

2009

Violated: Women's Human Rights in Sub-Saharan Africa

Kathryn Birdwell Wester

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/hrhw>



Part of the [African Studies Commons](#), [Economic Policy Commons](#), [Human Rights Law Commons](#), [International Humanitarian Law Commons](#), [International Law Commons](#), [Political Science Commons](#), [Public Policy Commons](#), [Social Policy Commons](#), and the [Women's Studies Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Birdwell Wester, Kathryn (2009) "Violated: Women's Human Rights in Sub-Saharan Africa," *Human Rights & Human Welfare*: Vol. 9: Iss. 1, Article 54.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/hrhw/vol9/iss1/54>



All Rights Reserved.

This Topical Research Digest 3 is brought to you for free and open access by the Josef Korbel School of International Studies at Digital Commons @ DU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Human Rights & Human Welfare by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ DU. For more information, please contact jennifer.cox@du.edu, dig-commons@du.edu.

Violated: Women's Human Rights in Sub-Saharan Africa

Abstract

In contemporary sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), women are facing human rights abuses unparalleled elsewhere in the world. Despite the region's diversity, its female inhabitants largely share experiences of sexual discrimination and abuse, intimate violence, political marginalization, and economic deprivation.

Keywords

Human rights, Sub-Saharan Africa, Women's rights, Economic rights, Discrimination, Intimate partner violence

Copyright Statement / License for Reuse



All Rights Reserved.

Publication Statement

Copyright is held by the Josef Korbel School of International Studies, University of Denver. User is responsible for all copyright compliance.

Violated: Women's Human Rights in Sub-Saharan Africa

By Kathryn Birdwell Wester

Introduction

In contemporary sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), women are facing human rights abuses unparalleled elsewhere in the world. Despite the region's diversity, its female inhabitants largely share experiences of sexual discrimination and abuse, intimate violence, political marginalization, and economic deprivation. Consider the following:

- A woman in South Africa has a greater chance of being raped than she does of learning how to read (BBC 2003);
- Seventy percent of women in Niger report being beaten or raped by their husband, father or brother (UNOCHA 2007);
- Maternal mortality rates in SSA are the highest in the world. SSA is home to 20 percent of the world's births but contributes 40 percent of the world's maternal deaths (UNFPA 2008);
- In SSA, about half of the population lives below the poverty line; over 80 percent of the poor are women (UNFPA 2008).

A major obstacle to checking these abuses is women's marginalization and under-representation within the nation-states responsible for implementing human rights standards: women in SSA represent only 6 percent of seats in national legislatures, 10 percent at the local level and a scant 2 percent in national cabinets (UNFPA 2008). Additionally, weak, male-dominated governments, a colonial legacy, and economic underdevelopment plague SSA nations and complicate efforts to redress violations of women's human rights.

Politics of Human Rights: Post-Colonialism and Plurality

Post-colonialism on the African continent raises complex issues involving gender and nationalism. Regardless of the colonial experience and manner of its conclusion, all SSA states today have plural legal systems that incorporate native African customs with Western-style legal courts. Although designed to be culturally inclusive, these systems neglect gender as a category of analysis and often trap women's human rights between formal law and traditional culture. Such systems were formed primarily without women's input during the period of decolonization: local customs were either relayed through male tribal leaders or observed by male colonizers and women at times lost rights previously accorded them by native African customs (Tamale 2008). Men in SSA also lost rights during the colonial era and still endure subordination by Western cultural and economic imperialism. As a result, SSA men have expressed frustration with this loss of power and control through violence and domination over local women (Reddock 2007). Similar to the experience of other developing regions, many attempts in SSA have been made to counterpoise women's human

rights with “traditional African values.” These claims, however, overwhelmingly solidify and perpetuate existing SSA structures of patriarchy.

Much native resistance of Western human rights initiatives has therefore focused on transnational feminist efforts to name women’s rights as human rights (Cornwall and Molyneux 2006). These protests are rooted in SSA’s skepticism of importing Western solutions to local problems and some SSA women have questioned the efficacy of a focus on rights as a way of advancing broader agendas of equality and social justice. Their argument, which centers on an observable reality and not a romanticized African past, is that a rights-based strategy has had limited success in contemporary sub-Saharan contexts; reforming the law means little to women who are informally prevented (through intimidation, impoverishment, illiteracy, etc.) from accessing legal systems. Are rights, then, the best way to make a real difference in SSA women’s lives? Feminists still say yes: more than simply encoding words on a document, gaining legal rights fosters a sense of entitlement—the right to have rights—which in itself constitutes an important dimension of human rights realization (Cornwall and Molyneux 2006).

If the existence of rights is a necessary but insufficient condition for greater gender parity in SSA, then the ability to harness state protection is also crucial. Given the inherent overlap of human rights, their abuse necessitates a comprehensive response that must partly come from the state. Victims of domestic abuse, for example, experience not only a violation of their right to health but are generally intellectually, economically, and politically victimized as well. This interrelated nature of human rights is evident in the western African nation of Togo where almost 75 percent of women report having been beaten or raped by a family member. Togolese women have been financially and scholastically disadvantaged as well: women’s literacy rates trail far behind that of men (45 percent to 72 percent) and women are legally obligated to relinquish their earnings to husbands or male relatives (Moore 2008). Women throughout the SSA region who manage to escape abuse in the private sphere usually encounter an unresponsive criminal law system that is unwilling to intervene in private matters of the family.

Attacks on Women’s Bodies: Health and Human Rights

Domestic Violence’s Personal and Communal Costs

If the intimate violence a woman experiences does not kill her, it prevents her full and constructive participation in societies across the SSA region. The fear and intimidation SSA women experience as a result of widespread partner violence has devastating effects for them and their communities. A recent study in Nigeria found that the threat of being beaten and the experience of marital rape largely determined if women used modern contraceptive methods (Oyedokun 2008). For women in Nigeria and across SSA, this has devastating effects on their reproductive health and the general health of the continent. An estimated two-hundred thousand unsafe abortions take place each year in southern Africa (Ngwena 2004). Almost eighty thousand women worldwide die each year from these unsafe procedures and over thirty-four thousand of those deaths, approximately 40 percent, occur on the African continent (Ngwena 2004).

“Feminization” of HIV/AIDS

At home and lacking money, property, and information about their rights, many women are dependent on males who reinforce their control through violence, often sexual. This has contributed to the “feminization” of HIV/AIDS in SSA. Unlike the disease’s progression in the West, women in Africa are just as likely to be HIV positive as are men, and young women are significantly more likely to be HIV positive than young men (Stewart 2006). “Safe sex” initiatives that focus on limiting sex to marriage—primarily lead by the United States—are meaningless given that most women in SSA are infected by their husbands or long-term partners through unprotected sexual intercourse (Stewart 2006). Women’s vulnerability to infection with HIV/AIDS is heightened by their inability to control when and with whom and under what conditions they have sex. Furthermore, the burden of AIDS-related care is often disproportionately distributed between males and females, with women tending to be more responsible for the care of the sick and dying regardless of their own state of health.

Early Marriage: A Brutal Custom

Forty-two percent of African girls are married before the age of eighteen (Nour 2006). Child marriage is a human rights violation that prevents girls from obtaining an education, enjoying optimal health, maturing, and giving birth to healthy babies (Nour 2006). Socially, early marriage forces girls to drop out of school at a young age, permanently disadvantaging their educational careers and earning potential (Ouattara, Sen, and Thomson 1998). Few may ever face career choices, though, as many child brides’ lives are cut short by disease. Married girls are more likely than unmarried girls to become infected with sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), two in particular—HIV and the human papilloma virus (HPV). A study in Kenya demonstrated that married girls had a 50 percent higher likelihood than unmarried girls of becoming infected with HIV. This risk was even higher (59 percent) in Zambia (Nour 2006). HPV infection has also become endemic to sub-Saharan Africa. Forcing young girls to marry far older men who have already had multiple sex partners, coupled with their low socioeconomic status, and their poor access to health care, the incidence of cervical cancer in Africa is now the highest in the world (Nour 2006).

Female Genitalia as National and Community Property

The violence directed at African women’s sex is shocking. Perhaps most familiar to the West are the human rights atrocities such as ethnic rapes in Rwanda, women’s sexual enslavement in the wars of Liberia and Ivory Coast during the 1990s, and the tactic of spreading HIV/AIDS through sexual assault campaigns in Sierra Leone. From gang rapes to attacks so brutal as to leave girls permanently disabled, African women are encountering levels of sexual violence relatively unprecedented in modernity. In Sierra Leone, it is estimated that more than 72 percent of women and girls were victims of wartime violence, 50 percent of that sexual in nature (Nowrojee 2005).

Rapes by alleged protectors reveal gaps in international mechanisms designed to shield wartime populations from violence—there were several cases of sexual violence by peacekeepers with the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL). These included the rape of a twelve-year-old girl and the gang rape of a woman by two Ukrainian soldiers. Peacekeepers with both the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) and UNAMSIL sexually exploited women—and solicited child prostitutes—during their “peacekeeping” missions.

Perhaps the most well-publicized and hotly debated issue affecting African women is the practice of female genital cutting (FGC). But much of SSA does not engage in the practice at all and no two places in Africa engage in FGC for the exact same reasons, at the same age, or perform the same procedure. Many rural African women, as well as doctors and educated members of African societies, are skeptical of Western FGC eradication efforts. “They do not understand why these foreigners are so obsessed with African women’s genitals, especially when [African] women themselves do not see this tradition as the most pressing problem they face” (Antonazzo, 2003).

Economic Human Rights: Exogenous & Endogenous Threats to Women’s Livelihood

As the marginalized half of society and the persons traditionally responsible for acquiring the family’s food, SSA women have suffered disproportionately from neoliberal economic development strategies. And although global trade manifestly impacts women’s lives, the voices of SSA women have been largely excluded from the debates on the wisdom of trade liberalization. Most of SSA has been subject to structural adjustment programs (SAPs), which include the removal of trade barriers, the removal of subsidies and protections to local industry, cutbacks in social spending, and the opening up of local markets to international investments, trade and communications media (often decimating local industry and agriculture). In Zambia, for example, removal of subsidies under SAPs resulted in a 50 percent increase in the price of maize (Ezeonu and Koku 2008). In Zimbabwe, elimination of food subsidies led to a 45 percent increase in the cost of living for lower income families, which are predominantly headed by women (Ezeonu and Koku 2008).

SSA women face a crisis of land ownership as well. For example, in Uganda women comprise 70 to 80 percent of the agricultural work force, and contribute 80 percent of food production, yet own only 7 percent of the land (Rebouché 2006). Since the colonial era, customary land ownership norms have been eroding and many of the protections of female land ownership formerly ensured by the clan system have almost disappeared, leaving African women’s access to land significantly more precarious (Rebouché 2006). At the same time, women throughout SSA have been called upon by their governments “not to make sexual strife” by demanding land ownership and thus undermining the clan system (Rebouché 2006). But by asserting autonomous opinions and insisting on economic equity, SSA women are actually challenging male domination of the clan, not siding with colonial law over African custom. Nuances such as this go unnoticed when “traditional” African practices are uncritically reintegrated into contemporary law. Thus, honestly examining tribal land practices reveals a system that would often impoverish women in African antiquity and today serves to ensure that African males receive the bulk of family wealth.

Conclusion

Despite the potential of various international conventions and conferences and the full body of human rights law, the lives of many African girls remain embroiled in violence. One reason is that UN treaties and conventions have not been locally interpreted in a way that is responsive to African women’s experiences of injustice. But robust human rights remain elusive for most SSA women primarily because neither the international community nor national leaders have given primacy to the voices of African women themselves. Transcending the rhetoric of rights starts with recognizing

the agency of SSA women and following the agenda they set. Listening to their priorities for the future of human rights work in the region can ensure that international human rights norms have sufficient legitimacy within particular cultures and traditions to prove effective.

Annotations

Ackerly, Brooke, and Susan Moller Okin. 1999. "Feminist Social Criticism and the International Movement for Women's Rights as Human Rights." In *Democracy's Edges*. Edited by I. Hacker-Cordón. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Annotation: Ackerly and Okin, pioneers in the field of women's human rights, discuss the efforts of international and grassroots women's rights organizations to define women's rights as human rights in the book *Democracy's Edges*. Ackerly and Okin draw attention to the ways international feminists have sought out and included the voices of marginalized women in human rights discourse, particularly by publicizing the individual stories of victims. These personal narratives, along with skillful political strategies employed by feminist NGOs at international conferences, have transformed the field of human rights. One fundamental change has been to recognize the limits of traditional international law to protect women. For instance, the authors ask what good is it to be included in international treaties protecting them from violence when women are abused by fathers and husbands?

Almroth, Lars, and Susan Elmusharaf. 2007. "Genital Mutilation of Girls." *Women's Health* 3 (4):475-485.

Annotation: Healthcare workers seeking practical information on how to treat girls and women who have undergone female genital mutilation (FGM) will find this article particularly helpful, although its clear style and purpose will be useful to anyone. The article gives basic information about various FGM procedures, focuses on clinical treatment options, and is full of accessible, informative charts and sketches. The authors advocate a culturally sensitive and non-judgmental method of treatment. They conclude by suggesting that such medically unnecessary procedures will eventually be abandoned if ethnocentrism in healthcare is avoided, and if holistic educational and empowerment efforts are tailored to specific African communities.

Antonazzo, Monica. 2003. "Problems with Criminalizing Female Genital Cutting." *Peace Review* 15 (4):471-477.

Annotation: The cultural imperialism of Western nations is the central concern of this article regarding the divisive issue of female genital cutting (FGC) in Africa. If Western groups really care about African women's health and their rights then they should take an informed and culturally appropriate approach to helping end a practice that often determines an African woman's marriageability. Rather than encourage and coerce foreign governments to outlaw genital cutting, the author says Western states should be directing foreign aid to locally run groups that educate women and help to change their minds about the need for FGC. The

article's goal is to implore any government or organization involved in eliminating FGC to understand that it will never end without addressing the millions of African women who have absolutely no future if they do not marry.

Banda, Fareda. 2006. "Women, Law and Human Rights in Southern Africa." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 32 (1):13-27.

Annotation: Largely discussing the development of human rights in the Southern African Development Community (SADC)—comprised of Angola, Botswana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe—this article explores the legal tension between tradition and modernity that complicates efforts by SADC nations to adopt human rights norms respectful of the rights of women. It draws attention to the pluralistic legal systems the countries share and the way that patriarchal worldviews of both African customary laws and the colonial legal systems combine to entrench gender injustice. Using a detailed analysis of the region's inheritance laws and customs, the author discusses reasons why SADC states have failed to enforce the multitude of human rights instruments they have adopted.

Bell, Emma. 2005. "Advocacy Training by the International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS." *Gender & Development* 13 (3):70-79.

Annotation: The advocacy efforts of two international NGOs—The International Community of Women Living with HIV/AIDS (ICW) and the POLICY Project—are detailed in this article that addresses healthcare access, treatment, and support for women living with HIV/AIDS in South Africa and Swaziland. Based on interviews with women from both countries, the research identifies surprising yet common barriers that HIV-positive women routinely encounter. Because data was collected by HIV-positive researchers who are themselves advocates, from a methodological standpoint the article is a valuable example of a participatory research model—quite useful when studying human rights issues. Substantively, the article draws needed attention to the fact women are largely excluded from formal decision making processes in the countries under study and that internationally-sponsored programs and policies most often marginalize women as well.

Burnett, Patrick, Shereen Karmali, and Firoze Manji. 2007. Grace, Tenacity and Eloquence: The Struggle for Women's Rights in Africa. Oxford: Fahamu Books.

The essays in this book first appeared in the critically acclaimed weekly electronic newsletter Pambazuka News and they provide an easy-to-read introduction to the struggle for women's rights in Africa. The articles are as diverse as the human rights needs of African women; they address topics like women and war, women's health in Africa, and the rising number of child sexual assaults in South Africa. The contributors describe how African women have engaged in human rights struggles with "grace and tenacity," and emphasize the personal agency of African women. They draw particular attention to the problems that have resulted from Western depictions of women in Africa as perpetual victims.

Charles, Laurie L. 2006. "Young Women Struggling for an Education: Systemic Work with a Village Community in West Africa." *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy* 18 (3):63-82.

Annotation: This article describes a project designed to improve the educational opportunities of young girls in a rural village community in West Africa. It specifically analyzes the problem of why girls drop out of school in Togo by relying on the author's work as a family therapist there with the Peace Corp. As a volunteer therapist working with young girls, the author focused on making the girls' stories more visible to the larger community. Their stories about the community's reaction to their pregnancies, she says, can make a valuable contribution to the global discourse on issues of gender inequality and the rights of women and young girls. Written in first-person style, the article suggests family therapists adopt a human rights perspective—view family as embedded in particular social contexts. Her goal is to suggest that family therapists should expand their clinical emphasis outside of the therapy room, to consider those who are silent or marginalized.

Chilisa, Bagele. 2002. "National Policies on Pregnancy in Education Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa: the Case of Botswana." *Gender & Education* 14 (1):21-35.

Annotation: This article is a critique of pregnancy policies in the educational systems of twenty sub-Saharan African states, which the author divides into three broad categories: expulsion, re-entry, and continuation. The essay focuses on Botswanan re-entry policies in order to illustrate the physical and cultural difficulties of readmitting young mothers to school. By pointing out the gender inequalities and traditional and institutional ideologies that complicate girls' educational re-entry, the author argues that both expulsion and re-entry policies violate girls' right to education. Applying a radical and socialist feminist critique, she examines the ways in which language limits the educational opportunities of pregnant students. She makes the provocative suggestion that Botswanan pregnancy policies are unconscious efforts to protect the economic interest men have in dominating school attendance and literacy resources.

Dauer, Sheila, and Mayra Gomez. 2006. "Violence against Women and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in Africa." *Human Rights Review* 7 (2):49-58.

Annotation: The authors in this essay are concerned with the dilemma human rights advocates in Africa find themselves in when trying to work on one set of rights without paying attention to others. This article focuses on the 2001 decision by Amnesty International (AI) to revise its 40-year-old mandate and adopt a new mission of advocacy for economic, social, and cultural rights. The policy shift placed at the forefront of AI a mission to specifically target grave abuses of human rights that arise as a result of discrimination. For African women and girls, AI's new focus is a more promising method of mitigating the gender injustice they face because it takes a holistic approach to eradicating entrenched discrimination. The article uses the issue of violence against women to illustrate the complex mechanisms that sustain practices harmful to women. It limits its discussion, however, to the use of international legal instruments as the most effective means available to combat domestic abuse.

Dow, Justice Unity. 2001. "How the Global Informs the Local: The Botswana Citizenship Case." *Health Care for Women International* 22 (4):319-331.

Annotation: Justice Unity Dow is a Botswanan attorney who successfully challenged the sexist Botswana Citizenship Act of 1984. She did so on the grounds that it discriminated against women by denying their children the same automatic citizenship it inferred on the children of male Botswanans. Dow's article focuses on African women's lack of decision-making power and suggests that women in Africa have not been involved in the formulation, interpretation, or implementation of accepted norms that inform concepts of human rights, democracy, and good governance. She calls on local African governments to follow the lead of Botswanan judges who incorporated international norms and ideas into their rulings. Doing so can reify some of the most progressive and gender-friendly goals of these international instruments and give them local force.

Eibl, Marita, Valerie Foster. 2007. "Gender and HIV/AIDS: An Annotated Bibliography." Available online: <http://www.wid.msu.edu/resources/biblios/Gender%20and%20HIV-AIDS.htm>

Annotation: The "Bibliography on Gender and HIV/AIDS" is an online resource of scholarly articles, development and human rights reports, and books regarding the intersection of HIV/AIDS and gender, particularly in the lives of sub-Saharan African women. The first of the bibliography's two parts, "Gender and Development," provides an overview of literature on the impact of HIV/AIDS on land and water rights, agrarian livelihoods, and food and nutrition, as well as how those issues may affect the course of the disease. The second section, "Empowerment, Vulnerability, Rights, and Sexuality," gives researchers a more theoretical background in the power structures and patriarchal customs that frame the lives of women living with HIV/AIDS in Africa. The bibliography includes citations from many countries and is chock full of downloads, toolkits, and advocacy resources.

Ewelukwa, Uche U. 2002. "Post-Colonialism, Gender, Customary Injustice: Widows in African Societies." *Human Rights Quarterly* 24 (2):424-486.

Annotation: This article focuses on the economic injustices faced by widows in sub-Saharan African and is based on the author's experiences as a native Nigerian as well on information she gathered during a six-week human rights monitoring session with the UN. These practices range from painful public treatment following the death of a spouse to the application of discriminatory laws and practices that deny women a share of their deceased spouse's property. The article primarily concerns the plight of Nigerian women, but the "multiple cultural stratifications" that perpetuate widow injustices—traditional customs, the colonial experience, and post-colonial globalized economic structures—function throughout Southern Africa. Because African society no longer reflects the cultural patterns of the past, the author says nations need a new social strategy to equitably distribute assets among family members following a death.

Widows are likely to continue experiencing injustices, she warns, when discriminatory customs that disempower women are reapplied to a modernizing continent.

_____. 2005. "Centuries of Globalization; Centuries of Exclusion: African Women, Human Rights, and the 'New' International Trade Regime." *Berkeley Journal of Gender, Law & Justice* 20:75-149.

Annotation: This article takes a historical approach to examine the relationship between African women and major globalization players during the 20th century. The author argues that, for African women, the history of global trade has been one of their exclusion, exploitation, and resistance. She says that the current globalization process is not new but merely represents a continuation of internationalization processes that began over three centuries ago with the slave trade. Warning that current globalizing policies simply perpetuate African women's economic subordination, the author calls for a fundamental reform of international trade rules and a radical reinterpretation of international human rights norms, which would include questioning the basic concepts and precepts of neoliberalism.

Ezeonu, Ifeanyi, and Emmanuel Koku. 2008. "Crimes of Globalization: The Feminization of HIV Pandemic in Sub-Saharan Africa." *The Global South* 2 (2):112-129.

Annotation: As part of an emerging literature known as "critical criminology," this article argues that the implementation of neoliberal policies in Sub-Saharan Africa constitutes women's vulnerability to HIV by encouraging risky lifestyle choices that often expose them to the disease. It is philosophically aimed at practicing criminologists, and suggests they should broaden traditional definitions of criminology from its narrow focus on law and legalism. Doing so would recognize the social harm done under neoliberal globalization initiatives that have been implemented by global financial institutions like the IMF, World Bank, and WTO. The authors are critical of all such development efforts, which they say have naked greed at their root and have largely had devastating effects on the vulnerable populations of the SSA region, especially the poor, women and children. They discuss HIV/AIDS's disproportionate impact on SSA women to illustrate the social harm and criminality of both economic policies and embedded gender norms.

Gawaya, Rose, and Rosemary Mukasa. 2005. "The African Women's Protocol: a New Dimension for Women's Rights in Africa." *Gender & Development* 13 (3):42-50.

Annotation: Scholars interested in the Southern African nations of Mozambique, South Africa, and Zambia can find them featured in a descriptive article on the African Women's Protocol, an international legal instrument adopted in 2003. The authors compare the Protocol with other international legal instruments and endorse the African document for its native origins, its robust encapsulation of sexual and reproductive rights, and its potential to bring about legal reform of African customary practices harmful to women. The authors use the political advocacy of international NGO Oxfam in three sub-Saharan African countries on behalf of the Protocol to guide their argument for promoting African women's human rights through formal

legal mechanisms. Some of the authors' hopes for the Protocol seem reasonable, such as its potential to increase the participation of women in formal decision making bodies through legislation quotas and other affirmative action measures. But the instrument's lack of an enforcement mechanism more reasonably requires that advocates remain skeptical.

Gettleman, Jeffrey. 2007. "Rape Epidemic Raises Trauma of Congo War." *The New York Times*. (October 7).

Annotation: The brutality and extent of sexual violence in Congo's protracted internal conflicts is the subject of this news article. It quotes UN officials who name Congolese troops as some of the world's worst rape offenders. The article contains graphic details of the violent sexual assaults, which are often perpetrated with objects and weapons and designed to kill or disable women.

Gordon, Robert J. 2008. "Widow 'Dispossession' in Northern Namibian Inheritance." *Anthropology Southern Africa* 31 (1/2):1-12.

Annotation: At odds with the bulk of literature on the topic of widow dispossession, this author, an American anthropologist, contends that the issue in Namibia has been exaggerated by Western NGOs and churches, and is a far more complicated—and declining—practice. Although he is not explicit about the sources he relies on, presumably his contacts through a Namibian human rights organization he worked with, the author explicitly criticizes the methodology of UN studies for inflating and obfuscating the reality of Namibian inheritance customs. He claims that the custom of widow dispossession was far more prevalent before colonization and that African women currently employ a number of informal mechanisms to get around the practice. He says that formal legal initiatives have been ineffective at altering what is an essentially cultural norm.

Hellum, Anne. 2004. "Land Reform and Human Rights in Contemporary Zimbabwe: Balancing Individual and Social Justice through an Integrated Human Rights Framework." *World Development* 32 (10):1785-1805.

Annotation: This essay examines the accelerated land reform program in Zimbabwe to explore conflicts between international, regional, and national law. The authors argue that property rights are part of the general right to a decent standard of living. To analyze the Zimbabwean quagmire, they emphasize a comprehensive understanding of local injustices and conclude that the government of Zimbabwe has engaged in serious human rights violations and has used the land reform program to concentrate power and resources in the hands of undemocratic elite. They argue that "fast track" land reform policies of President Robert Mugabe masked patrimonial practices. Women in particular have been harmed by fast track policies and the authors propose that participatory frameworks should be utilized in future efforts at land reform in Zimbabwe.

Musa, Roselynn, Faiza Jama Mohammed, and Firoze Manji. 2006. Breathing Life into the African Union Protocol on Women's Rights in Africa. Addis Ababa: Fahamu/Pambazuka.

Annotation: This book is a collection of papers presented in September 2005 at a conference jointly convened in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia by a coalition of more than twenty development, human rights, and gender-focused NGOs in Africa. The groups met to strategize about the disconnect between formal human rights instruments and the subordinated status of women throughout SSA, and how the new Protocol could change that. Because of the book's narrow focus on promotion strategies aimed at the Protocol's full implementation in SSA, the essays—most of them under ten pages long—give a nuanced treatment to a rights-based strategy for promoting social justice and gender equity.

Kaminer, Debra, Anna Grimsrud, Landon Myer, Dan J. Stein, and David R. Williams. 2008. "Risk for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Associated with Different Forms of Interpersonal Violence in South Africa." *Social Science & Medicine* 67 (10):1589-1595.

Annotation: Using representative data from over 4,000 adults, this research assessed the relative risk for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) associated with several different forms of assault in South Africa. The researchers found that over a third of South Africans had recently experienced political, domestic, criminal, sexual, or other forms of violence related to gender. Among men, political detention and torture were the forms of violence most strongly associated with a lifetime diagnosis of PTSD, while rape had the strongest association with PTSD among women. At a population level, the researchers found that criminal assault and childhood abuse were associated with the greatest number of PTSD cases among men, while intimate partner violence was associated with the greatest number of PTSD cases among women. Their findings point out the dilemma that arises when women's rights are confined to an unregulated private sphere.

Liebling-Kalifani, H., A. Marshall, R. Ojiambo-Ochieng, and N. M. Kakembo. 2007. "Experiences of Women War-Torture Survivors in Uganda: Implications for Health and Human Rights." *Journal of International Women's Studies* 8:1.

Annotation: Women's urgent reproductive and gynecological health needs following the Ugandan civil war are the subject of this article. The researchers—representing a broad coalition of NGOs and academics, both native and Western contributors—suggest that 50 to 70 percent of women who survived the devastating civil war in Uganda's Luwero District had been raped. The authors focus on the needs of those women and on enumerating their physical and psychological problems by presenting the findings of extensive fieldwork that documented Ugandan human rights abuses. They also draw attention to the international system's failure to either prevent or mitigate the mass rapes, particularly through a discussion of procedural issues that legally prevented international intervention.

Merry, Sally Engle. 2006. Human Rights and Gender Violence: Translating International Law into Local Justice. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Annotation: With a detailed exploration of how local cultures interact with and incorporate international human rights law, this book will be valuable for scholars of gender studies and of human rights. The book primarily adopts an anthropological perspective to arrive at the conclusion that human rights law must be contextualized by and in local communities. The author argues that deep cultural and religious roots of gender violence, for example, have made it extremely resistant to activism aimed at its elimination. This and other challenges of making global human rights norms more palatable to local, traditional communities makes this book a great resource for those interested in the theoretical concerns that underlie the “rights-based” advocacy debates in SSA today.

Moore, Ami. 2008. “Types of Violence against Women and Factors Influencing Intimate Partner Violence in Togo (West Africa).” *Journal of Family Violence* 23 (8):777-783.

Annotation: This large-N quantitative study examines violence against women (VAW) in Togo, with the aim of remedying the lack of scholarship on domestic violence in the developing world. Specifically, it details the various types of violence Togolese women experience and identifies factors that affect their chance of being victimized by an intimate partner. Although the objective of the article is straightforward—to document the types of domestic abuse women in Togo face—it provides an advocate’s overview of family violence in that its focus is on direct service delivery to abuse victims. The author points out that VAW is certainly not an unfamiliar research topic in the West, but the lack of literature on VAW in Africa complicates formulating policies capable of protecting women’s human rights.

Mwaura, Philomena Njeri. 2008. “Stigmatization and Discrimination of HIV/AIDS Women in Kenya: A Violation of Human Rights and its Theological Implications.” *Exchange* 37 (1):35-51.

Annotation: This article discusses the ethical, spiritual, theological and cultural dimensions of HIV/AIDS by making a plea to the Catholic Church in Kenya to stop its discrimination against carriers of HIV/AIDS. Kenyan women face an infection rate nearly twice that of men, the author says, because of many discriminatory customs and laws that encourage stigmatizing and discriminating against women with HIV/AIDS. The Church hierarchy, she says, is responsible for distorting reality by depicting those infected with HIV/AIDS as sinners condemned by God. She recommends the Church remedy this situation by consistently condemning the sins of stigmatization and discrimination and developing an ecclesiology that could effectively respond to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in a just, loving and gender-inclusive manner.

Mwenda, Kenneth Kaoma. 2006. “Labia Elongation under African Customary Law: A Violation of Women’s Rights?” *International Journal of Human Rights* 10 (4):341-357.

Annotation: Written by a member of the World Bank’s legal counsel, this article on the practice of labia elongation is so problematic as to merit discussion. Author Dr. Kenneth Mwenda is best known for his scholarly articles on banking law and reform, securities regulation, and business law. Here though, to determine whether or not African customary law permits labia elongation, he questions the logic of relying on colonial legal traditions to determine if such cultural

practices constitute a human rights violation. His debatable conclusion is that labia elongation does not involve offensive physical violence to women nor widespread coercion, therefore, the practice as customary in many parts of Africa does not violate the rights of women. He neglects, however, the imbalance of decision-making powers between the sexes in cultures where labia elongation is practiced. He also accepts as a valid justification for its continuation that labia elongation “enhances men’s sexual pleasure” and is “beneficial to the maintenance of such social institutions as marriage and the family in Africa.” In doing so, he demonstrates how women’s human rights can vanish when analysts fail to be cognizant of the gendered reality in Africa.

Ngwena, Charles. 2004. “An Appraisal of Abortion Laws in Southern Africa from a Reproductive Health Rights Perspective.” *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics* 32 (4):708-717.

Annotation: This piece is primarily concerned with reviewing abortion laws in the African countries belonging to the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The author discusses how SADC countries inherited repressive abortion policies from their former colonial rulers, which contrasted sharply with more permissible indigenous African customs. Local rulers have, however, largely retained the restrictive laws since establishing self-rule. Because the SADC nations have almost all participated in the major international conferences on reproductive health (Vienna, Cairo, and Beijing) and signed on to international human rights instruments, the author evaluates their public commitments to uphold reproductive rights against their private, empirical records of providing abortion access for their female citizens. His overview of abortion reform initiatives concludes that SADC countries on the whole have failed to implement meaningful changes in restrictive reproductive policies and should accompany future legal initiatives with material and educational resources aimed at helping women access reproductive services.

Nnaemeka, Obioma and Ezeilo Joy. 2005. Engendering Human Rights: Cultural and Socio-Economic Realities in Africa. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Annotation: This informative book looks at the seemingly insurmountable obstacles sub-Saharan African women must endure to obtain and protect their human rights. All from distinguished scholars and activists, the essays address the particular, gendered concerns facing sub-Saharan Africa in the age of globalization. Contributions range from discussions of body politics and reproductive health and rights, to religion and ethnic cultures, to art and legal reform and much in between. The case studies from some of the pieces are especially useful as illustrations of the complex constraints on women’s human rights throughout the region. The book is an excellent resource for scholars in human rights, public health, literature, gender/women’s studies, and African studies.

Nour, Nawal M. 2006. “Health Consequences of Child Marriage in Africa.” *Emerging Infectious Diseases* 12 (11):1644-1649.

Annotation: Nawal Nour is a Harvard-affiliated obstetrician-gynecologist and director of the African Women’s Health Center in Boston. Internationally known for her work to end female

genital cutting, in 2003 she received a MacArthur Foundation Fellows grant for creating the only center in the United States that focuses on issues regarding the health, public policy, and legal needs of circumcised women. Her brief article provides a concise picture of the medical and social consequences of child marriage in Africa. The author says the common practice of forcing African girls to marry young, overwhelmingly constitutes a human rights violation. Not only does it prevent them from obtaining an education, the act of marrying may even prevent them from physically maturing at a safe rate. Nour focuses on young brides' increased risk for contracting sexually transmitted diseases, cervical cancer, malaria, dying during childbirth, and experiencing obstetric fistulas. She concludes that culturally appropriate programs from the government, international NGOs, and local authorities that educate communities and offer reproductive health services can help stop child marriage in Africa.

Nowrojee, Binaifer. 2005. "Making the Invisible War Crime Visible: Post-Conflict Justice for Sierra Leone's Rape Victims." *Harvard Human Rights Journal* 18:85-105.

Annotation: The focus of this article is on the efforts made by Sierra Leone's "Truth and Reconciliation Commission" (TRC) and the Special Court for Sierra Leone to address and redress the wartime sexual violence directed at women and girls during the country's civil war that ended in 2002. Legal scholars have written extensively on the merits of justice mechanisms such as truth commissions and courts in post-conflict societies designed to prosecute war crimes and promote justice, peace, and reconciliation. This author warns that although aspects of the international community now formally recognize sexual violence as a crime, most institutional efforts have been insufficient at rendering justice to female victims. Sierra Leone's justice commissions specifically addressed this shortcoming and largely delivered their promised redress. Her article praises these justice mechanisms for promoting a progressive outlook regarding sexual violence during wartime and for including African women's voices in the healing process of their state.

Obiora, L. Amede. 2004. "Supri, Supri, Supri, Oyibo?. An Interrogation of Gender Mainstreaming Deficits." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 29 (2):649-662.

Annotation: Though it may not be reflected in the daily reality of most women living in SSA, elevating the status of women has been at the forefront of international development initiatives for at least a decade. While acknowledging that a commitment to gender equality is an emerging international norm, the author of this article questions how well the concept has traveled across radically different histories, cultures, and structures. She illustrates her point by highlighting some of the discord resulting from African women's experiences with First-World gender-mainstreaming initiatives. Based on her work managing the gender and law division of the World Bank, she concludes in part that gender reform initiatives must be sensitive to the local African legal context instead of implicating African culture as the greatest threat to African women's human rights. She ends by relating some of her experiences with the World Bank to suggest that past gender reform initiatives have largely been sites for the production and reproduction of hegemonic practices.

Olowu, Dejo. 2006. "A Critique of the Rhetoric, Ambivalence, and Promise in the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa." *Human Rights Review* 8 (1):78-101.

Annotation: Countering prevailing pessimism, the author of this article contends that the 2003 "Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women" can nonetheless be an entry point for a new wave of women's rights activism across the African continent. The author acknowledges that before the Protocol's adoption the principle of non-discrimination had already been included in virtually all constitutions of SSA states. Nevertheless, women's marginalization in all spheres of political, social and economic life remain a problem. Her hope that the Protocol can change this is pragmatic and doesn't suggest the new instrument is qualitatively different from previous human rights documents ratified in SSA. Instead, she emphasizes that African pluralism necessitates formulating agreements like the Protocol in order to galvanize multilateral action.

Olowu Otoo-Oyortey, Naana, and Sonita Pobi. 2003. "Early Marriage and Poverty: Exploring Links and Key Policy Issues." *Gender & Development* 11 (2):42-51.

Annotation: Less than 5 percent of young boys under sixteen years old in sub-Saharan Africa are forced to wed, while over 60 percent of girls the same age are married, usually with children. The authors of this article discuss the "feminization of poverty" that occurs when young girls in sub-Saharan Africa are forced to marry before they have developed either an effective set of adult social skills or a body ready to bear children. Without time to acquire useful employment skills, develop the decision-making abilities needed as a wife and mother, or acquire the intellectual perspective that accompanies life experiences, young African girls are disadvantaged at the outset of their marriages to far older men who can then dominate sexual and economic relations. And because early marriage is not freely chosen by most African girls, its tendency to relegate them to lives of poverty constitutes a violation of their human rights. The highly accessible article makes limited and effective use of statistics, but offers sound empirical arguments for insisting gender must be specifically considered in discussions of SSA poverty.

Ouattara, Mariam, Purna Sen, and Marilyn Thomson. 1998. "Forced Marriage, Forced Sex: the Perils of Childhood for Girls." *Gender & Development* 6 (3):27-33.

Annotation: This article investigates how early marriage, non-consensual marriage, and marital rape affect girls and women worldwide. The authors are members of the "Forum on the Rights of Girls and Women in Marriage", a development group comprised of members who share common concerns regarding women and forced early marriage in developing countries. The article uses case studies on Nepal, India, and several countries in West Africa to explore the health risks that prematurely married girls face. Among them are risks associated with pregnancy, child-bearing, and receiving substandard care when they suffer injuries or contract HIV from early sexual activity. The authors argue that because children lack information about adult issues of marriage and sex, the use of force (to marry or have sex) in these situations is a gross infringement on girls' human rights.

Oyedokun, Amos Olugbenga. 2008. "Domestic Violence and Constrained Contraceptive Choices in Selected Areas of Osun State, Nigeria." *Sexual & Relationship Therapy* 23 (4):305-323.

Annotation: Violence against women, population studies, and global health issues intersect in this article that examines the impact of domestic violence—specifically physical abuse and marital rape—on Nigerian women’s use of modern contraception. The article is based on a 2003 large-N survey of 408 women in the Ife-North Local Government Area of Osun State, Nigeria. It uses simple descriptive statistics, Chi-square and binary logistic regression models to show that over half of female respondents had experienced intimate partner violence, been threatened with physical violence, or been victims of marital or intimate partner rape. Specifically, the study found that violence or the threat of violence significantly affected women’s use of contraception, as they often feared repercussions from jealous or possessive partners for doing so. The author stresses Nigeria’s patriarchal culture where men largely control women’s sexuality and dominate decision-making in the family. Thus, she concludes that educational initiatives targeted at men would be most effective at regionally decreasing violence against women and concurrently increasing the use of contraception.

Peberdy, Sally. 2008. "The Invisible Woman: Gender Blindness and South African Immigration Policies and Legislation." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 33 (4):800-807.

Annotation: The overall goal of this article—to explain how South African citizenship has been constructed as belonging exclusively to men—is achieved through a historical analysis of black immigrant women’s experiences in South Africa. Despite its brevity, the piece is packed with information on the discriminatory citizenship laws that women throughout sub-Saharan Africa encounter today which impede the realization of their full human rights. It details the ways female immigrants were legally subsumed under the affairs of men, how immigrant women were depicted solely as wives and mothers in national conversations about migration, and how this contributes to all South African women’s citizenship being determined through their associations with men. The author uses the South African history of female migrants to illustrate that migration policies have a direct gendering impact on national constructs of citizenship.

Randriamaro, Zo. 2003. "African Women Challenging Neo-Liberal Economic Orthodoxy: the Conception and Mission of the GERA Programme." *Gender & Development* 11 (1):44.

Annotation: This article focuses on the activities of the Gender and Economic Reforms in Africa (GERA) program, a pan-African research and advocacy initiative aimed at increasing African women’s involvement in formulating economic policies. Despite numerous promises to truly promote gender equality as a norm of international development policy, the author argues that free trade has in fact been the primary objective of economic development initiatives. The article highlights three areas in need of strategic action if women’s human rights are to be taken seriously in Africa—depoliticizing national economic policymaking, governing multilateral trade, and re-conceptualizing human security. Using this typology, the article gives clear examples of how policies stemming from reform efforts would look if formulated with a gender perspective.

The real difficulty, the author argues, is amplifying African women's voices over those of Western development policy makers who have largely ignored the wishes and needs of Africans in general, and particularly African women. GERA, she suggests, can bridge this gap between activists, researchers, and ordinary African women to better integrate all viewpoints in SSA economic policy.

Rebouché, Rachel. 2006. "Labor, Land, and Women's Rights in Africa: Challenges for the New Protocol on the Rights of Women." *Harvard Human Rights Journal* 19:235-256.

Annotation: This comprehensive discussion of the 2003 African Women's Protocol is valuable to any research regarding the effectiveness of international legal instruments in mitigating gender discrimination. The author argues that the Protocol ends up perpetuating a division between formal and informal employment without addressing the ways in which African women's work is undervalued or underreported. By vaguely referencing women's contributions to the informal sector when discussing their general and often unseen economic activity, the Protocol does not link property rights to land usage or to a woman's right to be free from discriminatory customs. These conceptual shortcomings, she argues, are coupled with enforcement problems and unless the Protocol is interpreted in a manner that addresses these concerns, it may only have a marginal impact on climate of human rights obligations in SSA.

Reddock, Rhoda. 2007. "Gender Equality, Pan-Africanism and the Diaspora." *International Journal of African Renaissance Studies* 2 (2):255-267.

Annotation: Thick with academic jargon, the worthy message of this article—that neoliberalism has economically harmed African development and the people (particularly women) of the African diaspora—is almost lost in a hard-to-follow discussion of globalization. The author's main points, which are quite buried, are that collaborative efforts should be undertaken among native and diasporic Africans to counter the hegemonic West. Thus, she calls for more technical assistance and support from Caribbean sources for state agencies and indigenous organizations focused on African gender equity. She also says that the transnational feminism that has propelled Pan-Africanism should not be abandoned in future South-South initiatives. The issues the article addresses—cultural imperialism, global South cooperation, international feminist influence—manifest in very real and compelling ways for women. A description of those would have been helpful and clarified the article's aim.

Stewart, Kearsley A. 2006. "Can a Human Rights Framework Improve Biomedical and Social Scientific HIV/AIDS Research for African Women?" *Human Rights Review* 7 (2):130-136.

Annotation: This article asks the following questions: Why are women in Africa more likely to be HIV positive than men? Why are young women significantly more likely to be HIV positive than young men? And what can the biomedical community do to make social scientific research more responsive to the realities of African women? All are aimed at uncovering the unique experiences of African women living with HIV/AIDS and making the international donor community more responsive to their needs. The author advocates adopting a human rights

approach in public health—which emphasizes non-discrimination, equality, participation and accountability—in order to contextualize the gender inequality jeopardizing the health of African women. The article also emphasizes the difficulties that arise when outside Western donor agencies largely dictate African domestic health policy.

Tamale, Sylvia. 2008. “The Right to Culture and the Culture of Rights: A Critical Perspective on Women’s Sexual Rights in Africa.” *Feminist Legal Studies* 16 (1):47-69.

Annotation: Focusing on SSA women’s contemporary sexual rights, this article compares their development in the dual venues of traditional SSA customs and legal or rights-based contexts. The author rejects the idea that “culture” and “rights” are in opposition and argues for a less constraining conceptualization of tradition than has been favored by mainstream international feminists. She uses examples from Uganda to illustrate the potential of creatively reworking traditional values and practices to overcome patriarchal control. She argues that much of what is seen as “culture” in contemporary SSA is largely a product of colonial interpretations and collaboration with African male patriarchs. She concludes that the social legitimacy “culture” enjoys across the African continent makes it a valuable avenue for gender transformation.

Tallontire, Anne, Catherine Dolan, Sally Smith, and Stephanie Barrientos. 2005. “Reaching the Marginalized? Gender Value Chains and Ethical Trade in African Horticulture.” *Development in Practice* 15 (3/4):559-571.

Annotation: Representative of a common thread in international feminist scholarship, this article is broadly concerned with the failure of legal human rights provisions to cause meaningful changes in the African women’s lives they claim to impact. Using case studies of Kenyan flowers, South African fruit, and Zambian flowers and vegetables, it looks at the relationship between women in the horticultural sector, the employment patterns of African producers, and the legal process of implementing formal codes or provisions on human rights. Through global value-chain (GVC) analysis, the authors trace the effectiveness of codes of conduct introduced from four different origins: dominant buyers such as supermarkets and importers (company codes), trade associations linked to various industries, and organizations in civil society. They conclude that oftentimes where codes do reach informal workers, which are overwhelmingly women, their coverage of gender issues is highly variable. They advocate for local-level implementation aimed at including all stakeholders to extend the impact of legal codes to cover more marginalized workers.

Tripp, Aili Mari. 2004. “Women’s Movements, Customary Law, and Land Rights in Africa: The Case of Uganda.” *African Studies Quarterly* 7 (4):1-19.

Annotation: The “double-bind” pluralistic legal systems often pose for African women is the subject of this article describing recent efforts by Ugandan women’s rights groups to oppose the revival of customary land rights laws which had been favorable to women prior to colonialism. Before the introduction of registered land ownership and privatization by the colonial powers, informal clan protections ensured relatively egalitarian access to land. But since decolonization,

these informal mechanisms have been eroded due to numerous social, political and demographic changes. It is crucial that Ugandan women possess land rights given that they are traditionally responsible for the household's food production. Thus, the work of feminists to pursue a rights-based approach and oppose reinstatement of customary land practices has significant implications for women who often do not have traditional means of accessing tribal lands (generally through a male relative). Although there is an emerging international consensus on looking favorably at reviving African customary laws, the author cautions that such a move should be examined in light of current gender norms and relations in Uganda before assuming traditional practices will benefit both men and women.

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). 2007. "Niger: Rape and Beatings of Women Seen as 'Normal.'" *Humanitarian News and Analysis*. (December 6). Available online: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=75720>.

Annotation: This news item comes via IRIN, the humanitarian news and analysis service of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. It provides an overview of the horrific violence that characterizes daily life for women in Niger and explores the systemic reasons such violence persists. One reason, the report suggests, is that Niger's male-dominated government has shied away from anything more than lip service when it comes to women's rights. Despite a law that institutes a quota for women's representation in government, only 13 percent of the seats in the National Assembly are filled by women. Coupled with lagging literacy rates—just 15 percent of women in Niger can read and write, compared to 43 percent of men—underrepresentation and poor education makes women vulnerable to discrimination both violent and routine.

United Nations Populations Fund (UNFPA). 2008. "Reaching Common Ground: Culture, Gender and Human Rights." In *The State of the World Population 2008*. New York: UNFPA.

Annotation: The delicate but crucial relationship of culture and human rights is the theme of this annual report from the United Nations Population Fund. The report is rich with some of the latest statistics available to the UN entities working in SSA. More than a statistical reference, though, it can serve as a springboard for further research into multiculturalism and rights-based advocacy.

Women and International Development Program. 2007. "Internet Resource Guide: African Resources." Michigan State University. Available online: <http://www.wid.msu.edu/resources/internet/wwwafrica.htm>.

Annotation: This Internet resource guide from Michigan State University's Women & International Development Program (WID) is a highly useful research gateway to online documents regarding women's human rights in SSA. A great source for NGOs and international coalitions working in Africa, the guide is policy oriented in that most of the links provide detailed information about the current SSA climate and future. Established in 1978, WID is the longest-standing program of its kind in the nation and nearly three hundred MSU faculty and

graduate students from all colleges are affiliated with the program. WID is recognized by the US Department of Education and is an invaluable starting point for reliable information on human rights in SSA.

Weiser, Sheri D., Karen Leiter, David R. Bangsberg, Lisa M. Butler, Fiona Percy-de Korte, Zakhe Hlanze, Nthabiseng Phaladze, Vincent Iacopino, and Michele Heisler. 2007. "Food Insufficiency is Associated with High-Risk Sexual Behavior among Women in Botswana and Swaziland." *PLoS Medicine* 4 (10):260-1598.

Annotation: This article from the medical field links the economic insecurity facing many African women with its potential to directly affect their health, specifically increasing their likelihood of contracting HIV. Using a stratified two-stage probability design, the authors studied the association between food insufficiency and inconsistent condom use, sex exchange, and other measures of risky sex in a study of over two thousand adults in Botswana and Swaziland. Their findings indicated that women from these nations often found themselves in situations where unsafe sex provided them with food. Thus, they suggest increasing women's access to food through targeted food assistance and by supporting women's subsistence farming will mitigate the issue. Other means of food production should be considered as strategies to decrease HIV transmission risk for women in SSA.

Weiser, Sheri D., Karen Leiter, Michele Heisler, Willi McFarland, Fiona Percy-De Korte, Sonya M. DeMonner, Sheila Tlou, Nthabiseng Phaladze, Vincent Iacopino, and David R. Bangsberg. 2006. "A Population-Based Study on Alcohol and High-Risk Sexual Behaviors in Botswana." *PLoS Medicine* 3 (10):1940-1948.

Annotation: In 2006, several Western development foundations enlisted ten distinguished doctors from the United States and Botswana to perform a cross-sectional, population-based study of 1,268 adults from five districts in Botswana using a stratified two-stage probability sample design to assess correlates of heavy alcohol consumption and gender-specific associations. Chiefly, the authors hoped to fill a gap in the research on how alcohol affects sexual behavior in SSA nations with extremely high HIV infection rates (such as Botswana). Echoing data collected from surrounding African countries, the researchers found that nearly 40 percent of Botswanan men and over 25 percent of women reported problem drinking. While the study showed that most significant correlates of risky sexual behavior were similar for men and women, the researchers noted a few important gender differences. Chiefly, lack of control in sexual relationships was associated with having multiple partners for both men and women. Women, however, were significantly more likely than men to report experiencing a lack of control in their sexual relationships and were more likely to consider this a key barrier to protecting themselves from HIV.

Win, Everjoice J. 2007. "Not Very Poor, Powerless or Pregnant: The African Woman Forgotten by Development," in Andrea Cornwall, Elizabeth Harrison and Ann Whitehead (eds.). Feminisms in Development: Contradictions, Contestations & Challenges. University of Sussex, UK: Zed Books.

Annotation: Calling into question the dominant image of women in SSA as “poor, powerless, and pregnant,” this book chapter makes a powerful case for a rights-based approach to gender advocacy. To illustrate that the agency and leadership of women in the SSA region has been misunderstood and largely discounted by the West, the essay discusses how the “othering” process that accompanied colonization today lingers in discourse about the endless victimization of SSA women. The author points out the marginalizing effect this had on middle class women in the region and suggests that the new rights-based approach to realizing human rights offers an avenue for reform that is more universally accessible to all SSA women.

Woolman, Stu, and Michael Bishop. 2006. “State as Pimp: Sexual Slavery in South Africa.” *Development Southern Africa* 23 (3):385-400.

Annotation: To explore the issue of international human trafficking in South Africa, the authors of this article discuss the “enabling conditions” of extreme poverty, unemployment, war, lack of food, and traditional practices that encourage the sexual enslavement of women in South Africa and throughout the SSA region. These are necessary but not sufficient conditions, however, for a flourishing human market: the authors say the South African trafficking market is actually fueled by a demand for sex workers, organized criminal syndicates, and the failure of legal imagination. The article is a creative attempt to mitigate the current legal system’s failure to quell trafficking in women. To do so, it outlines how the South African constitutional prohibition against slavery can be used to develop a legal doctrine of sexual slavery.