



## **The Unequal 2030 Agenda:**

### **Improving Health and Rights for Women and Girls in Latin America and Caribbean**

UNITED NATIONS—By 2030, the world aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, but the new development agenda to be adopted by the United Nations (UN) in a few days does not live up to the previous, hard-fought commitments toward gender equality and provides only a fragmented plan to empowering half the world's population.

During the UN Sustainable Development Summit, from 25 to 27 September 2015, the 193 Member States will adopt the new development agenda with an outcome document titled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” The 2030 Agenda – to be implemented over the next fifteen years – includes the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the next generation of global goals to address extreme poverty and which build upon the previous Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Unlike with the MDGs, the process to develop the SDGs was inclusive, involving consultations with civil society and women’s organizations and other stakeholders. As the SDGs will impact every woman and girl in the world, their meaningful participation and leadership and greater investments in gender equality are required to implement the global goals and achieve sustainable development.

However, the 2030 Agenda, although ambitious, contains critical gaps in several important issues for realizing the full rights and empowerment of all women and girls. Namely, on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), the introductory and visionary chapters of the outcome document do not reference sexual and reproductive rights.

Furthermore, the SDGs themselves specifically exclude sexual rights, which were established as human rights in the Beijing Platform for Action, a landmark document adopted in 1995 that provided the roadmap for the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls everywhere.

In the Latin America and Caribbean region, the lack of access to and limited government expenditures toward sexual and reproductive health education and services serve as barriers to health and empowerment, especially for young women and girls.

“Adolescents are a population group with specific needs that require urgent action,” commented Esperanza Delgado from Mexico. “States must provide an appropriate, quality response in a timely manner, while respecting their sexual and reproductive rights.”

According to CoNGO CSW LAC (Committee of Non-Governmental Organizations on the Commission on the Status of Women from Latin America and the Caribbean), “In some countries of the region, there is no legislation that regulates basic sexual education in schools. In 2008, ministers of Health and Education in [the] region signed an agreement to provide sexuality education. However, the lack of provision is uniformly high in most countries and particularly affects girls.”

“Evidence-based and comprehensive education on sexuality should be incorporated in the official curricula, and access to contraceptives with adequate information and counseling should be ensured,” recommended Delgado.

Moreover, vast inequalities exist among and within countries in the region on access to sexual and reproductive health care, which particularly impact the poorest populations.

“In some countries, family planning needs are still largely unmet among women,” according to CoNGO CSW LAC. “Reducing maternal mortality is a pending challenge. Although the rate has declined, there are significant inequalities within the region.”

“In the global south, a substantial part of health expenses are out of pocket, and this jeopardizes the lives and the health of people, especially the poor and the lower-income groups,” stated Sivananthi Thanenthiran from Malaysia.

A rights-based framework is essential to the 2030 Agenda and strengthens the ability of women and girls to protect themselves from coercion, violence, and discrimination. State governments will be primarily responsible for ensuring the full and effective implementation of the new development agenda, and civil society organizations and other stakeholders will be instrumental in holding governments accountable.

“We must have clear, time-bound goals, “ stated Mabel Bianco from Argentina, “so that no stakeholders, governments, donors, UN agencies, civil society, or other actors can ignore or have an excuse not to develop actions and interventions to improve women’s sexual and reproductive health.”

*The Post-2015 Women's Coalition is an international network of feminist, women’s rights, women’s development, grassroots, and social justice organizations working to challenge and reframe the global development agenda. For more information, please visit our website at [www.post2015women.com](http://www.post2015women.com) and follow us on Twitter @Post2015Women.*

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