

## **IPPF Statement to the 56<sup>th</sup> Commission on Population and Development**

The right to education has a transformative potential to support the empowerment of all women, adolescents and girls, in all their diversity, to claim their human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to participate in the conduct of public affairs, as well as in political, economic, social and cultural life, and to fully, equally, effectively and meaningfully participate in the decision-making processes that shape society.

Education is considered a key pathway for women and girls' bodily autonomy, to make informed decisions about their lives, to have access to better jobs and decent work. Educated women are more likely to marry later, use contraception and access healthcare; and to understand their rights and have the self-confidence to act on them.

In all regions of the world we still see people being denied education or school (re-)enrolment. Access to education, or lack thereof, is not gender neutral. Often girls and adolescent girls have additional gendered barriers that prevent them participating in schooling and other educational opportunities. For example, unpaid care work and domestic work often falls disproportionately on the shoulders of girls and adolescents girls who often have to dropout of school in order to help in the house; or the lack of access to sexual and reproductive health and rights can also lead to unplanned and early pregnancies which can be compounding factors in terms of being excluded from school and other educational opportunities.

Inequality, discriminatory social norms and attitudes towards girls and young women underlie and drive these issues. In this regard, comprehensive sexuality education is a vital promising strategy by which to shift negative norms and attitudes, and empower young people to negotiate safe, consensual and enjoyable conscious, healthy and respectful choices about relationships and sexuality. Most countries of the world have some form of CSE, under varying names, demonstrating shared common values on this issue and global support. Sexual and reproductive health policies should be combined with educational policies to address quality and equity.

Access to quality education and comprehensive sexuality education is fundamental to achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.