

**Oral Statement presented to the 44th session of the Commission on Population and Development on the theme: “Fertility, reproductive health and development” by the German Foundation for World Population (DSW)**

With the Cairo Programme of Action the international community committed itself to a stronger promotion of sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. Since then we have seen an improvement in the sexual and reproductive health of men and women. However, for a long time family planning competed with other priorities and in many low-income countries women, men and particularly adolescents do not have access to effective contraception and large inequities in access to family planning services still exist.

Family planning is one of the most effective health interventions and a wise investment. It enables women and couples to determine the timing and spacing of their children and gives mothers and newborns an opportunity to stay healthy. It reduces the number of unintended pregnancies and abortions as well as maternal mortality. Finally, it helps countries make savings and gains that enable them to reach their development goals and poverty reduction.

Yet, today an estimated 215 million women have an unmet need for family planning. This unmet need is likely to increase due to the large group of young people entering reproductive age.

Universal access to reproductive health, including family planning, is key to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. MDG 5, “Improve Maternal Health,” particularly target 5b, “Achieve Universal Access to Reproductive Health,” is the most off-track of all MDGs, even though the critical importance of reproductive health to development has been widely acknowledged.

Therefore, we would like to reiterate the recommendations formulated at the “ICPD at 15”-NGO Forum on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Development in Berlin 2009: In order to implement the ICPD PoA and achieve the MDGs, which are integrally linked, we call on local, national and international decision-makers to join with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to establish and implement concrete, practical, and fully funded actions for ensuring sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The “Berlin Call to Action” summons governments, policy-makers and other leaders to commit to take urgent action on:

1. Guaranteeing that sexual and reproductive rights, as human rights, are fully recognized and fulfilled.
2. Investing in comprehensive sexual and reproductive health (SRH) information, supplies and services as a priority in health system strengthening
3. Ensuring the sexual and reproductive rights of adolescents and young people.
4. Creating and implementing formal mechanisms for meaningful civil society participation in programs, policy and budget decisions, monitoring and evaluation.
5. Ensuring that national governments and donors allocate sufficient resources and budgets that meet the needs of all people’s sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The German Foundation for World Population (DSW) has a strong focus in its programme work on the sexual and reproductive health of young people, therefore we would like to stress the importance of the third point:

We need to empower young people now to make informed decisions about their life and livelihood in an environment that removes all barriers to accessing the full range of sexual and reproductive health information and services. We need to guarantee confidentiality and eliminate parental and spousal consent and age restrictions. And we need to expand and allocate the resources needed to deliver effective, continuous, gender sensitive and youth-friendly services and evidence-based, timely, and comprehensive sexuality education. It is our responsibility to enable youth to have a healthy transition into adulthood.