



Thank you to the UN women for the opportunity to be here today. It is an honor to be able to contribute to such an important discussion on what is actually needed to translate global commitments into substantive equality for women and girls.

I want to start by sharing a story from Peru. [Lundu](#) is a small organization based in El Carmen district and Chíncha, with a large Afro-Peruvian Population. For 14 years, Lundu has advocated for the recognition of Afro-descendant as a category on the intake forms at emergency centers for women (which was included in 2015); and most recent their second demand to include "racial insults or slurs" as a category of Psychological violence was finally included in the forms at centers ran by the Ministries of Women and Vulnerable Populations.

Racial insults are the most common form of aggression towards Afro-Peruvian women and the least reported. After 14 years and for the first time emergency centers for violence and aggravations, will collect reliable data on Afro-Peruvian populations, which can be taken into account in the development of public policies. This includes preventative measures of violence and discrimination against Afro-Peruvian women.

A few concrete changes linked to this have taken place including the amendment to the Femicide Law to include racial and ethnic-cultural discrimination as an aggravator; and the change to Article 8 of the Legislation on Violence Against Women, which included insult, stigmatization and stereotyping as punishable manifestation in cases of psychological violence.

The next steps for Lundu are clear - to continue to build the capacity of public servants so that they are equipped to adequately apply the questions from the intake form in order to collect information based on ethnic and racial differentials. In 2016 alone LUNDU trained over 100 public officials from the Minister of Women and Vulnerable Populations (MIMP).

What I highlight here is that tackling discrimination is a long term endeavor: It takes time, persistence, political will, creativity and the involvement of those most affected by discrimination and violence. These characteristics are necessary for the implementation of the 2030 agenda.

The need to build on existing and past efforts – Quality and Application of Laws and Policies

Over the last twenty years (ICPD PoA, Beijing Platform of Action, and even the MDGs), numerous laws, policies and programs have been developed towards eliminating discrimination against women and girls.



The implementation of 2030 Agenda builds on previous gains to ensure universal access to quality education; health and social protection, value unpaid care work, and improve women's access to decent work and livelihoods.

Despite efforts, discrimination against women and girls remains one of the most widespread human rights violations taking place in every single country of the world.

It is a fact that many countries have adopted laws related to women's rights and gender equality including on domestic violence, sexual harassment, equal pay, maternity leave and laws on equal pay and right to own property. However, **their application has not been comprehensive enough to address the complexity of discrimination experienced by women and girls.**

While there are as many girls and boys enrolled in schools, the level of literacy has dropped, the quality of education has not been assessed; girls do not always complete school due to early and forced marriage, pregnancy, childbirth and or violence. And while there are more women accessing contraceptives, varying and modern methods of contraceptives are not always available nor affordable (globally 225 million have an unmet need for modern contraception). Moreover, women are often unable to negotiate safe sex and lack bodily autonomy and reproductive freedom.

A concrete example of deficit in applying existing laws would be the Maria da Penha Law (2006), which combats domestic violence in Brazil. While comprehensive in scope, its implementation has primarily focused on criminalizing perpetrators of violence without applying the additional protective measures for survivors nor taking the steps towards restorative justice.

The second overall point that needs to be highlight is the issue of policy alignment and coherence

Regional agreements like the Montevideo Consensus offer a strong landmark in the advancement of gender equality and eliminating discrimination. The same can be said for the Maputo Protocol and the Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality and Agenda 2063 in Africa.

In this context the SDGs are seen as supplemental (promotion of care as a right, building parity democracies and moving towards the full recognition of unpaid care work). Regional alignment is important as many of these regional commitments have accountability mechanisms linked to them for member's states to follow.

The challenge of policy coherence and alignment is also seen at the national level. For example, Rwanda has undergone a gap analysis between the SDGs and national legal and policy framework before taking concrete steps in localizing goals. In this analysis, the



country has determined that for the most part, it already has in place the policies and legislations called for under Goal 5.

Therefore, an alignment between national policies, regional mechanisms and global commitments that respect international human rights standards, is essential for a stronger means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The issue of retrogression and universality

In countries, such as my own, Brazil, the transformative language of Agenda 2030 and its comprehensive approach have not yet translated into concrete action at the national level. And in some cases, what we see is the opposite. In Brazil recent measures around labor, welfare and fiscal reforms all have a harmful impact on women and girls. The recent measures adopted on outsourcing all activities of a company, does not consider that women, especially poor women, are the ones most affected by the revised law because they are the ones who experience the most precarious work conditions; and they have less negotiating power due to their double role as laborers and care takers. What we then see is the reproduction and increasing of inequalities, the perpetuation of discrimination, and the ongoing feminization of poverty.

Moreover, the principle of universality - the key message being that the SDGs “are universal goals and targets which involve the entire world, developed and developing countries alike,” hasn’t quite sunk in. This is seen amongst developed countries such as the United States and European countries that struggle to shift their sole position as donors, to one of implementers and duty bearers to the 2030 Agenda. The UK for example, has been heavily criticized by its own civil society and other stakeholders for focusing their SDGs implementation strategy on ODA and international development, rather than looking inwards to its domestic policies including addressing recent cuts to benefits through welfare reforms which will lead to further discrimination and inequalities.

2. Institutional arrangement to ensure action and monitor progress? What are the key challenges faced?

In relation to institutional arrangements, I’ll share a few examples of what is happening at the national level¹:

In Argentina, the national government has developed a specific area for the SDGs. They have reached out to civil society to work with the government to review indicators as part of their contributions to the National Voluntary review.

¹ These examples have been kindly shared with me through our members and allies in the respective countries.



Feminist groups are engaging with the government in assessing the quality of indicators under goal 1, 3 and 5. In addition, there are efforts to Implement the 2009 legislation on violence against women (Ley 26.485) through their National Women’s Council. These efforts include all ministries, capacity building and has a dedicated budget to implement the policy.

The 2030 Agenda offers an opportunity for the government and stakeholders to re-articulate between different areas with provincial and national governments to discuss existing normative framework on women's rights. It is also an opportunity to assess their application and implementation to bring about the change the national framework has envisioned.

The second example is from Sri Lanka and it offers a different analysis of how governments are prioritizing the SDGs and how.

As the Sri Lanka shadow report to the CEDAW committee (2017) reported, “the Ministry of Sustainable Development and Wild Life (MoSDW) has been tasked with operationalizing the 2030 Development Agenda with little input from the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs and insufficient coherence across the SDGs for gender aware policy development.”

The MoSDW has established a Sustainable Development Division (SDD), which is supposed to develop a Roadmap as well as set up a Sustainable Development Council. But there is no information available on how various stakeholders such as civil society could be included and be involved in these processes or whether there is cohesion between the SDD and the Ministry of Women and Child Affairs.

Last year the Sri Lankan President presented a set of goals that would be prioritized (1, 2, 4, 7, 10 and 11) and added that the government would continue to work to improve gender equality. However, it is concerning that the government has not placed due priority to goal 3 and 5 given that major disparities remain on gender equality including in access to sexual and reproductive health services and in discriminatory laws that violate the constitutional standards of equality such as the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act of 1951.

The last example is from Nigeria and speaks to the challenge of institutional coherence at the national level in implementing the SDGs.

In Nigeria, the government transitioned the Office of Senior Special Assistant on the MDGs to the SDGs. The office will be responsible for coordinating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The President has appointed the Senior Special Assistant to lead this office and a road map for the transition from the MDGs to the SDGs has been developed.

One of the challenges with the model is that the office sit under the presidency and works independently from the Ministry of Budget and Planning. In addition, there is poor linkage and collaboration between the SDG office and respective Ministries and agencies responsible for various sectors under the SDGs. **This has led to vertical implementation that does not take into account the integrality of the three dimensions of sustainable development.** For example, the Ministry of Women Affairs has not been actively engaging with the SDGs office; therefore very little attention is being given to the implementation of Goal 5 and mainstreaming of gender across all other goals.

Recent regional forums on the SDGs point to several challenges:

1. The need to improve data collection to measure the transformation expected from Agenda 2030
2. Lack of understanding of what gender statistics is which leads many countries to focus exclusively on disaggregation by sex alone (gender statistics calls for data collection and presented by sex as primary and overall classification; data reflect gender issues; data are based on concepts and definitions that adequately reflect the diversity of women and men and capture all aspects of their lives; data collection methods take into account stereotypes and social and cultural factors that may induce gender bias in data)
3. Lack of clarity on the institutional structures and mechanisms needed to reflect the comprehensive approach of 2030 Agenda
4. The absence of evaluations on the quality of existing policies and ensure alignment between global, regional and national mechanisms as well as coherence across institutions at the national level
5. Institutions are still not able to analyze programs by gender differentials in order to ensure policies and programs that reach the diversity of women and girls with the programs and services they need
6. The continuous reliance on penal policies to counter discrimination and rights violations without comprehensive measures to address their root causes
7. The challenge some countries face in prioritizing goals around economic growth and the need for taking into account the three dimensions of sustainable development

3. What Policy measures are required at all levels to ensure elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and girls?

1. First, as we move forward in nationalizing the SDGs, there is need for an assessment of existing policies that identify discriminatory practices in laws and policies including gender stereotyping. Measures should also take into account social inequalities and unequal distributions of power based on gender, ethnicity, race, age, disability, class, and sexual orientation and gender identity among other factors when it comes to access to SRHR services
2. Second, it is important to focus on the development and full implementation of policies and programs that promote women's and girls' autonomy in social, economic, political and cultural life and that there is financial commitment and gender responsive budget for their implementation
3. Third, there is also a need to prioritize data collection, analysis, and dissemination from a gender perspective that will help monitor and track the impact of the agenda on women and girls human rights, measuring not only progress, but also where there are challenges and where resources should be directed towards. This also means including indicators that examines structural, legal, gender and economic barriers that keep women and girls from accessing or using information and services that they need (including the prevalence of: intimate partner violence; early and forced marriages; unequal power relations; discrimination by health care providers; spousal and parental consent laws; conscientious objection clauses; user fees in health care services; and sexual and reproductive preferences and intentions).
5. Lastly, while there is myriads of recommendations on what measures should be effectively taken to eliminate discrimination, I want to make the radical recommendation that any measures must begin with **education**.

An example of the need to educate can be seen in a recent rape case from Brazil, where a police commissioner reacted to a rape case of an 11-year-old girl. The girl was raped by her stepfather and denounced by the girls' mother. In his statement, the Commissioner stated that the stepfather would be penalized but that the mother was also at fault and should be held responsible for exposing the girl to violence and making her vulnerable by having several partners. Where one might take this as concern of a public official to protect, this is actually a clear case of using authority to intimidate and strip women of equality in her decision-making. It perpetuates violence and alludes to this woman's inability to protect her own child.

This case elucidates the need for not only providing training to public officials but also to create due diligence and compliance measures in policy implementation.



There is an urgent need for gender training and capacity building with those responsible for the implementation of policies and laws aimed at eliminating discrimination. From health care providers, to police officials, to teachers and policy makers, we see reluctance and unwillingness to provide women and girls with the care they are **entitled** to, when they most need.

Equally important is the desperate need for political will and sustained financing directed at **comprehensive sexuality education programs**. This type of education offers an opportunity to **address toxic masculinity**, committing to preventative approach to violence against women and girls and LGBTI people from an early age. It can help children and adolescents value the role of women and girls in and outside of their homes and deconstruct gender stereotypes. This goes hand in hand with revisions of school curriculum, textbooks and teaching methodology that reinforces patriarchy, discrimination and inequality in all its forms

While not a magical bullet, education grounded in principles of human rights and equality provides a strong foundation to dismantle discrimination and violence against women.