

51st session of the Human Rights Council

Panel discussion on the negative impact of the legacies of colonialism on the enjoyment of human rights

Thank you Mr President. This statement is a joint statement.

Colonialism has created inequity and power imbalance within the global health systems, leaving those that were most affected by colonialism vulnerable, inadequate and broken. Racism is rooted in colonial legacies, and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) are intrinsically linked to global racial justice. Abhorrent practices such as forced sterilisation, socially weaponised birth control, and continued discourse on the theory of "over-population", all allow for and have repercussions that are still significantly prevalent today.

Young people worldwide, including myself, are experiencing poor health outcomes, stemming from the global health inequalities and post-colonialism effects. We are constantly hit by inadequate access, archaic laws affecting equitable health care, unfriendly health systems due to years of misplaced priorities dating back to colonial days and limited options in health care access. Colonial laws are largely not a reflection of the views and needs of the people and have an impeding effect on local laws and policies, particularly those on SRHR. Criminalization, sanctions and fines on matters considered not at par with 'religious moral standards' is a common colonial legislative approach. On top of the stigma youth face, features such as third-party consent is a key barrier when seeking SRH services. Thus, continued criminalization of health conditions and services, such TB, HIV/AIDS, and abortion services, has inculcated stigma in societies, as well as health professionals.

We urge States therefore to ensure all global health research use gender, age and ethnicity disaggregated-data to effectively document and address impacts of racism and colonial legacies on SRHR. Additionally, we call on states to hold consultations with and invest in feminist, youth-led and youth-focused organisations to create, finance and implement community-responsible health policies based on ideals of decolonization.

Thank you.

Sources:

<https://www.icrw.org/publications/srhr-and-justice-a-closer-look-at-the-historical-impacts-of-racism-and-colonialism/>

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<https://reliefweb.int/report/world/sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-rights-srhr-climate-issue-recommendations-us-foreign>

<https://arrow.org.my/publication/understanding-catholic-fundamentalism-philippines-conservative-religious-teachings-women-family-contraception-wielded-impede-reproductive-health-law-reproducti/>

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