

Members of Rwanda's Parliament have started in-depth discussions on a bill aimed at reforming the country's medical services. The first day of talks with the Ministry of Health was marked by significant debates, particularly on two key issues: one concerning surrogacy and the other regarding granting adolescents and young girls full access to reproductive health services.

Among the new provisions in the bill is one allowing a woman to act as a surrogate for another, in cases where a couple desires a child but is unable to conceive naturally. The Minister of Health, Dr. Sabin Nsanzimana, assured that this process would follow medical ethics and standards.

Another proposed change focuses on easing access to reproductive health services for adolescents. This sparked debate, with lawmakers calling for careful consideration, especially given the need to reduce teenage pregnancies. The Rwanda Biomedical Center (RBC) has revealed concerning statistics, indicating that 51% of children under the age of 12 engaged in sexual intercourse in 2023, underscoring the urgency of addressing adolescent reproductive health.

Regarding reproductive rights for adolescents and young girls, the law regulating people and families, which was enacted in June 2024, specifies that reproductive health services are only available to individuals aged 18 and above. However, the Ministry of Health believes there is a need for exceptions, particularly to address the issue of teenage pregnancies.

The Ministry of Health explained that the 1998 law governing medical practice no longer aligns with the fast-paced developments in the medical field, which is why it too is undergoing revisions.

These proposed changes are expected to have a significant impact on public health, especially for the youth and women, by ensuring more accessible and up-to-date medical services.