

# SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS:

CROSS-REGIONAL DIALOGUES  
TO ADVANCE AND AMPLIFY  
OUR MOVEMENT



Action Canada  
for Sexual Health & Rights



**RIGHTS  
FROM THE  
START**



**This event is part of Rights from the Start, a project led by Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights and implemented in partnership with the International Planned Parenthood Federation Western Hemisphere Region (IPPFWHR) and local partner organizations in Bolivia, Ecuador, Guyana, and Peru.**

**Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights** is a progressive, pro-choice charitable organization committed to advancing and upholding sexual and reproductive health and rights in Canada and globally.

**IPPFWHR** is a dynamic, feminist ecosystem that embraces 135+ organizations in more than 35 countries that work together to advance reproductive justice.

**INPPARES** is a Peruvian non-profit organization working on holistic health with emphasis on sexual and reproductive health for the most vulnerable population groups.

**CEPAM-G** is an Ecuadoran organization working in Guayaquil, which offers community-based sexual education, support for gender-based violence survivors, and legal services for women, including legal representation for those seeking an abortion under the few legal exceptions available in Ecuador.

**Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association (GRPA)** is the principal organization offering sexual and reproductive health care services from a rights-based approach in Guyana.

**CIES** is a privately owned non-profit organization in Bolivia focused on social development, with vast experience working with youth in situations of vulnerability.

**PROMSEX** is a Peruvian non-governmental feminist organization which inspires leadership and strengthens inclusive alliances for policy advocacy on sexual and reproductive rights.

**Akahatá** is a grassroots advocacy network which is committed to providing regional support for the promotion, protection, and advancement of sexual and reproductive rights in Latin America and the Caribbean.

**THE RIGHTS FROM THE START PROJECT IS GRATEFUL  
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# CONTENTS

Executive summary	<b>9</b>
Context	<b>11</b>
Cross regional dialogues	<b>16</b>
What where the dialogues about	<b>18</b>
What did we learn?	<b>42</b>
Conclusions	<b>59</b>

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

**LAC** – Latin America and the Caribbean

**SRR** – sexual and reproductive rights

**CSE** – comprehensive sexuality education

**GRPA** – Guyana Responsible Parenthood Association

**IPPFWHR** – International Planned Parenthood Federation - Western Hemisphere Region

**UN** – United Nations

**SRHR** – sexual and reproductive health and rights

**SRH** – sexual and reproductive health

**ICT** – information and communication technology

# LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We acknowledge the territory on which the office of Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights is located. It is the unceded and unrenounced territory of the Algonquin Anishnaabe nation whose presence on this land dates from time immemorial. We wish to affirm the inherent rights and treaties of all the Indigenous Peoples of this land and beyond. This Project recognizes their positioning and relationship to the lands on which it is implemented, as well as the colonial history shared by the peoples of this continent. As a partner organization based in the Global North, we commit to honouring the resistance of Indigenous Peoples throughout the region known today as Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC).



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In March 2021, Action Canada for Sexual Health and Rights convened a virtual forum as part of the Rights from the Start project, funded by the Government of Canada through Global Affairs Canada. This report describes the lessons learned and impacts of the event titled **Sexual and Reproductive Rights: Cross-Regional Dialogues to Advance and Amplify Our Movement**.

**The dialogues covered four key themes:**

- Opportunities and limitations of strategic litigation as a tool for holding states accountable for sexual and reproductive rights;
- Intersectionality, contexts of marginalization, and the application of a lens of reproductive justice;
- Innovations in service provision during the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- The role of arts and culture to advance advocacy and activism for sexual and reproductive health and rights.

During the dialogues, experts, activists, and human rights defenders shared knowledge, practices, thoughts, and feelings, culminating in a closing panel led by youth to reflect on the amplification of youth voices in cross-regional movement building.

The dialogues aimed to facilitate the exchange of knowledge, render visible various struggles, memories, and experiences, and identify points of convergence, challenges, and opportunities to build synergies, strengthen, diversify, and expand the feminist movement. After the dialogues, participants were invited to collaborate in five working groups to generate strategies and recommendations for activists, organizations, and governments across the Americas.

**REPORT OBJECTIVES**

- 1.** Identify commonalities in cross-regional needs, challenges, and opportunities. Analyze linkages, common themes, and shared strategic priorities.
- 2.** Facilitate the sharing of knowledge and resources. Identify feminist and rights-based approaches that are being mobilized to defend the right to health and to claim sexual and reproductive rights.
- 3.** Make recommendations on SRHR to governments, civil society organizations, and individuals.

# CONTEXT

## **OUR ACTIONS**

The Rights from the Start project uses feminist and human rights-based approaches to promote and advance sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and comprehensive sexuality education (CSE). We work collaboratively in partnership with community leaders, civil society movements, educators, researchers, health care workers, decision-makers, and diverse population groups in Bolivia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, and Canada.

The project aims to promote SRHR for all people in order to guarantee the full, free, and informed exercise of sexuality and access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services which are safe and free from violence.

## **WHAT ARE SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS?**

Sexual and reproductive rights (SRR) are an inherent part of human rights. They involve autonomous decision-making over our own bodies. Each state must guarantee the respect, protection, and fulfillment of SRR through information dissemination, tools, public policies, legislation, and partnerships with society.

In the current context, these rights are continuously violated. Access to SRH is limited for women, youth, adolescents, and LGBTQ2S+ people. For this reason, movements and civil society organizations are joining together to engage in advocacy for public policy reform to promote bodily autonomy, respect for identities, and high-quality SRH care.

# SEXUAL RIGHTS

refer to the freedom of all persons to live their sexuality free from gender stereotypes; the right to sexual pleasure; the right to decide when and with whom to engage in romantic, erotic, or sexual relations; the right to CSE and access to information to enjoy these rights while remaining healthy; and to decide whether we want a partner or wish to marry or not. These rights also include the right to a sexuality free from discrimination, coercion, or violence.

# REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

refer to the freedom to make autonomous decisions over our own bodies, to decide whether we would like to reproduce or not, to decide how many children we would like to have and with whom to have them; the right to access effective and affordable contraceptives, the right to family planning, quality health care during and after pregnancy, or when a pregnancy is life threatening; the right to protection from discrimination in cases of unplanned or unwanted pregnancy; the right to legal interruption of pregnancy that is safe, confidential, and free.

## **WHY TALK ABOUT LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN? WHY NOW?**

The region is at a critical juncture. Feminist movements are gaining strength in some LAC countries while others see increasing threats and challenges to SRR.

Argentina's historic decision to legalize abortion is a turning point whose ripple effects are likely to be widespread. At the same time, the Congress in Honduras changed the country's constitution to make it practically impossible to legalize abortion in the future.

These contrasting realities grant us a rich learning opportunity to build stronger and more resilient alliances across regions.

# CROSS-REGIONAL DIALOGUES



**T**he inaugural event of Rights from the Start—Sexual and Reproductive Rights: Cross-Regional Dialogues to Advance and Amplify our Movement—gathered diverse activists from across LAC and Canada. The dialogues offered a space to reflect and share experiences on feminist and rights-based approaches to SRHR.

Drawing from the Global South feminist movement’s knowledge, practices, and experiences, panelists explored cross-regional connections, innovations, and shared priorities. They also discussed how these kinds of spaces can elevate youth voices and expand the feminist movement across the Americas.

# WHAT WERE THE DIALOGUES ABOUT?

# CHALLENGING THE STATE: THE PROMISE AND LIMITS OF STRATEGIC LITIGATION

**Moderators:** Sarah Kennell (Action Canada), Thalíe Ponce (CEPAM-G)

**Panelists:** Lita Martínez Alvarado (CEPAM-G), Gabriela Oporto (Prom-sex), Pooja Badarinath (Sexual Rights Initiative), Alisa Lombard (Despacho Jurídico de Semaganis Worme Lombard), Débora Diniz (Brown University)

## STRATEGIC LITIGATION FROM A FEMINIST APPROACH

Each state is responsible for fulfilling sexual and reproductive rights and guaranteeing access to SRH services. When states do not fulfill this obligation, it is necessary to make this known through regional human rights protection mechanisms.

These rights are under constant threat in LAC due to systemic failures, structural violence, and well-established patterns of inequality and social exclusion. In this context, strategic litigation from a feminist perspective is an effective tool for claiming human rights protection for all people. During the dialogues two emblematic cases of strategic litigation were discussed:

- 1. The case of Paola Guzmán Albarracín.** Ecuadoran adolescent, victim of sexual harassment and abuse by a school vice principal. When she learned she was pregnant, she took her own life. After 18 years of national impunity, the case was brought before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights which issued a landmark judgment against the state of Ecuador, the first in LAC on sexual violence in schools.
- 2. The case of Camila.** Indigenous 13-year-old girl in Peru who was sexually abused by her father. She became pregnant and had a miscar-

riage. This led the state to open an investigation against her, turning the victim into perpetrator. When justice could not be found in the national courts, the case was presented to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child seeking justice and reparations.

# KEY LESSONS

- 1.** Feminist strategic litigation is a fundamental tool for social transformation because it enables us to elevate claims to the international level when states fail or violate rights.
- 2.** Strategic litigation helps to build a spirit of solidarity because it creates an opportunity to identify cross-regional synergies and learn from other movements and contexts.
- 3.** Strategic litigation helps to build a bridge between social movements, human rights, and the justice system, while fighting impunity and demanding justice for the victims.

## **POWER STRUCTURES, SEXUALITY, AND GENDER**

SRR should be a cross-cutting issue throughout international law. Sexuality and gender are linked to economic, social, and cultural rights. They cannot be seen as separate. However, colonial legacies and neoliberal logic persist in the UN system. Paradoxically, the states responsible for sustaining the regional and international human rights systems have created a racist, classist, violent system which perpetuates inequality and exclusion. Therefore, the international system is not a solution to these problems.

Dominant ideologies of race and gender, together with the economic and political power structures in the international arena, are opposed to considering women and the LGBTQ2S+ population as political subjects. Using ultraconservative and reactionary discourse, they condemn positive language and attack SRHR.

# KEY LESSONS

- 1.** SRR are linked to, and mutually supportive of, the right to freedom from racism and discrimination.
- 2.** Decolonizing international law requires taking on the power structures of ableism, racism, cisheteropatriarchy, and neoliberal capitalism.

## THE RIGHT TO ABORTION DURING HEALTH EMERGENCIES

Abortion is both a human rights and reproductive health issue; however, in LAC abortion is penalized in most countries. This leaves many people with no other option than to resort to clandestine and unsafe abortions, which put their health at risk and can cause death.

There are specific examples which can be used to create global arguments for access to abortion, such as the Zika virus. Infection during gestation can cause congenital fetal conditions, such as microcephaly and neurological development effects. This makes the Zika virus a public health emergency with women and pregnant people in the centre. Brazil was one of the countries most affected by Zika, and the epicentre of infections caused by the virus. This led to greater public debate on the right to legal, safe, and free abortion in the country.

Abortion is only permitted in Brazil in three situations:

- 1.**When there is no other way to save the pregnant person's life.
- 2.**When the pregnancy is the product of rape.
- 3.**When the fetus is diagnosed with anencephaly.

The Zika virus has also brought new elements to the fight for the right to bodily self-determination. It has enabled activists and civil society organizations to advocate to reconsider abortion laws and expand existing rules and restrictions on abortion.



# KEY LESSONS

- 1.** The debate on the right to abortion unites feminist movements, who are seeing an impact after many years of struggle, while creating public debate on the topic of abortion.
- 2.** States must implement protocols for the prevention, detection, and specialized health care for girls and adolescents who have been victims of sexual abuse and unwanted pregnancy.
- 3.** Unwanted pregnancies primarily affect girls and adolescents who are at risk or experiencing poverty and exclusion.

## **INTERSECTIONAL OPPRESSIONS: ADVANCING REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE IN MARGINALIZED CONTEXTS**

**Moderators:** Eunice Leyva García (Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights)

**Panelists:** Daniela Esmeralda Vázquez Matías (Almas Cautivas), Claire Dion Fletcher (National Aboriginal Council of Midwives), Kelly Perneth, Adriana Guzmán, Kara Gillies (Action Canada)

### **EXCLUSIONARY PENITENTIARY SYSTEMS**

The reality facing LGBTQ2S+ people who are incarcerated in LAC is fraught with binarism and heteronormativity. Their rights have been constantly violated while in prison, based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

A historic debt is owed to LGBTQ2S+ people in terms of the protection of their rights, as they have been denied access to justice and due process and have been victims of discrimination, violence, and exclusion. Most governments in the region have not taken any specific measures to protect LGBTQ2S+ people in prison. Violence has been institutionalized through an absent state which is complicit in these inequalities and has not heeded their demands.

**IN LAC PRISONS, EFFORTS MUST BE MADE TO  
PROMOTE THE GRADUAL REINSERTION INTO  
SOCIETY OF THOSE WHO HAVE REGAINED  
THEIR FREEDOM FOLLOWING  
INCARCERATION.**

# KEY LESSONS

- 1.** LAC prison systems promote a classist, exclusionary, and discriminatory agenda against the LGBTQ2S+ community. We must work toward more inclusive, transparent, and participatory prison management.
- 2.** The COVID-19 pandemic has deepened inequalities and human rights violations against LGBTQ2S+ community leading to their incarceration.

## **FORCED STERILIZATION AND REPRODUCTIVE CONTROL IN CANADA**

Sexual and reproductive rights have been debilitated by colonialism. Historically, systemic racism against Indigenous women and girls has been legitimized through forced sterilization. These practices represent a form of ethnic, socioeconomic, and gender discrimination, as well as a grave violation of human rights.

Through rape and reproductive control, women's and girls' bodily autonomy is violated, causing psychological and emotional harm, such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and panic, as well as physical harm, such as gynecological trauma, chronic lesions, and even death.

Guaranteeing that women and girls receive quality health care in rural, Indigenous, and farming communities requires the intersectional reform of laws and policies, as well as broader transformations of the health and education systems. Attention must be paid to the real needs in communities, fighting for reproductive justice, and promoting bodily autonomy.

**THE NON-CONSENSUAL STERILIZATION OF  
WOMEN AND GIRLS REFLECTS A RACIST AND  
CLASSIST COLONIAL SYSTEM.**

# KEY LESSONS

- 1.** Forced contraceptive use is a violation of human rights.
- 2.** Currently, there is no global action to combat this contemporary form of oppression or historic discrimination.
- 3.** Not guaranteeing effective access to justice for those who have been subjected to coercion and other forms of violence against women and girls is considered state inaction and impunity.

## **COMMUNITY FEMINISM AND ANTI-RACIST FEMINISM**

Community feminism emerges from the struggles, memories, and knowledge of the Aymara women of Bolivia and Xinka women of Guatemala. It represents a move toward epistemological and political autonomy, and therefore a decolonization of being and of knowing. It proposes reinterpreting life as collective, and envisions another world different from capitalism, individualism, patriarchy, misogyny, and cisheteronormativity.

Anti-racist feminism recognizes the excessive colonial legacy which permeates all structures—economic, political, social, and cultural. This calls for the reclaiming of experiences of racialized bodies and identities in a whitriarchy (white supremacist and patriarchal society) which is also sexist, racist, classist, and cisheteronormative.

In addition, anti-racist feminism denounces the co-optation of intersectionality as a category of analysis, as it has become yet another form of neoliberal and state doublespeak; this happens, for example, when intersectionality is used by international banking systems. Anti-racist feminism proposes a return to those who originally introduced this analysis—Black women, Brazilian women, and others experiencing precarity—to remember those who proposed speaking of interlocking oppressions.

# KEY LESSONS

1. Community feminism is a theoretical and political proposition which aims to reposition struggles against patriarchy from the bodies and territories of Indigenous women.
2. Community feminism proposes other ways of understanding and practicing existence, based on a collective process of caring for life.
3. This requires deconstructing hegemonic (neo) liberal feminism, a white feminism premised on upholding white supremacy and privilege.

## **DECOLONIZING GENDER**

Community feminism and anti-racist feminism argue for the need to decolonize gender, recuperate memory, go to the matrix of these systems of oppression, and replace them.

Both feminisms consider gender a reductionist category which serves the system by universalizing experiences, replicating the social image of a heteronormative society, and covering over historic relations of oppression. In turn, this renders invisible patterns of appropriation, domination, and colonial exploitation of bodies, peoples, and territories.

These feminisms propose that the historic and underlying exclusions enacted through ancestral forms of patriarchy are also present today in the feminist movement. Therefore, it is necessary to continue deconstructing Eurocentric, white, hegemonic, egocentric, and (neo)liberal feminism, which is incapable of addressing what we mean by sexuality, pleasure, birthing, gestating, and raising children in community.



# KEY LESSONS

1. We must recognize the multiplicity of feminisms, which have been marked by different contexts, histories, and experiences situated at both the individual and collective levels.
2. The challenge is to construct transnational alliances, establish dialogues, and exchange experiences starting from a recognition of other forms of claims-making and struggles.

# LESSONS FROM THE PANDEMIC: INNOVATIONS IN YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

**Moderators:** Mariana Cruz Murueta (IPPFWHR)

**Panelists:** Carmen Ortiz Ticona (INPPARES), Becky Van Tassel (Centre for Sexuality), Pahola Peñaranda Villarroel (CIES), Nicole Cheetham (Advocates for Youth), Makeda Zook (Action Canada)

## COMPREHENSIVE SEXUAL EDUCATION, SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS DURING COVID-19

Since the beginning of 2020, the world has been transformed by a health crisis, which has increased existing social, economic, and cultural inequalities. Educational gaps and obstacles have worsened, and access to SRHR has been limited. In particular, access to contraception and comprehensive care for victims of sexual violence have been affected, while maternal health and postpartum care have been relegated as secondary concerns. In general, most health resources have been reallocated for the treatment of COVID-19 cases

The pandemic has not affected everyone in the same ways. This calls for addressing it based on an understanding of these different realities. Youth in rural and marginal urban areas have been much more affected since COVID-19 has also deepened the situation of precarity and conditions of vulnerability, widening the gaps of inequality and exclusion with grave consequences for SRH.

The health crisis has posed a challenge for organizations and youth networks in the region whose training processes and collective advocacy have been compromised. In this context, different institutions and civil society organizations have formed to fight for respecting SRR. They have been creating strategies, new methods,

mechanisms, and tools to take forward their CSE trainings for the youth of LAC.

Information and communications technologies (ICT) have been key instruments for substituting in-person services with online educational offers for people living in rural and remote areas.

**Taking the teaching-learning process online:** Education and SRH services are delivered through newly created virtual platforms and apps. Social media, radio, and television are used to deliver messaging to remote communities. The development of audiovisual materials, such as films and short videos with subtitles in English and Spanish, support sexual health education. They have also made use of virtual platforms, such as Google Classroom and Zoom, and have established cooperative agreements with telephone companies to ensure internet access.

**Development of technological capacities:** To support teachers, who have had to quickly adopt a new teaching model, additional support has been provided on how to adapt and prepare educational content for virtual delivery, as well as training on how to operate the new technologies to use for pedagogical purposes. There have also been technological competency development efforts for youth and health care personnel to facilitate the continuity of essential service delivery and access to care.

**New forms of service delivery:** The digitalization of health care has become necessary to facilitate the continuity of SRH service delivery remotely. For example, the ability to purchase contraceptives and pharmacy items online has facilitated their delivery. In addition, organizations have held various activities online, such as workshops, festivals, and dialogues, and have made use of social media to ex-

tend the outreach for these events. They have also organized virtual roundtables for youth to take stock of their needs and encourage their empowerment on SRH issues. Carrying out these activities online has broadened the audiences who are able to participate.

**BOTH THE DIGITAL DIVIDE AND THE GAPS IN ACCESS TO EDUCATION HAVE INCREASED. THESE HAVE IMPORTANT IMPACTS ON THE COMMUNITIES WHO WERE ALREADY EXPERIENCING PRECARITY PRIOR TO THE PANDEMIC.**

# KEY LESSONS

- 1.** During the COVID-19 pandemic, SRH services have been reduced because these rights are not considered a priority.
- 2.** The impacts of the pandemic are uneven. The people most affected were already living in vulnerable situations and have experienced a deterioration in their human rights and SRR.
- 3.** The pandemic has created an opportunity for generating innovative strategies and tools to connect with youth in remote places.

# BEYOND THE CLASSROOM: SRHR IN ARTS AND CULTURE

**Moderator:** Daniela Marin Platero (Action Canada)

**Panelists:** Amanda Kanbari (FOXY). Cayetana Salao/Caye Cayejera, Kyisha Williams, Elizabeth Grace Wong (Nuance)

## ART, STRUGGLE, AND RESISTANCE

Feminist art is a medium of knowledge and reflection that has been useful for promoting greater awareness of SRR. Through mediums such as film, music, theatre, dance, literature, poetry, digital media, and ICTs, personal experiences, thoughts, and feelings on sexuality issues can be shared.

Creative expression facilitates the exchange of ideas because it enables the weaving together of common threads across generations. It also represents another way of participating and thinking beyond the binary. All art forms can be a powerful tool for questioning, protesting, inspiring, and connecting with others.

Art can also bring communities together. It has the power to move people and to promote care and compassion. Art represents an opportunity for freedom, born out of a poetic and social emergency. The social context is what allows people to draw inspiration in order to transform worlds.

# KEY LESSONS

- 1.** Art helps to humanize the conversation on SRH.
- 2.** Art allows people to consider things that could be uncomfortable in other contexts and to speak of sexuality without social stigma.
- 3.** Art serves as a bridge between the feminist movement and broader social debates.

# AMPLIFYING YOUTH VOICES IN CROSS-REGIONAL COLLABORATIONS

**Moderator:** Daniela Marin Platero (Action Canada), Nora Loreto

**Panelists:** Asmaa Ali Habon Ali, Adriana Mendoza (IPPFWHR Youth Network), Kobe Smith (GRPA Youth Network), Donna Ng (IYAAP), Iehente Foote (Native Youth Sexual Health Network)

## COLLECTIVE ACTION AND EXPANDING MOVEMENTS

Collective action involves organizing to achieve a common goal, while expanding movements is key for engaging in advocacy and fighting to change the racist, classist, and cisheteronormative system that surrounds us.

The growth of movements creates opportunities to get the message out to more people. Therefore, it is important to maintain existing networks and alliances, while also building new spaces for solidarity and cooperation. These are useful for exchanging ideas, broadening perspectives, sharing lessons learned, issuing recommendations, strengthening capacities, and learning from diverse contexts and realities.

It is important to bring a diverse and plural group of people into dialogue, since a single person cannot represent all the multiple and diverse realities in existence. Movements must be built based on the experiences of all people. This necessarily involves meaningful cooperation, recognition of youth perspectives, a willingness to shift processes and organizational structures, and allowing youth to have direct participation in decision-making processes.

Efforts must also be made to decolonize spaces and processes, promote ongoing self-evaluation, and engage in continuous positioning based on an understanding of individualized sociocultural perspectives.



# KEY LESSONS

- 1.** It is important to maintain existing networks and to create cross-regional spaces where we can work together to strengthen capacities and have broader perspectives on the different realities and problems in the region.
- 2.** Cross-regional dialogues and gatherings must be diverse and inclusive to allow for knowledge sharing and movement building with a shared vision and objectives.
- 3.** We must reconsider the strategies of institutions and activists, avoid generalizations and flattening of differences, question and learn in order to create an active and ongoing positioning.

# WHAT DID WE LEARN?

## FINDINGS FROM THE WORKING GROUPS

**F**ive working groups were held following the dialogues to bring together experts in SRHR. A space for sharing and reflection was created with the objective of producing actionable strategies. The working groups were facilitated virtually by Talleres Solaris.

## **COMPREHENSIVE SEXUAL EDUCATION AND SERVICE DELIVERY PROGRAMS**

### **HOW HAS THE PANDEMIC AFFECTED THE WAY IN WHICH YOU DELIVER SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CARE SERVICES?**

The pandemic has affected all forms of service delivery. In-person visits have been replaced by virtual services, such as telehealth, telepsychology, and the delivery of contraceptives and pharmacy items; however, virtual care coverage has several limitations:

- General health care services are prioritized, limiting access to SRH.
- Public spending on SRHR has been reallocated to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Patients can express themselves better with health care personnel in person than over a virtual chat.
- Stigma remains an obstacle for people to seek urgent care related to SRH.

From an educational perspective, the innovation of working online and using virtual platforms, apps, social media, radio, and television has facilitated the design of interactive learning modules, which has enabled more people to access education; however, it remains to be seen whether online learning is as effective as in-person learning.

## **USING SOCIAL MEDIA HAS MEANT GREATER ACCESS TO INFORMATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE**

### **HOW CAN HEALTH CARE SERVICES RESPOND BETTER TO CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES?**

The following proposals are based on the lived experiences of working group participants:

- Develop technological competencies among youth and health care personnel to close the digital divide.
- Hold forums and events that are open to the public on defending and promoting SRR.
- Link up with community leaders to figure out what they need.
- Create alliances with the public sector to increase outreach.
- Generate conditions and mechanisms to close coverage gaps in access to SRHR for vulnerable persons.

### **WHAT SHOULD HEALTH CARE SERVICE PROVIDERS AND SRR DEFENDERS KNOW IN ORDER TO OFFER YOUTH-FRIENDLY SERVICES AND TO SUPPORT YOUTH LEADERSHIP?**

This involves recognizing and valuing youth participation in all sectors, understanding their needs, and allowing for their meaningful participation in planning, conceptualizing, and creating programs and public policies.

Youth social oversight enables them to have a more active role in implementing, monitoring, and following up on public initiatives. Youth need training and competency development, skills, and knowledge

to strengthen their leadership, all of which must incorporate a focus on gender, human rights, and intersectionality.

At the same time, it is necessary to continue building awareness of service providers, adapting practices and ways of working based on youth contexts and needs, and ensuring the physical, mental, and socio-emotional wellbeing of those seeking care.

### **HOW CAN WE CONTINUE BUILDING COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR THESE SERVICES AND FOR COMPREHENSIVE SEXUAL EDUCATION?**

Efforts must be made to eradicate stigma and imposed social norms so that young people can access high quality SRH services that are free from prejudice. It is important to create partnerships with key stakeholders (educators, health care professionals) and to raise awareness of the importance of tailoring approaches according to the problems and needs of youth in relation to SRHR.

More resources and financial support are needed, as well as the adoption of follow-up strategies, the opening of more informal spaces, and the organization of more community awareness workshops.

**WORKING DIRECTLY WITH KEY STAKEHOLDERS  
(EDUCATORS AND HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS) AND  
RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE  
OF TAILORING APPROACHES**

# HUMAN RIGHTS

## **WHAT ROLE CAN LITIGATION AND THE STRATEGIC USE OF HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISMS PLAY BEYOND THE JUDGMENTS ISSUED? HOW CAN THEY HAVE AN IMPACT ON GRASSROOTS MOVEMENTS?**

Strategic litigation is a feminist strategy for making visible the demands and emblematic cases of grave violations of SRR. It creates linkages between social movements, human rights defenders, and the justice system. It helps to generate debate on public policies, create jurisprudence, and promote legal reforms that contribute to improving access to justice and eradicating impunity.

## **STRATEGIC LITIGATION BUILDS A FRAMEWORK FOR SOLIDARITY ACTIONS BETWEEN MOVEMENTS**

## **WHY DOES A CASE TAKE ON EMBLEMATIC IMPORTANCE? HOW DOES THIS CONTRIBUTE TO ADVANCING RIGHTS CLAIMS?**

A case takes on emblematic importance when a human rights violation is reflective of broader patterns of exclusion, prejudice, traditional gender norms, or social factors, such as racism. This also happens when there are obstacles blocking victims' access to justice and denying reparations for victims and their families.

The case or complaint becomes symbolic at the national or regional level because of its reach and transcendence. It can become a source of law allowing similar cases to seek the same reparations.

Human rights movements should create campaigns and communication strategies to make the case known, and create synergy and advocacy through networks until they achieve legal reforms and new legislation. It is important to recognize that there is no such thing as equal access to justice. Cases that become known at the national and international level are extremely few in number.

**A CASE IS EMBLEMATIC WHEN IT MODIFIES AN ENTIRE SYSTEM OF BELIEFS, MORALS AND INSTITUTIONAL PRECEPTS. THESE CHANGES ARE REFLECTED NOT ONLY IN SOCIETY BUT ALSO IN INSTITUTIONS.**

### **HOW CAN WE CLOSE THE GAP BETWEEN THE LEGAL OR NORMATIVE WINS AT THE REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LEVEL AND THEIR LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION?**

First, we need to strengthen communication channels, build bridges, and work collaboratively with activists and social movements. We also must keep strengthening capacity and leadership among civil society organizations. It is also necessary to engage in lobbying work to establish connections with decision-makers and influence political agendas and actions.

Secondly, we must remain vigilant and create systems of evaluation and transparency to hold the state accountable for respecting human rights, access to justice, freedoms, and institutional guarantees. It is also necessary to adopt international principles and mechanisms as tools which complement domestic law.

**WHENEVER WE WIN A HUMAN RIGHTS CASE, WE  
MUST ALSO CONTINUE FIGHTING BECAUSE THERE  
ARE STILL MANY RIGHTS TO BE WON**

### **HOW CAN WE HOLD GOVERNMENTS ACCOUNTABLE FOR MEETING THEIR HUMAN RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS?**

The key is resistance, sustained activism, and advocacy to pressure states to respect and fulfill the rights of all people without discrimination. We also need organized civil society to participate actively in approaching supranational institutions, presenting complaints, and demanding access to justice.

This involves fundraising for human rights defender organizations and movements. It is also important that civil society organization leaders do not follow political party lines or religious positions, so they are free to advocate and monitor outcomes independently and in the spirit of justice for all.

**EFFORTS SHOULD BE MADE TO ENSURE LOCAL  
ACTIVISTS ARE LEADING THE STRATEGY**

## **CIVIL SOCIETY**

### **WHAT ROLE CAN ACTIVISM PLAY IN ADVOCACY?**

Different forms of activism generate advocacy, bringing about changes and transformation in society. Activism is an activity which requires persistence, energy, and effort to make a real impact.



Today's activists use the tools of communication and technology to help messages of struggle and resistance reach more people, amplifying their voices and bringing forward what had been invisible.

**WE AIM TO MAKE VISIBLE, GIVE VOICE AND STRENGTH TO THAT WHICH HAS BEEN MADE INVISIBLE**

### **HOW CAN INSTITUTIONS BETTER SUPPORT MOVEMENTS? WHAT ROLES SHOULD THEY TAKE AND PLAY?**

There can be no democratic state without strengthening the voice of civil society. When governments fund civil society organizations, there is a risk of co-optation. However, we must also recognize that in some countries public institutions play an important role for movements because they open channels for them to participate. Civil society organizations also play an important role as intermediaries between public institutions and social movements.

International organizations, such as the United Nations and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, play an important role cooperating with efforts to generate positive social change. Likewise, donor funding agendas must be reformulated to include civil society initiatives, especially during and after the pandemic.

Financial support is needed to carry out new studies throughout the region by civil society organizations in collaboration with academic institutions to understand which inequalities have deepened during the pandemic. Collation of national and regional data on the effects of the pandemic on access to SRH services should include variables related to sex and gender.

## **THE DONOR FUNDING AGENDA MUST BE REFORMULATED WITH THE PARTICIPATION OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS TO FACILITATE EMPOWERMENT AND SUSTAINABLE LONG-TERM SUPPORT**

### **WHAT ARE THE HISTORIC MISTAKES THAT NON-YOUTH LED ORGANIZATIONS MUST CONTEND WITH?**

The principal historic mistakes are adultcentrism and a lack of internal democracy in organizations.

Adultcentrism involves power relations between different age groups and a lack of changes in processes and mechanisms which limit youth participation in processes of social transformation. At the same time, organizations have low levels of democratization in their own internal practices when decision-making is left to adults, casting doubt on the abilities and capacities of youth leadership.

We must recognize and respond to the need for generational change to build relationships of solidarity between youth and adults. This necessarily involves a move toward intergenerational organizational spaces.

## **ADULTCENTRISM CREATES HIERARCHICAL INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS SILENCING YOUTH VOICES**

## **HOW CAN WE ENSURE THAT EFFORTS TO PROMOTE SRHR ACTIVELY INVOLVE THE PUBLIC AND LEAD TO MOBILIZATION AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL?**

We must design new strategies and find new ways of communicating to reach new audiences, since visibility of these struggles is key. Public dialogues and forums are one way to disseminate SRHR-related issues.

Sexual education programs must be comprehensive, cognizant of the evolving capacities of children and adolescents, evidence informed, and based on simple and clear messaging that reach remote and Indigenous communities.

The pandemic has led to the digitalization of content and programming which represents an opportunity for broadening informational outreach and designing youth-friendly campaigns. We must continue to make use of social media and other digital platforms. These tools allow for sharing and publishing content which promotes respect for diversity and the exercise of a sexuality free from violence and stereotypes.

**IT IS IMPORTANT TO BUILD NATIONAL AND  
CROSS-REGIONAL ALLIANCES IN ORDER TO COLLABORATE  
AND SHARE KNOWLEDGE, TOOLS, AND MECHANISMS  
FOR PROMOTING SRHR**

# ADVOCACY

## HOW DOES THE FEMINIST APPROACH TO DEFENDING SRHR DIFFER FROM STANDARD OR HISTORICAL APPROACHES?

The feminist movement is incorporating struggles and demands for building a more equitable and diverse society. This includes working with migrant, Indigenous, racialized, and LGBTQ2S+ people, building collective power and resistance against a vision which remains androcentric, sexist, white, classist and cisheteronormative.

This is why protecting and defending SRHR is done from a cross-cutting, intersectional, and intercultural perspective. Services and programs must be offered in accordance with the needs, cultural norms, languages, and specific contexts of diverse rights-holders, through accompaniment which is sensitive and respectful of their knowledge, practices, and ways of life.

**LAWS MOVE AT A PACE THAT IS NOT  
ALIGNED WITH PEOPLES' NEEDS**

## HOW CAN WE MAKE SURE THAT FEMINIST ADVOCACY BREAKS WITH ITS HISTORIC SHORTCOMINGS?

The main change involves working from the vision and leadership of grassroots organizations and foregrounding community efforts, struggles, and wins. This involves ensuring that organizations have more solid representation in advocacy spaces and integrating their voices in the design, implementation, and evaluation of advocacy processes. In addition,

donor organizations should fund local initiatives and avoid blocking their lines of work, goals, and institutional objectives. It is also important to ensure that civil society organizations have access to digital resources.

Another way to overcome past shortcomings is to analyze and debate privilege. Having frank and open conversations among people within the same circles can help overcome implicit bias. People in privileged positions should lead these discussions and transitions; this is how we can identify points of convergence, challenges, and opportunities, building a common language without replicating patriarchal power relations.

All of this involves intersectionality. We cannot talk about advancing feminist advocacy without being conscious of the importance of practicing an inclusive feminism, which is a key determinant for building coalitions.

## **THERE HAS TO BE A CHANGE TOWARD WORKING FROM THE VISION OF GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATIONS**

### **HOW CAN WE CREATE A LIBERATING DISCOURSE TO EFFECTIVELY COUNTER ANTI-RIGHTS MESSAGING AND ITS EFFECTS ON THE FULFILMENT OF SRHR?**

Communication should always be proactive rather than reactive. Anti-rights messaging should be countered, but this can be done by positioning the ideas and proposals generated by organizations.

New lines of communication could include the following:

- Establish and support mutual aid in communities. This can be

done by learning from other movements and from those who are working at the grassroots level, since real examples allow for discussion on the underlying issues.

- Place rights-friendly and pro-rights messaging in traditional spaces, showing solidarity among women and that there is a pathway for achieving positive changes.
- Take a proactive approach and avoid using the discourse and language of anti-rights groups.

## **HOW CAN WE CONCEIVE OF BODILY AUTONOMY WITHOUT GATE-KEEPING BY HEALTH CARE SYSTEMS?**

### **WHEN DISCUSSING THE RIGHT TO ABORTION IN LAC WITH CANADIAN AUDIENCES, HOW CAN WE BALANCE THE DIVERSE LEGAL AND SOCIOCULTURAL CONTEXTS IN THE REGION AND AVOID PERPETUATING HARMFUL NARRATIVES THAT ARE COM- MON IN DEVELOPMENT CONTEXTS?**

We must identify new narratives and integrate elements of harm reduction and legality, leaving aside stories of fear and criminalization so these do not become a fixed image.

It is important to communicate that there is access to rights by using clear, convincing, and transformative language, which helps to raise awareness. We can highlight micro-stories about experiences of abortion and activism in a positive light. This requires a completely horizontal approach that highlights the diversity of women who are active in the feminist movement.

We must modify paternalist perspectives, and recognize that autono-

mous spaces for sharing knowledge, experiences, and tools have already been built. This is how we can facilitate access to those who are already working at the local level.

**RETHINK WHERE OUR IDIOSYNCRASIES LIE AND  
RECOGNIZE HOW WE UNDERSTAND THE WORLD**

## **EXPANDING MOVEMENTS**

**WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO BUILD CROSS-REGIONAL ALLIANCES? WHAT ARE THE  
MUTUAL BENEFITS THAT OUR MOVEMENT CAN BRING?**

We must maintain existing networks and alliances. At the same time, cross-regional alliances can generate learning, complement existing strengths and capacities, and compensate for weaknesses of regional movements. Working alone is not an option; together we can develop a critical stance and share resources.

Alliances contribute to the development of strategies from diverse perspectives because they are born of a collective process of analysis. These kinds of strategies help to identify obstacles and potential mitigation tactics based on previous experience. Alliances help to increase mobilization, commitment, and support in order to adapt to new or different contexts.

**THEY ALLOW FOR THE SHARING OF KNOWLEDGE AND  
PRESERVATION OF HISTORY AND FORMS OF RESISTANCE**

## **HOW CAN WE MAINTAIN A DECOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE AND PRAXIS IN CROSS-REGIONAL ALLIANCES AND ENSURE THAT WE ARE NOT REPLICATING OPPRESSIVE SYSTEMS?**

We must develop an understanding of the diverse ways in which classism and colonialism continue to have an impact on experiences and identities. This involves avoiding generalizations and falsely equating different realities, as well as actively working to dismantle a culture of privileges, hierarchies, and exclusions.

We must recuperate and value community knowledge and initiatives. This requires constant questioning, learning, and active (re)positioning. It involves a permanent practice of active listening, elimination of core-periphery distinctions, dialogues with voices different from one's own, and a recognition that the centre of power and decision-making lies within communities.

## **SUPPORT SOVEREIGNTY OVER BODY AND LAND**

### **HOW DO WE UNDERSTAND REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE AND HOW CAN WE APPLY IT IN OUR MOVEMENT?**

Reproductive justice is a feminist concept that has to do with the evolution of gender roles. It is linked to various struggles for bodily autonomy. It is a multifactorial concept still under construction, which covers a broad range of social and racial justice issues considering inequalities and structural violence. It incorporates intersectionality and is related to a framework that goes beyond SRR.



The concept of reproductive justice helps to see the whole human rights framework and to identify the ways in which they are interrelated. For example, we can see the connection between reproductive rights and the rights to land when we speak of oil pipelines, extractive industries, and high rates of cancer and miscarriage.

Adopting a framework of reproductive justice requires collective action and emancipatory processes that lead to the denunciation of acts which aim to control and exploit bodies, sexuality, and reproduction; recognizing that migrant, Afro-descendant, Indigenous, and LGBTQ2S+ communities experience multiple forms of oppression and discrimination further sharpens our view of the conditions which violate fundamental rights and freedoms.

## **REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE TAKES A WIDER VIEW OF HUMAN RIGHTS: THE RIGHT TO WATER, FOOD SOVEREIGNTY, AND POLITICAL DECISION-MAKING**

### **HOW CAN WE BUILD BETTER ALLIANCES AND ENSURE THAT SRHR ARE CONSIDERED BY SECTORIAL OR ISSUE-SPECIFIC ORGANIZATIONS, ESPECIALLY THOSE WORKING IN INTERNATIONAL SPACES?**

This requires decolonizing the rights to health, sexuality, and reproduction. We must engage in constant questioning and repositioning, begin to develop a critical understanding of the perspectives of individualistic cultures, and question Eurocentric bias on the rights to health, sexuality, and individual reproduction.

A single person cannot represent a whole population, reality, or region. We must build spaces of collaboration, where there is commitment, representation, and meaningful participation in decision-making. Sharing knowledge and making visible findings and experiences are necessary parts of this process.

It is apparent that we cannot work on SRHR without addressing other issues. This is yet another reason to establish links with organizations working on broader human rights concerns and to identify points of convergence between movements. For example, SRH is absolutely 100 per cent linked to mental wellbeing: obstetric violence, forced sterilization, lack of postpartum care, and sexual violence all have major impacts on mental health. We must practice listening to other movements and learn from them to enhance the proposals and agendas put forth by movements advocating for SRHR.

**CONVINCING ORGANIZATIONS FROM OTHER  
MOVEMENTS TO WORK ON SRR AND VICE VERSA.  
IT IS NOT A ONE-WAY STREET**

# CONCLUSIONS

In LAC and Canada, there are patterns rooted in a colonialist, racist, classist, and cisheteropatriarchal system, which limit access to health care and violate the full enjoyment of SRR of different population groups.

Sexual violence, forced maternities, and forced sterilizations primarily affect population groups who are experiencing risk and conditions of poverty and exclusion. Regional systems are key for combating high levels of injustice and state impunity and advocating for the guarantee and enforceability of human rights.

Anti-rights groups have a growing presence in international structures and organisms. It is crucial for SRHR defenders to continue strengthening their strategies to confront this reality.

Education is an essential component for promoting, protecting, and defending SRHR. Access to comprehensive sexuality education is key for people going through adolescence to gain knowledge, make informed and independent decisions, and enjoy a full, free, and healthy sexuality.

The COVID-19 pandemic has deepened existing inequalities and forms of structural violence. The impacts are uneven; those most affected by rights violations were already living in excluded and marginalized communities, such as the LGBTQ2S+ population, and have experienced restrictions in their access to SRH services. All pandemic response initiatives must guarantee access to the right to health for these population groups.

Recognizing other forms of claiming rights, struggling, networking, and engaging in collective action is an opportunity for advancing and guaranteeing SRHR.

# EVALUATIONS AND IMPACTS

## IN YOUR OWN WORDS: WHAT DID PARTICIPANTS SAY?

“ I think we have a lot of the same underlying problems, and it was really interesting to notice that. We are working in such different areas, but we still face very similar concerns. ”



“ This exercise has been an enormous help to better understand our own work, our actions in terms of advocacy, and the importance of giving them shape and not just doing things out of inertia. Indeed, all these steps are necessary to continue advancing rights and keep from losing rights already won. What we said was to aim for growing and strengthening the movement, and that active listening is an important part of all the work we are doing. ”



“ This space has been one of exchange and not exclusion. This is a space of listening and respect. ”

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## FOR ACTIVISTS AND INDIVIDUALS

Continue leading advocacy efforts to make violations of SRHR visible and amplify the voices calling for justice.

Continue public debate on decriminalizing abortion and advancing toward full respect for SRR.

Take a proactive approach to communications, instead of being reactive, in order to position ideas and proposals that counter anti-rights messaging.

Continue advocating in suprastate spaces for the issuance of guidelines and judgments which favour the recognition of gender identity.

Explore options for creating regional and transnational alliances with other individuals or activist groups.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## FOR ORGANIZATIONS

Overcome adultcentrism and allow youth to take the lead in working for their own changes.

Generate resilience in educators and health care personnel to be able to overcome uncertainty, changes, and crisis situations.

Maintain and strengthen connections with community leaders to know and respond to the realities and needs facing communities.

Strengthen youth movements and networks, give them tools, and allocate resources for youth coalitions.

Engage in advocacy informed by studies, evidence, and statistical information.

Make use of regional and international organisms as a space for strengthening and amplifying demands made at the national level.

Build alliances, coalition politics, and collective advocacy as a means of consolidating nuclei of resistance against systemic and institutional oppression.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## FOR GOVERNMENTS

Create conditions that facilitate the accessibility, availability, and free provision of SRH services for population groups experiencing precarity and exclusion.

Generate mechanisms and legal guidelines that facilitate access to safe and free abortion.

Publish up-to-date SRH service directories so all people can access and request support based on their needs.

Adopt public policies with a gender and child-centered perspective, ensuring that spaces within educational and public institutions are free from harassment and sexual violence.

Implement protocols for the prevention, detection, and care of victims of sexual abuse and unwanted pregnancies.

Strengthen institutional procedures and mechanisms to facilitate access to justice and reparation for victims of sexual violence and forced parenthood.



Facilitate training and awareness-raising programs on SRR, gender, and diversity for health and prison administration personnel.

Adopt public policies that promote social inclusion and guarantee the physical, psychological, and emotional wellbeing of LGBTQ2S+ people who are incarcerated.

Implement public policies focused on comprehensive sexuality education inside and outside schools.

Prepare comprehensive sexuality education curricula which are informed by evidence and have meaningful youth participation.

Include a gender and intersectionality perspective in all legislation and policies to fulfill the human rights of diverse and plural populations.

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