



THE WATCHDOG

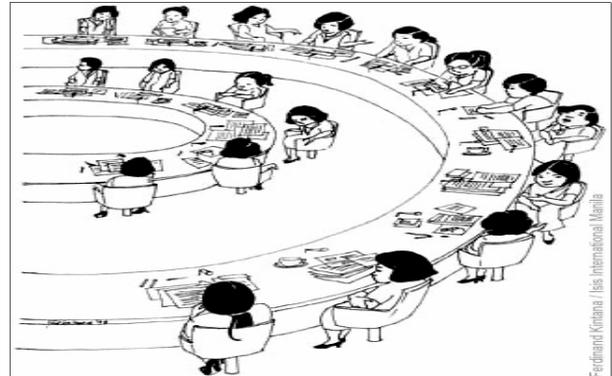
The Youth Coalition's Quarterly Newsletter

Editorial

June 23, 2005 has been marked as a historic day in the United Nations, where for the first time in almost 60 years, civil society organizations have been given a space at the General Assembly Hall, where the GA president himself has followed the deliberations. We truly respect this process towards a more democratic, open and transparent UN system. But, we will continue to be the Watchdogs. We will be monitoring whether these inputs and issues will be included in government negotiations and outcome documents. We will be watching whether this is truly a space for more interactive dialogue or a space to side-line CSOs so they will not spend the time and resources to advocate at the 'real' deliberations. So let's all be Watchdogs together and ensure that our voices are carried through September and beyond!

Crucial Steps to Reach Development

By: Gabriela Cano Azcarraga/Mexico



In order to progress development, it is urgent to recognize that women, especially young women, must meet their needs of sexual and reproductive health education and services.

It is also highly important that all education and services reflect a human rights-based approach, and that the needs of vulnerable groups are addressed, specifically youth and young women.

Only by recognizing, respecting, and promoting sexual and reproductive rights, which highlights people's right to make free choices about their sexuality and reproduction can the MDGs be achieved.

It is an obligation of the UN to guarantee that human rights, especially women's rights, reproductive rights and SEXUAL rights are key components to the "2005 World Summit". Finally, it is crucial that the UN and member States remember and implement the previous commitments of past human rights declarations and conferences.



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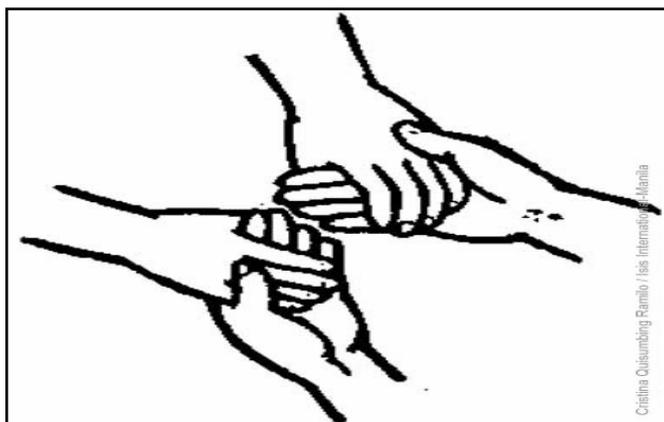
The Watchdog is the Youth Coalition's Quarterly Newsletter.
For more information on the Watchdog or the YC, please contact us at:

#405, 260 Dalhousie Street, Ottawa, ON
Canada K1N 7E4
admin@youthcoalition.org
Tel: 613-562-3522
Fax: 613-562-9502



The edge of my safety zone

By: Anneke Wensing
YouAct, European Youth Network on SRR



Somebody once told me that “life happens at the edge of your safety zone”. Intervening at an important meeting like the civil society hearings today, is definitely an experience that happens at the edge of my safety zone. No matter how much I practice, my voice is still unsteady, my hands are sweaty, my knees are shaking and I hope it will be over soon. But I do want to feel alive, taking some sort of action, so I do it, no matter if the nervousness is killing me. And if people come up to me afterwards to say they appreciated my input, it is worth it, and I’m glad I stepped out of my comfort zone for a little while, as many young women live daily.

During the sessions ‘Freedom to live in Dignity’ and ‘Freedom from Want’ it seemed that sexual and reproductive rights and health were on almost everybody’s priority list. Young people were also mentioned several times, by the time I had the opportunity to

speak, most of my points had already been mentioned (several times) by other people. Great, ‘cause that gave me the chance to refer to other people’s statements and stress the importance of sexual rights and health of young people, the rights of sexual minorities, the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS and gender equality, without needing to spend too much time explaining the issues in detail. Instead I took the time to make the following recommendations:

In order for poverty reduction strategies to be effective, we must invest in human rights and young people by including youth as an integrated part of every MDG. NGOs and civil society are critical actors in achieving universal access to reproductive health by 2015. It is critical that CSOs are included in follow-up efforts to improve the targets and indicators that will be developed after the September Summit to achieve the MDGs.

I hope that these recommendations will lead to continued involvement of young people and sexual and reproductive rights and women’s rights activists in the process leading to the Summit and beyond, so many other young people will have the chance to cross the edge of their safety zones in other meetings and conferences too!



Financing for Development Must Include Youth!

By Tanya Baker, Canada /Trinidad and Tobago

While the majority of my peers on Thursday afternoon attended the Freedom From Want sessions on Goals 1 – 7, and heard excellent speakers recognizing the needs and rights of young people in order to reach these goals, I attended the consecutive Freedom From Want session on Goal 8 – Financing for Development. I was disheartened by the absolute lack of recognition of young people's issues from the speakers, especially considering that one target and indicator is with respect to youth unemployment.

All of the issues mentioned including fair trade, debt relief, official development assistance (ODA), the special needs of Africa and sustainability are all extremely important issues to be discussed, but we must remember that economics is dynamic, and needs to respond

not only to the realities of the present population, but sets the ground work for future populations. Thus, it is important to include young people in these discussions to include their important perspective, but also have more ownership over these inherited economic systems.

Moreover, the obstacles that youth unemployment places on development must be recognized. The recent UNFPA publication – The Case of Investing in Young People as part of a National Poverty Reduction Strategy – clearly states “the lack of productive work for young people has a number of highly damaging economic and social consequences. It perpetuates the inter-generational cycle of poverty and is associated with high levels of crime, violence, substance abuse and

the rise of political extremism.”



If societies are truly intent on developing human capacities, it begins with increased education beyond the primary level and includes apprenticeship and entrepreneurship. That youth unemployment, which in some countries reaches up to 30%, was not even mentioned by speakers on Thursday, demonstrates that it is still not a priority, which must be addressed.

Please respond to the needs of individuals, communities and societies by respecting and investing in young people.



Going Grassroot!.....

An important strategy towards making progress in the MDGs

By Femi Aina Fasinu, Nigeria

Gradually, time is ticking towards September making it 5 years after the Millennium Declaration. Many meetings, conferences and strategies later ... trying to ensure that the goals become a reality. Yesterday, civil society organizations and governments discussed contributions and progress made thus far, the remaining challenges and possible ways forward. One simple question that should be asked is "what is the level of awareness and about these global goals at the grassroots and community level?". I carefully followed the sessions on Freedom from Want and Freedom to live in Dignity, and rarely were people heard talking about their involvement and contributions at the grassroots and community level, especially at the rural areas.

It is important to note that a doctor cannot treat a patient without the assistance, contributions and explanation of the patient. The MDGs are important and are a liberation, especially to the people at the grassroots and rural levels, since they constitute a higher percentage of the least developed regions and thus these populations should be involved and collaborate in the process and efforts towards achieving the MDGs.

5 years after the Millennium Declaration, most grassroots people have yet to know nor understand the MDGs and what it is all about. I call on our governments, the civil society and the private sector to increase and focus their efforts of MDGs more to the grassroots and community level. If this is done, there will be acceleration of progress and the journey towards achieving these development goals will truly begin.

Learning to Speak MDGs



From May 16th to 20th, 60 progressive young people from around the world came together to discuss how the MDGs are related to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. Participants developed specific recommendations for policy makers and to use in their own national-level advocacy on how to integrate a

youth and a human rights perspective into the MDGs. These recommendations are summarized into a booklet - Learning to Speak MDGs - which the Youth Coalition is proud to launch at the occasion of the Civil Society Hearings.

If you want to know more about the MDGs, the links between youth SRHR and development, and recommendations, we have a copy for you! For more information or for a copy of the booklet, please contact Rosario Castro at admin@youthcoalition.org or visit our website.

