

Statement submitted by Global Youth Action Network and presented by the Global Youth Coalition on HIV and AIDS.

I am presenting this statement, on behalf of youth led NGOs and young people from around the world.

We are firmly in support and call for the realization of all young people's human rights which include sexual and reproductive rights, that must be respected regardless of our age. With this year being the UN International Year of Youth, and as outlined in international commitments, the human rights of all young people should be the priority for the governments, international agencies, policy makers and communities. That's why we are here to share with you our collective voice and message: ***Youth Demand Change.***

Today we are more than 1.8 billion young people between the ages of 10 and 24 in the world.¹ This is the largest generation of young people in history and they will make critical choices daily that will affect their health, well-being and development. Sexual and reproductive health and rights have a direct influence on all aspects of young people's development and must therefore be prioritized in the development efforts. The ICPD PoA was the first time that young people's human rights, including sexual and reproductive health and rights were recognized as integral to achieving development.

A crucial part of which is young people's right to information and education on matters related to their sexuality. Comprehensive Sexuality Education empowers young people with the knowledge, skills, and tools they need to determine and enjoy their sexuality- physically and emotionally, individually and in relationships. It is evidence-based, gender sensitive, and grounded in human rights with a holistic view of sexuality within the context of emotional and physical development².

The right to education, including comprehensive sexuality education, is a human right that is being denied to young people all around the world. We continue to face unique and significant challenges in accessing the critically needed

¹ UNFPA: Dispatch on International Youth Day and Year, August 2010.

² IPPF framework on CSE, 2006.

information necessary for our development and the fulfillment of our human rights.

Take for example that every year approximately 10 million teenage girls marry, a majority of them without completing secondary education or that every year at least 111 million new cases of preventable STIs occur among young people, while an estimated 5.4 million young people currently live with HIV.³

It is time that we acknowledge the reality that young people are sexually active and we have the right to scientific, rights-based and targeted comprehensive sexuality education and counseling, both in and out of school. Effective sexuality education must go beyond biology and include information about sexual and reproductive health, including male and female condoms and emergency contraceptives and sexual and reproductive health commodities; gender equality; healthy and positive aspects of sexuality and relationships; gender-based violence; and human rights.

We demand that member states ensure that integrate CSE into educational policies for all young people and eliminate legal, regulatory and social barriers that restrict young people - especially young women's access to CSE.

Conclusion

In conclusion, on behalf of young people around the world, we demand that Member States ensure our meaningful participation in decisions that effect our lives, in order to achieve the goals and objectives of the ICPD Program of Action and other international commitments such as the Millennium Development Goals. Whilst we recognise that progress has been made, renewed commitment to SRHR is essential, with young people's rights at its centre. To invest in the sexual and reproductive health and rights and empowerment of young people, is to invest in the rights and health of the whole community, and is an investment in a country's development. Only if these actions are taken, and commitments are met, can young people lead healthy lives of which sexuality is a positive and enjoyable aspect .

Youth Demand Change

³ WHO: Factsheet on Why is giving special attention to adolescents important for achieving MDG 5?, 2008