

## MESSAGE FROM THE CONFERENCE CHAIR

DR CLAUDIA GARCIA-MORENO, WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

I warmly welcome you to the fourth SVRI Forum 2015. Thank you for coming. That many of you have travelled long distances and all of you have taken time out of your busy schedules to be here serves to remind us all just how important this event is.

Over the next two-and-a-half days, we invite you to discuss and debate key issues surrounding the conference theme: innovation and intersections, including the role of social norms in preventing different forms of gender-based violence; the importance of integrating prevention and response into other sectors and programmes; the global trends and best practices in terms of prevention and response; and most importantly, what is working, why is it working, how do we measure success, how much does it cost and how do we scale up?

A very new and exciting SVRI Forum programme awaits you. When you asked for more sessions on new knowledge and creation of expert panels – we heard you. In response, with over 115 oral and 61 poster presentations, we have more presentations than ever before, and 12 special sessions have been integrated into the programme. Special sessions enable colleagues to pull together expert panels on conference priority topics.

For those of you wanting to see and experience something different, we have created the SVRI Forum Theatre. This runs parallel to the main Forum programme. We invite you to sit on comfortable couches, in a warm, cosy room, and see how colleagues in the field use media to share research and new learnings in creative and innovative ways.

Promoting equity in research and successful north–south, south–south, and academic–practitioner research partnerships is a core value for all of us here. As such, researchers submitting abstracts on intervention evaluations and development were encouraged to ensure that their practitioner partners attend the Forum. Congratulations to those of you who have managed to achieve this.

As philosopher James Allen once said, “No duty is more important than that of returning thanks.” No event of this magnitude is possible without the assistance and support of many. As an initiative that promotes research in low- and middle-income countries, it is important to us that we help colleagues who, without external support, might not have been able to participate in this event. Through funding from the Population Council, we were able to support six bursaries for presenters from Latin America, Africa and South-East Asia, and our partner, Networking HIV/AIDS Community of South Africa (NACOSA), is supporting 40 South African based colleagues. We are extremely grateful for this support.

Further thanks goes to the Global Women’s Institute for their consistent and ongoing support to the Forum, and to research through the GBV Science Fair. We are delighted to once again partner with you on this initiative – thank you. Our immense gratitude also goes to Rape Crisis for providing referral counselling services, an essential service for events such as this. Details are available in your conference bag.

I would also like to send a big shout-out of thanks to colleagues who reviewed abstracts for us and other SVRI Forum partners and sponsors, for supporting people's attendance and hosting special events such as Promundo's support for the opening reception. You are ensuring that it will be an extremely busy week, and that this will be our best Forum ever.

The SVRI would also like to thank colleagues and friends who committed time and energy preparing for and facilitating the Forum pre-conference workshops. These workshops are an integral part of the Forum, and without your support and hard work, they would not be possible!

I would personally like to warmly welcome and thank our keynote speakers: Rashida Manjoo, who for the past six years has been the UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women; Shereen el Feki, an accomplished writer-academic-activist on sexuality in the Arab region; and Noura Bittar Sjøborg, a young and dynamic women's rights activist. Thank you for joining us. I would also like to express my gratitude to The Performing Arts Program at the Bokamoso Youth Centre, Winterveldt, South Africa, and the Global Women's Institute for supporting your attendance. You bring youthfulness, song and inspiration to this event.

**"The vibe and the energy of this meeting is really special and we hope it continues and it grows"**

Claudia Garcia-Moreno

Finally, I would like to express my highest appreciation to the SVRI secretariat, SVRI coordinating group, and SAMRC events management team for their efforts and support in ensuring a successful conference. SVRI Forum 2015 has a record number of participants, with over 300 delegates. I see this as an indication of the growth in the field, the increased value placed on research and evidence-informed programming, and the high regard the SVRI Forum has in the field. We all view the Forum as our biennial pilgrimage, a place where we can spend time with like-minded people, as an opportunity to network and to find out what is new and innovative in the field.

Prepare yourself to be challenged, excited and inspired by SVRI Forum 2015!

Don't forget to tweet about the Forum using the hashtag #SVRIForum2015 so we can follow your experience of the conference. I look forward to discussing, debating and sharing innovative ways in which we can improve the lives of survivors, and prevent violence against women and children from occurring in the first place.

Thank you.

Dr Claudia Garcia-Moreno, Chair, SVRI Forum 2015, SVRI Coordinating Group

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