

56 Commission on Population and Development

CSO Oral Statement for Marie Stopes International (ECOSOC status)

Honorable delegates, governments, fellow advocates and activists,

I start by telling you the story of Asha. She comes from a marginalized family, and became pregnant through rape. The man who raped her initially lured her by offering her help, showing affection and asking for her friendship. When her mother found out about her pregnancy, she took her to the hospital for an abortion. But the health personnel did not help, they said it would be illegal to perform abortion without registering the case with the Police. The mother started the legal process however it took very long and by then the girl was already 25 weeks pregnant. The doctors said it would be a risk to her life and advised the mother to take her to the capital city. But the family had no money nor place to stay or a support mechanism, so could not take her to capital city. So, Asha was forced to carry the pregnancy, giving birth to a healthy baby that later on died. Asha is now in a safe house with unknown future.

This is not the case of a single adolescent girl in Nepal. From July to March 2022 WOREC Nepal (a national NGO working for women's right) received 23 cases of adolescents requiring safe house support. Out of these, 65 % were due to pregnancy after rape and 86 % of girls were between 15-19 year age group. We know that rape is an outcome of harmful patriarchal norms and values that deny women and young women control over their own bodies. Denial of sexual rights creates a taboo towards sexuality, disproportionately affecting women and persons from gender and sexual minorities.

Comprehensive sexuality education is integral to helping women and persons of diverse gender and sexuality understand their rights, and to have autonomy over their bodies and increased negotiating power. CSE is also a mean to address systems of patriarchal domination and toxic masculinity by changing social norms and cultural patterns of domination that perpetuate discrimination and violence.

Furthermore, CSE is related to the fundamental right to education, and the right to be equal and live without any form of discrimination. We call on governments like Nepal to implement fully inclusive CSE, hand-in-hand with civil society, thus ensuring it is part of a societal transformation process.