

THE WATCHDOG

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The 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.

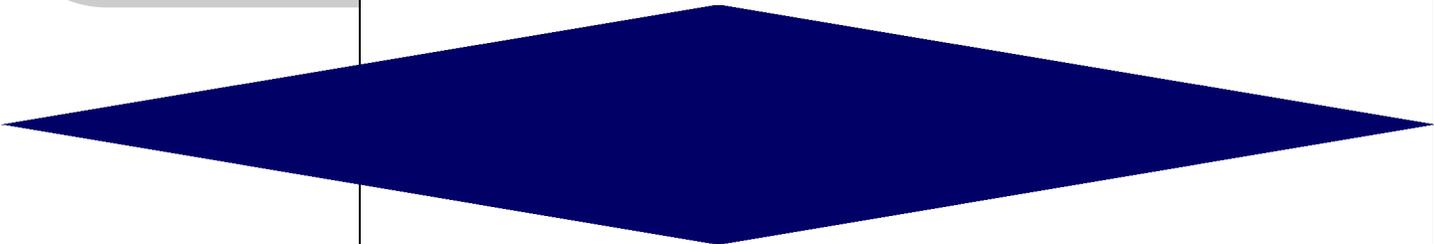
STOP THE PRESS! - WORKING GROUP REACHES CONSENSUS

Well into Thursday evening, after the sun had set, a thunderous clapping was heard in the UN—the Working Group finally ended negotiations. Not surprisingly, paragraph 45 on unsafe abortion was the last domino to fall. Its final language was divided into three paragraphs, the first was a repeat of 8.25 of the PoA, the second was 7.24 of the PoA, and a third paragraph recognized the need to train and equip health service providers and take other measures to deal with unsafe abortion. The phrase

“laws containing punitive measures against women who have undergone illegal abortions should be reviewed”—one that several groups, including the Youth Coalition was hoping to see—was not there.

However, the Youth Coalition can claim a small amount of satisfaction. A heartfelt statement from Nepal delivered to the Working Group, in which they sincerely and humbly recognized the need to review their punitive abortion laws. Many observers said this was the high point of the evening and Nepal’s statement met

with great applause and support. As many might remember, attention has been focused on Nepal’s abortion laws of late by many NGOs, in efforts to advocate for Min Min’s release from prison. Min Min was incarcerated after being forced by her family to have an abortion—after being raped by her brother in law. The Youth Coalition wishes to extend its encouragement to Nepal, for its bravery in recognizing that these punitive laws need to be addressed.



What's On 'till Sunday?

July 1-31: Harlem Summer Arts Festival: Dance, theatre, music. Call 212-222-9347

Until July 10: Metropolitan Opera House, Kirov Ballet, \$30-\$125. Call 212-362-6000

NY Waterway Disco: Fifty-minute floating disco dance under the stars.

Friday at Nell's: World music night, live world beat band upstairs. \$15.

Sunday: Macey's 4th Of July fireworks. East river b/w 23rd and 42nd. 9:15 - 9:45PM

Friday: MoMa: Pay what you can. 4:35-8:15PM. 53rd b/w 5th and 6th

Our Success Stems from the Support of the Larger NGO Community

"The Youth Coalition has begun to talk about its future, to ask if we have a role beyond ICPD+5. There seems to be a general consensus within the group that indeed, we have more to offer."

In this, the final issue of the *Watchdog*, I want to express, on behalf of the Youth Coalition, a sincere thanks and appreciation to the larger NGO community involved in the ICPD+5 process. Our unlimited ideas, vision and enthusiasm required support and direction from those more experienced, and dare I say... older and wiser. We were included in discussions and panels, we were invited to attend briefing sessions, we were kept informed, and most of all, we were encouraged. Everyone seemed quite accepting that we had something valuable to say and a right to participate along with all the other NGOs, even though we were less experienced and not always sure of ourselves. You welcomed us in, incorporated some of our issues into your own platforms, and even wore our yellow buttons proudly.

Special thanks must go out to those who helped us with securing funding, accreditation, preparing press releases, and our

other activities in NY. I want to recognize the Packard Foundation and WPF for ensuring we had the financial resources to continue our work as a group, and taking the initiative and the risk, in investing in us, as a new and relatively inexperienced initiative. The *Watchdog's* existence is due mostly to WEDO and CRLP's provision of facilities and CRLP's invaluable human resource--Alison Maria Bartolone, who spent many hours with our *Watchdog* crew writing and editing. The Women's Coalition for ICPD has also been very helpful and inclusive, which allowed us to feel at ease when asking for their advice or input. Thanks to individuals include Dianne Sherman (USAID) and Trish Sears (CEDPA), for their general enthusiasm, personal support, and assistance with logistical matters and Joke van Kampen (WPF) and Geoffrey Knox (Women's Coalition) for help with media. And finally, everyone should know how wonderful my boss, Katherine McDonald,

executive director of ACPD, has been. She, with full support from APCD's Board of Directors, has allowed me to take as much time away from my duties at ACPD as was needed to work on the Youth Coalition, and struck a perfect balance between being a pillar of support and mentor, and encouraging our independence.

The Youth Coalition has begun to talk about its future, to ask if we have a role beyond ICPD+5. There seems to be a general consensus within the group that indeed, we have more to offer. As we work towards Beijing+5, and even ICPD+10, we hope that we can continue to strengthen our links with the larger NGO community and develop relationships based on mutual respect, a spirit of cooperation, and a sharing of ideas.

Thanks again, and we'll be seeing you.

By Erin McGinn

"Fairness doesn't seem to feature in this process, if it did we may have, conceivably, witnessed a consensus by now."

The Vowels of Cairo

The inevitability of endemic change is being challenged at the ICPD+5 conference. Difficulties still remain between NGOs and many delegations. NGOs, the frequent implementers of the Cairo PoA, many of whom who have been involved since Cairo itself and even before are now having their entry into the UNGASS curbed. Is this fair?

Fairness doesn't seem to feature in this process, if it did we may have, conceivably, witnessed a consensus by now. At the time of going to press, the arduous negotiations continue to thrash out the commas, adjectives and verbs that will become the review document. The contentious issues could be deemed "the vowels" of Cairo:

A: Adolescents
E: Emergency Contraception
I: Informal and Formal Sex Education
O: Overall Chapeau
U: Unsafe Abortion

And the points that are likely to cause inflammation in future conferences concerning the ICPD process. There is a real potential for the problems to deepen on an international level: in future conferences there will be references

to not only the original PoA, and the numerous other, albeit important covenants of the past, but now also the ICPD+5 call for future actions. It seems that we will all become so entrenched in the paper work, that it will be difficult to see the reality and successes of implementation. The NGO community, particularly the youth, are fundamental to this process, and its success (which the ministers seem all too happy to address) beyond the walls of the UN Basement.

The NGO representatives here should have the opportunity to "engage the heads of state at the General Assembly" as a means of encouraging "national leaders to return home and improve dialogue

and increase their receptiveness to partnerships with civil society."* It is unfortunate we could not address the UNGASS, but we are not insistent on revisiting the past, we will look to the future and will leave here with experi-

ence and knowledge which will assist us in our grass-roots implementation in our own countries. Next time, however, we will return, probably not with the same faces, because "as we grow older, we will pass the yellow button on to other young people" in recognition of the rapid pace of societal change which the UN needs to relate and react to. The Youth Coalition was strengthened by this experience, and our three months of existence will, eventually through our sheer energy, determination and vision, become fully integrated into the UN System. **In short, we'll be back!**

*Excerpts from the address made by the Youth Coalition to the Committee of the Whole on July 1 1999. It has been printed and is available from either the tables outside the conference rooms or from Youth Coalition members: look for that badge!!!!

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In Danger: Language on Youth

"Although most adolescents become healthy and productive adults, many millions, unfortunately, as a result of the non-recognition of the fights of adolescents to sexual and reproductive health education, do not."

The PrepCom continues to strive for consensus on the outstanding paragraphs that have been set aside before the UN-GASS began. And as it does, one can only hope that the final document will be a progressive one for young people all over the world, particularly in areas such as the Caribbean where tremendous progress has been made since Cairo. The Programme of Action of the international conference on Population and Development was, without a doubt, a significant achievement for young people all over the world as it relates to our sexual and reproductive health and fights. This achievement, however, now appears to be in great danger.

It is extremely important that we encourage sexual and reproductive health interventions which are crucial at this time among the adolescent population in order to offset some potentially explosive social problems associated with, for instance, alarming increases in teen pregnancies.

Adolescents need proper information, education, counselling and services which are frequently non-existent or inappropriate. Adoles-

cents need to know about the constellation of reproductive health and social service options which are in line with the recommendations of the ICPD-94 so as to be able to make responsible and informed choices.

Although most adolescents become healthy and productive adults, many millions, unfortunately, as a result of the non-recognition of the fights of adolescents to sexual and reproductive health education, do not. More than half of the new HIV infections occur in young people, and one in 20 adolescents worldwide contracts an STD.

One-tenth of all births are to teenage girls, posing increased risks to both the mother and child. The situation is so crucial at this time that UNFPA has been making adolescent reproductive health its focus since 1998 and will continue to do so till 2001.

Sexual education goes beyond biological information and awareness of contraception and includes self-esteem, sexual development, love and relationships and personal responsibility. By enabling young people to make informed choices, sexuality edu-

cation can minimise the risks of unwanted pregnancies and STDs including HIV/AIDS among young people clearly illustrates the danger of ignorance and misinformation. UNFPA studies have found that sex education does not increase promiscuity. In fact, recent studies showed that almost half of the young people taking part in sex education programmes had higher levels of abstinence, higher use of contraceptives, fewer sexual partners and reduced rates of sexually transmitted diseases and unplanned pregnancies. Immediate investment in adolescent sexual and reproductive health is a valuable step in the development of basic human rights and sustainable development for the benefit of the individual society and mankind for the next millennium.

Reaching this generation of young people must become a burning priority, after all the reproductive behaviour of young people will, in many ways, determine the future of the world. I sincerely hope that the final document of the PrepCom will be progressive enough to take stock of this.

By Adler Bynoe

Strengthening the Grassroots in Argentina

"The bottom line is that in my country there aren't any programmes that allow adolescents to enjoy their sexuality as a whole, free of health risks ... Adolescents' privacy is not respected, nor is their right to access services that safeguard their health."

In Argentina, sex education generally isn't included in the school curricula - at the primary or secondary level. Youth don't have access to information on how to protect themselves from sexually transmitted diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, or teenage pregnancies, which lead to unsafe abortion. Abortion is illegal and women and teenage girls generally use it as a method to interrupt a pregnancy that they weren't able to prevent. They do this in secrecy, in conditions that harm their health and expose them to many complications. The bottom line is that in my country there aren't any programmes that allow adolescents to enjoy their sexuality as a whole, free of health risks. In addition, youth barely have access to sexual and reproductive health services that are confidential, and that allow you to go there even without your parents' consent. Adolescents' privacy is not respected, nor is their right to access services that safeguard their health.

In the organization that I work in, Foundation for Women's Studies and Investigation (HELM), we offer workshops to enable youth with the objective of them then be-

ing able to teach their peers on subjects such as their health and their sexual and reproductive rights. Thanks to programmes like these in schools, many adolescents were able to learn about their sexuality, through talks with youth their own age. HEIM also organizes campaigns to disseminate information and raise consciousness among youth in the poorer sectors of the community, where information is rare. We work with youth and women on the prevention of HIV/AIDS, contraceptive methods and other subjects related to sexuality. We promote the implementation of the Platform of Action of Cairo and Beijing. We work day by day so that adolescents will be able to live their youth in a wholesome way, in enjoyment of all their rights, including sexual and reproductive rights.

En la Argentina la educación sexual generalmente no está incluida en los programas de estudio de las escuelas primarias ni secundarias. Los y las jóvenes no tenemos acceso a información sobre cómo cuidarnos de enfermedades de transmisión sexual, como el VIH Sida, o de embarazos no deseados, que

conducen a abortos inseguros.

El aborto es ilegal y por lo general las mujeres y adolescentes lo utilizan como el único método para interrumpir el embarazo que no pudieron evitar. Y lo hacen en la clandestinidad, expuestas a condiciones que perjudican su salud y complicaciones, que pueden comprometer su salud futura, incluso hasta la muerte. Es decir, en mi país no existen políticas que nos permitan gozar de nuestra sexualidad plenamente y sin riesgos para nuestra salud.

Además, la gente joven tiene escaso acceso a servicios de salud sexual y reproductiva confidenciales, y que puedan realizarse sin el consentimiento de los padres. No se respeta la privacidad de los adolescentes, y su derecho a acceder libremente a servicios que protejan su salud.

Desde la organización donde participo, FEIM (Fundación de Estudios e Investigación para la Mujer), ofrecemos talleres de capacitación y concientización para jóvenes, con el fin de que ellos mismos puedan enseñar a sus pares, acerca de su sa-
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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.

We're on the Web!

www.youthcoalition.org

Continued: ...Grassroots in Argentina

lud y sus derechos sexuales y reproductivos. Gracias a estos programas implementados en las escuelas, muchos adolescentes pudieron aprender sobre su sexualidad, a través de charlas con personas de su misma edad.

Además, entre otras cosas, FEIM organiza campañas de difusión en los sectores más bajos de la población, excluidos por la pobreza, donde la información es escasa.

Trabajamos con las mujeres y los jóvenes sobre distintos temas, como la prevención del Sida, los métodos anticonceptivos, y otros temas vinculados a la sexualidad. Promovemos la implementación de la Plataforma de Acción del Cairo y Beijing. Trabajamos día a día para que los jóvenes puedan vivir plenamente su juventud, gozando de todos sus derechos humanos, incluyendo los sexuales y reproductivos.

By Maria Eugenia Miranda

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