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### **P.10 Basic Obstetrics Ultrasound for Ethiopian Obstetrics Care Providers**

A total of 12 health care professionals have attended the first round and 14 other professionals have attended the second round of training. The participants of this training are from selected health centers in Addis Ababa....

### **P.18 Enhancing Efforts to Establish Primary HPV DNA Testing for Cervical Cancer Screening in Ethiopia**

Cervical cancer is the fourth most common cancer in women globally and the second leading cause of cancer death in women. An estimated 660,000 new cases of cervical cancer are diagnosed annually....



## Editorial Message

### Harnessing South-to-South Collaboration for Integrating Reproductive Health into OBGYN Residency Training



The Global South faces significant challenges in healthcare, with high rates of maternal morbidity and mortality standing out as critical issues. Sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services are notably deficient and require immediate attention. Addressing this gap necessitates training a new generation of healthcare professionals, particularly OBGYNs, who are well-equipped with the skills, knowledge, and positive attitudes essential for comprehensive SRH care and advocacy for women's health.

South-to-South collaboration emerges as a pivotal strategy in achieving this goal. By fostering partnerships and sharing experiences between trainees and trainers across different regions of Africa, the quality of residency training can be significantly enhanced. One promising approach is the exchange of best practices in integrating family planning (FP) into residency programs.

A notable example of effective South-to-South collaboration is the residency exchange program between the East, Central, and Southern African College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (ECSACOG) and St. Paul's Hospital Millennium Medical College (SPHMMC)/St. Paul Institute for Reproductive Health and Rights (SPIRHR). ECSACOG, a burgeoning training institution for hospital-based residency programs in southern, eastern, and central Africa, operates in regions where access to SRH services is limited, and professional attitudes towards SRH often need improvement. The collaboration with SPHMMC, renowned for its successful integration of reproductive health into residency training, provided ECSACOG residents and trainers with practical experiences and the opportunity to transform their attitudes towards SRH.

Over a four-month period, nearly 30 residents and trainers from ECSACOG visited SPHMMC and its SRH model clinics. This exchange offered invaluable opportunities to acquire new skills, improve systems, and shift attitudes positively. Upon returning to their home institutions, many participants were inspired to lead SRH advocacy efforts and identify future champions for this cause.

Such partnerships highlight the power of South-to-South collaborations in creating sustainable improvements in healthcare. These exchanges enable the sharing of innovative practices and successful strategies, ultimately enhancing access to reproductive health services and reducing

maternal mortality across Africa. It is imperative that stakeholders at all levels support and expand these collaborations within residency training programs.

We call on governments, healthcare institutions, and international organizations to invest in and promote South-to-South collaborations. By doing so, we can build a robust network of skilled OBGYNs committed to advancing reproductive health and ensuring safer maternal outcomes for women across the Global South. This collective effort is crucial for building resilient health systems and empowering future generations of healthcare providers to champion women's health and rights.

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# SPIRHR Updates

## Training Pillar

The training pillar recently organized and conducted a training workshop on "Family Planning and Comprehensive Abortion Care" from May 20-24/2024. The participants were safe abortion and family planning service providers at catchment health centers of St. Paul's Hospital Millennium Medical College. The workshop aimed to equip the participants with the skills and knowledge to provide a more comprehensive abortion care service and comprehensive family planning. The training was provided by the Family Planning and Reproductive Health team SPHMMC. The SPIRHR CPD center aims to provide similar training in future dates.



## Research Pillar

### Introduction to **Stata** Statistical Software for Health Research

Stata is a statistical software package developed by StataCorp and released for the first time in 1985. It is widely used for data management, statistical analysis, publication quality graphics, and programming capabilities and allows for storing data of different sizes. It is a very user-

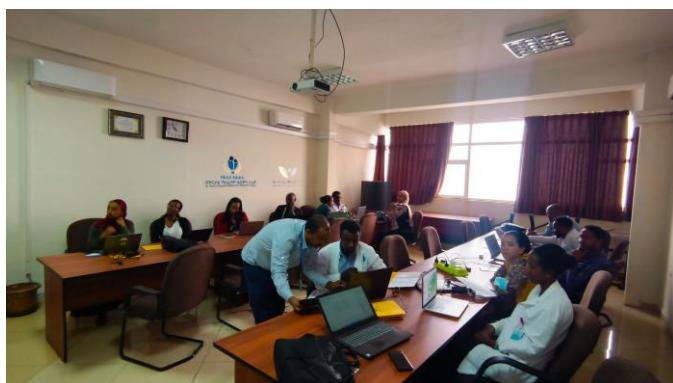
friendly and versatile software with diverse functionalities and has become a popular choice by researchers in various fields including healthcare. This software is commonly used among health researchers, particularly those working with very large data sets, because it is a powerful software that allows you to perform almost anything you like with your data.

In recognition of its powerful features and user-friendly interface, St. Paul Institute for Reproductive Health and Rights organized a two-day training workshop in Introduction to Stata Software for Health Research for faculty and fellows of St. Paul's Hospital Millennium Medical College. The training workshop took place on March 14 and 15, 2024 and a total of 15 trainees received certificates of participation. This training workshop was intended for trainees who had no or minimal experience using a statistical software program.

The objectives of this Stata software training workshop were to ensure that learners became familiar with the Stata interface, including the main window, menus, dialogs, and sub-windows such as Command, Results, Variables, and Data Editor. Participants were trained to carry out data import and export, specifically importing data from formats like SPSS, Excel, or CSV files and exporting data to other formats. The learners were guided through data management strategies relevant to health-related research, including renaming and formatting variables, understanding value labels and formats, and efficient data manipulation techniques. Learners were shown how to use command-based programming to modify and manage data, perform univariate

and bivariate statistical analysis, and create various types of graphs. Additionally, the module covered how to write about and present results effectively through graphs and tables. Finally, learners explored different ways of utilizing online resources and engaging with the Stata user community.

In general, the training offered the opportunity for the faculty and fellows to have the knowledge regarding the different considerations in choosing a statistical test and to have skill in making use of Stata software to perform data management and data analysis. The training was facilitated by Dr. Mekitie Wondafrash, the research and publication advisor at SPIRHR.



## Overview of **Implementation Science**

Implementation science in healthcare focuses on the methods and strategies needed to adopt and integrate proven clinical treatments, practices, and organizational interventions into routine practice. Its primary goal is to accelerate the use of evidence-based practices, interventions, and policies in healthcare and public health, thereby improving population health outcomes.

This relatively new field aims to enhance the uptake of evidence-based practices and increase their public health impact. Research shows that

it takes an average of 17 years to translate research evidence into practice, highlighting the importance of implementation science. As a result, policymakers and health economists are increasingly focusing on this field for its potential to improve the application of research findings.

Poorly implemented interventions in real-world settings often fail to deliver the same health benefits seen in randomized clinical trials. Implementation science addresses this issue by studying the dissemination and integration of proven interventions and identifying the barriers that limit their effectiveness. This field includes the study of implementation, which focuses on integrating effective interventions into clinical practice, and dissemination, which focuses on spreading information about these interventions to various practice settings.

The St. Paul Institute for Reproductive Health and Rights, in collaboration with the Center for International Reproductive Health Training at the University of Michigan (CIRHT-UM), hosted a two-day workshop on implementation science. Held on April 15th and 16th, 2024, at Sarem International Hotel, the workshop was led by Dr. Julie Buser from CIRHT-UM.

The workshop explored how complementary implementation science research methods can bridge the gap between high-quality evidence and effective health programs. It focused on addressing implementation barriers, utilizing appropriate research and evaluation methods to ensure fidelity and effectiveness, and learning from real-world examples to apply

these principles in Ethiopian clinical practice. Participants engaged in discussions to identify and address barriers to implementing evidence-based practices. Emphasis was placed on using robust research and evaluation methods to ensure the effectiveness of these practices. Real-world examples and case studies provided practical insights into applying implementation science, particularly in improving healthcare outcomes in Ethiopia.

The training workshop offered valuable insights into the application of implementation science in healthcare, especially within the Ethiopian context. By addressing implementation barriers, using robust research and evaluation methods, and learning from real-world examples, participants are now better equipped to integrate evidence-based practices into routine healthcare and public health, ultimately enhancing healthcare outcomes and public health impact.



## **Electronic Data Collection and Management for Clinical Research with Kobotoolbox**

Electronic data collection refers to the systematic process of gathering, managing, and

storing data both online and offline. This approach is extensively used in research and healthcare settings, facilitated by electronic data-capturing applications that enable data collection and entry via mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets. These solutions enhance data capture efficiency, enable real-time data synchronization, and support remote data collection in various environments.

One notable platform for electronic data collection is KoboToolbox, a suite of open-source web and mobile applications that allow users to create complex forms, collect data using mobile devices, analyze and visualize the data, and store it both online and offline. KoboToolbox facilitates data collection from multiple devices, including smartphones, tablets, and web browsers. Users can submit data through forms created on the platform. Once data is collected, it can be reviewed, edited, and downloaded by the account owner or authorized users, with a data table view displaying each submission as a row. Additionally, KoboToolbox supports the "pull data" functionality, allowing users to import data from external sources, such as CSV files, into their forms.

To ensure effective use of KoboToolbox, it is crucial to follow several best practices. Start by designing clear and relevant forms with well-structured questions and clear instructions, employing skip logic to guide respondents through pertinent sections based on their answers. Before deploying your form, thoroughly test it on various devices to identify and rectify any errors, missing questions, or



confusing wording. Since KoboToolbox supports offline data collection, ensure your form functions seamlessly without an internet connection and sync the data once the device is back online. Security and permissions are vital; set appropriate user permissions to limit access to sensitive data. Implement validation rules, including range checks and required fields, to maintain data quality, and provide helpful error messages for invalid entries. Regularly back up your data to external storage solutions such as Google Drive or Dropbox to prevent data loss. Lastly, train your data collectors thoroughly on how to use KoboToolbox, ensuring they understand the survey's purpose and the application's functionalities.

The St. Paul Institute for Reproductive Health and Rights (SPIRHR) organized and conducted two rounds of training workshops on "Introduction to KoboToolbox: an electronic data capturing and management platform." The first training workshop was conducted from November 30, 2023, to December 1, 2023, while the second one took place from January 4, 2024, to January 5, 2024, at SPIRHR's training hall. Participants included faculty, fellows, and residents from the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology of St. Paul's Hospital Millennium Medical College. A total of 29 participants received certificates of participation across the two rounds. The workshops aimed to equip the participants with the skills and knowledge to use KoboToolbox effectively.

Electronic data collection and management have several advantages over paper-based methods, including being eco-friendly, cost-efficient, easy to export to statistical software, easy to share with collaborators, and enhancing data quality through real-time monitoring and analysis. The workshops covered topics such as creating forms, deploying forms, collecting data, managing data, and analyzing data using KoboToolbox.

The outcomes of the training workshop were significant. Participants gained a comprehensive understanding of KoboToolbox's features and functionalities, increased awareness regarding the advantages of electronic data collection and management, and improved skills in creating forms, collecting, managing, and sharing data using the platform. Participants expressed enthusiasm about incorporating KoboToolbox into their research projects for enhanced data collection and management efficiency.

Throughout the workshop, participants were engaged in hands-on exercises and group discussions. The feedback was positive, with participants expressing appreciation for the opportunity to learn about KoboToolbox.





## Advocacy Pillar

### Journalists Workshop on **Safe Motherhood**

The St. Paul Institute for Reproductive Health and Rights (SPIRHR) recently had a workshop on Safe Motherhood, to mark the end of Safe Motherhood Month, for journalists in collaboration with St Paul's Hospital Millennium Medical College. The advocacy team led the workshop with Betelhem Taye (Senior Advisor at MOH) in attendance.

The event was aimed at sensitizing journalists about the pressing issue of Maternal Health in accordance with the theme for 2024 "Ensure Equitable and Quality Early Antenatal Care for Positive Pregnancy Outcome". The workshop concluded by underscoring the need for media and journalists to become advocates for safe motherhood.



### Policy Dialogue on International Women's Day 2024

#### **Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress**

St. Paul Institute for Reproductive Health and Rights (SPIRHR) celebrated International Women's Day 2024 by organizing a policy dialogue titled Increasing HPV Vaccination

Uptake through Policy Level Interventions in collaboration with Ethiopian Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Ethiopian Medical Women's Association, EngenderHealth and ICAP Ethiopia. The goal of the event was to raise awareness on current scientific knowledge on HPV Vaccines, understand the different practices and policies in action both globally and locally and to advocate for the roll out of HPV vaccination to the unreached women and girls in our nation through policy level interventions and ministerial office commitments.

The panelists were Dr Hezkiel Petros, an OBGYN and Public Health Specialist, Cervical Cancer Program Manager at ICAP Ethiopia, Sr Zenzem Mohammed Maternal Desk Lead at the Reproductive Maternal Child Health and Nutrition Directorate at MOH and Dr Bethel Dereje a Gynecologist Oncologist at St Paul's Hospital Millennium Medical College. In attendance were members of ESOG, EMeWA, youth advisory council members from EngenderHealth and other guests.

The panelist mentioned there are significant improvements globally in the types of HPV vaccinations. Furthermore, they said it is worthwhile to mention the efforts of Ethiopia in making the vaccine available and trying to change the perception of the society positively about the vaccination. They also highlighted that there is need for awareness creation, timely collaboration of stakeholders and devising multiple strategies to bring about a holistic approach of vaccination. In conclusion they stated, local evidence generation and research are key to making context appropriate health policies.

SPIRHR understands that it has a key role in creating awareness about the HPV vaccination

to all key stakeholders. In addition, our institution will keep playing its part by participating in evidence generation through quality research papers. In the future, our institution will continue to keep investing in women's health to create a more healthy, equitable and safer world for all.

Link to the full policy dialogue:

<https://fb.watch/qJcEifeb7v/>



## VCAT Workshop for SRH Service Providers and Graduating Medical Students

St. Paul Institute for Reproductive Health and Rights (SPIRHR) hosted a two-day workshop in collaboration with EngenderHealth Ethiopia on Value Clarification and Attitude Transformation for SRH service providers and graduating medical students at St. Paul's Hospital Millennium Medical College. The aim of the workshop was to improve engagement of health professionals in destigmatizing safe abortion care (SAC) through advocating efforts to discharge professional responsibilities.

Through the workshop the participants were provided with updates on the revised Technical

and Procedural Guideline (TPGL) for SAC services in Ethiopia. The workshop also aimed at assisting SRH providers to clarify their values and strengthen service provision and engagement to counter anti-choice movements.

The workshop reaffirms the need to work on academic areas and medical schools to clarify personal values, sharing updates and engaging to discharge professional responsibilities. Ongoing evidence-based seminars, comparative findings, VCAT workshops ought to be done to address persisting value related challenges and emerging anti-choice movement.

SPIRHR will continually provide support and prepare more rounds of the workshop to reach more providers and assist them in clarifying their values. The workshop reaffirms the need to work on academic areas and medical schools to clarify personal values, sharing updates and engaging to discharge professional responsibilities. Ongoing evidence-based seminars, comparative findings, VCAT workshops ought to be done to address persisting value related challenges and emerging anti-choice movements.



## Clinical Service

As part of SPIRHR's dedication to the improvement of Quality of SRH services through the clinical service pillar, the pillar has made a Quality Improvement Project Proposals callout in line with its plan for the year. The callout was targeted towards Obstetrics and Gynecology faculty and residents assigned in groups. It also included thematic areas to choose from. With a total of 9 QI Proposal titles and documents submitted a tailored QI training was delivered by Mr. Nebiyu Hailemariam, who is an experienced quality expert and trainer, to both residents and faculties with hands-on exercise and several useful materials shared which aimed at improving the quality of the project they proposed. Moving forward the teams will work on implementing the proposed projects throughout the year.



## HeWaN Inauguration

Women's Health Support Charity Organization (HeWaN) marked a significant milestone today with its official inauguration ceremony held at Elilly Hotel, Addis Ababa. The event brought together esteemed guests, dignitaries, and key figures from the healthcare sector, reaffirming HeWaN's commitment to improving maternal health and transforming women's healthcare in Ethiopia.

Founded by a team of dedicated healthcare professionals, HeWaN aims to address the pressing challenges facing women's and maternal health in Ethiopia. With a mission to enhance the quality of care for reproductive patients who lack access to medical services, HeWaN strives to create sustainable solutions that empower women and promote their well-being throughout the country.

The inauguration ceremony was graced by the presence of distinguished guests, including Professor Delayehu Bekele, HeWaN Board Member and Director of St. Paul Institute for Reproductive Health and Rights (SPIRHR); Dr. Sena Dugasa, Academic Vice Provost of SPHMMC; Lensa Biyena, Executive Director of the Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association (EWLA); Fatuma Said, Executive Officer for Women and Social Affairs at the Ministry of Health (MoH); Zemzem Mohammed, Maternal Health Team Leader at MoH; Dr. Wondimu Gudu, CEO of HeWaN and Chair of the Obstetrics and Gynecology Department; Dr. Lemi Belay, HeWaN Board Lead and Clinical Vice Chair of the Obstetrics and Gynecology Department; and Yetnayet Tamiru, Founder and CEO of Swiss Diagnostic Center and Ambassador of HeWaN.



During the event, speakers emphasized the urgent need to address the disparities and challenges facing women's and maternal health in Ethiopia. Professor Delayehu Bekele highlighted the critical role of organizations like HeWaN in driving positive change and advancing healthcare services for women across the country. Dr. Wondimu Gudu reiterated HeWaN's commitment to providing comprehensive care and support to reproductive patients, particularly those from underserved communities.

HeWaN's vision is to create a future where every woman in Ethiopia has access to high-quality maternal healthcare services, regardless of their socioeconomic status or geographic location. Through strategic partnerships, innovative programs, and community engagement initiatives, HeWaN aims to make a lasting impact on women's health outcomes and contribute to the overall well-being of Ethiopian society.

As HeWaN embarks on this transformative journey, it calls upon stakeholders, policymakers, and the broader community to join hands in advancing the cause of women's health and maternal well-being. Together, we can build a healthier, more equitable future for all women in Ethiopia.

[www.hewan.org.et](http://www.hewan.org.et)



## SPIRHR ECSACOG Exchange Program

St. Paul Institute for Reproductive Health and Rights (SPIRHR), East, Central and Southern Africa College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (ECSACOG) and St. Paul's Hospital Millennium Medical College (SPHMMC) Department of Ob/Gyn initiated the long-awaited exchange program for ECSACOG residents on March 18 by welcoming the first round of ECSACOG exchange residents. The exchange program aims to foster a positive endeavor in developing skills and observe surgical ob-gyn procedures with an emphasis on Family Planning and Comprehensive Abortion Care. The residents, during their welcoming, had the chance to visit different Obstetrics and Gynecology facilities in SPHMMC including Michu Clinic and the soon to be completed SRH Building. SPIRHR hopes this continued global South-to-South collaboration will advance the SRHR service provision in these regions to a greater extent.

The exchange is currently ongoing with the last and fifth cohort for the year attaching.





## Basic Obstetrics Ultrasound for Ethiopian Obstetrics Care Providers

St. Paul's Institute for Reproductive Health and Rights in collaboration with St. Paul's Hospital Millennium Medical College (SPHMMC), the Ethiopian Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ESOG), and Addis Ababa Health Bureau conducted a Basic Obstetrics Ultrasound Training program for Ethiopian obstetric care providers. The training, conducted from April 1st to 12th, 2024(Round 1) and May 6th to 17th, 2024(Round 2), aimed to equip mid-level obstetric care providers with essential skills in obstetric ultrasound to enhance antenatal care quality and improve maternal health outcomes in selected health centers in Addis Ababa.

A total of 12 health care professionals have attended the first round and 14 other professionals have attended the second round of training. The participants of this training are from selected health centers in Addis Ababa.

The training encompassed a comprehensive curriculum delivered over ten days. Sessions covered crucial topics such as ultrasound physics, fetal dating, amniotic fluid assessment, placental evaluation, and screening for fetal anomalies. Through a combination of theoretical lectures, practical demonstrations, and hands-on practice sessions, participants gained proficiency in conducting basic obstetric ultrasound examinations.

The initiative aligns with the Ethiopian government's commitment to enhancing the healthcare system and reducing maternal mortality rates. SPIRHR remains committed to furthering such initiatives.



# SRHR Services and Youth

## Youth Empowerment and SRHR: Closing the Gap

By Helen Birhane, MD Lecturer at SPHMMC and  
Practitioner at St. Paul's Hospital Center for Fertility and  
Reproductive Medicine

Adolescence is a period of transition between childhood and adulthood. According to WHO, it represents the ages between 10 and 19. This tricky age is a time where they go through physical, psychosocial and intellectual changes. While trying to keep up with the accelerated changes that they experience Adolescents also face their sexual identity and that of those around them.

Adolescence is a time when decisions and choices made can be life-defining. Despite the vitality of this period, adolescents need all the support they can get to make appropriate decisions about their lives. This is especially true regarding their sexuality. Education and open conversation that provide enough information about their sexual and reproductive rights, and that address their questions and curiosities, are important to help them make informed and responsible decisions in this area. It also helps them understand their bodies and feel confident by ensuring them that the changes they are going through are universal and perfectly natural

Despite the discussed significance of SRHR in adolescence, the sexual and reproductive rights of this age group are often overlooked and dismissed. Adolescents face issues such as sexual abuse, lack of access to health services (especially for contraception and safe abortion), gender inequalities, and harmful traditional practices like female genital mutilation (FGM) and child, early, and forced marriage. They are also at risk of STIs, including HIV.

In Ethiopia where 25% of the population is young according to EDHS 2016 there is 12.5% teenage pregnancy. Studies demonstrate that the

Youth (15-24 years) of Ethiopia accounts for 0.73% of HIV cases in urban Ethiopia. However, only 63% of HIV-positive youth are aware of their HIV status. This is just the tip of the iceberg, with unsafe abortion being one of the leading causes of maternal mortality in our country. There is a significant unmet need for family planning, along with a lack of awareness regarding sexual and reproductive health.

The gap observed in addressing sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) issues stems from problems at various levels, from the home to policymakers.

**Home:** Parents are role models and primary educators for their children. Honest conversations about their children's sexuality, the changes they are going through, and answering their questions help adolescents feel comfortable with themselves, ultimately enabling them to make informed decisions. However, this is not a common practice in many countries like ours, where adolescents are often discouraged from asking questions, and their curiosity is dismissed by their parents.

**Society:** Adolescents are integral members of society whose needs should be met, and their decisions regarding sexual and reproductive rights should be respected. Unfortunately, society often shames them, labeling their actions as taboo. This leads adolescents to take unsafe routes to meet their sexual and reproductive needs.

**Policy Makers:** The rights of adolescents are frequently overlooked in policy-making. Insufficient emphasis is placed on ensuring adequate access to the tools adolescents need to achieve their full sexual and reproductive rights. These areas need improvement for adolescents to have a positive and enriching experience, enabling them to make informed decisions about all aspects of SRHR.

# SRHR and Technology

## Enhancing Healthcare Delivery through **Clinical Decision Support Applications**

In today's rapidly evolving healthcare landscape, the integration of technology has become pivotal in augmenting clinical decision-making processes. Clinical Decision Support (CDS) applications stand at the forefront, revolutionizing how healthcare professionals deliver patient care. These innovative tools leverage medical knowledge, patient data, and advanced algorithms to provide timely, evidence-based guidance to clinicians, thereby improving diagnostic accuracy, treatment efficacy, and patient outcomes.

At its core, a well-designed CDS app serves as a digital companion, empowering healthcare providers with comprehensive insights and actionable recommendations at the point of care. By seamlessly integrating with Electronic Health Records (EHR) systems, these applications harness the vast repository of patient information to offer tailored suggestions that align with best practices, clinical guidelines, and pertinent research findings. This real-time assistance not only streamlines decision-making but also reduces the likelihood of errors and oversights, ultimately enhancing patient safety and quality of care.

SPIRHR strongly supports the use of technology to improve the outcomes and

quality of care in SRHR services. In its efforts to do so, SPIRHR in collaboration with the Department of Ob/Gyn at SPHMMC has developed in-house and launched the “Ethiopian Pregnancy Calendar” App. The app is an important provider job aid has many important features which including

- Calculating gestational age and EDD from LNMP, from ultrasound, from date of embryo transfer and conception date (for intrauterine insemination)
- Providing the dates for a given pregnancy specific investigation such as for Ultrasound Nuchal translucency, anatomic scanning, OGTT when indicated, etc
- Providing the dates for a given pregnancy for specific interventions such as for low dose aspirin and anti D administration
- It has St. Paul's protocol for medication abortion under various scenarios like gestational age and uterine scar
- Providing date for elective cesarean section, EDD, postterm
- Bishop score calculation
- Providing ANC schedule dates using the national ANC

One of the key strengths of CDS apps lies in their adaptability to diverse clinical scenarios and specialties. In the case of the Ethiopian Pregnancy Calendar App apart from the diverse clinical related features and functions the app also provides date calculation seamlessly in both Ethiopian and Gregorian

Calendar. Moreover, the application has been made available for Android and IOS devices.

In conclusion, SPIRHR's commitment to improve the quality care delivery through technology like the Clinical Decision Support applications will be adamant in transforming modern healthcare. Embracing these digital allies, healthcare stakeholders can chart a course towards a future where precision, effectiveness, and compassion converge to redefine the standard of care.





# SRHR and Social Media

## Uncovering the Troubling Trend of **Nonconsensual Sharing of Intimate Content** on Social Media in Ethiopia and Beyond

By Addisu Deresse, Program Communications Officer at Ethiopian Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ESOG)

In a disturbing incident that has shed light on a growing trend, a young woman in Ethiopia found herself the victim of a nonconsensual recording and dissemination of an intimate video. The video, which has been widely circulated on social media, depicts the woman's boyfriend coercing her into being filmed during a sexual encounter. Despite her initial hesitation, the young woman eventually agreed, fearing that her partner would leave her otherwise.

This case is not an isolated one. Discussions with colleagues in the media have revealed that this is just one among dozens, if not hundreds, of similar incidents occurring across Ethiopia. The country has unfortunately become a hotspot for the proliferation of sexually explicit content shared without consent, prompting the House of People's Representatives to take action and ban access to such sites within the nation.

### The Rise of Nonconsensual Intimate Content Sharing in Ethiopia

Ethiopia's struggle with the nonconsensual sharing of intimate content on social media platforms is a complex and multifaceted issue. The ease of access to the internet, coupled with

the growing popularity of social media, has created an environment where young men and women are increasingly exposed to and engaging with sexually explicit content.

A simple research on most visited sites in Ethiopia reveals that Ethiopia ranks among the top countries in the entire world where individuals, particularly the youth, access websites and platforms showcasing explicit sexual contents. This trend has also been fueled by a combination of factors, including a lack of comprehensive sex education, the normalization of harmful gender norms, and the absence of robust legal frameworks to address this issue effectively.

### The Implications for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights

The nonconsensual sharing of intimate content on social media poses a significant threat to the sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) of young girls and women in Ethiopia. When individuals, often without their consent, have their most intimate moments captured and distributed online, it can have devastating consequences on their physical, emotional, and psychological well-being.

The trauma experienced by victims of such violations can lead to long-lasting mental health issues, including anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Furthermore, the stigma and social ostracization that often accompany these incidents can further exacerbate the challenges faced by young women, hindering their ability to access essential SRHR services and support.

It is within our recent memory that a woman committed suicide following the dissemination of her intimate content on social media by her own partner.

### **Addressing the Issue: Lessons from Other African Countries**

Ethiopia's struggle with nonconsensual intimate content sharing is not unique to the country. Similar trends have been observed in various other African nations, prompting a need for a coordinated regional response.

In neighboring Kenya, for instance, the government has taken steps to address the issue by enacting the Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes Act, which criminalizes the nonconsensual sharing of intimate images and videos. Similarly, South Africa has introduced the Cybercrimes Act, which aims to protect individuals from the unauthorized distribution of their personal information and intimate content.

These legislative efforts, while commendable, highlight the need for a more comprehensive approach that combines legal reforms, educational initiatives, and community-based interventions to address the root causes of this problem.

To effectively tackle the growing trend of nonconsensual intimate content sharing in Ethiopia and across Africa, a multifaceted approach is necessary. This should include the following key elements:

#### **Strengthening Legal Frameworks**

Ethiopia, along with other African nations, should prioritize the development and implementation of robust legal frameworks that specifically address the nonconsensual sharing of intimate content. These laws should

provide clear definitions, establish appropriate penalties, and empower law enforcement agencies to effectively investigate and prosecute such cases.

#### **Enhancing Digital Literacy and Sex Education**

Comprehensive digital literacy and sex education programs should be integrated into school curricula and community-based initiatives. These programs should empower young people, particularly girls and women, with the knowledge and skills to navigate the digital landscape safely, understand the importance of consent, and recognize the harmful consequences of nonconsensual content sharing.

#### **Promoting Victim-Centric Support Services**

Governments and civil society organizations should establish accessible and well-resourced support services for victims of nonconsensual intimate content sharing. These services should include counseling, legal aid, and assistance in the removal of the offending content from online platforms.

#### **Engaging with Tech Companies and Social Media Platforms**

Collaboration between governments, policymakers, and technology companies is crucial in addressing this issue. Tech companies should be held accountable for developing and implementing effective content moderation policies, as well as streamlining the process for victims to report and have

nonconsensual content removed from their platforms.

## **Raising Awareness and Fostering Social Change**

Public awareness campaigns, community dialogues, and advocacy efforts should be undertaken to challenge the societal norms and gender-based biases that contribute to the normalization of nonconsensual intimate content sharing. These initiatives should empower individuals, particularly young women, to speak out against these violations and advocate for their SRHR.

The growing trend of nonconsensual intimate content sharing on social media in Ethiopia and across Africa is a pressing issue that demands urgent attention. The violation of young women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as the profound psychological and social consequences, underscores the need for a comprehensive and coordinated response.

By strengthening legal frameworks, enhancing digital literacy and sex education, promoting victim-centric support services, engaging with tech companies, and fostering social change, Ethiopia and other African nations can take meaningful steps to address this challenge and protect the rights and well-being of their young people. Only through a concerted effort can we ensure that the digital landscape becomes a safer and more empowering space for all.

# SRHR and Policy

## Enhancing Efforts to Establish Primary HPV DNA Testing for Cervical Cancer Screening in Ethiopia

By Wondimu Gudu, MD, MPH, Associate Professor of  
Obstetrics and Gynecology Maternal Fetal Medicine and  
Gynecology Oncology Subspecialist at SPHMMC  
Head of Department of Ob/Gyn SPHMMC

Cervical cancer is the fourth most common cancer in women globally and the second leading cause of cancer death in women. An estimated 660,000 new cases of cervical cancer are diagnosed annually, with 350,000 deaths reported worldwide. In Ethiopia, cervical cancer is the second most common cancer among the adult population, with a prevalence of 22 per 100,000. Each year, 7,445 cases and 5,338 deaths are reported.

In response to the global burden of cervical cancer, the WHO convened a meeting in 2018 to address this issue. During the summit, the WHO Director-General highlighted the severity of cervical cancer, stating, “One woman dies of cervical cancer every two minutes... Each one is a tragedy, and we can prevent it.” The WHO subsequently issued a call to action with a vision to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health problem, setting the 90-70-90 target by 2030.

The Ethiopian government and the Ministry of Health (MOH) are committed to preventing cervical cancer and have adopted the 90-70-90 strategy. There is a national cancer control program in which cervical cancer is a key

target. Guidelines for the prevention of cervical cancer have been established, aiming to promote cancer prevention, early detection, improved diagnosis and treatment, palliative care, cancer surveillance, registration, and research. However, the WHO’s call to action for the elimination of cervical cancer has not yet been officially adopted in any national documents.

Currently, cervical cancer screening strategies in Ethiopia include HPV-based, cytology-based, and visual inspection-based methods (using acetic acid (VIA) and/or Lugol’s iodine (VILI)). Despite national efforts to increase access to cervical cancer screening, only 12% of the eligible female population is currently screened.

The WHO (2021) has recommended HPV DNA testing as a primary method for cervical cancer screening. This test is easy, acceptable, accessible, and affordable, and it offers the added advantage of allowing for self-testing at home. This is particularly beneficial in developing countries like Ethiopia, where health-seeking behavior is significantly influenced by socio-cultural taboos. However, HPV DNA testing as a primary method of cervical cancer screening is not yet widely integrated into routine preventive services in Ethiopia. There are no large-scale programs aimed at increasing access to HPV DNA testing, and existing efforts to introduce HPV testing are fragmented, driven mainly by research interests and project activities.



The large-scale introduction of HPV DNA testing as a primary screening method requires concerted efforts focusing on multiple dimensions. At the policy level, political commitment is needed to prioritize this health agenda. This includes incorporating HPV DNA testing as a primary screening method in all national maternal health documents, including HPV testing kits as essential items in pharmaceutical procurement processes, synergizing fragmented efforts to introduce HPV DNA testing for cervical cancer screening, and establishing strong, long-lasting international collaborations, including engagements with pharmaceutical companies.

These policy-level initiatives should be accompanied by advocacy efforts based on a “rights-based approach” to reproductive health, emphasizing that women have the right to benefit from scientific innovations and technological advancements for their health. Securing significant funding is essential for integrating HPV DNA testing as a primary cervical screening method. Therefore, advocacy messages should be strongly presented to influence donors and decision-makers. Additionally, major inequities in access to cervical screening services should be addressed, along with health education and community sensitization on HPV DNA testing.

Health facilities, medical teaching institutions, NGOs, and research institutions also play a crucial role in this initiative. Their involvement can help create a robust framework for the widespread adoption of HPV DNA testing, ensuring a comprehensive and sustainable

approach to cervical cancer prevention in Ethiopia.

## THE NEW SRH BUILDING



### **About St. Paul Institute for Reproductive Health and Rights (SPIRHR)**

*SPIRHR was established and registered by the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Agency for Civil Society in September 2019 as a local non-governmental organization with the vision of strengthening and facilitating effective and quality sexual and reproductive health and rights programs at St. Paul's Hospital Millennium Medical College (SPHMMC). SPIRHR is an independent institution targeting to ensure the project's implementation in the most efficient and effective way while ensuring accountability and transparency. Since its inception, SPIRHR has continued supporting the implementation of major program activities that were jointly planned with SPHMMC Ob/GYN faculties while taking the lead in the administration and coordination of RH infrastructure development as per a collaborative framework outlined by a memorandum of understanding. Through the collaborative effort of SPHMMC and SPIRHR, SPIRHR will continue to invest in four key priority areas of intervention: training, research, advocacy, and clinical services. SPIRHR aim to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity through coordinated sexual reproductive health and rights and enable girls and women to reach their full potential.*