

iLead issue33 - 3 April 2014

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Population | Leadership | Women

Parliamentarians Meet Succeed to Influence Policy Maker

For policy makers and activists working for sexual and reproductive health and rights, it's been a long road since the landmark International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo in 1994. Back then, the abortion issue pitted groups against one another, even as frustrated activists tried to keep the spotlight on human rights and development. Still, the conference prepared the groundwork for international development goals, and 179 governments adopted an ambitious "programme of action". Participating in the sixth International Parliamentarians' Conference on the Implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action (IPC/ICPD) Apr. 23-25 in Stockholm, Osotimehin told IPS that the UNFPA doesn't "get into abortion" because the organisation respects the rights of sovereign states to make their own laws. "But we insist that in countries where it is legal, it should be performed safely, and in those countries where it is not legal, they should have empathy and compassion so that post-abortion care is available," he said. The Stockholm conference took place amid controversial moves in Spain to pass some of the strictest abortion legislation in Europe. But the conference itself had a much broader agenda, focusing on gender equality, gender-based violence, and reproductive and sexual health and rights – including contraception, safe abortion and sexuality education. A few parliamentarians seemed to have been sent to the conference by their governments without a clear view of the issues or objectives, but others said they were in Stockholm to take inspiration from the meeting and to effect change in their countries. (ipsnews.)

Why Reproductive Health and Family Planning should be in MDGs

As we move towards the end of the MDGs and the close of an era that has seen unprecedented cooperation and progress in women and children's health, we are also now clearly seeing where and whom we have failed. We know so much more today

than we did in 1990 about the joy and pain, participation and exclusion, life and death of our girls, women, babies and children. The evidence shows us that to maintain the progress made, it is essential that we continue what we have begun, whilst expanding our investments if we are to spread our impact. New data has exposed the horror of newborn mortality around the world. In 2012, nearly 2.6 million babies were stillborn while another 3 million babies died before they were 28-days-old. In other words, over 5 million babies were alive until -- but died during -- labor, delivery or in their earliest neonatal period. Access to family planning -- to choices about contraception -- improves both maternal and newborn survival by lengthening inter-pregnancy intervals. Spacing the birth of children by three years will decrease under-5 deaths by 25 percent. Allowing men and women to prevent unwanted pregnancy would not only stop 300 million unintended pregnancies, including 21 million unplanned births, it would mean 26 million fewer abortions (of which 16 million are likely to be unsafe), 7 million fewer miscarriages, 79,000 fewer maternal deaths, and 1.1 million fewer infant deaths. Family planning is a key to unlocking the promise of this extraordinary human potential. (huffingtonpost)

Pakistan: Need for National Policy to end Violence Against Women

Representatives of major political parties and parliamentarians, civil society organizations and officials of Ministry of Law, Justice and Human Rights in Pakistan have agreed at a policy dialogue that the country urgently needs a comprehensive national policy on ending violence against women and girls from the society. The policy dialogue organized by AAWAZ Voice and Accountability Programme agreed to develop the national policy in consultation with the relevant stakeholders through dialogue at provincial and local level. The proposed policy framework included a vision statement on safe spaces for women and girls, relevant legislation, institutional and response mechanisms and rehabilitation of survivors of violence against women in a dignified manner. The participants also suggested that a one-stop approach is required to address the issue, where medico-legal, police help, shelter home and rehabilitation facilities are put under one roof. It emphasized that civil society organizations must take political parties along in their struggle for gender equality. (The nation)

China: Lawyers Call to Curb Practice Linking House Registration and Birth Permission

Thirty two lawyers and scholars have recently called for local governments in China to curb the informal practice of linking the hukou, or household registration system, to the family planning policy. Lawyer from east China's Zhejiang Province sent a letter to the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee and the State Council, in which she urged them to consider curbing the informal practice of using birth permission as the premise for registering a newborn's hukou. Birth permission is given to parents before pregnancy and is used to make sure parents have obeyed the national family planning law, that is, in many cases, parents need to prove that this is their only child. In April, east China's Shandong Province and Nanchang City in east China's Jiangxi Province passed a law which clearly states that newborns will be registered with the hukou system as long as their parents present a birth certificate

from a hospital, which means, they no longer need to provide the birth permission certificate to prove they have obeyed the family planning law in China. (womenofchina.cn)

South Asia: Media Coverage on Gender Identity Issues Draws Flak

The media can be a positive force for improving human rights, health of homosexuals and transgender people in South Asia, says a new report developed by Centre for Advocacy & Research (CFAR) and UN Development Programme (UNDP). The report, 'A Framework for Media Engagement on MSM and Transgender Persons in South Asia,' provides direction for how homosexuals and transgender communities should engage with the media and how the media itself should leverage its influence to reduce stigma and discrimination, educate and raise awareness of human rights issues and support strategies, programmes that improve the political, social and legal environments for homosexuals and the transgender people. Examining media reporting in Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and Nepal, researchers found prejudiced, inaccurate and sensationalised news coverage that increased stigma and distorted public perception on sexual orientation and gender identity issues. It also enforced stereotypes and not reported community issues accurately. "Though media coverage of HIV has increased over the last two decades, the coverage of issues relating to sexual orientation and gender identities has often been weak and objectionable," said Edmund Settle, Policy Advisor at UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Centre. The report recommends that community organisations create partnerships with all levels of the media – local, state and national – to improve accurate reporting and representation of key issues. (thehindu)

NZ Needs a National Approach to Sexual and Reproductive Health

Family Planning and the New Zealand Committee of the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) applaud the Health Select Committee's second call for the implementation of a sexual and reproductive health strategy. Chief executive of Family Planning Jackie Edmond and Chair of the New Zealand Committee of RANZCOG Dr Ian Page say there needs to be an action plan on sexual and reproductive health from the health sector - as recommended by the Select Committee in its November 2013 report and reiterated in its media release this week. Ms Edmond says, "New Zealand does not have a strategy or a national approach to sexual and reproductive health and this is an issue that needs to be addressed". (YahooNZ)

The Global Youth Wellbeing Index

The Youth, Prosperity, and Security Initiative at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), in partnership with the International Youth Foundation (IFY), has developed a groundbreaking Global Youth Wellbeing Index, to elevate distinct young people's issues and comparative status from within national and population-wide measures of national poverty, development, and wellbeing. The Index comprises 40 representative indicators across six domains of wellbeing: citizen participation, education, economic opportunity, health, safety and security, and information and

communications technology. The report details the Initiative's findings, recommendations, and methodology used to construct the Global Youth Wellbeing Index. It is the hope of the Initiative that policymakers, donors, and youth are able to use this tool as the world moves forward with the post-2015 agenda. (csis.org)

Up Coming Meeting

- Violence against women “Engaging Youth as Agents of Change” 21st – 23rd June Melaka, Malaysia. Organized by World Youth Foundation. wpf@po.jaring.my
- Post 2014 Youth Global Strategy Meeting 6th – 8th June Bangkok. Organized by Youth Coalition. programs@youthcoalition.org
- APEC Women Leadership Forum 21st - 22nd Aug. Beijing

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Message for Leaders

“I am concerned that young people are not being offered the opportunities to which they are entitled, such as education, information, healthcare – and decent opportunities to have a future. Many young people worldwide lack access to correct information, and the knowledge and means to protect themselves against both sexually-transmitted diseases including HIV and unintended pregnancies.”

Speaker, Sweden's Parliament at IPCI



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