

**Global Partners in Action:
NGO Forum on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Development
Berlin Call to Action**

Now is the time for donors and government leaders at all levels to accelerate implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action (PoA) as fundamental to achieving equality and equity, human rights and social and economic development.

Leaders of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) from more than 130 countries have come together in Berlin to demand that the international community reinforce and strengthen their commitment to the vision of the ICPD PoA, and in particular, sexual and reproductive health and rights.

As urgent as the ICPD agenda was in 1994, it is even more so today as countries, communities, and individuals seek effective responses to financial, political, humanitarian and environmental crises, climate change, insufficient health resources, continuing high maternal mortality and morbidity and the spread of HIV, and inequality in ensuring human rights. It is important to recognise the social determinants of health and are responsible for a major part of health inequities between and within countries. Access to sexual and reproductive health and rights information and services is essential to addressing these issues. The ICPD created a visionary global consensus which confirmed that the best way to improve global health and population policies, support sustainable development, advance human rights and help end poverty is to:

- Invest in health and rights for women and young people;
- Provide comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information, services and supplies for all people;
- Eradicate discrimination against girls and ensure access to all levels of education;
- Advance gender equality and equity and empower girls and women.

ICPD's core principles and priority actions have repeatedly been affirmed by governments as having linkages to other aspects of development, such as in the 21st session of the UN General Assembly in 1999, the UN Millennium Declaration in 2000 and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the World Summit Outcome in 2005, the inclusion of universal access to reproductive health as a target in the MDGs, in the 2009 resolution of the UN Commission on Population and Development and in recommendations issued by the UN Human Rights treaty monitoring bodies.

With five years left to implement the ICPD PoA and achieve the MDGs, which are integrally linked, we call on local, national and international decision-makers to join with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to establish and implement concrete, practical, and fully funded actions for ensuring sexual and reproductive health and rights.

We urge the following actions to be taken immediately:

- I. **Guarantee that sexual and reproductive rights, as human rights, are fully recognized and fulfilled.** Reform laws and policies to protect and promote sexual and reproductive rights, which are central to achieving the highest attainable level of health. Repeal restrictive and punitive laws and policies which deny access to information and services for sexual and reproductive health and rights, as well as those which criminalize the transmission of HIV and abortion. These laws and policies should at the minimum

comply with international human rights standards, treaties and conventions. These rights enable free and informed decisions over marriage, pregnancy, childbirth, contraception, sexuality, sexual orientation, pleasure and livelihood. Eradicate sexual and reproductive coercion, stigma, discrimination, harmful traditional practices and gender-based violence, particularly against women and girls.

- II. **Invest in comprehensive sexual and reproductive health (SRH) information, supplies and services¹ as a priority in health system strengthening.** We are deeply concerned with the consequences of unsafe abortion and maternal mortality, and as a result call for governments to address these as public health and human rights issues. Ensure equitable and affordable access for contraception, safe and legal abortion, skilled maternity and newborn care, including access and referral to pregnancy and delivery complications; prevention, diagnosis, treatment and care of HIV and AIDS and all other sexually transmitted infections, including in humanitarian crisis. All of these services must be available and fully funded throughout the health system, particularly in the public sector and at the primary health care level as well as taking into consideration the important role that NGOs play in providing complementary health services. Provide these services for all, ensuring quality, gender and age-sensitive healthcare and non-discrimination for low income and other marginalised groups. Service providers need to be non-judgmental and respect diversity. Support innovation, including the development of new technologies and service models, and access to scientific progress. We call upon governments to include objectives and indicators in the national health planning and budgeting process that ensure positive sexual and reproductive health and rights outcomes.
- III. **Ensure the sexual and reproductive rights of adolescents and young people.** Empower young people to make informed decisions about their life and livelihood in an environment that removes all barriers to accessing the full range of sexual and reproductive health information and services. Guarantee confidentiality and eliminate parental and spousal consent and age restrictions. Expand and allocate the resources needed to deliver effective, continuous, gender sensitive and youth-friendly services and evidence-based, timely, and comprehensive sexuality education. Acknowledge and respect the diversity of young people and collect age and gender disaggregated data.
- IV. **Create and implement formal mechanisms for meaningful civil society participation in programs, policy and budget decisions, monitoring and evaluation.** Provide ongoing opportunities, especially for women and young people, to be full partners in the policy dialogue and decision-making processes. Increase funding and ensure autonomy for nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), especially women's organizations to expand and strengthen their work to inform, influence and advocate for sexual and reproductive health and rights. Repeal repressive laws regulating NGOs and

¹ Reproductive health [...] implies that people are able to have a satisfying and safe sex life and that they have the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so. Implicit in this [is] the right of men and women to be informed and to have access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of family planning of their choice, as well as other methods of their choice for regulation of fertility which are not against the law, and the right of access to appropriate health-care services that will enable women to go safely through pregnancy and childbirth and provide couples with the best chance of having a healthy infant. [...] reproductive health care is defined as the constellation of methods, techniques and services that contribute to reproductive health and well-being by preventing and solving reproductive health problems. It also includes sexual health, the purpose of which is the enhancement of life and personal relations, and not merely counselling and care related to reproduction and sexually transmitted diseases.
ICPD Programme of Action, ¶ 7.2

enact and implement legislation that protects and facilitates their actions. Recognize and protect sexual and reproductive health and rights advocates as human rights defenders and foster meaningful leadership among women, young people and groups of people living in situations increasing their vulnerability.

- V. **Ensure that national governments and donors allocate sufficient resources and budgets that meet the needs of all people's sexual and reproductive health and rights.** Particularly in times of economic crisis, we strongly urge all donors to meet their commitments to overseas assistance and provide full funding that is predictable and long-term. Ensure funding mechanisms include sexual and reproductive health and rights policies and services. Establish and implement concrete, practical, and fully funded actions for ensuring sexual and reproductive health and rights. Strengthen and harmonize people-centered, economically and environmentally sustainable policies. Prioritize sexual and reproductive health and rights as a critical component of economic and social justice, health and development.

We ask you to adopt the following principles in taking action:

- ***Equity and equality.*** The ICPD PoA and MDGs cannot be achieved without equity and equality, therefore actions must always be designed and monitored to foster equity, participation and representation;
- ***Inclusiveness and transparency.*** All stakeholders, including the NGOs making this statement, will work in partnership to ensure that priority actions are taken and have an impact.
- ***Accountability and sustainability.*** All stakeholders—policymakers, donors and civil society—are committed to achieving the ICPD PoA and to ensure sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- ***Democratic processes and policies free from fundamentalisms and other doctrines that restrict human rights.***

We, the NGOs participating in the Global Partners in Action NGO Forum urge governments to reaffirm their commitment to the ICPD PoA and as NGOs, we will promote this Berlin Call to Action in our own countries and communities. We will work in cooperation with governments, bilateral and multilateral agencies and policymakers and other sectors of the social movements to ensure its timely implementation and hold governments accountable for the full realization of the PoA.

Human beings cannot live in dignity without the full implementation of the ICPD PoA. We demand that all governments fulfill the commitments made to their own people and the international community at Cairo in 1994. As NGOs, we work daily to uphold the right to health and commit ourselves to this Call to Action and its dissemination among policymakers and stakeholders who are committed to shape the future. It is a matter of human rights, democracy, and equality for all. This mandate does not end in Berlin. We must intensify our efforts.