

UNFPA'S POPULATION REPORT LAUNCHED

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No rights: Nearly half the women from 57 countries do not have the right to make decisions regarding their bodies.

Nearly half the women from 57 developing countries do not have the right to make decisions regarding their bodies, including using contraception, seeking healthcare or even on their sexuality, according to the United Nations Population Fund's (UNFPA) flagship State of World Population Report 2021 titled 'My Body is My Own' launched on Thursday.

This is the first time a United Nations report has focused on bodily autonomy, defined as the power and agency to make choices about your body without the fear of violence or having someone else decide for you.

The report shows that in countries where data is available, only 55% of women are fully empowered to make choices over healthcare, contraception and the ability to say yes or no to sex. It also highlights that only 75% of countries legally ensure full and equal access to contraception.

Some examples of violation of bodily autonomy include, child marriage, female genital mutilation, a lack of contraceptive choices leading to unplanned pregnancy, unwanted sex exchanged for a home and food or when people with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities cannot walk down a street without fearing assault or humiliation. Under its ambit also fall people with disabilities stripped of their rights to self-determination, to be free from violence and to enjoy a safe and satisfying sexual life.

"Women around the world are denied the fundamental right of bodily autonomy with the COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbating this situation... Realising bodily autonomy is essential to achieving the UNFPA's goals of ending the global unmet need for contraception, preventable maternal deaths, gender-based violence and harmful practices by 2030... We are committed to the cause," Argentina Matavel Piccin, India's UNFPA Representative and Country Director, Bhutan, said.

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