**Intersessional Expert Meeting**

**Mainstreaming Gender Perspective into the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda**

**Strengthening Accountability** **for the 2030 Agenda: *UPR Review Process- UNFPA***

One of the key challenges in operationalising the human rights based dimension of the SDG agenda, is that of accountability.

“Marrying” (to use the term from CEDAW expert) the SDG processes and international human rights mechanisms is key to giving them “teeth”- accountability for meeting the goals.

In this presentation I am going to touch upon 3 recent initiatives UNFPA has taking forward with the aim to strengthen accountability on gender equality- with a focus on SRHR.

The first, is our engagement at global and country level with the Universal Periodic Review. This mechanism has provided a huge opportunity for advocacy, multi-stakeholder dialogue and accountability to advance gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights in countries.

To maximize the opportunity that the UPR presents for advancing accountability on SRHR, at the global level we carried two assessments of each of the two completed cycles of the UPR from the perspective of SRHR – the first cycle from 2008-2012, and an analysis we are just completing, on the second cycle from 2013-2017. As we believe that key to women’ ability to access SRHR, is her ability to decide freely on all matters related to her sexual and reproductive health, gender equality is included as part of this analysis.

The analysis found that sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights issues were among the most frequently cited in the first cycle of UPR recommendations: of the **21,956** recommendations made in the first cycle, **5,720** (26 percent) pertained to SRHR and gender equality, and of these, 77 percent were formally accepted by member states. In the review of the second cycle of the UPR, the analysis has found that the percentage of SRHR recommendations have increased, from 26% to 28%. Within these figures, Gender Equality and GBV, received by far the highest number of recommendations, doubling from the first to the second cycle, with over 5000 recommendations in these two areas.

And, when we looked at the extent to which States have taken action on the recommendations, we found that from the State Reports, 63 % of States reported to have taken action on at least three quarters of SRHR recommendations from its first cycle.

Our analysis also found however, that when we look at these recommendations more closely, there have been far more recommendations on very broad issues such as gender equality and gender based violence, than on specific issues such as sexuality education or contraception. For example, there were only 34 recommendations on early pregnancy and 23 on contraception.

In addition, recommendations are often phrased in vague terms, for example “improve maternal mortality”. Only about one-third of UPR recommendations over both cycles have been specific and action-oriented.

Some recommendations are also repetitive, for example Uganda received 10 recommendations on ratifying the OP to CEDAW- if recommendations were more unique would broaden the range and reach of the UPR on human rights issues.

In conclusion, the UPR offers a huge opportunity for accountability and tracking State Progress. However, its potential could be maximized.

**Now, the question, is how can we better bring together the wealth of information from the reporting and recommendations to the SDG reporting process?**

A second initiative we carried out, and in collaboration with Tarcila and Chirapaq, is a review of recommendations of the UNFPII in regards to SRHR and GBV issues and the extent to which these have been implemented. The Study aims to better understand the achievements, limits, barriers and scope of the recommendations of the Permanent Forum for generating actions to achieve progress in the exercise of indigenous women’s rights.

The Study found that:

1. In its 16 sessions, only 16 per cent of the recommendations made by the Permanent Forum explicitly focus on the situation of indigenous women, girls and gender equality. Only 3 per cent relate to sexual and reproductive health and 6 per cent to gender based violence.
2. The Forum has issued 170 recommendations specifically aimed at improving the situation of indigenous women; however, only 10 have been reported as “completed”
3. One of the main challenges the Forum faces is the low response rate it receives from UN Member States. In the 16 years the Forum has been held, only 37 UN Member States have submitted reports for the annual Sessions. Of them, only one country (Mexico) has sent more than 10 reports, while most have sent one or two reports in total. In addition, these reports often focus on process and activities but not results.

The Study identified the key inhibiting and enabling factors for the Permanent Forum to take action. These include such issues as the limited budget and low priority given to indigenous women’s issues in the country; lack of disaggregated information; and lack of mechanisms and processes in the country to follow up to the recommendations. It also included the lack of coordination and synergies across the different UN HR and development mechanisms- from the UNFPII to HRC, to HLPF, and synergies across even the different mechanisms supporting indigenous people’s rights.

Finally, going down to the country level, UNFPA has also been working to strengthen the capacity of NHRIs to monitor SRHR issues as part of their work.

I don’t have time to go into details here. But will mention to country examples- Azerbaijan and Guatemala, which illustrate in a very practical way how these mechanisms can strengthen accountability for gender and SRHR issues at the country level, and the huge potential to channel these process into the SDG voluntary national reviews.

In both countries a national assessment of SRHR was carried out which culminated in the development of a M&E framework to track regularly and systematically states’ progress on SRHR. In Azerbaijan, based on the latest CEDAW and UPR recommendations, the NHRI developed indicators in five specific areas- abortion, maternal health, violence against women, CSW, and HIV- to track progress by the Government in meeting these human rights obligations. The NHRI reached an agreement with the government, to update the indicator matrix bi-annually.

In Guatemala, the Ombudsperson Office developed a standardized system for monitoring and evaluating the status of SRHR in the country, to be used on an annual basis.

These initiatives will provide important sources of information for strengthening accountability. Now a key step is to ensure that that information is channelled into SDG report.

This work we have done at global and national level has showed us the strong potential of these mechanisms for generating accountability, policy dialogue and advocacy on gender issues. There are ways in which their potential can be further maximised. Key will be finding ways to institutionalise the linkages/synergies between the UN’s human rights and development mechanisms.