

Conditions and Challenges Associated with Women's Risk Sexual Behaviour in Informal Settlements Across South Africa

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KEYWORDS Food Insecurity. Housing. Unemployment. Transactional Sex. Women

ABSTRACT This paper reports on the conditions and challenges faced by women in informal settlements across South Africa. To comprehend how lack of water and sanitation threatens women and adolescent girls' health owing to abject poverty and unemployment, this paper employed a systematic review by analysing the primary and secondary sources such as theses, dissertations, electronic journals and government gazettes. Guided by multiple theories and models such as Emerson's social exchange theory and Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory, findings reveal that women are subjected to gender inequality and experience physical and sexual abuse, which, in turn, gives rise to sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancies and psychological distress. This paper argues that owing to lack of proper housing and electricity, teenage gangs and older men tend to prey on vulnerable women and adolescent girls living in informal settlements. Realising that cultural practices subjugate women, findings show that the human rights of adolescent girls are violated and caregivers do not report sexual exploitation by older men. Policies around children's rights should therefore be entrenched at the community level and schools to equip educators in the area of sexuality so that learners may take steps to prevent HIV transmission within 72 hours. In this regard, job creation becomes a necessity because when women with pre-existing health conditions such as tuberculosis do not cope with living in precarious conditions, they resort to drinking alcohol, thereby weakening their immune system and be susceptible to rape at the taverns.