

Awaz Centre for Development Services, Pakistan
Joint Oral Statement by Pakistani CSO and Youth Networks and Alliances to CPD 48
Commission on Population and Development
Forty-eight Session
13-17 April 2015
Madam Chairperson and distinguish delegates,
I thank you all and the Commission for providing me this opportunity

AWAZ Centre for Development Services, Pakistan having special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, works for socio-economic development and empowerment of marginalized communities, especially women, young people socially excluded groups and elderly people. We strive for recognition and promotion of sexual and reproductive health rights, especially of adolescents. The overall themes we cover in our programs and campaigns include: health, education, climate change, disaster risk reduction (DRR), food insecurity, and poverty alleviation. Our themes synchronise with the theme of the 48th session of the United Nations Commission on Population and Development.

Madam chairperson,

Though our government has introduced new laws and reforms in policies related to women and youth empowerment that include prevention, protection and empowerment measurements, yet there is a long way to go in terms of their proper implementation.

As lead organization in Pakistan, AwazCDS has conducted Civil Society consultations on the post 2015 development framework. The results from the community level and national level consultations say that progress in many areas have been unequal and fragmented, however at the same time new challenges and opportunities have emerged over the years.

Many a people continue to live in a context of rising extremism, discrimination, inequality, and violations of human rights including sexual and reproductive health rights. The goal of gender equality still appears elusive, with gender-based discrimination and violence continuing to affect many. Large and persistent gaps remain between the most advantaged and marginalized populations, especially with respect to access to sustainable development and empowerment opportunities, sexual and reproductive health and other fundamental rights and services.

Madam Chairperson,

In Pakistan, 65% of the population comprised young people that illustrates a huge potential for our fledging nation, provided our governments demonstrate political leadership and ensures compliance to the ICPD Programme of Action. We need to harness the huge potential of adolescents and youth who are the key future resource for sustainable development and systemic social change.

Today there is a dire need of young peoples' inclusion in every strata of our life. The assumption that boys and girls under 18 are "too young" to need Sexual and Reproductive Health information and services ignores the realities and push factors that keeps young people away from acquiring practical

knowledge and skills they need to protect themselves from abuse, exploitation and disease. They continue to bear the brunt of sexual and reproductive health burdens, which in turn makes them vulnerable to sexual violence/exploitation, child, early and forced marriages, unintended pregnancy, unsafe abortion and STIs, maternal morbidity and mortality. These are formative years for young people and the lack of necessary information and services translates into unhealthy behaviour and in turn unsure emergence into adulthood.

Therefore in this context, it is crucial that the sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights that are part of two goals (health and gender) in the Open Working Group outcome document must be retained and further strengthened by inclusion of sexual rights in the Post 2015 Development Framework.

We have developed the following recommendations to make this possible:

- Endorsement and implementation of life skill based education (LSBE) programs that provide accurate information on gender equality, human rights, relationships, and sexual and reproductive health and rights for both in and out-of-school youth
- Strengthening the legislation for women protection and empowerment, including laws against child, early and forced marriages, domestic violence and other harmful customary practices.
- Inclusion of women and young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights in the formal and informal health structures to promote Youth Friendly Services.
- Launching of awareness program for youth and adolescent on sexual and reproductive health related issues, which are at the moment under covered or misreported in media or in social circles.
- Integrated laws, policies and strategies need to be introduced to address rising poverty & inequality, food insecurity & climate change, primary health & WASH facilities to make sure no one is left behind.
- Initiate robust monitoring and accountability mechanisms to ensure the follow up of commitments made under ICPD Plan of Action

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