

From Commitment to Action

A Factsheet on Implementing the 2013 Asia and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development for **ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE**

Introduction

The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) is heralded for putting people at the centre of population and sustainable development efforts, and in particular the fundamental rights and freedoms of women and girls to have control over their sexual and reproductive lives. As part of the ICPD Beyond 2014 review process, governments joined by civil society representatives met for the Sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference (6APPC) in Bangkok. The 2013 Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development - a progressive and visionary agenda for the region - was adopted at the 6APPC. It reaffirms gender equality and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) as indispensable to sustainable development, which was also underscored in the subsequent global Framework of Actions for the follow up to the ICPD Beyond 2014.

Policy Directions and Priority Actions

The Declaration contains recommendations to ensure the effective implementation of ICPD Beyond 2014. It is critical that the policy directions and priority actions set forward are realized through awareness raising, accountability and civil society participation, and leaders are held accountable for the rights of adolescents and young people in Asia and the Pacific region. Below, recommendations from the Declaration are set out based on the civil society statements for the 6APPC. The Declaration paragraph numbers are referenced in parentheses. Adolescents and Youth is identified as a priority area, as well as a cross-cutting issue in the Declaration.

Human Rights

With over 60% of the world's youth living in Asia and the Pacific, Member States recognise the need for relevant policies and strategies that promote and protect their human rights (57) including a life course approach to SRHR (85). The Convention on the Rights of Child is reaffirmed, with acknowledgment that evidence-based **comprehensive sexuality education** and life skills which are age-appropriate and consistent with evolving capacities are essential to make informed and responsible decisions and to exercise **the right to control all aspects of their sexuality** (58).

Legal and Policy Environment

The removal of legal, regulatory, and social barriers to youth-friendly SRH services is recommended, and **respect for SRHR of adolescents and young people and their right to privacy and confidentiality**. Meeting their SRH needs requires their full participation and engagement in all levels of decision-making of policies and programmes, and the removal of obstacles that limit their full contribution (145, 148). It further calls for the design, implementation, and to ensure sufficient resources for age-appropriate CSE programmes, **consistent with their evolving capacities** and providing accurate information (146). It emphasises the right of everyone to education and towards the full development of the person and their dignity (127) and for ensuring the provision of viable alternatives and support for educational opportunities including for married adolescents and young mothers (128).

Youth-friendly Health Services

Sustainable health and social services that are youth friendly and without discrimination and judgement must be provided and accessible, to enable them to enjoy the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (144). The Declaration stresses prioritising policies and programmes to achieve universal access to comprehensive and integrated quality SRH services for all to **reduce the unmet need for family planning, and** ensure access for adolescents and unmarried persons (109, 110). While recognising the role and responsibilities of parents, teachers and peer educators in exercising their rights and protecting themselves (58), it asserts the need to prohibit practices that violate the reproductive health and rights of adolescent girls, such as parental consent requirements to receive health services (112), in addition to prioritising the provision of free education for girls at all levels, access to sexual and reproductive health information services, and efforts to **eliminate early and forced marriage** (113).

Data Collection

The collection, analysis, and dissemination of data on young people (amongst others) to effectively **protect their rights**, and to **design and implement policies and programmes** to enhance their well-being must be improved (201).



Best Practice

Critical Note

Sexuality Education in Papua New Guinea

Papua New Guinea (PNG) is one of the few countries in the region to have a detailed discussion of sexuality education in national HIV laws and policies and reproductive health or population policies and laws; in addition to specific education sector policies and youth policies. PNG has set targets relating to sexuality education that crosscut national plans and policies, and curriculum centred on combatting gender-based violence, and the promotion of human rights and gender equality. It also includes the target populations of both in school and out of school youth, aiming to reach some of the most vulnerable populations.

The National Population Policy calls for the development of curriculum, and the development of a peer-education network in addition to mobilising parents and teachers to support the curriculum. This National Youth Policy calls for sexuality education to combat high rates of unsafe abortion and the impact it has on young women and girls. In addition, the HIV/AIDS Policy for the National Education System invests in meaningful youth leadership by setting out student participation in activities and advocacy, in addition to a commitment to capacity building. Overall, the policies in PNG reflect a commitment to young peoples' leadership and human rights by ensuring their participation.

Adapted from Review of Policies and Strategies to Implement and Scale Up Sexuality Education in Asia and the Pacific, UNESCO (2012). Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002150/215091e.pdf>



The Declaration is a step forward and can guide policy making regarding the SRHR needs of youth and adolescents. The inclusion of Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) for young people is important, as changing attitudes regarding CSE is a long-term process that needs strong support - CSE is still viewed as controversial in many places in the region. However, the Declaration overlooks the needs of out-of-school youth, also with regard to CSE, and as a large population of adolescents and youth in the region are in this category it is an oversight. It is essential to ensure that efforts are made towards addressing their needs.

Further advocacy resources

1. The ICPD Review Bali Global Youth Forum Declaration, 2012. Available at: http://icpdbeyond2014.org/uploads/browser/files/bali_global_youth_forum_declaration.pdf
2. The Colombo Declaration on Youth: Mainstreaming Youth in the Post-2015 Development Agenda, World Conference on Youth 2014. Available at: <http://wcy2014.com/pdf/colombo-declaration-on-youth-final.pdf>
3. Learning to Speak the MDGs: A guide to the Millennium Development Goals, Youth Coalition of Sexual and Reproductive Rights; 2009. Available at: http://www.youthcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/LearningtoSpeakMDGs_2ed.pdf