

Lucia – Talking Points for EWEC Event (4 min. remarks and 1 min. question)

Hello. My name is Lucia Berro Pizzarossa and I am Women Deliver Young Leader. I come from Uruguay where I work with MYSU (Mujer y Salud en Uruguay) and I am part of RESURJ—a network of young feminists working for sexual and reproductive justice across the global south.

I would like to thank you Every Woman Every Child for the opportunity to be here today. It is indeed a wonderful opportunity to highlight how gender equality and fulfillment of rights can help to ensure the health and wellbeing of women, children and adolescents around the globe.

This year's session of the Commission of the Status of Women comes in very challenging times. As the Millennium Development era comes to an end and we reflect on what we have achieved in the past years, there is no doubt that we have made progress. But also there is no doubt that still far too many women, children and adolescents worldwide that have little or no access to essential, good-quality health services and education, no access to clean air and water, adequate sanitation and good nutrition. They face violence and discrimination, are unable to participate fully in society, and encounter many barriers to realizing their human rights.

The public health emergency triggered by the Zika virus, the environmental disasters around the globe, the refugee crisis among other pose new challenges to the enjoyment of Human Rights of women, children and adolescents and the humanitarian and fragile settings forces us to reimagine new ways to uphold our human rights and redesign our plans to meet our specific needs. And we need to make sure that our responses to these challenges are not just emergency responses, but are also radical—consistently tackling the root causes of these issues and addressing them in a comprehensive manner.

And in these times of pressing events and as Member States and other stakeholders engage in formulating the Development Agenda, What do we need to do to change this scenario for women, children and adolescents?

I think it is important that we build on what we have learned. The first five years of the Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health have shown us that it is key to recognize the multiple underlying determinants for women's, children and adolescents health. This is an important and much needed advance in ensuring that we recognize and measure the correlation between health and the experiences of people in different areas of their lives. These correlations are complex, intersecting and vast, but the consideration of determinants of health is absolutely essential to accelerate the attainment of the sustainable development goals.

Indeed, in times like this we must work on strategies that are grounded on human rights and have women, girls and adolescents at its center, strategies that take into account more than the cost-benefit of the policies or that have women as vehicles for economic growth.

The Global Strategy is key because it acknowledges the fact that improving health requires strong actions outside the health sector, through a multi-sectoral approach.

We need the international community and the national governments to ensure meaningful participation. We need to have women, children and adolescents directly involved in the decision-making process and that the process is transparent. As the Every Woman Every Child's strategy intends we need to give people voice, choice and control over their own bodies.

We need to advocate for the effective enjoyment of sexual and reproductive rights. And for that we need education, including comprehensive sexuality education.

Educating women, children and adolescents benefits us all: secondary and higher education, especially for girls, leads to greater health outcomes, economic growth, and poverty reduction. It is a goal in itself and contributes substantially to the achievement of the development agenda. Moreover, quality education means more than just reading and writing. A critical aspect of educating women, children and adolescents is making sure that we are aware of our rights and are able to make our own decisions about our bodies, our health, and our relationships.

One of the serious barriers women, children and adolescents face are early and forced marriages, as child brides are often forced to leave school, and are unable to complete their schooling. They are forced to be adults and denied the experience of Women, children and adolescents's lack of access to education, control over resources and assets and often solely carry the burden of unpaid care work. All this impacts on their ability to participate as full and equal economic and political actors.

These challenges call for strategies that create enabling environments, tackling structural imbalances and placing the human rights and health of women and adolescent girls—especially their sexual and reproductive rights—at its center.

It's time for sexual and reproductive justice!

Keeping this in mind I would like to ask one of our distinguished panelists a question about her experience in Malawi.

Her Excellency Patricia Kaliaiti, Minister of Malawi: There are still 700 million girls worldwide who are married before the age of 18 as noted in a 2014 UNICEF study, but I understand in Malawi things are changing: Can you share with us what has changed, and what does that mean for girls?

As we all know, the Zika epidemic has reignited the discussion about women's rights and sexuality in Latin America. Taking into account that the Global Strategy positions gender equality and human rights as guiding principles, I would like to ask you.

- How are women organizing and mobilizing to fight against Zika? And if you could tell us how community engagement and mobilization can be an important strategy for promoting women's human rights and holding the Governments accountable?
- Furthermore, you have coordinated a successful campaign 'Women won't wait'. Can you share with us some of your achievements and lessons learned?