Adolescent Pregnancy and Reproductive Health in Transkei (Rural South Africa)

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ABSTRACT
A study of adolescent unmarried pregnancy was conducted in 1994 in the Transkei, Eastern Cape (South Africa). Data included a survey of 2,290 married and unmarried women, ages 15 to 49 years, and qualitative data collected from adolescents, parents and family planning officials. While only 11 percent of women were ever-married by age 19 years, 43 percent have had children. Marriage is late, with 64 percent of women 20–24 years never-married, a marked departure from universal and early marriage regarded as characteristics of most African societies. The recent South African political economy has contributed to the predominance of unmarried child-bearing in South Africa. For more than a century black men were recruited to work in cities, while by law, women and children had to remain in rural areas. This policy promoted a norm of unmarried women (possibly the largest in Africa) and a general acceptance of child-bearing outside marital unions. (Afr J Reprod Health 1998;2(1):41–48)

RÉSUMÉ

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decision-making. In addition, punitive measures should be taken against those biological parents who fail to support their children. While such punitive measures must include enforcement of support claims against men and making such claims easier for women, it must also extend to non-financial responsibilities.

The “Cairo mandate” calls for expansion of family services to include women’s reproductive health. A more sound policy will be to include all reproductive health domains, for women or men. Family planning efforts in South Africa must be directed at the society at large, rather than women alone. Equal effort must be made to reach both women and men in all operations of a family planning program service or policy. It must also aim at reaching all age groups, from children to old people. And efforts must aim at changing social behaviours, and secondarily, to providing technologies to individuals who need them.

REFERENCES


