

Medicus Mundi International

Meeting: Seventy-first World Health Assembly (A71/1)

Agenda Item: 12.3 Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health (2016–2030): sexual and reproductive health, interpersonal violence, and early childhood development

Statement:

MMI takes this opportunity to address the WHA. The statement is supported by PHM.

The Global Strategy and the Operational Plan anticipates a range of prudent and strategic initiatives. However, while ensuring access to health care services for women, adolescent and children, there are several other determinants that need urgent attention. We urge MS to safeguard and enhance women's general welfare and social position of women in order to close the current gender inequality gap. Women and girls account for 71% of all human trafficking victims and 1 in 3 women worldwide have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime. Gender based empowerment should go beyond binaries, for example, 23% of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender interviewed in the EU indicated having experienced physical and/or sexual violence.

Patriarchy, socio-ecological, economic and political structures, with historical and regional differences, encompass all aspects of women's and girls' lives. We wish to emphasize that women's health needs are not just linked to their reproductive role. Liberalizing abortion laws to allow services to be provided by skilled health personnel reduce the rate of abortion-related morbidity and mortality. 68,000 women die of unsafe abortion annually, making it one of the leading causes of maternal mortality (13%) and the annual costs are estimated at US\$ 553 million. Thus the Global Gag rule poses an additional risk to women's health and lives. Neonatal mortality rate, under-5 mortality rate and prevalence of stunting still remain grossly unequal when compared across regions.

Major determinants of poor health during childhood include sub-optimal nutrition, unhealthy environment and lack of opportunities for development of cognitive skills which needs to be addressed as a priority. We urge MS to strengthen health systems with a clear focus on community-based interventions, provided in the first instance, through community health workers with fair working conditions.