Tradition Hinders HIV Prevention for Women in Ghana

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Religious and traditional obstacles impede the fight against HIV/AIDS and efforts to stem violence against women in Ghana, according to a new study reported on by *Public Agenda*.

The study, commissioned by ActionAid Ghana, states that in Northern Ghana, women continue to suffer illegal violent acts because of ignorance about women's rights and misinterpretation of religious and cultural practices. As a result, the fear of violence keeps women from negotiating safe sex; once they contract HIV, their status then causes them to turn to prostitution to survive, said Yaa Peprah Agyemang Amekudzi, the report's author.

According to the article, the World Health Organization estimates that 17.5 million women are living with AIDS across the globe, 77 percent of them in Sub-Sahara Africa. Current efforts to control HIV have failed to curb the high rate among women and girls in northern Ghana, according to ActionAid Ghana, because the efforts don't recognize that most women lack the power to make decisions.

"We are working on building and strengthening the voice of persons living with HIV/AIDS," said Adwoa Kwateng-Kluvitse, country director of ActionAid. "We want to increase their access to information and skills, especially the vulnerable ones."

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