

## Contraception Depo-Provera: African Diaspora call for its ban/use on African women

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Contraception is a basic human right for all women as articulated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Every girl and woman should have the right to choose what contraception method, when they want it and how they would like to plan their families or control their fertility. Importantly women should have the right to enjoy sex without the fear or risk of pregnancy. The role of Governments/leaders is to ensure and support this human right for African women and girls including the assurance that the contraception methods made available to their citizens are safe. Depo-Provera or 'the injection' as is commonly referred to, is a common method of contraception widely used in Africa. Depo-Provera is a contraceptive injection that works by releasing progesterone slowly into the recipients system preventing ovulation.

There are significant concerns about the safety of Depo-Provera despite it relatively cheapness, easy to transport/access, can be used by women and girls discretely, and the many associated side effects. Marie Stopes International, a leader in family planning services internationally, cautions against the use of Depo-Provera because it may delay pregnancy for up to twelve months for women who may want to have a baby in the next year; the increase risk in weight gain; and decrease in bone density. Further Depo-Provera provides no protection against Sexually Transmissible Infections (STIs) including HIV. It is known that STI and HIV disproportionately affect African women on the African continent.

The literature is rife with information about the dangers of Depo-Provera with some countries including Germany banning the use of Depo-Provera out right on their citizens. The Rebecca project (2013) has highlighted the challenges of the use of Depo-Provera on African women. In many developed countries where Depo-Provera is still being used, **women provide informed consent** before it can be administered to them. Zimbabwe banned the use of Depo-Provera on it's citizens while Kenya recommended Depo-Provera can be used only with women 30 years and older and/or have at least four children.

Based on the evidence about Depo-Provera it is evident that the risks surpass the benefits. There are other cheaper forms of contraception in the market today that will provide similar/more benefits, at competitive or lower costs, with little risks and side effects to women and girls compared to Depo-Provera. Lilian Sepúlveda (2013), said: *"Women have a fundamental right to decide if and when to have children ... history has proven that even well-intentioned efforts to provide women with increased access to contraception can result in coercive practices if women's rights and empowerment are not at the center of such policies and programs"*.

We the African diaspora are united in calling on African Leaders and Heads of Governments to ban the use of Depo-Provera on the African Continent. That Depo-Provera should NOT be used on our sisters, daughters, cousins, aunties and other. It's a basic human right.