

THE WATCHDOG

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Agenda

Wednesday

- 9-5: Forum on Women and Health. Hunter College. 68st and Lex
- 10-11: Health Caucus, 12th flCC
- 11.45-1.15: Young Women's Realities & Recommendations, Conference Room 4
- 12-1: Ending the Pre-sumption of Consent: A Worldwide programme on non-consensual sex in marriage. 10th floor, Church Center
- 2-3: Men's Roles and Values US Customs House

Move Forward

On Tuesday afternoon Youth for Women's Rights spoke to the Press to voice their concerns with the hope of being heard by their governments. The key concerns were: youth participation, access to education and information, recognition of their sexual and reproductive rights and economic issues that directly impact the lives of young people.

In a room in the Church Center that overlooked the grey skies and the rain-lashed UN building in which crucial negotiations on Beijing+5 are going on, five young women from various regions elaborated on their issues. Sinta Ratna Dewi, 29, from Indonesia said that the chief reason why policy on sexuality education is not implemented by various governments is cultural and religious barriers. "Some governments agree that sexuality education is important but resist changing existing values on sexuality."

She listed the kind of sexuality education that the Youth for Women's Rights is lobbying for. It needs to be based on sexual and reproductive rights of

young people, the youth should be involved in planning, implementation and evaluation. It has to be provided in the formal as well as non-formal streams of education and it should be confidential, free, accessible, friendly, non-judgemental and non-discriminatory.

Nadia van der Linde, 24, from the Netherlands called for governments, youth organisations and NGOs to not only respect but also promote the sexual and reproductive rights of all young people. Promoting these rights does not only mean providing information and education but also services that can help young people make informed choices.

"Abortions should be legal, safe, accessible and affordable for all women, including young women and girls. In no circumstances should a woman who has sought abortion be punished under any section of the law." She concluded by saying that the government's responsibilities towards young people were hardly being met in the Beijing+5 document that is still under negotiation. She called upon the

audience to support specific wording of the issues identified by Youth for Women's Rights and not be satisfied with anything less.

Viviana Maldonado, 27, from Ecuador underlined the value of diversity and called for elimination of barriers of age and gender, among others. She said that the Beijing+5 document should include: concrete targets and benchmarks to eradicate poverty generated by the negative impact of globalisation that strongly affects young women and redefinition of economic policies in order to mainstream gender perspective and to prioritise allocation for social development.

She called on governments to agree on concrete benchmarks for the fulfillment of the .7% GNP of developed countries allocated to overseas development assistance (ODA) and that they drastically reduce military expenditure and establish mechanisms to eradicate corruption and reallocate resources to investments in girls, adolescents and young women.

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Youth Statement

We, at the Youth for Women's Rights, would like to raise some points about the negotiations process that we feel are detrimental to the work that we are doing for the promotion and protection of youth rights.

The negotiations are proceeding slowly and we are concerned about the state of the Outcomes Document. We urge governments to proceed with the negotiations as fast as possible so as to ensure that there is a forward-looking document that addresses our needs and concerns at the end of the week. It is important that the efforts of governments and NGOs working towards this review are not in vain and are recognized and reflected in the Outcomes Document. It has become apparent that some countries have failed to be supportive or rather obstructive to the recognition of the rights of young people. To these nations we say that you have the responsibility of many young people in your hands and we urge you to take that responsibility seriously.

It is imperative that governments stick to the commitments they have made at Beijing 5 years ago and during ICPD+5

last year and come out with a forward-looking document that addresses and recognizes the concerns and needs of the youth of today.

Youth for Women's Rights urges governments to take another forward step to reaffirm their commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action. And in the spirit of the Review, we urge governments to remove reservations on the original Beijing Platform for Action. In recognition of the principles of human rights/equality, we hope that the international community will endorse the universality of the human rights framework.

In addition we hope that the commitments of the governments to the Beijing Platform for Action will translate into concrete actions once this review process is over. We urge governments to review legislation at the national level to bring it in line with the principles outlined in the Platform for Action.

As youth, who are not just the future but also the present. We hope to play a greater role in policy- and decision-making processes as well as in the implementation of the commitments made here.

Move Forward

(Continued from page 1)

Mariana Nasser, 19, from

participation and reiterated that "Young people

must have their voice

The recommendations that

youth representatives at all

youth perspectives at all

The second recommendation called for the establishment of youth councils

where youth are included

evaluation.

n-

two obstacles were identified, namely, lack of institutionalization of youth funds. It was pointed out

funds be provided for programs and organizations

people, for young people."

"Youth are not ONLY the future. Youth are the present. Right here, right

By Sonu Chhina

For a full text of the speeches made at the press conference, visit www.youthcoalition.org

Argentina joins SLAC

With just two working days left, Argentina moved to this progressive block on Tuesday. The Youth Coalition for ICPD congratulates Argentina for taking this bold step. It is definitely going to make a difference at this crucial stage of negotiations.

I support...
**ICPD
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YOUTH**

Men & Gender Equality

The reputation the Nordic countries have for being very progressive in integrating men into efforts to promote gender equality was on display again on Tuesday afternoon. Ministers from five countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden) discussed their respective policies, successes, and continuing challenges with regards to men and gender equality and provided shining examples for other countries to follow.

Much of the discussion centered around issues of fatherhood and the need for men to play an active and equal role in the household or domestic

sphere to enable their female partners to achieve equal and independent participation in the public sphere. To this end, ministers focused their discussion on the following issues: Male parental leave, Men's networks/groups, and the need to change predominant social values of masculinity.

All five countries provided examples of their parental leave policies - demonstrating that much progress has already been made towards providing men the opportunity to play an increased role in raising their children as equal partners with women. This issue also

brought about some debate amongst the ministers, as the Danish minister questioned the value of forcing men to take parental leave - a practice that currently takes place in Norway.

The matter of men's networks or groups of men mobilizing to make progressive changes to male behaviour and values of masculinity was also raised by several of the speakers. Such groups exist in several of the Nordic countries, and work actively to change attitudes towards parenting, gender division of labour, and violence against

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Did you have sex education in school?

Kind of. It was a political[ly difficult] thing where I came from. It was more like a science class, not like real life. It [sex education] was taboo. The way it was. I was uncomfortable and the teacher was uncomfortable, so we made a lot of jokes. The way it was, I would I would have preferred not to have even had it. It was embarrassing.

"AskScot"

Have you ever felt you had to do something because you are a guy, rather than because it is what you wanted to do?

I feel like that every day. A lot of that has to do with how I was raised—my culture. [For example, on a date] I'll naturally just pay for things, but I feel like I don't have a choice, because I hear women complaining about guys who don't pay. I went out once with a woman who paid for herself. I like that, because it was different. I was in a relationship once, where I wasn't working much at the time, and she paid for some stuff. Afterwards [when the relationship ended] I got ridiculed about that from her.

How do you feel about pa-

rental leave from work when a baby is born?

Absolutely necessary. It should be law/ mandatory. Nowadays both people work. Just because she's the mother, doesn't mean she [alone] should have the option or responsibility [to take care of the child]. I would love to see fathers taking that responsibility. Balance it out.

So why don't men take parental leave?

I think men don't take it because it's new and a strange concept. Also, there's a lot more men in corporate American and maybe they feel they have more to lose or they have to be in their jobs, because they make more money or their job is more important. Also, what will the other

men say? Will they get teased for taking time off to be 'mommy'?

How do we get from A to B?

Have literature to go to all employers about men having these rights to take parental leave—that the law protects them and their jobs. Literature that says maybe it's new, but it's where we are and explains WHY men should take parental leave. It has to be talked about and it has to be written about. They [men] have to be informed and employers have to make them feel more comfortable when they ask for that time off. I, in general, think that fathers should play a greater role with their children.

Step by Step, Another Youth Network is Born

*Men and Gender Equality
(Continued from page 3)*

women. These groups often now include a significant amount of female participation alongside the men in a combined effort to work towards positive change.

The thread running throughout the discussion by all ministers was the need to change social values, structures, and acceptance of men's role in promoting gender equality. Men will only be able to be equal partners with women if legislation, policy, and social acceptance exists to back them up. Along with this, there needs to be a fundamental change in the culture of business in the public sphere, moving away from treating men's role in equal participation in parenting as a nuisance to acknowledging the great value it has in promoting gender equality in society.

Overall, the success of the Nordic countries at integrating men into efforts intended to improve gender equality has been encouraging. It is clear that all countries and societies of the world would benefit from following similar actions and policies. Thus, even though we are gathered here at the UN this week to discuss the status of the world's women, we cannot forget that by actively working with men to change aspects of masculinity and men's behavior which hinder gender equality, further progress towards equality for all will be possible.

By Liam Swiss

From 1996 until now our group grew and it now consists of 90 young 'multipliers'. We have had some great achievements. For instance the coordination of more than 250 workshops, reaching more than 5,000 young people in public and private schools and communities. We also came out with two books and a poster about some aspects of sexuality like prevention and values.

I entered the GTPOS - Grupo de Trabalho e Pesquisa em Orientação Sexual (Work and Research Group in Sexual Education) - when I was 15 years old. I was looking for an opportunity to change some things that I didn't agree with. When a teacher at school told us about this NGO and the project they were developing, I saw the possibility of doing something.

I learned that GTPOS is a NGO composed mainly of health professionals and educators, that develops and implements projects and offers aid in the areas of sexuality and prevention of STIs and HIV/AIDS since 1987. One of the projects was to create a group of young peer-educators.

After half a year of training, a group of 30 young people was ready to give peer-education workshops. I still remember my first intervention as a coordinator. I was thinking that I would only be teaching, but I learned a lot myself about the value of sharing information and life experiences. At the end of 1996 we, the young people, decided to call our project Trance essa Rede (Build this Network). Our objective was to make a set of educational actions, developed and implemented by young 'multipliers', aimed at preventing the transmission of STIs and HIV/AIDS. GTPOS has continued the project ever since, funded by the Brazilian Ministry of Health and the MacArthur Foundation. We mainly work in the city of Sao Paulo and in its region. Our target group is generally between 12 and 24 years old and come from

different backgrounds. The young people working for the project joined a network called MAB (Movimento de Adolescentes Brasileiros / Brazilian Adolescent Movement), which focuses on the Sexual and Reproductive Rights of young people.

From 1996 until now our group grew and it now consists of 90 young 'multipliers'. We have had some great achievements. For instance the coordination of more than 250 workshops, reaching more than 5,000 young people in public and private schools and communities. We also came out with two books and a poster about some aspects of sexuality like prevention and values. One of the books, Adolescence and Vulnerability, was used as a base for workshops by other young people. With the organization and realization of the seminar 'Trance essa Rede', we reached 700 young people, and we attended the annual ENA meetings (Encontro Nacional de Adolescentes / National Meeting of Adolescents). With the experience we gathered at these meetings, we organized the EPA meeting (Encontro Paulista de Adolescentes / Paulista Meeting of Adolescents) in Sao Paulo in 1999.

During the ICPD+5 and Beijing+5 meetings I was the representative of GTPOS and Women's Union of Sao Paulo.

By Mariana Arantes Nasser



Even before birth, a girl can be convicted to a family through marriage, by her parents. From birth to adulthood, girls may be forced, coerced, tricked or kidnapped into marriage - sometimes to a boy, but often to a man - who she may never have seen before and who may be many years older than her.

The Hidden Wound: FGM

An estimated 130 million girls, young women and women worldwide have undergone the harmful traditional practice of FGM (Female Genital Mutilation) and every year at least two million of them are at risk of having to face the same. In a panel organized by UNICEF yesterday, experts reported research, projects and recent developments on this harmful practice.

Panelist Dr Nahid Toubia, president of Rainbo, emphasized that the goal must be to 'abandon' FGM and not to 'eradicate' it, as it is not a disease but a customary practice. The

ways to do this vary. About 20 years ago, when the first projects started, they put emphasis on the health complications caused by FGM. Later the message of human rights was added and now we look at it in a gender equity perspective.

According to Dr Toubia, there have recently been some successes. This was agreed on by Dr Morissadan Koqyate, executive secretary of CPTAFE in Guinea. He pointed out that 20 years ago you couldn't even talk about the subject, but now women are standing up and saying stop, no more. But, he

said, it is very difficult to really assess progress as FGM is a tradition and therefore hidden.

For making more progress in abandoning FGM, it is important to influence several groups like women, men, young people, religious leaders and political players. Also important is the role of legislation. But said Anika Rahman, director, International Program of CRLP, law alone is not enough. Besides legal strategies and measures, you need profound social change as well as a change in the way people think.

By Alicia Karssing

Marriage of Girls, Against the Spirit of the CRC

"States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child." Article 19(1), Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Even before birth, a girl can be convicted to a family through marriage, by her parents. From birth to adulthood, girls may be

forced, coerced, tricked or kidnapped into marriage - sometimes to a boy, but often to a man - who she may never have seen before and who may be many years older than her.

A young girl is expected to engage in sexual relations, even though there are myths which deny that this happens. Being wrenched away from her family and friends is traumatic enough at an early age, but add to that the shock of married life, including sex that results in pregnancy and motherhood. Early sex and pregnancy often have severe and ad-

verse health consequences and miscarriages or unwell babies may be the result.

Early marriage is a harmful traditional practice which violates the rights of girl-wives to good health, to be free from sexual abuse and interference with their privacy - all rights which are promised in the CRC. Forum of Marriage and the Rights of Women and Girls on June 7 from 6-8pm in the Dag Hammarskjold Auditorium.

By Purna Sen & Alicia Karssing

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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.

Contradictions, Contradictions...

"Reaffirm our commitment to Beijing."

"Let me just emphasize that we are not here to.... go back on the agreements and decisions adopted in both Beijing and Cairo. Rather we are here to move forward..."

"We really need to rally our forces to move forward".

These are just some of the quotes from the speech made by the head of the Egyptian delegation at the General Assembly on Tuesday. His message, however, seems at odds with how his delegation is performing in the negotiations of the outcomes document. The Egyptian delegation had comments on each paragraph, even when the chairman had

already put the gavel down. For instance on the introduction before paragraph 125c. Just when the NGOs on the balcony were relieved that finally some text was agreed on, as was the chairperson who spoke the words 'so decided', the delegation took the microphone. They did not agree on two parts of the text, one of which had already been agreed on days before by everybody except the Holy See, who later withdrew their objection. At the end of the negotiations on paragraph 122d, Egypt



Youth For Women's Rights Press Conference

also stood alone in not accepting the inclusion of the International Criminal Court.

If the speed of the negotiations on Section four is any indicator, we can be sure that this section will not be finished before Friday.

By Alicia Karssing & Erin McGinn

Colofon

Zahra Ahmed (NAPY), Alicia Karssing, Erin McGinn, Sonu Chhina, Rose Koenders, Marianna Nasser, Maria Antoinetta Alcalde, Purna Sen, Liam Swiss, and Scot.

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