



FROM COMMITMENT TO ACTION ON SEXUAL
AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS

Lessons From the Second Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review

EQUALITY JUSTICE HUMAN RIGHTS ACCOUNTABILITY
NON-DISCRIMINATION PARTICIPATION CIVIL SOCIETY SRHR ACT CHANGE IMPLEMENTATION
STAKEHOLDERS INVESTMENT OBLIGATIONS DIALOGUE HUMAN RIGHTS



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CYCLE 2

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AIDS	acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CSO	civil society organization
FGM	female genital mutilation
HIV/AIDS	human immunodeficiency virus
HRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
LGBTI	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex
NHRI	national human rights institution
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
SRHR	sexual and reproductive health and rights
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SuR	State under review
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
ZHRC	National Human Rights Commission of Zambia

Summary

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a unique human rights monitoring mechanism where the human rights record of each of the 193 United Nations Member States is reviewed every 4.5 years by other Member States. During the second cycle (2012–16), the UPR continued to facilitate dialogue between Member States on the critical human rights issues of our time, and positioned the mechanism as an important platform to advance sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and strengthen accountability for SRHR.

This report follows up the United Nations Population Fund's (UNFPA) 2014 report from the first cycle of the UPR, *Lessons from the First Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review: From Commitment to Action on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights*. The 2014 report showed that more than a quarter of all recommendations and voluntary commitments related to SRHR.

This report assesses the successes, challenges and opportunities that the second cycle offered, and how these lessons can inform and support governments, the United Nations system, civil society and other stakeholders engage throughout the third cycle.

With national and global attention focused on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the UPR can play an important role in guiding action and strengthening accountability. The UPR can accelerate SDG implementation by identifying critical issues and groups that need attention and requiring States to take action. It can also help assess SDG implementation by highlighting progress made and remaining gaps. Moreover, as the SDGs do not cover all aspects of SRHR, the UPR can help ensure continued political attention and accountability on all dimensions of SRHR.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights in the second cycle of the universal periodic review

More than 10,000 SRHR-related recommendations were made during the second cycle, accounting for more than a quarter of all recommendations, and of these, 76% were accepted by States. This continuing and increasing engagement on SRHR issues by Member States reinforces the mechanism

TABLE 1

Numbers of recommendations and voluntary commitments

Recommendation type	CYCLE 1	CYCLE 2
Overall number of recommendations	21,355	36,331
Number of SRHR-related recommendations	5,662	10,364
SRHR-related recommendations as a percentage of overall recommendations (%)	27	29
Number of SRHR-related voluntary commitments	24	46

SRHR = sexual and reproductive health and rights



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as an important tool in upholding and strengthening accountability for SRHR.

Similar to the first cycle, second cycle recommendations, however, highlight stark differences in attention to different SRHR issues by reviewing States. For example, gender equality and violence against women received more than 4,000 recommendations in total. Whereas other SRHR issues such as sexuality education, early pregnancy, and contraception received 23, 35, and 48 recommendations respectively. A comparative analysis of overall SRHR recommendations excluding gender equality and gender-based violence issues is revealing. The proportion of SRHR recommendations significantly

decreases when these issues are excluded from the analysis: only approximately one tenth of all recommendations address SRHR issues other than gender equality and gender-based violence.

As all these issues constitute important elements of SRHR, it will be important to address such unbalanced outcomes to ensure that all components of SRHR receive adequate attention.

The United Nations and civil society stakeholders reported on nearly all SRHR-related issues during the second cycle. This typically included an assessment of the current situation of human rights in the country, progress towards implementation of accepted

recommendations and additional recommendations intended to improve the SRHR situation. Reporting by the United Nations and civil society stakeholders also often filled an important gap, as they frequently included information on both the range of SRHR issues and varied aspects of SRHR issues that States had omitted in their national reports. This reporting also highlighted a general trend seen among non-State reporting: information on the implementation of SRHR-related recommendations could be fragmented and superficially touch upon multiple issues without comprehensively reporting on any. As reporting by UN and stakeholders provide an independent assessment of work underway, more systematic and detailed information on implementation of recommendations is critically important.

Implementation of first cycle recommendations on sexual and reproductive health and rights

The overall picture of implementation efforts is encouraging. Around 90 per cent of States acted on at least half of the accepted recommendations on SRHR, and 63 per cent of States acted on at least three quarters of all the accepted recommendations.

These data, and the examples of country action throughout this report, confirm the key role of the UPR in accelerating action and accountability on SRHR, including in efforts to achieve the SDGs.

The study also found that the UPR process has provided a valuable tool for civil society collaboration at the country level. As a platform for bringing together different constituents, it has facilitated greater collaboration and joint work across civil society actors in efforts to collectively advocate around key issues raised during the UPR.

Action taken on SRHR Recommendation

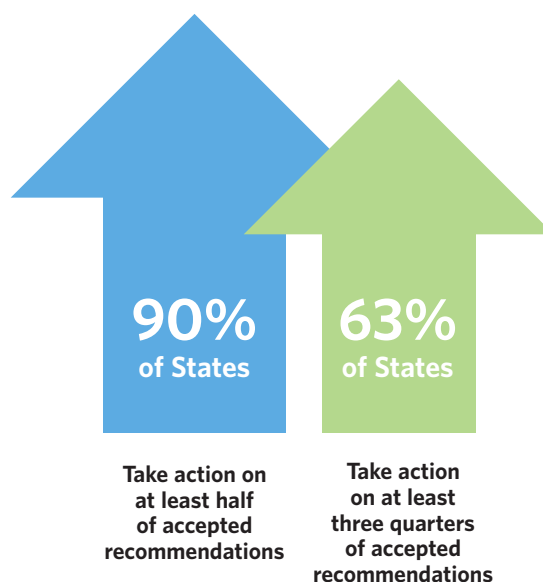


TABLE 2

Implementing accepted recommendations related to SRHR

Proportion of accepted SRHR-related recommendations that States took action to implement	Percentage (and number) of countries that took action
0-25%	3.6% (7)
26-50%	6.2% (12)
51-75%	27% (51)
76-100%	63% (121)

Considerations for the third cycle

For States under review

- To broaden the scope of SRHR issues addressed throughout the UPR process, States should engage in continuous dialogue with diverse stakeholders at the country level. This includes dialogue with civil society, marginalized groups and national human rights institutions (NHRIs), and technical assistance from UNFPA and other United Nations partners.
- To ensure effective implementation of recommendations received, conduct national inclusive and participatory dialogue that is, ideally, also informed by recommendations from other human rights mechanisms.
- To provide a comprehensive picture of implementation efforts, States should report on all recommendations. States can seek technical support from UNFPA and the participation of a wide range of stakeholders in tracking and monitoring implementation efforts.
- Reporting on emerging human rights concerns as well as efforts to implement previous UPR recommendations is necessary. States are strongly encouraged to

For reviewing States

- Address different aspects of SRHR in recommendations; this will strengthen outcomes and ensure a more holistic approach.
- Make specific and measurable recommendations when appropriate; these can help to increase State accountability.
- Use the wealth of information provided by the United Nations system, NHRIs and CSOs in posing questions and making recommendations.
- Follow up on previous recommendations during subsequent reviews, and engage with implementation at the national level between reviews through international, South–South and triangular cooperation.



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