

USAID SUCCESS STORIES - PERU

PERU YOUTH LEADERS TELL LAWMAKERS “DON’T CHICKEN OUT” ON REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS

Documentary film inspiring youth advocacy in Peru

“We really want to urge our lawmakers to take a stand on this issue, and showing them our “Don’t Chicken Out” is one way to get them to take notice.”

March 2015 - Cecilia Chujutalli is a youth advocate in the eastern city of Pucallpa, Peru nestled between the Amazon and the Andes mountains. She knows from experience that film has the power to inspire change in communities, even in remote places like Pucallpa. Along with dozens of other teens in schools and community centers in the Ucayali region, Cecilia participated in a [Women and Girls Lead Global](#) (WGLG) screening of [She Matters](#), a documentary film by Maro Chermayeff that demonstrates the importance of engaging women and girls in their own global future. Part of a joint effort between WGLG, UNFPA, INPPARES, and CARE, the film screenings and accompanying community workshops sparked the flame that led adolescents in the region to galvanize support for changing Peruvian law to allow for more readily available sexual and reproductive health (SRH) information to youth. “Several of the youth in those screenings wanted to create a film of their own to help further the cause of our ongoing campaign *Ahora es Cuando*, and we wanted to support them in every way to do that,” said WGLG Country Engagement Coordinator Kathrin Pfeiffer.

Under the guidance of production partner PCI Media Impact, a New York-based “edutainment” leader, and the Peruvian Youth Council for the Prevention of Teen Pregnancy, WGLG brought teens together in 4-day training workshops throughout the region, to learn important skills like research-based messaging, scriptwriting, and production. Pfeiffer said an essential component of these workshops is that they start with a full “diagnosis” of the problem from the youth’s perspective: i.e. what were the key sexual and reproductive health issues, what kinds of real life stories could illustrate them, and which audience(s) would be the most likely to address these issues. “We learned how to create a story that would be persuasive to legislators,” Cecilia said, “but that also was entertaining.”

The teens’ main goal in this policy push is to change Article 4 of Peru’s National Health Law requiring one parent to be informed of all sexual and reproductive decisions made by teens. “This policy has unfortunately led to many unplanned pregnancies, and ultimately, to many girls dropping out of school,” said Pfeiffer. She added, “Each youth organization involved is free to use the film for education or advocacy purposes. The main objective of their producing a film was to express their perspective on the issue. The idea of using it as a policy push tool came later, organically, through the process of learning.” Now, many youth leaders and activists are using the film to persuade and inspire decision makers to support modification of the law. “We really want to urge our lawmakers to take a stand on this issue, and showing them our film *Don’t Chicken Out* is one way to get them to take notice,” Cecilia noted.

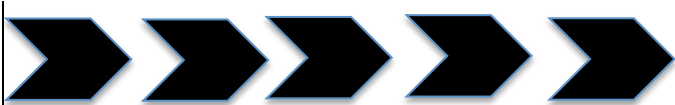
The Spanish title of the film *Sin Arrugar*, roughly translates to “Don’t Chicken Out” in English, and refers to the two protagonists in the film, friends who when faced with one’s unplanned pregnancy and the other’s need to support his family, encourage each other to stay in school and hold on to their dreams. “This also is a not-so-subtle challenge to lawmakers,” says Pfeiffer, “to do the right thing for Peruvian youth.”

Peruvian Congresswoman Rosa Mávila presented a referendum for changing the law a few years ago, but she is still waiting for a decision from her fellow congressional representatives. “When I learned of these kids’ advocacy work,” Mávila said, “I was impressed and inspired. We are looking forward to the launch and helping them reach lawmakers in a positive, proactive way.”

On March 16 and 17, youth representatives from several regions of the country participated in a WGLG, UNFPA and INPPARES - sponsored workshop to discuss priorities for youth advocacy on SRH, and to prepare the April 9th launch of the *Ahora es Cuando! (Now it the Time!)* Policy Push in red-carpet style. On that special day, the student’s film *Don’t Chicken Out*, will premiere for over 100 local influencers, legislators, and reproductive health advocates at the Casa Andina Hotel in Lima. Following the screening, organizers will hold a “street activation” in the city’s main plaza, where the soundtrack for the film will play amongst an information fair providing “skillfully nudged” opportunities to sign a petition to promote modification of Article 4.

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[Women and Girls Lead Global - Peru](#) - is a USAID - funded initiative that uses documentary film to inspire and catalyze community action on important global issues affecting women and girls. Participating countries include: Bangladesh, Kenya, India, Jordan and Peru. Partner funders: ITVS, Ford Foundation, and CARE. www.wglg.org

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