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Violation of Women's Rights by Harmful Traditional Practices

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ABSTRACT This article reviews harmful traditional and cultural practices which lead to violation of women's rights in SADC region and measures taken by the Member States to address them. It is based on secondary data collected through review of studies, reports, policy documents and surveys from various data sets from national, regional and international organisations. Traditional and cultural practices investigated include female genital mutilation, child marriage, marriage by abduction and virginity testing. Conclusions drawn from the review indicate that such practices have devastating physical and psychological effects on women. They reinforce the inferior status of women in society and continue to violate their rights and this has serious implications on the achievement of gender equality in society. Although States have put in place legislation and other measures to outlaw harmful traditional and cultural practices on women, these continue unabated due to persistence of cultural attitudes, lack of capacity, resources and commitment among the implementers.