

## **The Unfinished Agenda of Cairo at ICPD+15**

### ***Asia Pacific NGO Call to Action***

Fifteen years after the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the Cairo agenda remains unfinished. To tackle the significant remaining gaps, 64 participants from 16 countries came together to suggest actions to accelerate the achievement of the ICPD objectives and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the Asia Pacific region. NGO and civil society representatives, members of parliament, representatives of UN agencies, and donors engaged in panel discussions and brainstorming sessions. We affirmed the recommendations of the Berlin Call to Action adopted at the recent Global Partners in Action: NGO Forum on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Development. Further, we took note of the recommendations of the Expert Group Meeting to Assess the Progress in the Implementation of the Plan of Action on Population and Poverty adopted at the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference held in February 2009. Through a participatory process, the forum identified critical sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) issues affecting the region and urgent actions to be taken.

The Asia Pacific region is the most diverse in the world, with unique needs and problems that remain unaddressed. Key issues include persistently high levels of maternal mortality in some countries, unmet need for family planning of both married and unmarried women, unsafe abortion; unmet sexual and reproductive health (SRH) needs of adolescents and young people; of marginalised groups such as refugees, migrants and internally displaced persons, and persons with disability. We were particularly concerned that, although some countries have made significant progress in advancing the Cairo agenda, much needs to be done for the least developed countries, including landlocked, island and fragile states and countries in crisis situations to effectively meet the needs of the most-at-risk populations. We reaffirmed the importance of a rights-based and gender-sensitive approach in our programming and advocacy and of ensuring the participation of beneficiaries in all aspects of program implementation. Sexual and reproductive health and rights are basic human rights and the needs and choices of individuals must be respected, fulfilled, and protected.

The Asia Pacific NGO forum urges that the following actions be taken immediately:

#### **Priority Actions for NGOs**

1. Establish a forum for NGOs as a mechanism for ongoing dialogues for effective collaboration, sharing of experiences, and creating a unified voice for sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) advocacy and resource mobilisation.
2. Pursue urgently targeted, determined and appropriate media, campaigns and advocacy; and engage parliamentarians at the highest level to secure adequate

funding and to lobby for favorable laws and policies to meet ICPD and MDG targets –particularly MDG5.

3. Identify and strategically target alternative sources of funding from corporations and philanthropists, and create income-generating activities to strengthen and sustain NGOs' programs.
4. Convince donors to fund civil society initiatives on sensitive and contentious issues of SRHR and pro-active strategies to anticipate emerging needs of populations affected by environment and climate change.
5. Urge governments to recognize NGOs as equal partners and create inclusive mechanisms for meaningful NGO and civil society participation.
6. Strengthen advocacy to ensure that SRHR and gender equality are included in the agenda of global and regional summits to prioritize and securing funding for SRHR.

### **Priority Actions to Accelerate Achievement of ICPD and MDG Goals**

1. Urge governments to invest in primary health care and health systems strengthening to enable provision of integrated, comprehensive, and quality services towards achievement of universal access to SRHR.
2. Reposition and revitalize family planning as the most cost-effective intervention to reduce maternal mortality, prevent unsafe abortions and unintended pregnancies with focus on the most vulnerable populations such as unmarried and married young girls and women.
3. Urge governments to remove all remaining discriminatory barriers that prevent girls from attending school and ensure their access to health care, nutrition, and education.
4. Meet the sexual and reproductive health needs and rights of young people through increased investments in youth participation, capacity-building, youth-friendly services, comprehensive sexuality education, and intensify efforts to reach the most vulnerable and marginalized groups.
5. Prevent unsafe abortions through ensuring access to family planning, comprehensive abortion services, advocating for removal of legal restrictions and barriers, and application of new technology.
6. Protect young girls and women particularly those in difficult circumstances, and in crisis and conflict situations, from all forms of exploitation and violence; ensure access to SRHR, psychosocial and legal services for survivors; and ensure perpetrators are held accountable.

7. Promote, protect, and fulfill sexual rights of all people to have safe and satisfying sexual relations, practice healthy sexual behavior, and prevent transmission of STI and HIV.
8. Urge governments to ensure that safeguards are in place to protect the gains of ICPD even as the region faces economic challenges.

In light of the above, we call on governments, NGOs, and other stakeholders in the Asia Pacific region to strengthen collaborative relationships in order to more effectively address the complex and inter-connected issues of health and development taking into account the principles of accountability and transparency. We urge all stakeholders to set forth an inclusive agenda for development founded on a rights-based and equity framework. We reiterate our call for the advancement of gender equality and equitable access to services wherein girls and women of all socio-economic and personal circumstances are able to make informed decisions and care for their own health as well as achieve their personal aspirations. Now is the time for all stakeholders in the region to accelerate implementation of the ICPD Program of Action to achieve equality, equity, and human rights for all.