

ICPD – HIV – YOUTH: WHY IT ALL MATTERS



ICPD – WHAT?

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) was first held in 1994 in Cairo, Egypt. It was the largest conference ever to address the topic of population and development, with over 11,000 delegates representing government, media, and non-profit sectors¹. At the conference in Cairo, 179 countries endorsed the Programme of Action (PoA) – a plan to create a new approach to population² by 2015.

The PoA calls on the international community to steer away from population policies that look only at statistics, forcing policymakers to acknowledge the linkages of issues including poverty, human rights, the environment, comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services and education, and empowerment of women and girls.³ By guaranteeing the protection of sexual and reproductive rights on a global level, ICPD foster dialogue and action on the social, economic and political barriers to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support.

ICPD – HIV – YOUTH: WHAT IS THE CONNECTION?

ICPD has a strong focus on reproductive health and rights and has been revolutionary in linking HIV and young people in a sexual and reproductive health and rights context. Recognising these linkages and bridging the work of youth, HIV and sexual and reproductive health organisations is crucial for the response to HIV to be successful. The epidemic will only be overcome if issues of women's rights, sexual and reproductive rights, gender inequities (including supporting responsible and transformative masculinities) and key populations including people who use drugs, men who have sex with men and sex workers are acknowledged and integrated as cross-cutting, fundamental issues within the AIDS movement.

The PoA's approach integrates HIV and AIDS with larger health policy improvements and increased respect for human rights. By mainstreaming HIV prevention, ICPD furthers this integration and pledges to "generally improve the quality, availability and affordability of care of people living with HIV/AIDS."⁴

In addition, ICPD was revolutionary for its scope and its inclusion of young people. For the first time, the international community worked specifically with young people to recognise their unique situation and improve their reproductive health choices. The PoA aims to "raise the quality of life for all people through appropriate population and development policies." (Para 3.16) Countries agreed to make reproductive health services a part of primary health care, to improve facilities and training, and to adopt national strategies on HIV/AIDS that address the reproductive health and rights of adolescents. (Para 1.12)

The rights of young people are crucial in the response to HIV. Their sexual and reproductive health and rights, such as the right to accurate information, the right to comprehensive sexuality education, the right to (youth friendly) health care and services, the right to gender equality, the right to live free from discrimination, and their right to participate at all levels in decision making in a meaningful way are fundamental components of an effective response to HIV.

ICPD ACTION ITEMS

The following action items were established at the ICPD. You can use these points in your advocacy work:

- Youth should be actively involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of development activities that have a direct impact on their daily lives. This is especially important with respect to information, education and communication activities and services concerning reproductive and sexual health, including the prevention of early pregnancies, sex education, and the prevention of HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. (*Action 6.15*)
- Governments should immediately develop, in full partnership with youth and others, youth-specific HIV education and treatment projects with special emphasis on developing peer education programs. (*ICPD+5, Para 68*)
- Governments should adopt the goal of ensuring that HIV infection rates in persons 15 to 24 years of age are reduced globally. Prevalence in this age group should be reduced by 25 per cent in the most affected countries by 2005, and reduced by 25 per cent globally by 2010. (*ICPD+5, Para 70*)
- All health-care providers, including all family-planning providers, should be given specialised training in the prevention and detection of, and counselling on, sexually transmitted diseases, especially infections in women and youth, including HIV/AIDS. (*Action 7.31*)
- In the light of the urgent need to prevent unwanted pregnancies, the rapid spread of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, and the prevalence of sexual abuse and violence, Governments should base national policies on a better understanding of the need for responsible human sexuality and the realities of current sexual behaviour. (*Action 7.38*)

¹ ACPD: IC-What? A Primer on ICPD, www.acpd.ca/acpd.cfm/en/section/cairo/articleID/250

² Advocates for Youth: "Affirming the Rights of Young People at United Nations World Summits and Conferences: A Guide for Youth Advocates"

³ UNFPA "The Cairo Consensus at Ten: Population, Reproductive Health and the Global Effort to End Poverty". Geneva 2004

⁴ ICPD+5, Paragraph 71

WHY IS ICPD + 15 IMPORTANT?

In 1999 and 2004, for ICPD+5 and ICPD+10 respectively, young people, along with global civil society, international governments and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), evaluated how close countries were to achieving their goals – and the result was not great. Many of these policies have not materialised into action and adequate resource allocation; and laws have not been enforced consistently. Adequate funding by governments and inter-governmental agencies has proven difficult. The international community is undermining the integrity of its commitment by not honouring funding targets. Donor countries currently provide only half of the amount pledged in the PoA (\$3.1 billion instead of the \$6.1 billion promised by 2005). Donor support for contraceptives and condoms has decreased since 1994, and many countries now face a shortage of supplies⁵.

Young people account for almost 45% of all new HIV infections with an estimated 5.5 million young people living with HIV today.⁶ Currently fewer than 40% of young people have basic knowledge of HIV transmission.⁷ The failure of policymakers to address this ignorance has had dramatic consequences: approximately 2.7 million new HIV infections occurred in 2007⁸, and every 14 seconds, another young person becomes infected with HIV. Young women are particularly at risk, as gender inequality reduces the ability of young women to negotiate condom use and access services.

In only 5 years, all the PoA goals must be met. The upcoming 15th anniversary of the PoA, called ICPD+15, provides an important opportunity for young people to have their voice heard and demand that their governments honour their commitments on ICPD goals for 2015.

WHAT WE NEED – COUNTDOWN TO 2015

- Access to contraceptives, comprehensive sexuality education and sexual and reproductive health care
- The international community must recognise that comprehensive sexual education is a right that should be available to all young people, regardless of social, cultural, religious, sexual or HIV status.
- Recognition of the growing and special needs of youth and adolescents, including reproductive and sexual health issues, and taking into account the special situations they face, particularly those of young women.
- Recognition of the effects of gender based violence and early marriage on the development of girls and young women.
- The United Nations system and donors should complement and enhance Governments' efforts to mobilise and provide adequate resources to respond to young people's needs⁹.
- Acknowledgement and support of youth and youth organisations as indispensable partners in decision-making processes and development, by involving youth organisations in the planning, implementation and evaluation processes related to ICPD.
- Contribution to the capacity and development of sustainable youth participation and partnerships with youth.
- More opportunities for youth to generate income, secure financing and funds to establish projects and organisations for and by young people, that focus on sexual and reproductive health and rights.



⁵ UNFPA: National Progress in Implementing the ICPD Programme of Action 1994 – 2004. Geneva, 2005

⁶ UNAIDS, Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic, 2008

⁷ WHO, UNAIDS, UNICEF, "Towards Universal Access, Scaling Up Priority HIV/AIDS Interventions in the Health Sector, Progress Report, 2007

⁸ UNAIDS, Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic, 2008

⁹ Report of the Ad-Hoc Committee of the Whole, Key actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of ICPD, 1 July 1999

WHAT CAN YOUNG PEOPLE DO?

- Join the e-consultation on youth advocacy for ICPD+15 with UNFPA and TakingItGlobal.org by sending an email to ICPD15Youth-subscribe@groups.takingitglobal.org
- Start or join a group with young people in your region to discuss the impact of ICPD on sexual and reproductive health and rights
- Stimulate the interaction of youth, sexual and reproductive health, and HIV organisations around the ICPD process. This affects us all!
- Challenge your local political leaders to enact all the commitments in the PoA
- Participate in civil society discussions and advocate for your government to live up to its commitments on ICPD at future events:

New York, USA, 30th March – 3rd April 2009: *42nd Session of the Commission on Population and Development*. The theme: **"The contribution of the PoA to the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDG's"**

Beijing, China, 18-20th October 2009: 5th Asia-Pacific Conference on Reproductive and Sexual Health. The theme: "ICPD and the MDG's"

Cairo, Egypt, December 2009: IPCI – *International Parliamentarians' Conference on the Implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action*. The theme: **"ICPD+15"**

Keep an eye out for additional regional reviews and a Commemorative ICPD+15 meeting, as the dates have yet to be announced. Look for updates at <http://www.unfpa.org/icpd/> and at <http://ngosforicpd15.org/>.

For more information, please visit:

- www.choiceforyouth.org/
- <http://www.unfpa.org/icpd/>
- www.worldaidscampaign.org/