



THE WATCHDOG

The Youth Coalition's Quarterly Newsletter

ECE Beijing +10 PrepCom Special Edition!

Youth for women's rights are here with views, news and the right to choose!

Now it's your turn!

NGO forum sets pace for Government meeting to ADVANCE THE BEIJING AGENDA

Some 300 NGO delegates gathered at the NGO ECE Forum, 12 and 13 December 2004, to discuss the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, its review of Beijing +5 and to identify emerging issues. NGOs made recommendations to governments. These recommendations will be the annex of the official EU governmental document. Among them, six members of Youth for Women's Rights were active to push the agenda forward and to highlight critical areas that were not adequately covered in the Beijing Platform for Action and/ or have developed into major concerns since 1995.

During the workgroup Emerging issues, it became clear that progress on critical areas is still lacking and gaps have to be closed. Youth for Women's Rights is pleased to announce that European NGO delegates gained consensus on progressive paragraphs and recommendations: We welcome the recognition of the rights of young women to make their own informed choices about all aspects of their sexual lives and reproductive lives, including sexual pleasure and sexual autonomy.

Involving men in fighting sexual exploitation

Sexual exploitation is very difficult and complicated to tackle. Even if fighting this problem is one of the main priorities of the police and the justice system, it is hard to get a hold of it. Luckily there are people who have knowledge on what's going on in the world of illegal and coerced prostitution: their clients. Projects that promote men to report any suspicion of sexual exploitation anonymously to the police have had positive results in the UK as well as the Netherlands. Not all men that visit prostitutes are in favour of coerced prostitution; on the contrary, most men want to know the women consent to sexwork. So let's not shut our eyes for the possibilities of involving Johns in combating sexual exploitation.



ASTRA-ASTRA-ASTRA

ASTRA Youth is a group of young people from Central, Eastern and South Europe devoted to the promotion of sexual and reproductive health and rights in the region. We advocate for comprehensive and non-judgmental sexuality education, free access to confidential reproductive health services including family planning counseling, and young men's involvement into reproductive and sexual health issues.

Activity at ASTRA Youth is focused on strengthening youth voices at the national level, rather than the international level.

Beijing+10 Young people in action for equality

In 1995 the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) was held in Beijing. This conference, attended by 189 governmental delegations resulted in a Platform for Action aiming at the full participation of women at the social, economic and political level. The Beijing Platform for Action is in many ways closely linked to the ICPD Program of Action. Realising sexual and reproductive rights of women and the elimination of violence against women, as part of universal human rights, are important parts of the Platform for Action and necessary steps to ensure equality.

Equality between men and women is a key factor for development and peace. FWCW was the first conference on women in which a fundamental shift occurred from thinking about 'women' to thinking about 'gender'. The international community acknowledged, for the first time, that the entire structure of societies and the relations between men and women should change to realise equality and women's rights.

Continued on page 3...

Equality in Western Europe: Feminism needs a little sister!

Anneke Wensing, YOUACT

In many countries in Western Europe it is generally assumed that emancipation is finished. Equality has been reached and women's rights don't have to be reviewed or discussed anymore, except when talking about less developed countries. Recently in the Netherlands the function of Minister of Emancipation was cancelled, because emancipation was not thought of as an issue anymore. I will not say that there hasn't been much progress made, but even in the most advanced countries, total equality is not a reality. Emancipation is an ongoing process that is never complete and we should stay active to guarantee and safeguard equality and equity between men and women.

In many countries women are still paid less than men. This is not only true because so called 'women's jobs' are usually less well-paid than typical 'men's jobs', but even when men and women are doing the exact same job, women are more likely to receive a lower salary. On a social level, this leads to women being financially dependant on men, which undermines equality.

Continued on page 5.....

Continued from Page 2.... Beijing+10

It was acknowledged that the concepts of equality, peace, development, sexual and reproductive rights and violence against women are all interrelated and it is impossible to have one without the other. Furthermore, equality between men and women is favourable for everybody, both men and women, and therefore it is important that men also stand up to fight for equality.

During the Beijing+5 review process the General Assembly of the UN emphasized that even though more women are involved in paid labour and progress has been made concerning women's participation in the economy, some areas are lagging behind. Violence against women and poverty are areas of major concern that stand in the way of reaching equality and a healthier society. Even though the positive influence of women's organisations is felt at the national and international level, male involvement is still limited.

Now, almost ten years after the Beijing conference, it is time for another review. *It doesn't take a genius to see that equality is still far from a reality for the majority of women in this world.* This is not surprising because changing the whole structure of a society is something that doesn't happen overnight, and doesn't happen in ten years either. The time, money and continuous effort of all parties involved is vital. One way of making change happen more quickly is to start with young people. Young people are more open to live their lives differently and youth leaders can have great influence on the young people around them. I challenge governments and NGO's to involve young men and young women in the fight for equality, poverty reduction, sexual and reproductive rights and violence against women. Young people can have a positive impact on the future and can and will make a difference.

Young people are the future and therefore they have the right to positively influence their own future now.

Continued from Page 1....NGO FORUM

A MESSAGE TO GOVERNMENTS

All delegates affirmed that all women must have access to comprehensive and confidential reproductive health services including safe and legal abortion. HIV-AIDS must be integrated into the sexual and reproductive health and rights. It became clear that a lot needs to be done on the issue of gender based violence and to eliminate all forms of discrimination including FGM, forced and early marriages, domestic violence and so-called honour killings. The voices of Roma women and indigenous people were heard in the fight for their recognition and rights. There were also some strong human rights based recommendations from the trafficking group.

As a coalition advocating for sexual and reproductive health and rights of young people and meaningful youth participation, we feel that our rights and voices are heard and taken seriously by the European NGOs. We felt comfortable to express our opinions, to participate fully and to facilitate discussions. In working groups where we were not able to participate, other organisations putted our rights on the agenda. That is one major step ahead compared to the Beijing +5, where young people needed to fight strongly for this right.

In these two days, the floor in Room XIX is for the governments to safeguard women's rights. We urge governments to take our recommendations seriously at the UNECE Regional Preparatory Meeting and use them for the upcoming days and in their future policies. We wish all governments a fruitful meeting...Little Sis will be watching you!



Youth Activism or Self Promotion?

Tanya Baker, Youth Coalition, Canada

Youth activists are often excellent critics of policies, activities, actions and decisions carried out by adults that can directly or indirectly affect young people's lives, especially in the area of sexual and reproductive health and rights. However, as youth activists, we rarely critically analyze our own actions and decisions with respect to our individual goals and objectives of the work we do. Frequently, the primary argument given for the need for youth participation and advocacy is to provide a much-needed youth perspective and youth dynamic to the discussions, like having all the stakeholders present at the table. But are the youth activists at the table truly the stakeholders? Who are we 'representing' when we provide a youth perspective? Young people are an immensely diverse and dynamic population group, with many factors that influence our ideas and behaviours, consequently youth activists should not be considered representative of an entire population of young people, and as youth activists, we should not portray ourselves as representing anyone other than ourselves and our perspectives.

Many young people become activists with a vision of a better world and methods of working together, which can be lauded by the adult community who have lived and worked in the 'real world'. However idealism should not be considered a negative attribute and be forgotten or pushed aside. But like all mammals, youth activists are not altruistic and we personally benefit a great deal from our hard work and energy. This should not be misconstrued as support for the exploitive practices of paying young people significantly less money or respect for their equal work because of the experiences we are receiving, but it does imply that youth activists are not working entirely without personal gain or reward, even if there are no direct monetary gains. The benefits of receiving new contacts, recognition, writing skills, communication skills, resources for activities or publications and critical thinking skills are all very important for personal and professional development. If we don't recognize and take ownership over these aspects of youth activism and instead only believe that we are doing this to 'help' young people around the world because we know how the world should be, then we can start to become what we most abhor, exclusionary self promoters on our way to careers with increased power and prestige. As youth activists we need the strength and courage to deeply reflect on such issues and use the well fought for youth space as a means of promoting the rights of young people and not for promoting ourselves as individuals.

YOUTH FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

This special edition of the Watchdog was brought to you by:

Thurza Bronner, CHOICE; Gemma Hobcraft, YOUTH COALITION; Rose Koenders, CHOICE; Shannon Kowalski, YOUTH COALITION; Lieke Van Der Putten, CHOICE; Anneke Wensing, YOUACT/CHOICE. A massive thank you to all who contributed articles, you are stars! Happy Reading!
For more information about the Watchdog please contact Outreach@youthcoalition.org

Continued from page 2...

Feminism needs a little sister....

Additionally, women are less often working in top-positions and are participating less in politics.

Receiving a lower salary and serving less in top-positions is closely interlinked with women doing most of the housekeeping and childcare. Because women's work is seen to be worth less than men's work, they more often give up their jobs when they have children. On top of that, it is still socially unacceptable for men to be caring fathers and work less to take care of their children: men often have to fight for even taking only half a day off and proper paternity leave is virtually non-existent.

Political commitment is crucial to achieving real equality. It has been shown that policies, that actively promote women's participation and take away barriers that maintain inequality, have very positive effects, both for men and women. However, a strong and united voice of women is somewhat lacking to pressure their governments to address these issues. Amazing progress has been made during the past decades by women that have actively and tirelessly been fighting for their rights.

Is the younger generation apathetic to the things that still have to be done? No, I don't think so. To me, a lack of knowledge about gender issues and gender inequality, combined with a prejudiced view on feminism and a totally different reality than 30 years ago, are causing young women not to take over the reigns of the battle. We need education and effective handovers between generations to ensure that the fight continues with the same energy. On the other hand, we also need to accept that younger women might have different approaches than their 'ansisters' and that's not a bad thing.

So this is a call to all women who have opened so many doors for us and gave us so many opportunities: let's work together and make sure that the fight never ends!

Gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender rights are human rights!

By Joana Chagas, Brazil

In 2003, the Brazilian delegation introduced a historical resolution on sexual orientation during the 59th Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR). The resolution "Promotion and Protection of Human Rights" (E/CN.4/2003/L.92), of 17 April 2003, recalls on the recognition that every human being is born free and equal in dignity and rights and that everyone is entitled to all rights and freedoms.

Based on the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Brazilian resolution recognizes the occurrence of violations of human rights against persons on the grounds of their sexual orientation and that the enjoyment of their rights and freedoms should not be hindered in any way, calling upon the states to "promote and protect the human rights of all persons regardless of their sexual orientation".

Last April, the Brazilian resolution was on the agenda of the 60th Session of the UNCHR, but the debate was once again postponed for the session next year. There are rumors that there were trade-offs, and that the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) – which was leading the opposition side-by-side with the Vatican – threatened to boycott the UNCTAD meeting that would take place in Brazil a couple of months later, if the resolution was pushed forward for discussion. Furthermore, there were many concerns that the resolution could be defeated or even withdrawn from the UN agenda.

So, no votes nor debates arose at the UNCHR 60th Session: there was neither objection nor opposition to the Brazilian request to defer the consultation of the draft resolution.

The fact that the discussion on the Brazilian resolution has been postponed twice already shows how many UN Member States in the Commission on Human Rights do not want to recognize the violations to the human rights of people because of their sexual orientation and gender identity nor to discuss the "controversial" language on sexual rights.

Continued on page 6

Young people around the world are moving into action to stand up for their sexual and reproductive rights and health. Even though 'sexual and reproductive rights' may not sound like a very hot topic for young people to work on, new youth networks are being created everywhere in different forms and structures. Varying from local peer education groups to larger national and international networks, young people are working hard to make their voices heard and stand up for their rights. The general notion is no longer that young people are the future but that young people are an important part of the present. Young people and adults should work together to safeguard young people's rights in the present and move towards a healthier future.

One such youth movement is happening in Europe. YouAct, a new and unique European youth network on sexual and reproductive rights, has been officially launched in Portugal during a three-day youth conference in May of this year. Initiated by a national youth organisation in the Netherlands (CHOICE), eight young people from different European countries have been working on the development of YouAct for 8 months before its official launch.

Continued from page 5, THE BRAZILIAN RESOLUTION

Many NGOs and networks working with the rights of gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender (LGBT) were in Geneva at that time and were pleased that the issues of sexual orientation and human rights was still kept on the agenda. Whilst there was disappointment that the resolution could not be passed, at least there is another chance and a whole year to mobilize and strategize for the 61st Session, in 2005.

It is very important that the Brazilian resolution on human rights and sexual orientation be discussed next year and that LGBT and SRR organizations be present to advocate for the inclusion of a language that takes into account the diversity of gender identities. For example, the term "sexual orientation" is insufficient to protect the rights of transgender people, urging that there is a discussion on the definition of terms such as "gender identity", and that the final resolution explicitly includes it as a ground of protection.

In addition, the participation and advocacy of young people is fundamental to guarantee that our needs and concerns regarding our sexuality, sexual orientation and gender identity are also taken into account. Young people face an additional form of discrimination – age-based discrimination – which impacts on young people's rights and the states have an obligation to combat it.

Young people have the right to education, including sexual education, and to have access to factual, non-judgemental information about sexuality in order to be able to make informed decisions. Young people have the right to privacy, the basis for individual's right to make decisions about sexuality free from interference. Young people have the right to be free from discrimination and violence, regardless of our sexual orientation or gender identity.

In many countries, to be gay or lesbian is considered a crime, sometimes punishable by death. All over the world gay, lesbian, bisexuals and specially transgender are subject to harassment, humiliation, verbal and physical abuse related to their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. Homophobic rhetoric, abuse and violence by state actors such as the police, and also by society and by their own families are some of the human rights violations on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity, even in those countries where there is no legal discrimination.

This must stop! Let's support the Brazilian resolution on human rights and sexual orientation, and reaffirm that gay, lesbian, bisexuals and transgender rights are human rights!

For more information on the Brazilian Resolution, visit: www.brazilianresolution.org and www.igla.org



Unidos por el amor y por la ley

By Marisa Rojas, Argentina

“Desde que nos unimos civilmente con Marcelo nos peleamos más, como todos los matrimonios”, comenta entre risas César Cigliutti, presidente de la Comunidad Homosexual Argentina (CHA). César y Marcelo fueron la primera pareja gay que se unió civilmente en la ciudad de Buenos Aires, y en Argentina, el viernes 18 de julio del 2003. Y aunque el presidente de la CHA bromea sobre qué cambió en su pareja desde aquel entonces, sabe que se trató de un paso trascendental en la lucha por los derechos de la comunidad gay-lésbico-travesti-transexual-bisexual (GLTTB) del país. “No hay obstáculos suficientes cuando peleás con firmeza. Este es el fruto de años de trabajo, es el producto del esfuerzo de toda la comunidad homosexual argentina. Esta ha sido una lucha personal y política”, sentencia Cigliutti.

El mayor logro obtenido al momento por la CHA lleva el número 1004. Se trata de la Ley de Unión Civil, la norma legal de la Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires que reconoce la unión de las parejas homosexuales. La Ley otorga a los miembros de la comunidad GLTTB los mismos derechos laborales y de seguridad social que a los integrantes de las parejas heterosexuales:

- ser incluidos en la obra social de la pareja
- visitar a sus parejas en los hospitales públicos y recibir los partes médicos
- solicitar créditos de vivienda y planes de desempleo
- presentarse ante cualquier trámite como pareja legal de hecho

El proyecto de ley fue presentado ante la comisión de Derechos Humanos de la Legislatura de la ciudad a fines del 2001. Un año más tarde, en la madrugada del 14 de diciembre del 2002, y después de 18 horas de sesión continua, la Legislatura porteña aprobó la ley. Así, y por primera vez en toda América Latina, se reconocen derechos civiles a “las parejas que hayan convivido en una relación de afectividad estable y pública por un período mínimo de dos años, con independencia de su sexo u orientación sexual”. Pedro Paradiso Sottile, abogado, Coordinador del área legal de la CHA, recuerda hoy que *“en un principio casi nadie apostaba que la ley de unión civil iba a salir. Pero nosotros estábamos convencidos que el trabajo de todos estos años iba a tener sus frutos porque sabíamos que el proyecto era serio, era posible porque era técnicamente indiscutible”*.

La ley, aprobada por 29 votos a favor y 10 en contra –todos provenientes de sectores ortodoxos asociados a intereses de la Iglesia Católica, única institución que se manifestó públicamente en contra del proyecto– no habla de derechos civiles como la adopción –el aspecto más controvertido– o la sucesión, tópicos que en realidad sólo pueden modificarse por ley nacional ya que se trata de espacios del derecho sólo los que la Ciudad no tiene injerencia. Es en esa lucha en la que se encuentra abocada hoy la Coalición Nacional para la Unión Civil.

Continued on page 9...

OPINION POLL: FOCUS INDIA

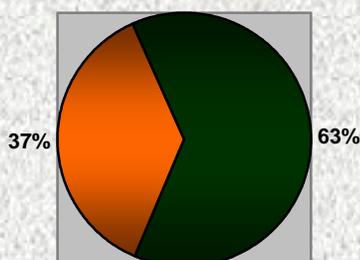
Although the meeting is about the ECE region, we are all part of one-world...

This time our opinion poll takes us to India and the issue of abortion.

This poll was conducted among 76 educated young Indian women and men in the age group 18 - 29

Reasons stated were given by the youth themselves, it was not given as options.

Do you agree that young women have the right to abortion?



If Yes, Why?

1. 48% it may be a risk to a woman's life especially during the adolescence.
2. 36% it may hinder the development of a young woman economically.
3. 16% Mental health of a young woman may get affected if pregnancy is unwanted.

If No, Why?

1. 67% Abortion is a sin
2. 28% If abortion is made a right for all young women, morality in the society will be lost
3. 5% It is the denial of Right to Life of the foetus

Continued from page 5: YOUACT

In August 2004, YouAct had its first General Meeting in Serbia, following participation in the 8th International Summer School STOPAIDS, organised by Youth of Jazas. YouAct consists of 27 members from 16 European countries. During the General Meeting the members of YouAct developed a work-plan for the coming two years, which mainly focuses on realising young people's rights and empowering youth to stand up for their rights through advocacy, training and awareness-raising. YouAct is ready to Act!

Starting a new organisation is not easy, especially when you are trying to get off the beaten path. For many members this is their first experience in managing and developing an organisation. This is why training and support are indispensable during the process. We are opening doors to new ways of working and finding the best way to work effectively by trial and error.

Paulo Jorge Vieira (25), Portugal, Chair of YouAct:

YouAct is a network that was established by young people for young people and that's what makes it powerful. The time has come that young people are no longer waiting for adults to tell them what to do, but they can make their own decisions and follow their own dreams. This doesn't mean that partnership with adults is not important, but being able to stand on your own feet is the first step towards equal partnership

Anneke Wensing, the Netherlands

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Youth Participation, a gap between words and actions

Youth participation is increasingly recognized as an essential part of development programs and policies. Senior policymakers often have good intentions, but there is still very little investment in meaningful youth participation. When it comes to youth participation, there still is a large gap between words and action. Since 1994 there has been an international consensus that young people must be fully involved in the policymaking process – yet this still often fails to happen! Young people are often only involved in the implementing phase of policies and programs. Policymakers often misuse the notion of youth participation and seem unwilling or unable to let young people be really involved, or unaware of the need to do so.

‘Always involve the target group from the very beginning’ is a principle that makes sense. Policies and programs focusing on young people can only be successful if they are fully involved in the process. Young people know their specific problems, needs and solutions best. They know the best way to address their peers. More to the point, they have a right to be involved, as their lives are at stake!

Wrong attitudes towards young people prevent adult policymakers from involving young people in a significant way, right from the start. Unless adult policymakers see young people as active participants, as people who have something serious to offer, as people worth listening to, projects aimed at youth are doomed to fail. For instance, some adults believe that involving young people simply means inviting them to meetings, but what they really need is an opportunity to express their ideas and opinions. Often adults do not put the necessary time and effort into learning how to work with youth. This is token participation. Young people and adults differ in the way they work. This fact must be recognized and addressed if partnerships are to be successful.

Youth for Women’s Rights believes that young people have the right to participate in the design, decision-making, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes in all sectors, not just in sectors identified as being specifically related to youth. Resources to promote and support youth participation must be made available, in order to implement youth participation. When youth do participate they must compromise a critical mass of at least 20 %, but more is always better and one is never enough. Governments and NGO's should pay young people for their time and effort, as they would pay adults. **Valuing young people's contributions means ensuring that they are appropriately compensated.**

Continued from page 7: Unions in law and love, Marisa Rojas

En ese orden es que la XIII Marcha del Orgullo GLTTB, realizada a comienzos de noviembre en Buenos Aires, tuvo por consigna: “UNION CIVIL para todo el país, YA”. UNION CIVIL para los más de 3 millones de argentinos ‘putos’, ‘travestis’, ‘tortas’, ‘bomberos’, ‘osos’, ‘locas’ (todos estos términos refieren a distintos apodos que se emplean para nombrar a l@s homosexuales en Argentina). Un 10% de la población total del país que permanece, en su mayoría, en el silencio, por vergüenza, por temor, por miedo a ser considerados ‘ciudadanos de segunda’.

Primero fue Holanda, en el 2001; dos años más tarde, en junio del 2003, sería el turno de Bélgica. A comienzos de octubre de este año fue posible también en España. ¿Podremos prontamente incluir a la Argentina en esta lista de países que aceptan las uniones de gays, lesbianas, travestis, transexuales, transgéneros y bisexuales? Con matices diversos en cada lado, lo importante es que se trata de una norma que habla de sociedades mejores: abiertas, tolerantes, igualitarias. Como dijo el presidente de España, Rodríguez Zapatero, “*contra nadie, sino a favor de una comunidad donde haya espacio para todos*”.

* Marisa Rojas is a young journalist from Argentina. She is currently working on her thesis about gay rights and communications.

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