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A journalist's guide to sexual and reproductive health in East Africa

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Description:

Sexual and reproductive health encompasses health and well-being in matters related to sexual relations, pregnancies, and births. It deals with the most intimate and private aspects of people's lives, which can be difficult to write about and discuss publicly. As a result, the public misunderstands many sexual and reproductive health matters. In addition, cultural sensitivities and taboos surrounding sexuality often prevent people from seeking information and care and preclude governments from addressing the issues. Yet, sexual and reproductive health profoundly affects the social and economic development of countries. When women die in childbirth, children are orphaned. When girls must take over care of their siblings, they drop out of school. Without an education, girls often marry and begin having children early, which can jeopardize their health and limit their opportunities to add productively to their community and their country's development. The media play a critical role in bringing sexual and reproductive health matters to the attention of people who can influence public health policies. These people include government officials and staff; leaders of nongovernmental organizations, including women's groups and religious groups; academics and health experts; and health advocates and other opinion leaders. Many of these influential people read news reports and listen to broadcasts daily, and their opinions are shaped by them. Occasionally, one news report can spur a decisionmaker to act. More often, however, a continuous flow of information is needed to educate diverse audiences about issues and inform public policy debates. Journalists who produce accurate and timely reports about sexual and reproductive health issues can: bring taboo subjects out in the open so they can be discussed; monitor their government's progress toward achieving stated goals and hold government officials accountable to the public. This PRB media guide brings together the latest available data on sexual and reproductive health for five East African countries - Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda - to help journalists educate the public and policymakers on these issues.

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