

Eliminating harmful practices against women in Zimbabwe: Implementing article 5 of the African Women's Protocol

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Summary

Traditionally, women's rights have always been of low priority in Africa. Women have been subordinated under the auspices of deep-rooted African customs and cultural practices, compromising their fundamental rights. Accordingly, member states of the African Union developed the African Women's Protocol, with article 5 to guide states towards the elimination of harmful practices against women. This article assesses the implementation of article 5 of the Women's Protocol in Zimbabwe, in relation to legal, constitutional and policy reforms instituted after ratification of the Protocol in 2008. Although the assessment noted a positive domestic influence of the Protocol in Zimbabwe, the country still has a long way to go in the process of eliminating harmful practices. For the effective implementation of article 5, the article recommends the rapid alignment of marriage and customary laws to the Constitution and the African Women's Protocol. The article also vouches for effective multi-sectoral approaches which include litigation and widespread awareness raising on the Constitution and other mechanisms against harmful practices.