

THE WATCHDOG

Inside this issue:

Can We Move Beyond Cairo?	1
Prompting Adolescent Reproductive Rights in Mexico: A Profile on Elige	2
What's Up On Wednesday?	3
Face to Face with the Holy See?	3
Get Your Facts Right!	4

Wednesday's Agenda:

- 10:00AM UN-GAH: First Plenary: 21st Special Session of the General Assembly
- 11:00AM Conference Room 4: Panel discussion on *An Adolescent's Right to Information: What we want to know! What we need to know! Who we need to support us!*
- 1:00PM Women's Caucus
- 1:45PM Face to Face Testimonials: Refugees and Reproductive Health
- 1:15PM Film: Breaking the Silence
- 4:00PM Panel on Population and Development

Can We Move Beyond Cairo?

When the working group began their discussion of Brazil's alternate language proposal for para 45e (which addresses unsafe abortion) before lunch, everyone on the floor and gallery held their breath-- it was going to be a long day. Or was it?

While the proposal received much support, several delegates raised objections at the discussion of such a sensitive issue so late in the negotiations. Their proposal -- cut and paste from the Cairo Programme of Action (PoA) to avoid any debate.

This has been a common response and a much-practiced strategy during these ICPD+5 proceedings. But I just have to ask -- what the heck is everyone thinking?

The PoA is a great document -- a watershed and something to be proud of. The ICPD+5 process was supposed to identify key future actions to further the implementation of the PoA. Are we spending millions of dollars, and tremendous time and energy, to have the original document regurgitated?

Para 8.25 states: "In circumstances where abortion is not against the law, such abortion should be safe." It was already agreed to. We're here to talk implementation. Brazil's proposal does this. It states: "In circumstances where abortion is not against the law, health system should train and equip health service providers and take other measures to ensure that abortion is safe and accessible."

The Brazilian proposal highlights the most obvious method of making abortion (when legal) safe: Make sure those providing the service are trained and equipped. It's really quite simple.

The afternoon's discussion revisited, among others, paragraphs 52 (a), (e) and (f) on adolescents with language proposals coming from Canada. Some delegates strained against the majority's support for a balance between adolescent and parental rights, and created tension in the room when taking valuable time on the floor to make general statements rather than direct their attention to the language at hand. The language on the involvement of adolescents should have been much stronger. In 7.47 of the PoA,

it states "Adolescents must be fully involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of such information and services with proper regard for parental guidance and responsibilities." If they are going to cut and paste the PoA, it would be nice if they got the good parts too. By press time, the most contentious of paragraphs remain to be agreed on, and the battle-weary delegates seem to be starting to take the easy way out by settling for a re-arranged 1994 PoA to meet tonight's deadline. But hope springs eternal, and there's still time for delegates to remember the purpose of the ICPD+5 and spend their remaining energy on formulating a document that is in spirit with the further implementation of the Cairo PoA.

By Erin McGinn

I support...
**ICPD
CHOICE
YOUTH**

Promoting Adolescent Reproductive Rights in Mexico: A Profile on *Elige*

Red de Jóvenes por los Derechos Sexuales y Reproductivos (Youth Network for Sexual and Reproductive Rights)

Why does the Network Exist?

- Young people make up 68.2% of the Mexican population.
- Elementary and secondary education in Mexico does not prioritize the inclusion of sexual education.
- 850,000 abortions are induced each year in Mexico; the majority of which are performed on women between 20 and 34 years of age.
- 70% of those who develop the AIDS virus become infected during their adolescence.
- Because the available services in sexual and reproductive health are not sensitive to the needs of young people and don't include a gender perspective.
- Because it is important to promote the creation of spaces for the empowerment of young people, allowing them to take an active role in defending and exercising their reproductive and sexual rights.

The *Elige* network works on the very sound principle that it is easier and more effective for young people to discuss, inform others and ask questions about sexual and reproductive rights in a peer environment. The network was formed out of young Mexican activists who felt that the needs of adolescents deserved its own space, has designed training and advocacy programs to raise awareness and interest in the promotion of reproductive and sexual rights issues among the young Mexican population. *Elige* has demonstrated the usefulness and practicality of peer education in sexual and reproductive health.

Who is *Elige*?

Elige is a network of young people interested in the promotion, defense and dissemination of reproductive and sexual rights from the perspective of young people. *Elige*'s work consists in promoting the full satisfaction of and respect for reproductive and sexual rights in Mexico.

***Elige*'s Objective**

Foment the awareness of and promote the exercise of the sexual and reproductive rights of Mexican youth population, as a fundamental part of their citizens' rights.

For more information on *Elige*, please call: 52 5 271 8207, or email elige@laneta.apc.org

¿Qué es *Elige*?

Elige es una red de jóvenes interesados/as en la promoción, defensa y difusión de los derechos sexuales y reproductivos desde las necesidades y óptica de la gente joven. Nuestro trabajo consiste en promover un pleno ejercicio y respeto de los derechos sexuales y reproductivos en México.

El Objetivo de *Elige*

Difundir y promover los derechos sexuales y reproductivos de la población joven mexicana, como parte del ejercicio pleno de la ciudadanía.

¿Por qué la Red?

- Porque la gente joven representa el 68.2% del total de la población mexicana.
- Porque la educación básica en México no

contemple la educación sobre la sexualidad como una prioridad.

- Porque en México, se cometen 850.000 abortos inducidos al año. La mayoría de éstos los sufren mujeres entre 20 y 34 de edad.
- Porque un 70% de los casos de infección de VIH/SIDA ocurren durante la adolescencia y juventud.
- Porque los servicios de salud sexual y reproductiva disponibles, son poco sensibles a las necesidades de la gente joven, además de no considerar la perspectiva de género.
- Porque consideramos importante impulsar la creación de espacios donde la gente joven pueda "apoderarse" y tomar un papel activo en la promoción y ejercicio de sus derechos sexuales y reproductivos.

Para más información sobre *Elige*, por favor llame al 52 5 271 8207, envíe un email a: elige@laneta.apc.org

By Alison-Maria Bartalone

COLOFON: Sonu; Erin; Alison; Gemma; Paul (for the company at Kinko's!)

What's Up On Wednesday?

La Traviata

Central Park SummerStage, Rumsey Playfield, Central Park
Enter at 72nd St Subway: 6 to 68th St. 7.30 p.m. Free.

Eric Clapton and Friends Benefit Crossroads Centre Antigua with Bob Dylan+Mary J. Blige+Sheryl Crow+D'Angelo

Madison Square Garden. 8 p.m. Tickets \$250-35

Face to Face with the Holy See?

"There is also the question of plurality. The position we arrive at here affects the youth all over the world: Catholic or non-catholic. A certain amount of leeway is essential in such proceedings."

You would have thought that the people most unlikely to go up to the Holy See delegates in the PrepCom were the youth. Well, think again. On Monday, some Youth Coalition members led by the Latin Americans tried to open up a dialogue by handing over a letter as an ice-breaker and an invitation for talks to clear the air.

Claudia Ahumada of Chile explains the rationale behind this move: "Back home, there is such a huge involvement of the youth in the parishes. The priests encourage us in various activities and youth par-

ticipation is paramount. But here, in these big international meetings, we see them adopt a different attitude. We are confused by their position."

Adds Susana Cruzalta of Mexico: "There is also the question of plurality. The position we arrive at here affects the youth all over the world: Catholic or non-catholic. A certain amount of leeway is essential in such proceedings."

"We went up to them so that we could make them realise that we are normal, mature individuals with a certain sense

of responsibility and that what we ask for in terms of sexual and reproductive rights is not based on arbitrary wishfulness," says Maria Eugenia Miranda of Argentina.

The purpose of the letter -- a meeting with the Holy See -- could not be realized till late on Tuesday afternoon, as there was confusion about the date and the venue. The Latin-Americans, however, hope that it will happen before the UN-GASS is through.

By Sonu Chhina

Five Key Themes of the Youth Coalition

1. 20% resource allocation
2. Sex education
3. Youth Participation
4. Sexual and reproductive health services
5. Sexual and reproductive rights are human rights.

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The Youth Coalition for ICPD is an organization composed of committed youth working at the local, national, and international levels to promote the full implementation of the Programme of Action stemming from the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo. The Youth Coalition emerged from the ICDP+5 Youth Forum, held in the Hague, in February 1999.

Through public education, advocacy, and coalition building, the Youth Coalition strives to ensure that the sexual and reproductive health rights, needs, and concerns of young people are addressed fully, and that young people from around the world are actively and meaningfully involved in all aspects of development, especially sexual and reproductive health, rights, and education issues. Its members, which range between the ages of 15 and 29, come from diverse backgrounds and represent every region in the world.

Get Your Facts Right!

Myth: Parental rights, responsibilities and duties override adolescents' rights to sexual and reproductive health information and services

Fact: Paragraph 7.45 of the Programme of Action of the ICPD calls for parental involvement and guidance in reproductive health matters. However, the PoA also very clearly and directly mandates that no obstacle

should be placed in the way of adolescent access to information and services, including the opposition that some parents may represent, directly or indirectly. Moreover, the 1989 UN Children's Convention directly states that "[in] all actions concerning children, ...the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration (Art. 3)" and "[no] child [should be] deprived of his or her right of ac-

cess to health services (Art. 24.1)." Parental involvement in the promotion and development of a mentally and physically healthy adolescent is important and ideal; however, the adolescent's right as an individual to access private, confidential and comprehensive health services overrides parental priorities, values and input.

At the Cairo conference, 179 governments agreed to a Programme of Action that calls for sexual and reproductive health care to be available to all, including adolescents, by 2015.

