

## REGIONAL YOUTH REPORT

### WOMEN DELIVER, COPENHAGEN, 14-19TH MAY 2016

This report is developed based on the inputs received from the following young people:

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#### Personal and work benefits from attending the Women Deliver conference

Attending the Women Deliver conference has been recognized by all participants as a great opportunity for self-development and professional growth. The conference, through various panel discussions, workshops, networks, has equipped young people with the additional knowledge and tools to perform their work (peer education, advocacy etc.) more effectively.

Some of the reasons include:

- The scale of the event; For some of the young people, it was the first experience of attending a global conference of more than 5,700 people
- The Exhibition area offered a good networking space and provided access to interesting reports, publications and brochures
- The conference was a platform for sharing experience, knowledge and skills building, resources and materials, being able to discuss issues with peers and colleagues, find answers to different questions, learn and share best practices and discuss new ideas with other youth-led organizations and partners
- Learning innovative approaches for session format: TedTalks, fish bowl
- Feeling inspired by speakers and panelists and the overall conference sessions and their content
- Listening to and interacting with policymakers that were present during the conference; building an understanding about what pathways to go in order to achieve their attention
- Having the opportunity to participate by co-facilitating, being a moderator or panelist, contributing to discussions and presenting national experiences (examples: Ukrainian experience of working with HIV-positive adolescent and youth, Kazakhstan experience on youth involvement; Central and Eastern Europe on threats to reproductive health and rights)

- Gaining visibility of own organizations and work, opportunity to promote the organization and the work
- Networking, meeting new colleagues and potential partners, representatives from various organizations that will allow exploring new partnerships and collaboration on international level

## Reflections and take-ons from sessions attended

- The variety of views and approaches enlarged the knowledge of participants on certain topics, in particular with regards to gender equality, GBV and abortion.
- The connection between rights being respected (having access to services, having information, having the right over your own body) – freedom (to know, to choose, to act) and peace (to be able to hold accountable institutions for rights violations).
- The importance of inclusiveness of diverse perspectives and marginalized populations while discussing SRHR in general; for example, debates on sex workers’ sexual and reproductive rights brought important points and arguments for protecting sex workers’ rights
- The need to be proactive and keep knocking on policy-makers doors; they will not watch our websites/social media all the time and that is why we have to maintain close connections
- Understanding that despite the different age, gender and countries, there are big similarities
  - Priorities (examples given: access to contraceptive choices and youth friendly health services , safe abortion, youth engagement in meaningful decision making)
  - Challenges in realizing SRHR (examples: lack of professional trained workers, data collection, gender equality violence against women, discrimination against LGBT community, criminalization)
  - Challenges faced by colleagues (examples: lack of funding, human resources)
- Realizing that one step is to change the laws (such as in the case of abortion or LGBT criminalization) but the challenge remains when the laws are in place but they are not applied. This translates into the recommendation to address the gaps between existing policies and their implementation.
- Despite progress achieved there is a need to continue pushing for equality of chances and of universality of rights and to fight for it.
- During the launch of the report ["Everybody's right to know" - Delivering CSE for all young people](#), strategies for addressing certain topics indirectly, even in conservative environments and leaving room for questions and discussions. It’s so important to make young people feel empowered to ask, to be interested and to know they have the right to find answers; The report emphasizes the importance of non-formal education and reaching out to marginalized young people as well, leaving no one behind.
- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) will not reach its desired outcomes if we do not work together on achieving them. The level of girls and women’s involvement until now has not been satisfactory and they should not be involved only in the implementation phase, nor serve solely as beneficiaries, but also as equals in the whole process from the planning to the implementation and the advocacy.

- The involvement of stakeholders and decision makers from the project planning; own experience is that project proposals are written without consulting stakeholders, beneficiaries, and interest groups beforehand. This results in lack of effective projects. Involving them in the earliest stages enables also for better advocacy due to the fact that they feel ownership of the project.
- Existing gender inequality in sports; a new perspective is that sport programs have been equipped with different tools which serve to push for equality and helps girls and women realize the qualities and potential they have. This then stirs a domino effect as they transfer that energy upon others.
- Ensuring sexual and reproductive rights are recognized as human rights; Political context may influence the way we see rights, especially the sexual and reproductive rights. In the process of SDG nationalization and prioritization, SRHR might be overlooked so we must continue to point out the fact that the sexual and reproductive rights are the corner blocks, the essentials, to achieving other rights.
- The links and interconnections of sexual and reproductive rights (SRR) and SDGs; the SRR are indispensable as the SDG aim to ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages

#### Overall conference reflections:

- The SRHR-community was well represented in Copenhagen in those four days; we did not discuss enough how to involve new people, people who have never heard of SRHR
- A challenge that was mentioned by few young people was related to the parallel and competing sessions and the difficulty to prioritize which one to attend; the youth regional gatherings organized throughout the conference aimed to address this and provided the space for young people to share key ideas from the sessions attended

#### Youth key messages or contributions in the discussions

- Most of the young people have participated and contributed to the discussions during the Regional Caucus of Eastern Europe and Central Asia – Health education small group. Their main inputs were about Comprehensive Sexuality Education, mapping challenges, sharing experiences from their own country of residence and contributing to the solutions for implementing CSE. Few examples include:
- Strengthen service referral as an important component of sexuality education - Partnering with schools to disseminate information about the existing family planning centers. For example, in Romania the FP centers offer free contraceptives (condoms and contraceptive pills), but most young people don't know about them.
- Reach out to parents and students and mobilize communities to require the introduction of CSE related subjects in their schools; For example, in Romania, "education for health" which includes sexuality education is an optional. The curriculum is quite fine, but only about 6% of students

study it, because schools don't offer it or students and/or parents don't select it, preferring other optional subject matters.

Other contributions to the discussions were addressing:

- Central and Eastern Europe is a region that is often forgotten in the global discussions and regarded as Western Europe in terms of SRHR realization
- Limited representation of Central Asia region and its particularities
- Increased radicalization in the region of anti-choice groups and initiatives which block progress on SRHR
- Challenges and barriers that HIV-positive teenagers face in Ukraine
- The right to safe and legal abortion and fighting abortion related stigma and discrimination
- Involving LGBT sexual education in schools and making school a safe environment
- Creating mechanisms to ensure participation of youth representatives in important decision-making processes at all levels
- Strengthening the capacity of civil society groups to protect human rights of women and vulnerable groups.
- The accuracy of electronic survey results, as the data collection often doesn't include rural and marginalized areas that don't have access to internet
- The need to work more on the accountability and advocacy of putting sexual and reproductive rights as being the same as human rights,
- The need for a common strategy that follows core principles but allows adaptability and different tactics based on the context
- Involving young people from the first stages of planning until the end of projects as equals. Age stigmatization is real, and discrimination also, therefore we need to work hard together on breaking those barriers
- Involving young girls and women, but also other marginalized groups such as: gender nonconformity, transgender etc.
- Using peer-to-peer methodology for effective and sustainable projects, including for teaching of teachers and working also with marginalized communities

### Follow-up actions:

1. Sharing back home
  - Within the organization and / or national network: conference learnings will be conveyed to peers and colleagues; the experiences, tools, and various networks created will serve the NGOs to strengthen its work, specifically in the fields of: gender equality, and sexual reproduction and health rights;
  - Translate learnings to peer-education sessions; for example, Akmaral from Kazkistan has committed to organize a series of trainings (7 sessions, 3 hours each) at Kazgyrt village, SKO, Kazakhstan for 8-10th grade pupil on gender equality, girl's empowerment, SRHR and leadership sessions.
2. Keep in touch with the other youth delegates who participated at WD 2016; Follow up with other youth networks on possible campaigns/projects/advocacy work etc.

3. Use the language and promises made by high level people to hold them accountable for what they promised.

### Suggestions for follow-up at regional and national level

- Address the gaps between existing policies and their implementation
- CSE related : Map best practices, adapt and replicate approaches; Work with communities to break myths and underline benefits and impact; Build economic arguments - demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of CSE implementation
- Ensure CSE referrals are met by existing youth friendly health services and access to contraceptive choices
- Complement peer-education with other interventions, as part of an integrated approach towards empowering young people to make healthy and responsible decisions
- Address the rising radicalization in the region that blocks progress on SRHR
- Ensure data collection, disaggregated on gender and age, as Melinda Gate said: “We can’t close the gender gap without closing the data gap” and “In order to make women count, we must count women first”
- Strengthen institutions capacity to gather and analyze data
- Foster connection of regional activists for future collaboration and joint work. Young people can be peer educators, advocates and researchers, they can be whatever they want, but most importantly is to be able to join forces, come together and build alliances.

#### Ways of working:

- Foster youth-adult partnership, empower young people and ensure their meaningful engagement
- Digital approaches: reaching through mobile devices must be a priority (so websites should be user-friendly on mobile phones) as studies show this is how information mostly reaches young people, even in developing countries, where new technologies are more common than we might expect
- Use data and turn them into easily read and understood materials such as infographics or animations for the general public
- The WD Meaningful Youth Discussion Paper can serve as a good tool for further advocacy:  
[http://womendeliver.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Meaningful\\_Youth\\_Engagement\\_Discussion-Paper.pdf](http://womendeliver.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Meaningful_Youth_Engagement_Discussion-Paper.pdf)

\* Yana Panifilova, young participant from Ukraine has initiated a meeting with Michel Sidibe, UNAIDS Executive Director about adolescents` and youth participation from the EECA region in HLM 2016. As significant result, UNAIDS nominated her as representative from Eurasian Union of Adolescents and Youth “Teenergizer” to attend the events and speak about challenges that youth face in the EECA region.