

World Youth Alliance

Oral Intervention

43rd Commission on Population and Development

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Priority Theme: Health, morbidity, mortality and development

Thank you Mr. Chair, esteemed delegates and members of civil society. The World Youth Alliance, a global coalition of young people promoting the dignity of the human person in policy and culture and building solidarity between young people of developing and developed countries, welcomes the theme of the commission – health, morbidity, mortality and development.

We are convinced that people are the most important drivers of development and that human creativity is a critical resource and a catalyst for development. As such development requires the promotion of a social, political and economic environment that allows persons to reach their full physical, spiritual, mental and emotional potential. Ensuring access to high quality health care, that adequately addresses communicable and non-communicable disease prevention and treatment, is a critical component of this effort.

As young people committed to the health and development of the world's people, we wish to call attention to areas we see as critical to addressing these issues: locally driven health systems, maternal health and the health needs of young people.

Locally Driven Health Systems:

Comprehensive primary health care that is informed by local priorities and structured based on cultural realities must become the focus of international health efforts. For too long, health priorities have been donor driven and focused on investment efficiency. This has slowed progress in the establishment of permanent institutions that promote community health through disease prevention, early detection and treatment.

Renewed emphasis on locally driven health systems is essential in light of the growing disease burden associated with non-communicable diseases in all parts of the world. Where acute health issues associated with malnutrition, clean water and sanitation, and vector borne diseases have largely been addressed health systems must be flexible enough to address chronic disease prevention. We call in a particular way for programs aimed at young people, particularly young men, to address substance abuse and other high risk behaviours that lead to higher rates of mortality among this sub-population.

Maternal Health

We call for a renewed commitment to the achievement of MDG 5. Too many women continue to lack access to adequate pre-natal care, skilled birth attendants at delivery and adequate post natal care – globally this is the major, immediate cause of maternal

mortality and morbidity. The strengthening of health care systems to ensure access to skilled birth attendants, proper equipment and the ability to refer women for and deliver emergency obstetric care should be a resounding recommendation of this commission and a priority for all nations cooperating for the delivery of maternal health care.

It is a disservice to women that family planning to “avoid mistimed or unwanted pregnancies” is proposed as a “cost-effective intervention to reduce maternal morbidity and mortality,” where access to adequate obstetric services is still limited. This is not a substitute for adequate obstetrics care and fails to respond to the pressing needs of women around the world.

We urge this commission to address maternal health distinctly from reproductive health and rights. The combination of these issues has led to investments that make it easier for women in developing countries to avoid a pregnancy than to have a healthy pregnancy and delivery.

The Health Needs of Young People

Finally, we call on the all nations in partnership with families and communities to promote to the fullest extent the health, well-being and potential of all children, adolescents and youth. Young people face unique health issues, many of which are intimately linked to the health and well-being of their families. As such, solutions to address their needs must encompass the family and community as a whole.

The health of mothers is a key factor in child health, where proper prenatal care, including nutrition is a critical determinant of healthy birth weight and the long-term survival of children. Programs that offer treatment to HIV positive pregnant women to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS or that prevent incidence of vector-borne communicable diseases in pregnant women must be made available where needed.

Parents and those responsible for the care of children and adolescents must be supported in creating conditions to promote child health through access to nutrition, health education and other primary health programs. This also includes the creation of an environment in which children can develop their athletic and artistic talents as an avenue for both physical and mental health.

Conclusions

We call upon the commission to reflect these recommendations in the resolution on health, morbidity, mortality and development.

Thank you.