

CONTEXT

International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network (IPPF EN) organized a Civil Society Organization’s meeting “*ICPD Beyond 2014 – From Promise to Action, CSOs Defining the Way Forward*” on the 3rd-4th of July 2013 in Geneva, co-hosted by two regional networks, the European Women’s Lobby and ASTRA.

The meeting welcomed more than 70 participants from CSO at large to follow up and analyze the outcomes of the UNECE Regional Conference. The Conference took place in Geneva on the 1-2nd of July and gathered government and UN representatives, CSO’s, and academics to review the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action (PoA) in the region.

The main objective of the CSO meeting was to identify strategies to translate the UNECE outcomes into action for the region in the upcoming global agenda, such as the 47th session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD), the Special Session of the UN General Assembly on the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Beyond 2014 and the post 2015 process.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON REGIONAL PRIORITIES

The CSO meeting focused on identifying priorities of emerging and persisting issues in the ICPD PoA for the region, and linking them with opportunities for advocacy on global, regional and national level.

Group discussions were in accordance with the three thematic topics from the UNECE-conference: i) Population Dynamics and Sustainable Development, ii) Families, Sexual and Reproductive Health over the Life Course, iii) Inequalities, Social Inclusion and Rights.

On the issue of “Population Dynamics and Sustainable Development”, the main recommendations can be summarized as following:

Fertility: A supportive policy framework respecting and protecting individual’s sexual and reproductive health and the right to make autonomous decisions about number and spacing of children is crucial. Choice should therefore be essential in population policies.

Ageing: Governments should take measures to address change in population dynamics, ensure SRHR of older people, and create policies enabling families to assist their older family members.

Migration: Regional and sub-regional agreements can be particularly effective in addressing migration issues and research is needed to ensure policies are evidence-based. In addition policies are needed that support integration of migrants through a human rights based approach.

Environment: Talking about population dynamics is linked to sustainable development. Educating, in particular youth, on new development models and green technologies, is crucial so that they become more environmentally aware and consume less.

On the issues of “Families, Sexual and Reproductive Health over the Life Course”, the main recommendations can be summarized as following:

Data: There is a great need for better monitoring systems and data collection in many countries throughout the region. Governments need to develop this capacity in collaboration with CSO’s.

New Family Forms: The “concept” of family needs to be re-defined and ensure that policies are including all categories (single mothers/fathers, same-sex couples...). CSO’s also need to be upfront on the new ethical questions on SRHR to avoid leaving this space open for others that do not apply a human rights based approach.

Access to information and services: The governments should support training of teachers and ensure that all groups (including the vulnerable groups) have access to information and counseling on SRH. CSE should be mandatory in educational curricula.

Abortion: As SRHR is dependent on general economic, cultural and religious trends, CSO’s need to stay aware of the increasing conservatism in the region, implying a rising anti-choice agenda, in particular in the Central and Eastern European sub region, which is reflected by attempts to restrict women's access to safe and legal abortion.

On the issues of “Inequalities, Social Inclusion and Rights” the main recommendations are:

Gender (in) equality: There is a general lack of policies and data on gender equality and the countries often lack the will or interest to monitor these issues. Gender sensitivity should be present in the whole policy spectrum from research, data, implementation of policies and programmes to evaluation.

Gender based violence: Data on GBV, but also general data focusing on gender/age would help understand causes and possible solutions to counter GBV, but there is a big gap in this area, which needs to be addressed by governments.

Discrimination: Disadvantaged groups should be understood and addressed in a broad sense (migrants, people living with HIV, sex workers, people living with a handicap, youth...) as some groups are subject to several types of discrimination. There is a need to ensure access to information and SRH services for disadvantaged groups.

HIV: Governments and donors need to keep on investing in prevention of HIV with a gender sensitive approach. This is particularly important in this region where infections are increasing and donors are withdrawing leaving behind countries that lack the capacity and budgets to take over.

CONCLUSIONS ON NEXT STEPS

The CSO meeting came out with the following conclusions on next steps on how to engage in the international process and reinforce regional priorities in the new global framework:

- CSO’s need to engage with and create alliances outside the SRHR community on the new global framework;
- Many advocacy opportunities and networks exist and were presented during the meeting - CSO’s should engage in these to optimize the impact and efficiency of their advocacy work;
- The UNECE region is very diverse and issues related to the ICPD PoA differ, but advocacy work should be inclusive and carried out in solidarity and transparency so that priorities of countries with less resources are also taken into account;
- The upcoming international process is a momentum where CSO’s should be involved to make sure our issues are not marginalized in the new development framework.