

THE HELLEN KANZIRA MEMORIAL LECTURE

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSANT INTERVENTION

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Sexual and reproductive health rights are part of the wider right to health which is contained in various international and regional instruments that have been ratified by African member states. It is also contained in domestic Constitutions and laws in various African countries. The umbrella phrase of SRHR contains two distinct yet interrelated rights – sexual health rights and reproductive health rights. In the discourse concerning SRHR, emphasis is normally placed on reproductive rights and critical aspects of sexual health can be overlooked by policy makers and regulators. These aspects need to be addressed if there will be an effective protection and realisation of sexual and reproductive health rights.

Apart from addressing the social determinants of sexual and reproductive health rights, countries in Africa also need to critically consider the working conditions of healthcare workers, particularly those that affect their psychosocial health and wellbeing, so that these healthcare workers can provide quality services to patients. Governments also need to consider fostering a robust human rights environment that is supported by evidenced based policies and laws. Strategic litigation as an advocacy and law reform tool should also be encouraged.

The COVID – 19 pandemic has brought with it increased interest and opportunities in telehealth/telemedicine/virtual health services. Innovative digital platforms and services can be employed in complimenting face to face clinical services (especially counselling services). This requires governments to formulate appropriate regulations as well as decrease the costs of internet and mobile phone calling services.