

Advocates for Youth CPD56 Oral Statement

I welcome the opportunity to speak as a youth activist representing Advocates for Youth at this critical moment. As we approach the halfway point to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it is crucial to recognise the importance of investing in youth and ensuring youth access to inclusive sexuality education and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) care. Addressing this basic need is essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

[Young people aged 15 to 24 years make up 16% of the global population, projected to grow by 7% by 2030.](#)

Access to inclusive sexuality education and sexual and reproductive healthcare is a primary need and should be recognized as a basic right essential to sustainable youth development. However, challenges in accessing youth-friendly and inclusive sexuality and reproductive health education and services remain. 14% of AGYW (adolescent girls and young women) give birth before age 18. Half of the maternal deaths due to unsafe abortion in developing regions occur in youth aged 24 and under. Nearly 14 percent of all unsafe abortions in developing countries are among youth under 20. [66 children will have become child brides by the end of my intervention, at a rate of 22 each minute.](#)

Our solution to these global challenges must be strategic and evidence-based. Therefore, we recognise Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)'s critical role in ensuring that all young people's basic needs are met and rights are protected. CSE addresses harmful gender norms and evidence repeatedly demonstrates that CSE programs contribute to delayed initiation of sex, increased use of contraception and condoms, and reduced number of sexual partners.

Despite these demonstrated benefits of CSE, youth continue to face challenges in accessing accurate, inclusive, and age-appropriate health information that is free from stigma, discrimination, and violence. States and communities continue to lack resources, expertise, and political will to implement and finance effective CSE programs that benefit diverse needs of young people in all our diversity, particularly marginalized and vulnerable groups such as gender-diverse, rural, displaced, or indigenous youth.

Therefore, we call upon governments to invest in access to CSE both because education and health remain fundamental rights and because CSE remains strategically important in achieving the SDGs. Investment means strengthening national policies, strategies and programs on CSE; involving young people as full partners in planning, implementing and monitoring CSE programming; and promoting an enabling environment that respects human rights and gender equality. By taking these actions, we can reduce access barriers, enable informed decision making, empower youth leadership, reduce gender-based violence, and achieve the SDGs. I urge this gathering to prioritize CSE as a key component in promoting health and wellbeing of young people and contributing to a more just and sustainable world for all.