

Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Women's Health and Human Rights

Dr. Paola Sesia (CIESAS, Mexico):

“Possibilities and Limitations of the Judicialization of Human Rights’ Violations in Maternal Health Care”

Dr. Jeannie Samuel (the Dalla Lana School of Public Health):

“Rights-Based Governance of Reproductive Health Service Delivery in Puno, Peru”

Wednesday, March 4, 2015

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

208N, Munk School of Global Affairs (1 Devonshire Place)

Register online at: <http://munkschool.utoronto.ca/event/16771/>

Abstract for Dr. Sesia’s presentation: In today’s Mexico, we experience a new development: some victims and supporting activist organizations are taking cases of human rights’ (HR) violations that occurred in the provision of maternal health care within public hospitals to Court. Almost all victims are poor, underserved, and indigenous women. Judicialization may be a promising avenue for obtaining justice for the victims. Strategic litigation may also play a positive role in putting pressure on the Mexican health system to become more responsive, improve its quality, and become less discriminatory in the provision of maternal health care. Still, judicialization faces major hurdles in a country where the judicial system is not well-suited to HR litigation pursuing social justice and where the health system reproduces social inequalities and treats the mistreatment of poor women as something to be expected. The presentation will critically assess what judicialization may or may not accomplish in its attempt to improve maternal health care from a rights-based approach in contemporary Mexico.

Abstract for Dr. Samuel’s presentation: This presentation explores the complex process of how socially excluded women carry out rights-based governance in state-operated health facilities in the southern Peruvian Andes. It addresses a central tension: how can marginalized actors exercise a governance influence over institutions that have systemically excluded them? The presentation examines the efforts of a group of Quechua-speaking indigenous women in Puno, Peru who act as citizen monitors of their reproductive health services. In a country where profound inequalities are embedded in the health care system, the monitors (aided by a network of strategic allies) seek to combat abuse and strengthen health service provision. Key to their governance strategy is the use of a human rights-based approach to health, intended to influence monitors’ power by repositioning them as rights holders. The presentation outlines some of the gains made by the citizen monitors and also considers the practical challenges they encounter as marginalized actors attempting to democratize reproductive health service delivery in their local health facilities.