

CAIRO YOUTH DECLARATION

International NGO Youth Consultation on
Population and Development
31 August - 4 September 1994
Cairo, Egypt
Fundação Cuidar o Futuro



We, more than 100 young women and men from all regions of the world from a diversity of cultural, religious and political backgrounds, have been actively participating in an International NGO Youth Consultation on Population and Development. This youth consultation was a collaborative NGO initiative organized by International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), International Youth and Student Movement for the United Nations (ISMUN), Society for International Development (SID), World Assembly of Youth (WAY), World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS), World Council of Churches (WCC), World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM), and World Young Women's Christian Association (WYWCA).

We believe that young people are agents of change. "Young people make up most of the world. More than half of the world's population is below the age of 25. About a third are between the ages of 10 and 24, of whom eighty per cent live in developing countries of the world." These were the words of Nafis Sadik who opened our youth consultation. It is clear that youth are and can be the present actors and leaders in our societies as well as those of the future. We recognize the importance of population and development concerns as they are the issues affecting our daily lives. These issues are central to our commitment, sense of responsibility and action to affect change in the world, believing that they are inextricably linked together with the issues of international economic inequity between the countries of the North and those of the South.

Throughout the course of our debates we found that we shared three central priorities:

- The need for population concerns to be explicitly and consistently integrated with development in the context of a just and equitable international economic system;
- A strong focus on the need for youth education and mobilization in the areas of adolescent health, sexual and reproductive health, the environment, human rights, and political and economic systems;
- A sense that now is the time for action: an expression of our strong commitment to take responsibility to act at the individual, organizational, national and international levels.

Population growth is an important factor that must be addressed in order to achieve sustainable development and quality of life. The rate at which we add members to our families and communities has an impact on our ability to meet their needs for survival and healthy development. Rapid population growth

strains available caring, food, shelter and social services and leaves children more vulnerable to "malnutrition, disease...labor exploitation, trafficking, neglect, sexual abuse and drug addiction" (ICPD Program for Action, 6.6).

In many cases, the resources available to children are already diminished by economic injustices within and between countries. Efforts to manage population growth must take place along-side measures to bring about equitable distribution of wealth. Over-consumption in more-developed countries, exploitative "development" policies and practices, unfair terms of trade and corruption all contribute to the gap in living standards between more and less-developed countries. In many countries, including more and less-developed, marginalized people who live well below the average standard of living and have fewer resources to invest in their children's and youth's development.

Poverty also damages the environment and in this way further weakens the possibility for sustainable development. Economically disadvantaged people have less access to information about environmentally-friendly lifestyles and are often forced by immediate needs to consume natural resources in an unsustainable manner. This, coupled with the over-consumption and waste of the more-developed countries, deepens poverty and reduces the resources that will be available to future generations. For this reason, long-term success in improving quality of life through managing population growth is interdependent with the success of environmental protection.

Education allows individuals to weigh options and make better decisions for living our lives. Education is a lifelong process and we learn primarily through daily living from those around us. We recognize the different influences of our families, our communities and the public at large in shaping our thoughts and behaviors. During our discussions we were reminded that this education takes different forms in differing cultures and that successful education is linked with variable resources.

Environmental education serves to gain a better understanding of our physical environment and the consequences of our action on it.

Young people need education on human rights and political and economic systems in order to conceive new and improved mechanisms for social development. We are committed to create a world where human rights of all people are respected regardless of age, gender, religion, race, abilities, health, ethnic background, sexual orientation, and educational and economic status and a

world where we have the right to live in global, national, local and individual peace.

Adolescence is the period of physical, psychological and social maturation from childhood to adulthood. Education of adolescents promotes and enhances harmonious and healthy relationships. Education and services which facilitate individual safe sexual behavior does not encourage promiscuity. On the contrary, it helps us to respect the integrity of our body and our lives and encourages us to have a better understanding of our responsibilities.

We acknowledge the grave consequences of our sexual behavior in our lives and the lives of our family and communities and the need to be able to take precautions. Particular attention is required to assist men in taking their responsibilities which would go far in promoting mutual respect as the basis for equality between men and women.

Teenage pregnancy was recognized as an issue of importance and concern. Education for pregnancy prevention is vital as it is support for teenage mothers, especially in regard to continuing their education. Expressing concern at the degree of maternal deaths as a result of unsafe abortion, and recognizing the existence of cultural and religious differences and the importance of respecting these traditions, we believe that both illegal and legal abortions should be monitored for their safety without encouraging recourse to abortion.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

The need to mobilize youth as agents of change was a recurring theme in the Consultation. This is also supported in the ICPD Programme for Action: "Youth should be active in the planning, implementation and evaluation of development activities that have a direct impact on their daily lives" (6.15). Many youth around the world have taken leadership in meeting needs related to population and development. Their commitment and expertise must be recognized and resources allocated in order to strengthen and expand their initiatives to more of the youth population.

During the Consultation, we shared among ourselves many examples of successful youth-led ventures. While individual actions generally address specific needs, the models for youth action are often transferable from one issue to another. For example, peer education and counseling techniques can be



adapted to a wide variety of issues. We commit ourselves to continuing to take action to meet needs related to population and development and to enable other youth to join us in our activities. The types of action we commit ourselves to include:

- Promoting peer education through workshops and seminars; and through vocational, leadership and organizational training;
- Involving, motivating and educating peers through artistic activities such as music and drama;
- Implementing peer counseling and awareness-raising through one-on-one interaction, group discussions, newsletters, newspaper columns and radio programs;
- Organizing services for peers in schools and recreation centers as well as outreach to peers on the street and other non-traditional settings;
- Creating jobs for peers through cooperatives and businesses;
- Educating parents and other members of the community;
- Lobbying local, national and regional governments and businesses, banks, the media and inter-governmental structures;
- Organizing public demonstrations;
- Creating networks of interpersonal support, information sharing, cooperation and inter-organizational collaboration.

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Youth/NGO Action

Sustainable Development and Population

1. Teach youth appropriate methods of agriculture and sustainable resource and waste management.
2. Educate businesses about environmental problems.
3. NGOs and citizens should insist on honest governments that reduce inequalities between rich and poor.
4. Youth-serving NGOs should help identify the needs of the youth and suggest solutions to governments through lobbying.
5. NGOs should lobby governments to respect and make full commitment to the implementation of Agenda 21, invest in recycling and renewable energy sources, and develop waste management projects.

Human Rights and Population

1. Stage local dialogue meetings to empower youth.
2. Youth-serving NGOs should initiate and participate in human rights education

campaigns.

3. Lobby for governments and NGOs to implement human rights and human rights programs.
4. NGOs should organize mass education campaigns against discrimination and to make people more aware of their rights.
5. Youth-serving NGOs should develop and promote youth-friendly media programs to educate, inform and communicate the social and economic rights and responsibilities of young people as well as encourage the youth especially those in developing countries to consume goods produced locally in their respective countries.
6. Youth NGOs should form a coalition for advocacy on youth concerns as well as educate the youth on their political, civil, social and economic rights and responsibilities.

Human Development and Reproductive Health

1. As members of youth-serving NGOs we are committed to pressure our organizations to be models for the empowerment of women. We are committed to arresting all forms of sexual; discrimination, violence against women, such as female genital mutilation through advocacy and community awareness work.
2. We, as a diverse group of youth reached an agreement on the importance of family planning and reproductive health as issues related to population and development and integral to the promotion of a healthy life for all persons and communities, particularly in the light of the growing spread of AIDS and STDs.

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International Conference on Population and Development Action

Sustainable Development and Population

1. ICPD should bring to the forefront of the international community the adverse socio-economic impact of unjust terms of trade, North-South economic relations, debt crisis, structural adjustments programs, etc., on people of less developed countries and encourage creditor nations and institutions to cancel debt-servicing as well as reduce debts and should ensure the achievement of those actions within the targeted twenty years.

Human Rights and Population

1. The Draft Program of Action emphasizes youth needs and youth rights to

information, education, survival, association, speech, contraception, etc.(6.7). We ask that this commitment be strengthened and that governments must implement this. We believe, however, that youth are more than targets of development but must be considered partners, active participants and leaders in the development process.

Governments' and NGOs' Joint Action

Sustainable Development and Population

1. Governments and NGOs should identify, advocate for and meet the needs of youth by: providing education, health services and cultural activities, and creating jobs in rural areas and for urban youth migrants.
2. Governments and NGOs should ensure sustainable management of the environment and take strong measures against people and organizations who cause environmental degradation.
3. Governments and NGOs should call for cancellation of debt or reduction in debt-servicing and educate people about unfair trade and structural adjustment programs that make sustainable development unattainable in less-developed countries.
4. Development policies and practices should enable governments in less developed countries to enhance human resources and create appropriate industries, infrastructures and social services.
5. Governments and NGOs should ensure sustainable management of the environment and take strong measures against individuals or groups of individuals and corporations who cause environmental degradation.
6. Governments and NGOs should ensure that sustainable and appropriate technological equipment is used in all projects.

Governments' Action

Sustainable Development and Population

1. Governments should enforce reduction in inequalities between rich and poor people and work effectively towards poverty alleviation.
2. Governments, especially those of developing countries, should enforce and implement rural development projects with a view of increasing social amenities in rural areas as a means of arrest rural-urban migration.
3. Governments should encourage decentralization of governmental and administrative structures, prioritize rural development, promote small private enterprises and increase exports of value-added products.



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As Youth and NGOs, we commit ourselves to:

1. Networking with other NGOs and youth-serving NGOs both at regional levels, national levels (e.g. creation of national platforms), and at the international level; and promote forums for NGOs so that they can meet and learn about each other's activities.
2. Creating/updating/translating youth-serving NGO directories.
3. Forming youth-serving NGO pressure groups against abuse/violations of rights.
4. Intensifying exchanges between young people.
5. Youth serving NGOs should form a coalition for advocacy on youth concerns as well as educate the youth on their political, civil and socio-economic rights and responsibilities.
6. NGOs should be more practical in the field and should count first and foremost on themselves to well-manage their own activities.
7. Promote partnerships from our homes and our families.

Governments should commit themselves to:

1. Inter-governmental partnership should be implemented with both partners involved from the beginning; develop trust between partners; respect of autonomy of developing countries, lead and identified by developing countries; coordination and networking between projects; projects must be sustainable.
2. South-South and North-South partnership.
3. Promote dialogue between religions and societies.
4. Promote AIDS/STD programs.

The United Nations agencies should commit themselves to:

1. Peace with less spent on military and more social spending.
2. Speedy democratization of inequitable UN structures such as the Security Council, the IMF and the World Bank.
3. Young people's voices must be heard if the UN is to respond to the changing needs of our world. This Consultation has shown the importance of providing a common platform for young people to express their concerns and aspirations and to propose action for the future.
4. The 10th Anniversary of the International Year of Youth will be observed in 1995. The UN must strengthen its support for youth NGOs and provide the necessary resources for Youth NGOs to meet together. This will enable the

UN to demonstrate its commitment to the participation of young people in building a more just world for the future.

Our strategies for action encompass the immediate, medium and long-term. Our priority is for words to be translated into action. We have a vision of a world without the factors of economic injustice and dire social and individual needs; a world where all live in a spirit of mutual respect, cooperation, tolerance, peace and justice. May you remember our words and hear their strength and through them understand our commitment and our energy to act.

thank-you

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