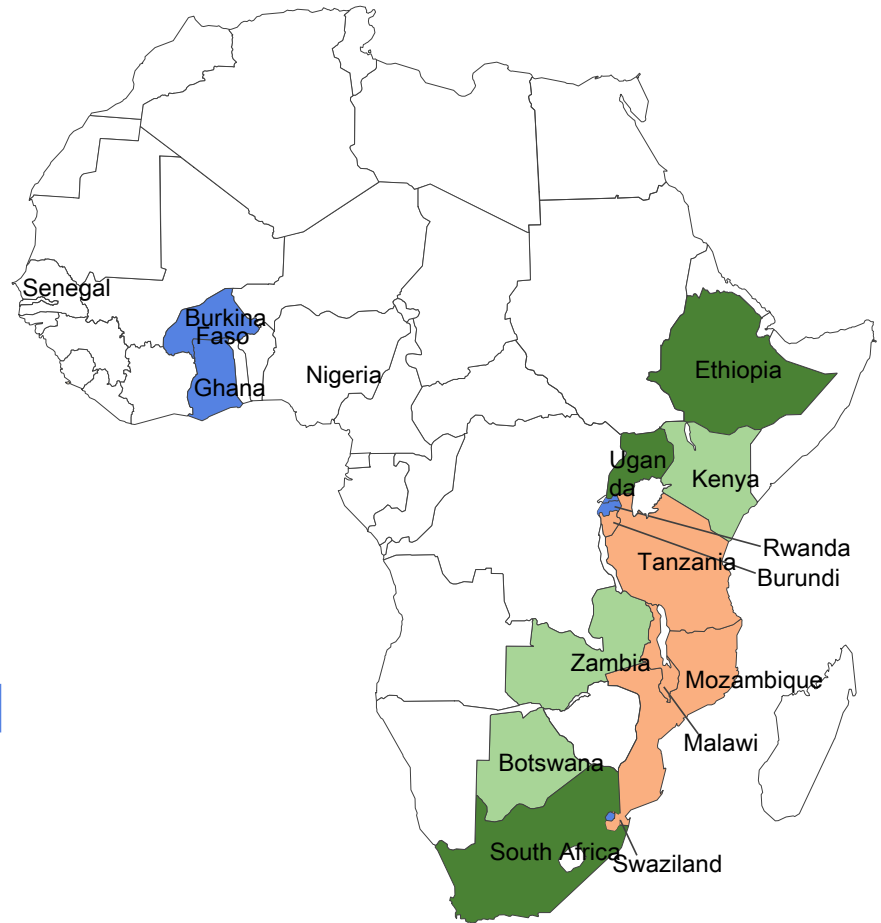
# What is available on EC in SV guidelines?

- 10 / 16 countries have SV guidelines
- Pregnancy prevention and EC in all 10 SV guidelines
- EC for SV also in some FP/RH guidelines, usually implicitly, sometimes explicitly
- Generally follows WHO 2003 guidance, but not always updated



# What guidance is available on abortion after rape?

- Abortion mentioned in SV guidelines
- Abortion mentioned in SV guidelines, but legal status left unclear
- SV guidelines do not explicitly address abortion
- Abortion after rape allowed in abortion guidance or legislation



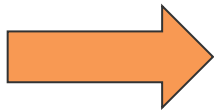
# Pregnancy and abortion guidance

- Latest WHO guidance does not mention pregnancy testing, during or after post-rape care
- Several national guidelines include pregnancy testing as part of SV, with follow-up testing at 2-6 weeks and 3 months
- Variable and somewhat vague guidance on pregnancy counseling
- Some countries require certified evidence for abortion from rape
- No evidence on rates of termination of rape-induced pregnancies



# Conclusions

- ✓ EC provision recommended in all SV guidelines
  - But variable detail and accuracy
- ✓ Pregnancy testing recommended, although with variable timing
- ✓ Pregnancy counseling vague and variable
- ✓ Abortion guidance confusing or deliberately vague



Countries would benefit from support to update and consolidate guidance