

## **A Tool for advancing sexual and reproductive health and human rights: Strengthening laws, regulations, policies and their implementation**

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### Issues:

Laws and policies may often hinder the attainment of sexual and reproductive health. Human rights provide a framework for governments to systematically identify and take action to eliminate such barriers.

### Description of the project:

A Tool developed by WHO and the Harvard School of Public Health is presently being field tested in Moldova, Sri Lanka, and Tajikistan. It consists of a method for compiling and analysing legal/policy data together with health data using a human rights framework, and it engages both governmental and non-governmental stakeholders in the compilation and the analysis. Stakeholders generate recommendations for action, allocating responsibility for follow-up to specific ministries and/or institutions and organizations.

### Lessons learned:

The Tool brings to light issues that governments find inconvenient to address, such as criminalization of homosexuality, sex work, abortion, forced sterilization of HIV positive women, and adolescents' access to information and services. It also begins to provide evidence of the added value of human rights to advance sexual and reproductive health by fostering the participation of various stakeholders in these processes, calling attention to accountability and the legal obligations of various duty bearers, and pointing to the need to address discrimination against vulnerable groups. Nonetheless, it requires significant effort, and to ensure participation over time of all stakeholders, including vulnerable groups, requires sustained national commitment.

### Next steps:

Field tests and expert opinions confirm this approach helps government and civil society to work together to assess and take action on sexual health issues - particularly those related to legal and policy barriers. Future actions will focus on the use of the Tool together with other methods of analyzing and addressing the ways in which laws and policies affecting sexual and reproductive health are being implemented.