

Helga - Opening Plenary – Day 2

[transitioning from David's orientation remarks]

- Hello again to all of you on behalf of PMNCH and The CORE Group
- **Yesterday** was an opportunity for all of us to listen to each other from 120 countries and understand the critical situation COVID has put us in AND the desperate need for action by design and not by default.
- We heard heartfelt stories and experiences of how frontline health workers, women and youth are coping in the middle of this crisis and –and the many ways in which COVID-19 is changing our lives.
- We learnt that gains made in the MDGs are threatened and that preventable deaths are now on the rise.
- We also heard that COVID has put many jobs on the line - **25 million risk to lose their jobs**, women migrant workers being particularly vulnerable. This is in a time when we need more jobs.
- We heard how globally 243 million women and girls between the age 15-49 in the last year have been subjected to sexual and physical violence by an intimate partner and that because of the COVID-lockdown, this number is expected to increase significantly.
- For Children we heard that COVID will put the 47 million children under five already suffering from

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wasting at an ever-high risk of death, poor growth, development and learning.

- **Yesterday** was not only about reflecting over the situation, it was also about collaborating, leveraging each other's voices, sharing lessons learnt and success stories. This is vital for all of us to learn from and take home to our own setting to put in place.
- **All in all**, yesterday I left the sessions in complete awe of everyone's' enthusiasm and determination to work in solidarity and move forward together for women, children and adolescents in face of this crisis
- What I heard yesterday, only reinforced what we all have been saying for so long but have not yet put into action as much as we would like and should – we are stronger when we all come together. And today I'd like to specifically highlight the important role **youth** play not only during COVID times, but also in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Young people have been at the forefront in the COVID-19 response and where they have been involved - there has been success. They have the capacity, the drive and the skills to make things better – this is because they are the present and the future.
- **BUT** - they are communicating to us a sense of urgency, that I would like to transmit to you. They

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say well-being is not just about health, it is also about road safety, education, security and employment. All of which are being deeply impacted because of the present pandemic. It is about all the SDGs combined AND they are telling us that now more than ever - we need to work side-by-side as partners and as leaders, as equals.

- The task is therefore on all of us to practise meaningful youth engagement, to not only listen to their issues but to empower their voices and actions in a joint effort side by side in a meaningful way.
- At PMNCH, meaningfully engaging adolescent and youth has been a high priority for us for many years now. We've been focusing our efforts on progressing adolescent health and wellbeing since 2016 and we have an extremely active and dynamic Adolescents and Youth Constituency that we closely work with, to advocate for and capacity build others around adolescent wellbeing issues.
- We are also working closely with our youth members around the issue of addressing tokenism and understanding what meaningful youth engagement looks like. In this regard, we have in collaboration with FP2020 and the International Youth Alliance for Family Planning supported the development of the Meaningful Adolescent and Youth Engagement Consensus Statement that has more than 250 endorsements. We will provide the statement on the chat column so that you can join if you have not already done so.

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- As a result of our collaboration with young people, we now have a Call to Action for Adolescent Well-being and are co-developing a framework which will bring together all the different issues that affect their lives. We will also share the link on this on the chat column so you can also join this call.
- We have also remunerated our AYC members to enable them to engage in leadership roles at global and country levels since 2017 and PMNCH has been influential in securing representation of AYC members on other global platforms such as GFF, FP2020 and the EWEC High level Steering Group. However, we understand that youth engagement is an evolving concept and we are currently working with our AYC leadership to see what more we can do to not only move the pendulum externally among all our partners but also internally within PMNCH's own operations.
- As we think about responding to the current crisis and about building back better, we must invest in AND, together with the SDG generation, lay down the bricks for a stronger and more resilient future. And while doing so, the onus is on all of us, to listen to and make sure that the voices of adolescents and youth are heard and followed by everyone.
- And as we talk about listening to youth voices, without further ado I would like to invite Maziko Matemvu to speak to us on behalf of her generation about their experiences during these past few months.

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- Maziko, is a member from our adolescent and youth constituency, is a 22-year-old human rights and SRHR advocate, fierce intersectional feminist, author, TV host and SRHR expert from Malawi. As an SRHR advocate, she is a Programs Manager for HeR Liberty and she is also the Vice President of the Young Feminist Network in Malawi.
- Maziko – over to you!