

Thematic Dialogue

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). Understanding challenges to bodily autonomy, access, and respect of SRHR, with a focus on the COVID-19 context.

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One of the Beijing Platform for Action main concern was women's right to enjoy the highest possible level of physical and mental health. It makes it clear that health is not only the absence of diseases or ailments, but a state of full physical, mental and social well-being.

The human right of people to exercise autonomy over their sexuality, express it and relate, interact, and establish relationships freely with other people without experiencing any form of coercion, violence, or discrimination, as well as to decide whether to have children or not and when to do so, is fundamental for the exercise of autonomy in all other areas of life. But the human rights of women, trans people and others who challenge mandated gender roles, girls and adolescent girls are regularly violated and are the target of intense attacks by religious institutions and authoritarian governments. Strengthening women's sexual and reproductive health and rights is a critical lever. **In 2019, 190 million women of reproductive age worldwide who wanted to avoid pregnancy did not use any contraceptive method.** Improved access to family planning, for example, helps reduce poverty and improve health. By preventing unwanted pregnancies, it enables adolescent girls to finish school and support women's participations in the labor force.

Underinvestment in primary public health care services as well as deficits of skilled and well-trained health workers, further reduces the availability of services.

In the current context of the pandemic, the life of the majority of the world's women has been seriously affected by COVID-19 and by the measures adopted by governments. Another risk is the shortage of contraceptive methods, either because there is not enough supply in the public sector or because the economic crisis caused by the pandemic makes it difficult or impossible for women to acquire contraceptives in the private sector. **According to UN Population Division data, at the end of 2020 the percentage of all women of reproductive age reporting unmet need for modern contraceptives will increase from 11.4% to 14.5% (optimistic scenario) or from 11.4% to 17.7% (pessimistic scenario).** Likewise, the global maternal mortality ratio has fallen by 38% between 2000 and 2017 but is still too high. Also, a crucial issue to consider is the risks that women run from unsafe abortions, since in many countries the legal interruption of pregnancy is not contemplated in the regulations.

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