

Statement by the Asian-Pacific Resource & Research Centre for Women (ARROW), a non-governmental organisation in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council at the 49th Session of the Commission on Population and Development

11 – 15 April 2016

ARROW, based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, is a regional, partnership based, non-governmental organisation that has been working since 1993 to advance women and young people's health and rights, particularly in the area of sexuality and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in the Asia Pacific region and the regions of Global South.

We welcome the focus on the theme for this 49th session- strengthening the demographic evidence base for the post-2015 development agenda and the methods of work of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD).

In line with this theme, we reiterate the prominence of the General Assembly resolutions, 65/234, and 70/1, as important mandates in the realisation of universal access to SRHR for all.

Twenty years have passed since the Programme of Action (PoA) of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), and the exercise of sexual and reproductive rights by all, especially women, young people, and people of diverse sexual orientation and gender identities (LGBTIQ), is increasingly under threat, with predominantly regressive trends in SRHR policy and programme implementation in the countries of the Asia-Pacific region.

With more than 4.4 billion people living in the region and changing population age structures pointing to an increase in the proportion of young population, and older persons, this calls for specific policy and programmatic interventions for these groups. This region also faces most inequalities within countries and in between countries in terms of access to basic health care services, education and information.

Overall fertility in the region is at replacement level of 2.1 births per woman, however there is an increasing proportion of women who either have more children than they want, who want to stop or delay child bearing, but have no means to exercise their reproductive rights. High unmet need for contraception and resulting consequences of unwanted pregnancies, unsafe abortions, and maternal mortality and morbidity is more common among marginalised groups of women. More than 1 in 4 women aged 20-24 continue to get married before they turn 18, especially in Southern Asia. High adolescent birth rates, child early and forced marriages, other harmful traditional practices, is increasing young women and girls risk to mortality and morbidity related to sexual and reproductive health.

Violations of the right to universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights for all, is exacerbated by the intersections of poverty, food and nutrition insecurity, migration, conflict, disasters, climate change and religious extremisms. The face of migration in the region is increasingly seen as young and female. Another trend that we see in the region is the concentration of people living in urban areas. Urban settlements are projected to rise to 56% of Asia's population.

To date, the ICPD PoA is the only action document that takes a holistic approach to population and development issues and sustainable development. It defines and recommends actions on the inter-relationships of population, development strategies, education, health, technology, research and development, population growth and structures, migration, urbanisation, environment, partnerships and international cooperation with a rights based

approach. The full implementation of ICPD PoA is more than ever critical to the achievement of SDG Agenda 2030.

In the area of strengthening demographic evidence, we call upon the States and the international community to:

- a) Uphold the political and financial commitment to the full implementation of ICPD PoA and the SRHR related goals and targets of Agenda 2030.
- b) Integrate human rights obligations, including the principles of equality, and non-discrimination, and gender equality, and equity in the implementation of ICPD PoA at the global, regional and national levels.
- c) Strengthen the demographic evidence base, to support the monitoring of ICPD and the SDG Agenda 2030, through establishment of functional data instruments such as the civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) systems, census, and household surveys at the national level. Further to this take into account advances and innovations in Information, and Communication Technology.
- d) Put in place human rights based data collection, and safeguard processes, that will address the human rights risks in collection, processing, analysing and dissemination of data. This is to ensure the protection of the rights of certain vulnerable populations. Capacity strengthening of National Statistical Offices in this area will be crucial.
- e) Ensure clear levels of data disaggregation in the review and monitoring of SRHR indicators and the ICPD agenda
- f) Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health information and services including access to a full range of contraceptive methods, safe abortion services, counselling, quality treatment including empathetic and trained health service providers, and comprehensive sexuality education for young people without stigma, discrimination and violence.
- g) Address the intersectional issues of poverty, food and nutrition insecurity, internal and external migration, conflict, disasters, climate change and counter religious extremism to ensure universal access to SRHR for all.

In the area of Methods of Work of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) We call upon the States and the international community to:

- h) Ensure the CPD continues to play a primary role in advising the council on population and development issues; monitoring, review and assessment of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the ICPD, the key actions for its further implementation and outcomes of its review conferences, as well as the previous resolutions adopted by the CPD, and the SRHR related SDG goals and targets of the Agenda 2030 at global, regional and national level.
- j) Upgrade the Commission to enable it to work on the SDGs in order to make its work strategic and relevant
- k) Expand the Commission to include more member states so that discussions are representative and inclusive of the work of all member states"
- l) Ensure a process whereby, there is an alignment of themes for CPD in line with the Agenda 2030 review theme at HLPF. This may call for a priority theme set forth in the multiyear programme by the council.
- m) Institutionalise a High level Ministerial Segment during CPD sessions on issues of population and development.
- n) Include in the CPD sessions, a reporting mechanism where, Member States present progress, gaps, challenges and best practices on the priority theme.

- o) We call for a negotiated outcome document at every CPD with clear actions and recommendations that will take into account emerging issues and recommendation on the priority theme to remain action oriented and policy relevant.
- p) We call for the full and active participation of civil society in all the processes relating to CPD, including submission of written and oral statements, and all other processes as experts, in the national delegations, including participation at the regional commissions.

This statement is endorsed by:

1. AIDS Accountability International
2. ARTS Foundation
3. Association for promotion sustainable development. Hisar. India
4. AwazCDS-Pakistan
5. Beyond Beijing Committee (BBC), Nepal
6. Chanan Development Association (CDA), Pakistan
7. CHRD, Mongolia
8. Danish Family Planning Association, Denmark
9. Elige Red de Jóvenes por los Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos A.C." (Elige Youth Network for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights), Mexico
10. EMPOWER INDIA, India
11. Equilibres & Populations
12. Forum of women's NGOs, Kyrgyzstan
13. Gender and Water Alliance (GWA) and Gender and Water Programme Bangladesh, Bangladesh
14. Huvadhoo Aid, Maldives
15. Inspirator Muda Nusantara, Indonesia
16. International HIV/AIDS Alliance
17. JAGO NARI, Bangladesh
18. JAGO NARI, Bangladesh
19. Joan Castro, Philippines
20. Khan Foundation, Bangladesh
21. Manivone Thikey
22. MONFEMNET National Network, Mongolia
23. Moroccan Family Planning Association(MFPA), Morocco
24. Naripokkho, Bangladesh
25. Paryavaran Mitra, India
26. Penita Initiative, Malaysia
27. Point of View, India
28. Radanar Ayar Rural Development Association, Myanmar
29. Reproductive Health Association of Cambodia (RHAC), Cambodia
30. RHAK - Reproductive Health Alliance in Kyrgyzstan
31. Rural Women's Association "Alga", Kyrgyzstan
32. Sanayee Development Organization - SDO.
33. SEEDS, India
34. Shirkat Gah Pakistan
35. Sindh Foundation, Pakistan
36. TARSHI, India
37. The Center for Creative Initiatives in Health and Population (CCIHP), Vietnam
38. The Faculty of Postgraduate Studies, University of Health Sciences, Lao PDR

39. The YP Foundation, India
40. UBINIG/ Narigrantha Prabartana, Dhaka Bangladesh
41. University Health Sciences, Lao PDR
42. Vanphanom Sychareun, Lao PDR
43. Vectoring China, the China Youth Leaders' Resource Centre, China
44. World YWCA
45. Yayasan Jurnal Perempuan, Indonesia
46. Youth Advocacy Network, Pakistan
47. Yunnan Health and Development Research Association (YHDRA, China)
48. YUWA Nepal
49. Fiji Women's Rights Movement
50. Pacific SRHR Coalition

Sources:

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3. United Nations Economic and Social Council. 2016. World Demographic Trend, Report of Secretary General. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/commission/sessions/2016/index.shtml>
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5. United Nations Economic and Social Council. 2016. Future organization and methods of work of the Commission on Population and Development. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/commission/sessions/2016/index.shtml>