SOVEREIGNTY BEGINS WITH THE BODY

PROTECTING FAMILY HEALTH BY DEFENDING 45 YEARS OF AFRICAN HUMAN RIGHTS

Forty-five years ago, African nations adopted the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, laying the legal foundation for dignity, health, and well-being across our continent. The 'Draft African Charter on Family, Sovereignty and Values' threatens to roll back these gains by stripping away healthcare access, disease prevention, and state accountability.

The 'Draft African Charter on Family, Sovereignty and Values' is a Direct Threat to the Health and Well-being of Every African
This proposed treaty does not protect African families; it abandons them. Under the guise of defending "sovereignty" and "traditional values", this draft charter systematically dismantles public health infrastructure, blocks disease prevention, and strips away the state's obligation to keep its citizens healthy. If adopted, it will spark a continental health crisis, driving up preventable illness and death for men, women, and children alike.

1 Dismantling Disease Prevention: How the Charter Ignites a Family Health Crisis

By rejecting evidence-based medicine and public health science, the draft charter rolls back decades of progress in saving lives:

- **Weaponizing Vaccine Hesitancy:** The charter explicitly promotes vaccine refusal and actively undermines lifesaving childhood immunisations. Most alarmingly, it targets the HPV vaccine – which prevents cervical cancer, one of the leading cancer killers of African women – by falsely suggesting that "simple, alternative treatments such as antibiotics" can replace it.
- **Cutting Off Children and Adolescents from Care:** By requiring mandatory parental written consent for all vaccines, health education, and basic clinical services, the charter prevents young people from accessing confidential care. This blocks early intervention for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), teenage pregnancies, and HIV, leaving an entire generation highly vulnerable.
- **Trading Prevention for Costly Late-Stage Treatment:** By shifting healthcare policy from prevention (vaccines, screening, education) to prohibition, the charter forces families to bear the catastrophic financial and emotional costs of late-stage, untreatable illnesses.

2 Isolating Africa's Health Systems from Global Lifelines

Rather than building strong, self-reliant health systems, the draft charter seeks to cut African medicine off from the rest of the world:

- **Blocking International Cooperation & Weakening Emergency Preparedness:** The charter directs states to reject cooperation, clinical guidelines, and funding from international health bodies (like WHO and GAVI). At a time when cross-border health emergencies require deep regional and global cooperation, this charter isolates national health structures, leaving communities defenceless against future pandemics.
- **Starving Health Budgets:** By conditioning and restricting health financing, it cuts off critical resources for maternal care, childhood immunisations, and basic healthcare, translating directly into preventable deaths.

3 Stripping Away State Accountability for Your Health

The draft charter attempts to redefine "sovereignty" as the absolute right of the state to escape accountability for the survival of its people:

- **Emptying the Right to Health:** It reframes healthcare from a positive, constitutional right into a tool of moral policing and state control over private lives.
- **Silencing Independent Oversight:** It commands states to audit, override, and ignore national human rights institutions and regional courts that try to hold governments accountable for failing health outcomes.
- **Denying Care to Non-'Traditional' Families:** By restricting family-based health and social protections strictly to married-couple households, it denies medical and legal recognition to single-parent, grandparent-led, child-led, and extended family networks which represent the lived reality of millions of Africans.

The Progressive Alternative: Genuine, People-Centred Health Sovereignty

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We do not need a regressive new treaty. Africa already has progressive, home-grown legal frameworks designed by Africans, for Africans:

- Fully Implementing the Maputo Protocol (Article 14) & African Children's Charter (Article 14): This means guaranteeing every African's right to accessible, affordable, and high-quality primary healthcare, robust disease prevention, and reproductive freedom.
- Honouring the Abuja Declaration: True health sovereignty requires states to meet their existing domestic commitments by allocating at least 15% of national budgets directly to healthcare.

Call to Action to Protect African Families

As Africa celebrates 45 years of the African Charter, we cannot permit the destruction of the continental health and human rights frameworks that keep our families alive. Advancing the right to health does not threaten African families; it is what keeps them alive, strong, and whole. We call on African governments and legislators to reject this regressive draft charter and instead fully fund and implement our own continental human rights and health agreements.

SOLIDARITY FOR AFRICAN WOMEN'S RIGHTS
A force for freedom
MOUVEMENT DE SOLIDARITÉ POUR LES DROITS DES FEMMES AFRICAINES
Une force pour la liberté

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