

Full reproductive and sexual health rights essential for maternal health goals

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In order to realize international health goals aiming to improve maternal health, recognition of women's full reproductive and sexual health rights is crucial. In an editorial published this week entitled "Maternal Health: Time to Deliver," the *PLoS Medicine* editors argue that action on maternal health must focus on increasing access to family planning resources as much as it does access to basic medical care.

Family planning—the ability to choose the number, spacing, and timing of children—is vital to educational attainment and economic productivity, and reducing unwanted pregnancies and family size is associated with lower public spending on the [health care system](#) and social services, say the editors.

Further, access to family planning services, including contraception and abortion, forms the basis of women's empowerment and control over their sexual and reproductive lives and is vital to women's health and dignity.

The editors argue that recognition of women's sexual and reproductive rights is particularly essential to maternal health progress in regions where women's status is diminished and their inability to negotiate safe sex increases the risk of leading causes of death and disability such as HIV, other sexually transmitted infections, unplanned pregnancies, and [sexual violence](#).

More information: The PLoS Medicine Editors (2010) Maternal

Health: Time to Deliver. PLoS Med 7 (6): e1000300.

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