
Reproductive Health

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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

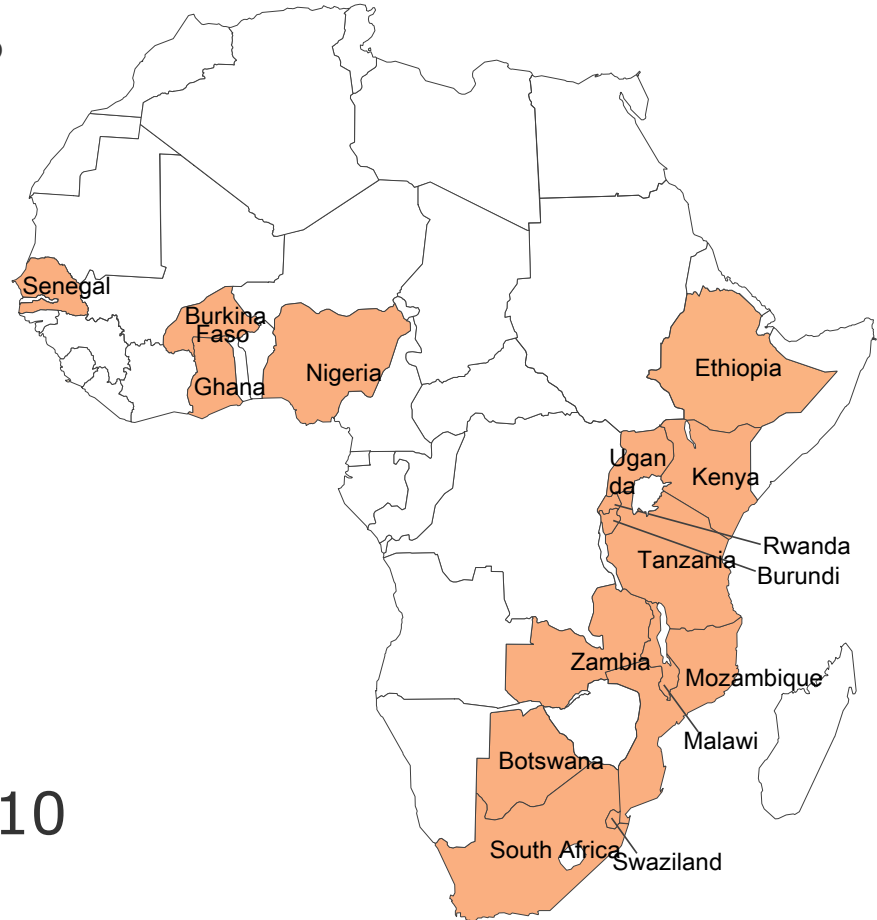
Jill Thompson, Chi-Chi Undie and Ian Askew

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)

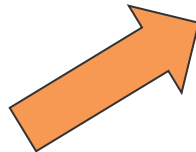
"State parties shall, by 2015, ensure that laws on gender based violence...shall include emergency contraception..." Article 20, 2(a)

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

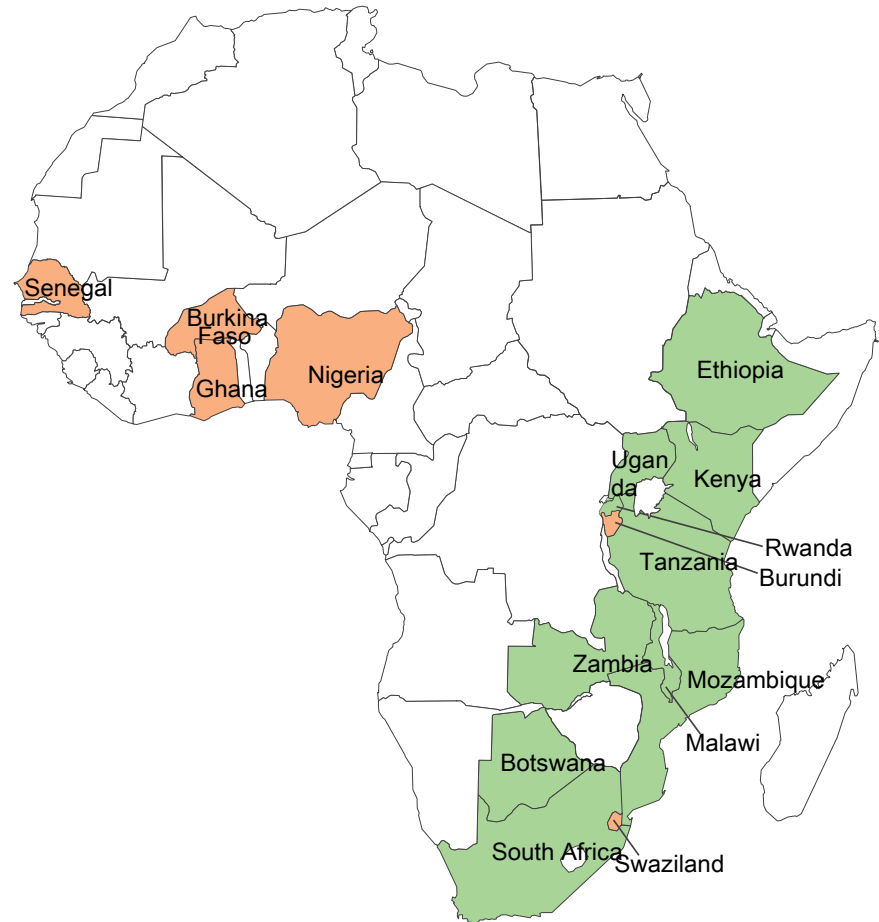
If a woman presents after the time required for EC (5 days), EC fails, or the woman is pregnant as a result of rape, she should be offered safe abortion, in accordance with national law.

Remarks

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

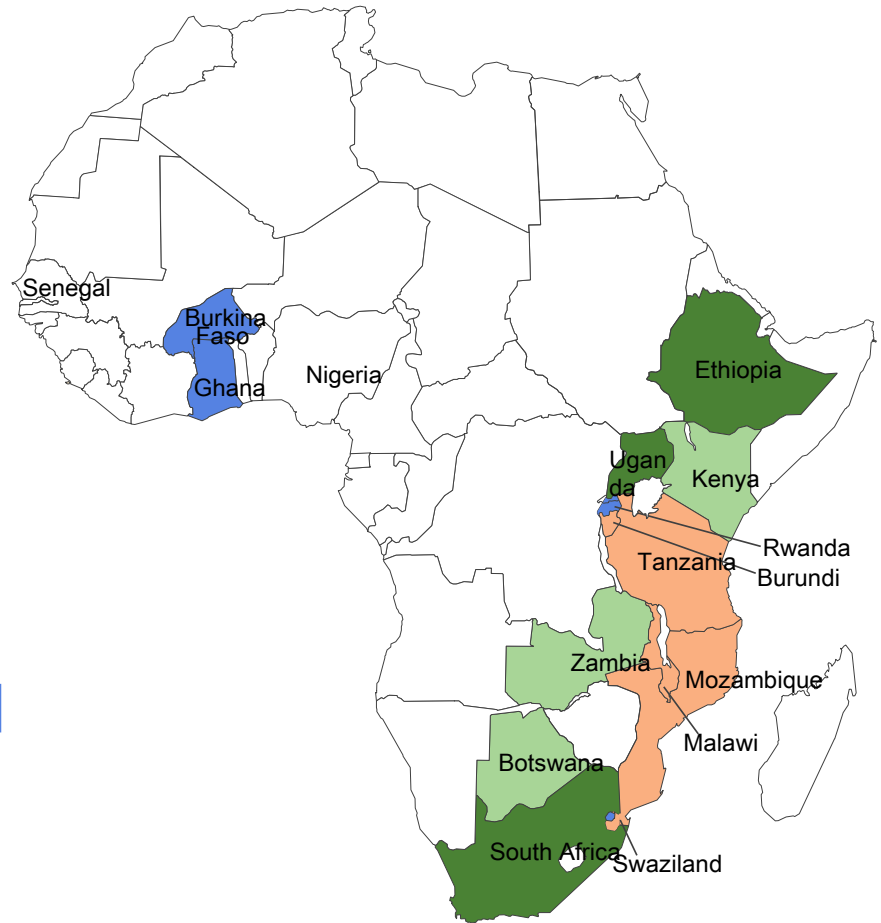
What is available on EC in SV guidelines?

- 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

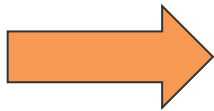


Pregnancy and abortion guidance

- 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