

A stylized map of Southeast Asia is shown in the background, rendered in a light pink color against a darker pink background. The map is centered and occupies the upper half of the page. The title text is overlaid on the lower half of the map.

THE ESSENCE OF AN INNOVATIVE PROGRAMME FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA:

*A POSITION PAPER ON COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION (INCLUDING
YOUTH FRIENDLY SERVICES), MEANINGFUL YOUTH PARTICIPATION AND
RIGHTS-BASED APPROACHES IN PROGRAMMING*



The Essence of an Innovative Programme for Young People in South East Asia
A Position Paper on Comprehensive Sexuality Education (including Youth Friendly Services),
Meaningful Youth Participation and Rights-Based Approaches in Programming

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Asian Pacific Research and Resource Centre for Women (ARROW)

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ABOUT ARROW & WHRAP-SEA

The Asian-Pacific Resource & Research Centre for Women (ARROW) was established in 1993 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, as a regional non-governmental, non-profit organization. ARROW's vision is for women in Asia and the Pacific to be better able to define and control their lives, particularly in the area of women's health and women's rights. Since 1993, ARROW has been able to make significant progress towards this vision, particularly in the area of information for change, as well as building regional civil society partnerships for advocacy. ARROW's contributions in the region have also been significant in terms of ensuring civil society monitoring reports of government progress towards international commitments such as the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)'s Programme of Action, the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) and the Beijing Women's Conference Platform for Action (Pfa).

The Women's Health and Rights Advocacy Partnership - South East Asia (WHRAP-SEA) is a partnership project, of ARROW and her partners in seven countries, which aims to shape safe spaces for young people in determining and claiming their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). WHRAP-SEA partnership comprises of nine national partners from Burma, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao PDR, the Philippines and Vietnam namely Myanmar Positive Women Network (MPWN), Burma Medical Association (BMA), Migrant Assistance Programme Foundation (MAP), Reproductive Health Association of Cambodia (RHAC), Yunnan Health Development Research Association (YHDRA), Yayasan Jurnal Perempuan (YJP), University of Health Science Lao, Likhaan, and Centre for Creative Initiative in Health and Population (CCIHP). Based on the project inception in July 2012, partners have identified that the issues of young people's access and information on SRHR services is crucial priority issues given the vast disparity of these matters. Phase I of the project began in July 2012 and ended in April 2012. Phase II is a four-year continuation of the project, which started in May 2012. Moreover this advocacy partnership has added to its core an overarching principle of meaningful youth participation in the project by involving young staff, young researchers and youth activists to the design, implementation and monitoring activities. The overarching principle of meaningful youth participation, mobilisation on the ground as well as the affluent influences in regional and global advocacy processes well shaped WHRAP-SEA as an innovative programme for young people's issues in the sub-region.

“A human rights-based approach should be regarded as an essential tool for achieving sustainable development outcomes and advancing ICPD goals such as universal access to sexual and reproductive health care.”¹ A rights-based approach holds governments and other powerful people/institutions accountable as duty bearers for those less powerful, like adolescents and young people. Such an approach, while recognising that young people are rights holders, works at empowering them and enabling them to claim their sexual and reproductive rights. This empowerment occurs not just through awareness or information provision, but also through making young people real stakeholders and altering the balance of power between young people and adults.

Meaningful youth participation is key to the implementation of a rights-based approach. In fact, in 2008, the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) documented that it values youth participation as a human right and this is also enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Youth Coalition on Sexual and Reproductive Rights defines youth participation

as, “the range of processes that empower young people to take an active role in all phases of decision making that affect our lives and to take up leadership roles to address and promote the issues that matter most to us.”²

The two key aspects of programmes on adolescent sexual and reproductive health and rights are: (i) provision of comprehensive sexuality education; and (ii) provision of youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services. Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) seeks to equip young people with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values they need to determine and enjoy their sexuality – physically and emotionally, individually and in relationships. It is essential to put in place broad-based strategies for CSE that address the needs of young people, especially young women and girls.³ CSE is necessary for all women, including unmarried girls, to prevent unwanted pregnancies.⁴ Review of evidence suggests that CSE programmes should be linked with youth-friendly SRH services through an effective referral system. Youth-friendly SRH services are those that are based on a comprehensive understanding of adolescents' and young people's realities. It is a service that young people trust and are able to access without barriers.⁵

It is evident that a programme or a campaign aiming to enable young people to claim their sexual and reproductive rights and gain access to sexual and reproductive health services must adopt a rights-based approach. Meaningful youth participation is intrinsic to such an approach and the programme or advocacy campaign has to address the basics of comprehensive sexuality education and access to youth-friendly SRH services.

²Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights, Meaningful Youth Participation: What it actually means for you, your work and your organisation

³IPPF (2010) IPPF Framework for Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)

⁴ARROW (2006) Providing Safe, Clandestine Abortion Services in Pakistan, ARROWs for Change 12(3), 4-5

⁵IPPF (2008) Provide: Strengthening youth friendly services

¹UNFPA (2010) A Human Rights-Based Approach to Programming: Practical Implementation Manual and Training Materials

ELABORATION OF KEY PRINCIPLES AND WHRAP-SEA POSITION

WHAT DOES COMPREHENSIVE SEXUALITY EDUCATION, INCLUDING ACCESS TO YOUTH-FRIENDLY SRH SERVICES MEAN TO US?

ARROW and WHRAP-SEA believe that CSE is a strategy that is developed from a scientific evidence base that is coherent with the needs of particular social contexts. It aims to empower young people to achieve greater well-being – physically, socially, and mentally.

We endorse seven basic elements of CSE, which must be covered by curricula at all times. These are gender, SRH and HIV, sexual citizenship rights, pleasure, freedom from violence, diversity and relationships. CSE should uphold the human rights of all people, especially adolescents and young people, thus enabling them to access their sexual and reproductive rights.

The approach to CSE shall affirm young people's sexuality and be sex-positive. It shall not be a fear-based model that considers young people as asexual beings. Instead, CSE shall reiterate and emphasize human sexuality and pleasure, especially young people's entitlement to this. It shall be practical and based on the realities of young people's lives, enabling them to gain life skills like negotiation, bargaining power in a relationship, making choices for survival, and others. The approach will also be based on the notion of adolescents and young people having agency in determining choices, based on a range of options. Informed consent, that is central to young people's rights and needs, shall be the foundation for all decision making processes for young people.

CSE curricula shall be developed and delivered based on the principle of equity and will engender non-discriminatory values. It shall be accessible by all adolescents and young people regardless of their age, marital

status, sexual orientation, sex-gender identity, religious beliefs, geographical location, disability, health and socio-economic status.

The creation of a CSE programme and its implementation shall acknowledge and understand the diversity of young people as a constituency. Their reality is compounded by specific contexts and local practices, which sometimes can be part of the marginalization process when accessing information and services, and programme shall recognise this.

Moreover, the CSE programme shall be linked with youth-friendly SRH services through reliable referral systems and updated information on the range of services available.

We believe that the aim of comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) should be to enable young people gain accurate information on sexual and reproductive rights, to develop life skills like critical thinking, decision making and empathy, as well as to nurture positive attitudes and values like respect for self and others and open-mindedness.⁶ In addition, CSE has to be based on the premise that sexuality is a fundamental aspect of human life with several dimensions and it cannot be understood without reference to gender and diversity.⁷ Therefore, we expand and elaborate the seven essential elements to CSE that has been explained by IPPF⁸:

1

Gender: this refers to the difference between gender and sex, gender roles and attributes including perceptions of masculinity and femininity and the changing norms and values in society, among others.

Gender deeply influences all aspects of sexuality. It is defined as the cultural characteristics, behaviours, and roles that are considered to be male or female. Gender varies by culture, but it begins influencing social development from birth. Gender affects every aspect of life from how we see and value ourselves to how we learn to communicate and interact with one another. Gender especially affects how we express and experience our sexuality, how we initiate relationships, and how we feel about giving and receiving pleasure. In addition, gender requires a discussion of rights. Inequality between the sexes often limits girls' and women's access to information and health services, depriving them of their right to control their bodies and decide on matters related to sexuality and fertility. Gender discrimination can also generate and perpetuate sexual violence, forced marriage, and harmful practices like female genital cutting. The other discussions within gender include those on power, oppression, and internalized oppression, whereby victims of oppression or discrimination come to believe in the stereotypical or derogatory characteristics ascribed to them. However, gender-role stereotypes are learned and can be challenged, unlearned, and changed. Sexuality education can and must do its part to correct these injustices.⁹

2

Sexual and reproductive health and HIV: this includes sexuality and the life cycle, anatomy, the concepts of virginity, abstinence and faithfulness, the reproductive process as well as how to use condoms and other forms of contraception (including emergency contraception) and abortion (safe and unsafe). It also covers sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV, including transmission and symptoms, among others.

In most societies, people refer to sexual parts of the body with euphemisms and many adolescents may be uninformed, misinformed, or frightened by unexpected changes in their bodies. Girls especially may have absorbed messages that their genitals are dirty and shouldn't be looked at or touched—feelings like shame, guilt and embarrassment that are detrimental to sexual health and the development of a satisfying and safe sexual life. People have a right to know their bodies fully. In addition, the more young people know

about reproduction, the better they will be able to decide when they want to become pregnant, and the greater the likelihood that they will have a healthy pregnancy when they do. In many countries, maternal mortality rates are still unacceptably high, especially among young adolescents. Sexuality education should ensure that participants understand how to prevent complications.

There are many obstacles to contraceptive use by adolescents and not only do they need to be fully informed about contraception, but also on communication and negotiation skills. Similarly, young people need to be able to explore attitudes and positions on abortion, while understanding the need for safe abortion to be available to girls and young women. Their right to make decisions about their own bodies must be respected and protected.

Adolescents are at a particularly high risk for being infected with STIs or HIV for a number of reasons. They may not have the knowledge or skills to make good decisions and stick to them; they may not have a realistic sense of their own vulnerability and therefore take risks; and they are in a phase of life when they are likely to be starting new relationships. Biologically, women are more vulnerable to STIs and HIV, and young women are at even greater physical risk because their cervixes are not mature. Young people need to have full and accurate information about STIs and HIV and the skills to protect themselves now and in the future.¹⁰

3

Sexual rights and sexual citizenship: this refers to the knowledge of international human rights and national policies, laws and structures that relate to people's sexuality, including rights-based approaches to SRH and related barriers, available services and resources and how to access them, and the diversity and dynamic nature of sexuality and culture, among others.

People's sexual health and emotional well-being are connected to their ability to exercise their human rights (for example, their rights to education and freedom of expression). These rights extend to protecting one's body, sexuality, and health. Sexual rights are based on international agreements and covenants. Sexual rights include the right to:

- choose sex partners and to form relationships based on choice and consent;
- say yes or no to sex;

⁶ IPPF (2010) IPPF Framework for Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)

⁷ UNESCO (2009) International Guidelines on Sexuality Education: An evidence informed approach to effective sex, relationships and HIV/STI education

⁸ IPPF (2010) IPPF Framework for Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)

⁹ Irvin, A. (2004) Positively Informed: Lesson Plans and Guidance for Sexuality Educators and Advocates, IWHC: New York

¹⁰ Ibid.

- express sexuality, including the right to seek pleasure, in the context of consent;
- enjoy bodily autonomy, free from sexual violence or exploitation;
- obtain full and accurate information, education, and services; and
- protect oneself against unwanted pregnancy and infection, including HIV.

Only when people can exercise these rights can they really choose whether or not to have sex, negotiate condom and contraceptive use, and seek the services they need. Promoting sexual and reproductive rights also encourages young people to take responsibility for protecting the well-being and rights of others. Knowing about human rights allows young people to gain a sense that they matter in the world.¹¹

Furthermore, sexual citizenship implies the rights of each individual to fully utilize their citizenship rights in expressing their sexuality. This also includes the rights to participate in public sphere and be fully respected regardless of their sexual identity and orientation.

4 Pleasure: this refers to being positive about young people's sexuality and understanding that sex should be enjoyable and not forced, the biology and emotions behind the human sexual response, the interplay of gender and pleasure, and sexual well-being, among others.

Sex is fundamentally about pleasure and while many children grow up receiving contradictory messages about sex; they want and need clear, honest answers. For girls and women in particular, sexual pleasure in relationships often does not come automatically. Expectations and reality often collide and cause disappointment or bewilderment. Teaching about the variety of ways to experience sexual pleasure, including similarities and differences between men and women, and encouraging communication between sexual partners can increase the likelihood that both partners will enjoy their sexual lives. In many societies, sexual behaviour is overly focused on intercourse. Encouraging people to learn the many sources of sexual satisfaction and different kinds of lovemaking not only offers adolescents alternatives to sexual intercourse but can also decrease the likelihood of sexual problems in adulthood such as dysfunction erection.

¹²As long as sexual activity is undertaken with

mutual and meaningful consent and is not harmful, there is no one true or better way to enjoy it.¹³

5 Violence: this includes the various types of violence towards men and women and how they manifest, particularly gender-based violence, non-consensual sex, and rights, laws and support options available, among others.

Sexuality should be a source of pleasure and emotional connection for people, but the unfortunate truth is that sexual violence, harassment, and abuse are prevalent in most societies, as are harmful practices. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that one in three women worldwide will experience violence in her lifetime. Adolescents need to be able to recognize abuse and know where to go for help; they need to clearly understand the concept of consent; they need to understand that drug and alcohol use can impair judgment and lead to risky, coerced, or violent sex; they need to recognize the elements of sexual harassment and know what recourse is available; and they need to understand the psychological and physiological effects of harmful practices and their origins in the desire to control women through their sexuality. To help end violence and harmful practices, educational programs must promote people's right to dignity and equality; their right to full information; and their right to the full enjoyment of, and control over, their own sexuality, including their bodies.¹⁴

6 Diversity: this includes recognizing and understanding the range of diversity in our lives (e.g., faith, culture, ethnicity, socio-economic status, ability/disability, HIV status and sexual orientation) and developing a positive view of it, among others.

First and foremost, we are all people. All of us have similarities and differences when compared with others in our families, school, workplace, and communities. For example, there is wide variation in how we look and what we think, in our talents, and in our sexuality. This diversity of human experience exists everywhere. Variation in people's sexual desires, behaviours, and identities is referred to as sexual diversity. People who are heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, or transgender may be found in every kind of

family, community, religion, and profession.¹⁵

Everyone has a sexual orientation, i.e., we are romantically and sexually attracted to either men, women, or both. Many young people will experiment sexually with friends of the same sex or may have crushes on friends, acquaintances, or celebrities of the same sex. They should know that such encounters or thoughts are a natural part of being human and do not necessarily mean that they are gay. Being gay is not a deviation or illness, but in many countries, homophobia and discrimination drive gay people to hide their sexual orientation from public view because they fear repression and violence.¹⁶

7 Relationships: this includes the different types of relationships (e.g., family, friends, sexual, romantic, etc.) that exist, as well as emotions, emotional and physical intimacy, power dynamics, communication, trust and honesty, among others

Sexual well-being and health depend on individual or personal factors as well as broader social influences. Adolescents need to be enabled to strengthen their communication in all kinds of relationships, especially on ways of making their way through the emotional thicket of intimate and romantic relationships.¹⁷

In many societies, the process of developing relationships that lead to marriage begins in adolescence. But few adolescents have thought clearly about the qualities that are important to them in a long-term partner or even what they would consider a healthy relationship, how to begin one, or how to get out of a relationship that is not healthy. And they usually receive very little adult guidance, even from their parents. Some relationships are not healthy. Assessing a relationship objectively, and especially concluding that it should end, is difficult for everyone, but it can be especially confusing for adolescents. Power imbalances frequently go unquestioned – they may even be socially sanctioned or encouraged – and very often affect young girls.¹⁸ It has been documented and agreed that “sexuality education should be guided by core principles, including that it should:

- Foster norms and attitudes and build skills for achieving gender equality and respect for diversity;
- Address vulnerabilities and fight exclusion;
- Promote young people's participation and strengthen capacities for citizenship;

- Encourage local ownership and cultural relevance;
- Take a positive life cycle approach to sexuality.”¹⁹

Since CSE provides comprehensive information on sexuality, SRH, HIV and other health-related aspects, it generates a demand for youth-friendly health services, particularly SRH. Therefore, it is essential that CSE be linked with youth-friendly SRH services. Particularly in the context of girls and young women, comprehensive approaches to addressing SRHR that include information and education, and access to services are critical to meeting their SRH needs and securing their rights. This is because girls and young women, in particular, have poor knowledge about sexuality and reproduction, and a lack of empowerment and agency to assert their rights.²⁰

A youth-friendly service is able to attract young clients, respond to their needs, and retain them for continuing care. The services offered through a youth-friendly SRH centre are wide-ranging and relevant to young people's needs. Characteristics essential for effective services include:

- Trained providers for competent, sensitive and respectful service delivery
- Confidential, non-judgmental and private
- Convenient opening hours
- Accessible to all adolescents and young people irrespective of their age, marital status, sexual orientation or ability to pay
- An effective referral system
- Involvement of young people in design, implementation and evaluation Involvement of family and community²¹

¹¹Population Council (2009) It's All One Curriculum: Guidelines and Activities for a Unified Approach to Sexuality, Gender, HIV, and Human Rights Education

¹²Irvin, A. (2004) Positively Informed: Lesson Plans and Guidance for Sexuality Educators and Advocates, IWHC: New York

¹³Population Council (2009) It's All One Curriculum: Guidelines and Activities for a Unified Approach to Sexuality, Gender, HIV, and Human Rights Education

¹⁴Irvin, A. (2004) Positively Informed: Lesson Plans and Guidance for Sexuality Educators and Advocates, IWHC: New York

¹⁵Population Council (2009) It's All One Curriculum: Guidelines and Activities for a Unified Approach to Sexuality, Gender, HIV, and Human Rights Education

¹⁶Irvin, A. (2004) Positively Informed: Lesson Plans and Guidance for Sexuality Educators and Advocates, IWHC: New York

¹⁷Population Council (2009) It's All One Curriculum: Guidelines and Activities for a Unified Approach to Sexuality, Gender, HIV, and Human Rights Education

¹⁸Irvin, A. (2004) Positively Informed: Lesson Plans and Guidance for Sexuality Educators and Advocates, IWHC: New York

¹⁹UNFPA (2010) Comprehensive Sexuality Education: Advancing Human Rights, Gender Equality and Improved Sexual and Reproductive Health

²⁰DAWN (2012) Breaking through the Development Silos: Sexual & Reproductive Health & Rights, Millennium Development Goals & Gender Equity

²¹IPPF (2008) Provide: Strengthening youth friendly services

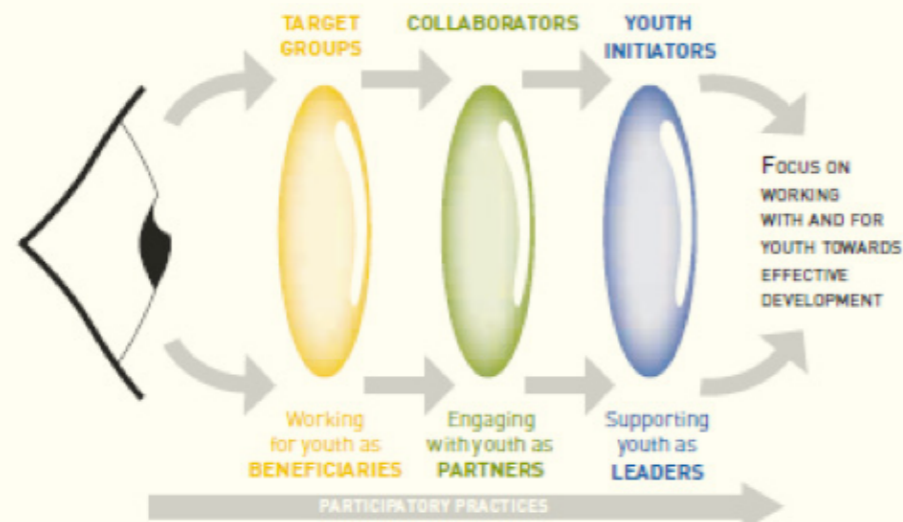
WHAT DOES MEANINGFUL YOUTH PARTICIPATION MEAN TO US?

ARROW and WHRAP-SEA believe that adolescents and young people are entitled to participation in social, political and public spheres as a human right. We also believe that young people have agency to own sustainable leadership spaces to exercise their rights and challenge power dynamics within their society. Therefore, meaningful engagement of young people must take place in multi-level approaches, at local, national and regional levels. In addition, young people should be partners from the initiation, design and implementation, to the monitoring, evaluation and governance processes of a project as well as policy making.

We recommend providing direct support to youth-led initiatives that aim to fulfil young people's needs and claim their rights. Such support would entail the provision of opportunities for active experimentation by young people, in order for them to be able to exercise their leadership skills.

While young people should represent the face of the youth movement, their efforts require support and facilitation from the established organizations they are affiliated to. Therefore, it is also essential for adults to learn to work with young people, develop positive attitudes towards them and encourage young leaders. Efforts on building capacity and perspective on youth-adult partnerships must be made to this effect.

An initial approach to youth participation is the 'three-lens approach to youth participation'. In this approach, agencies/programmes are expected to view young people as: (i) beneficiaries or target groups, (ii) partners or collaborators and (iii) leaders or initiators.



These three lenses must be applied together and are not mutually exclusive. However, depending on the context and the group of young people for the programme is, one or the other lens may be used at different times.²²

²²SPW/DfID-CSO Youth Working Group (2010) Youth Participation in Development: A Guide for Development Agencies and Policy Makers

However a more dynamic approach to youth participation, based on an understanding of context can be understood further by IPPF's continuum of youth participation. Organisations may begin at different starting points on this continuum, while progressing towards meaningful youth participation or even youth-led programmes or campaigns. At one end of the continuum is 'ad hoc input,' where decisions are made by adults and young people are only called in for specific inputs, and at the other end is 'youth-run' programmes, where young people make all the decisions from policies and financial management to staff recruitment.



In essence, however, it is essential to understand that to address meaningful youth participation, adults and young people alike are required to embrace change. Real participation means sharing power, involves motivation and commitment, and entails clear communication among all. Meaningful youth participation, when applied within a rights-based approach, will be supported by democratic values and principles of non-discrimination and equity.²³ Organisations also need to make structural changes to ensure that the needs and realities of young people are addressed.²⁴ The ultimate aim of such participation should be to develop young people as partners and leaders in development. This entails building skills, capacity and agency among young people as well as adopting core values like:

- Advocating for youth as assets to development;
- Recognising young people's agency and dynamism;
- Building youth-adult partnerships and understanding local attitudes towards youth;
- Prioritising excluded youth.²⁵

However, young people's agency and leadership has to be continuously fostered through capacity building, training, workshops, mentorship and so on. A crucial element in fostering young people's leadership would be cross movement building and intergenerational dialogues.

The history of the global youth movement indicates that the youth development agenda has been initiated and led by actors in the Global North. A critical position for us is that young people from the Global South need to own the issues and the agenda, and their capacities need to be built in order to sustain a movement that uses a gendered, Southern and rights-based perspective in advocating for SRHR. Beyond youth groups in the Global South, spaces have also been thus far limited for the participation of girls and young women especially those from geographically or linguistically secluded places.^{26, 27}

Refer to 'Participate: The voice of young people in programmes and policies by IPPF, 2008 for tips on best practices as well as principles of youth participation in decision making'.

²³IPPF (2008) Participate: The voice of young people in programmes and policies

²⁴Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights, Meaningful Youth Participation: What it actually means for you, your work and your organisation

²⁵SPW/DfID-CSO Youth Working Group (2010) Youth Participation in Development: A Guide for Development Agencies and Policy Makers

²⁶It is important to remember that participation of young people is not a "privilege but a right that comes with corresponding responsibilities." The movement of young people demanding participation and sexual and reproductive rights has a long history, though, only over the past few years has it begun to mobilise into independent networks of young people. The youth movement grew progressively over the past four decades, especially in multi-lateral platforms such as the United Nations (UN). It is key to shaping the global development agenda on young people's issues. As of 2010, there were more than 20 agencies, departments and specialised organisations within the UN system with specific initiatives and programmes working on youth issues. These included the Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development, the Inter-Agency Task Team (IATT) on HIV and Young People, the Inter-Agency Cooperation on Climate Change and Sustainable Development, the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, the Youth Employment Network, the United Nations Adolescent Girls Task Force, and the initiation of the International Youth Day.

²⁷ARROW (2012) Beyond ICPD and MDGs: A look at the Youth SRHR Movement, priority issues and strategies towards the post-2015 framework in Asia and the Pacific, (unpublished) Arrows for Change

WHAT DOES A RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH IN PROGRAMMES MEAN TO US?

ARROW and WHRAP-SEA operates on the premise that young people may experience a spectrum of marginalisation- age, gender, language, religion, sexual diversity and others. We believe in young people's agency and freedom to decide, thereby upholding their ability in making decisions. WHRAP-SEA aims to do this by not dictating to them what to do, but by giving young people a range of possible options to be taken. This implies that WHRAP-SEA and its partners respect the choices that young people take.

WHRAP-SEA programmes for young people echo the need to fulfil their rights and therefore, it is imperative that their rights be protected or advocated for. For this, WHRAP-SEA endeavours to be approachable and grounded in young people's realities, while focusing on young people's needs. An inclusive, non-discriminatory and participatory approach is adopted by all WHRAP-SEA programmes. This implies upholding the right to health, especially sexual and reproductive health (information and services), for the most marginalised young people. WHRAP-SEA believes in Universal Access to Healthcare and addressing the socio-cultural determinants of health.

While ensuring the prevention of the abuse of young people's rights, ARROW and WHRAP-SEA also believes in the meaningful participation of young people to achieve political, economic and environmental justice for them.

Rights exist at many levels, from international to the individual level. Therefore, they are not just about international legal standards or the international commitments made by nation states, but also the composite of law, policies and practices that are developed at the institutional and individual levels. Human rights have been acknowledged to be integral to development (Vienna Declaration) and adopting a rights-based approach to programmes should be imperative for all agencies.

A rights-based approach aims to increase impact and strengthen sustainability by addressing root causes, which are analysed

from a power/rights angle. This means that programmes move down to the lowest possible level of causality to impact outcomes, rather than address only symptoms. Such an approach also advocates for changes in policies and practices that are a violation of human rights principles. A rights-based approach focuses on changing power relations to achieve more equity within traditionally hierarchical relationships, e.g. doctors and patients, teachers and students, policy makers and young people, etc. Hence, in any implementational modality of a rights-based approach - processes are as important as results as they often determine the quality of the results.

According to IPPF²⁸, a rights-based approach in programmes for young people includes:

- Making young people active stakeholders within the programmes, not only in the development, implementation and evaluation of programmes, but also in all decision-making processes which affect them;
- Addressing discrimination in the programmes, on the basis of gender, ability, sexual orientation, and ethnic or religious background, among other factors; and
- Improving the availability, accessibility and affordability of SRH services for young people.

Adopting such a rights-based approach would result in a number of key benefits as enumerated by United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)²⁹:

- Promote realization of human rights and help government partners achieve their human rights commitments;
- Increase and strengthen the participation of the local community;
- Improve transparency;
- Promote results;
- Increase accountability;
- Reduce vulnerabilities by focusing on the most marginalized and excluded in society; &
- More likely to lead to sustained change as human rights-based programmes have greater impact on norms and values, structures, policy and practice.

²⁸IPPF (2007) Included, Involved, Inspired: A Framework for Youth Peer Education Programmes

²⁹UNFPA (2010) A Human Rights-Based Approach to Programming: Practical Implementation Manual and Training Materials

CASE STUDIES

THIS SECTION ELABORATES ON SOME KEY EXAMPLES OF HOW THE WHRAP-SEA PARTNERS HAVE PROMOTED CSE, INVOLVED YOUNG PEOPLE MEANINGFULLY AND APPLIED RIGHTS BASED APPROACHES IN THEIR PROJECTS.

CENTRE FOR CREATIVE INNOVATION IN HEALTH AND POPULATION, VIETNAM

The Centre for Creative Innovation in Health and Population (CCIHP) has made long strides in pushing the agenda on CSE. It is engaged in training peer educators among the female workers in five factories located in Hanoi, in collaboration with the national Youth Union. The workers are aged between 20 and 25 years and most of them are unmarried. Many live with their families, while some in hostels or shared accommodation.

The peer educators are responsible for having ten meetings on ten different topics of reproductive health (RH) and sexuality with youth clubs of 35 members each. CCIHP has developed the guidelines for the peer educators and a handbook for the young workers. The Youth Union knows the factory workers well through their engagement in a number of activities with young factory workers. Therefore, CCIHP works together with the Youth Union to recruit the peer educators from the factories. They choose people who are active in social work, have good communication skills and want to learn more about RH and sexuality.

Two trainers from CCIHP provide the peer educators with a five-day training on the key topics that they are expected to impart, i.e. RH, pregnancy prevention, sexuality, gender and gender based violence (GBV), HIV, relations between boys and girls, sexual and reproductive rights. The peer educators also receive training on communication skills and training methodologies.

Another successful project on CSE was a contest among 15 to 24 year olds on making video clips about sexuality education. These were short clips – about 3 to 5 minutes – which covered a range of different topics. A fan page was created online and this got over a 1000 young people discussing CSE and youth realities.

CCIHP also ensures young people's involvement in its activities as exemplified by the 'Why not' campaign. This campaign, aimed at 18-24 year olds, resulted in a network of volunteers who continue to work with CCIHP on several programs. They have been involved in a couple of big conferences on sexuality and on GBV, as well as with flashmobs and events on young people with disabilities.

LIKHAAN, PHILIPPINES

Likhaan provides an example of meaningful youth participation. This was done in 2003, when Likhaan brought together three local youth organisations and created Pilakk Youth (i.e. unified strength of women and young people) as a common forum. The organisations constituted of young women, young lesbians and young gay men and were formed by young people for young people. The members are between the ages of 12 and 24 and there are a total of 600 members across the three organisations.

While there were a number of adult women's organisations among the community, this was the first time that young people were getting organised. Therefore, they worked with the women's organisations in establishing their own. These adult advocacy groups also provided technical assistance during the strategic planning of the youth groups, thus exemplifying effective youth-adult partnerships. The young people decide upon their own direction every year and have an annual strategic planning assessment – by the President, the Vice President and the Secretary – to assess the organisations' programmes by the end of the year. Likhaan provides financial and technical assistance to them.

The groups provide peer education, peer counselling, sports, and education on relationships, sexuality, early pregnancy, STIs and abortion. This education is provided through community forums as well as to lesbian and gay youth. Likhaan provides training to youth leaders from the communities on education and counselling as well as medical input on the counselling training. Apart from this, Likhaan has a community based health programme with a youth library to encourage young people to do their school research assignments and also meet the medical personnel. The youth library was added to address the stigma attached to young people accessing the clinic.

REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH ASSOCIATION OF CAMBODIA, CAMBODIA

Working with young people to enable them to become young advocates is one of the ways in which the Reproductive Health Association of Cambodia (RHAC) engages in meaningful youth participation. Apart from providing training on CSE to young people in the Monduliri Province, RHAC also organised a concert to promote youth friendly services in health centres and to seek support from local authorities and the community so that they enable young people to access these services. This event was also used to highlight the real stories of young people with regard to SRHR issues through role plays. This generated interest among the young people. In addition, two young people from each village in the project coverage area were selected to join a training for peer educators.

The project seeks to deliver CSE as well as enable young people to demand better SRH services in the Monduliri Province. As part of this effort, 48 young advocates from the local communities were provided with two sessions of three-day trainings. The aims of the trainings were to make participants aware of advocacy strategies, SRHR, and to empower them to deal with local decision makers (i.e. local authorities and government health staff) for a supportive environment with regard to adolescent SRHR practices. They were also introduced to the national policy and national guidelines on youth SRH. All the young advocates discussed their action plans at the training and decided to refer young people who needed health services, to the health centre, as well as collect feedback from them. Some of the selected young advocates were already peer educators under RHAC's youth health programme. The young advocates meet every quarter to share experiences and solutions.

These young advocates are also expected to be active in the Commune Committee for Women and Children (CCWC). CCWC is an official, communal structure established by the Ministry of Interior of the Royal Government of Cambodia that works under the direct management of the Commune Council Chief. There is one committee per commune and it plays an important role in improving the health of mothers and children through an assigned set of activities. Young people are also part of this group's target and with the RHAC intervention, CCWC members have actually integrated adolescent SRH activities in their own commune investment programmes. The two young advocates from each community discuss SRHR with other young people in their villages and identify their realities. These are then brought forward for discussion with decision makers such as the CCWC and the operational health district or provincial health department. There have been a number of open fora between young people and the provincial health department, the operational health district, and local authorities. These have covered issues like providing youth friendly services through the health centres as per the national guidelines on SRH for youth.

YUNNAN HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH ASSOCIATION, CHINA

The Yunnan Health and Development Research Association (YHDRA) is engaged in a research study on applying a rights-based approach to SRHR. The organisation has also published a series of papers advocating to the government on issues around safe abortion and unwanted pregnancy, among others. Among its implementation projects, YHDRA has been working on a model of meaningful youth participation by including young people among the staff of the organisation. Even though, initially, there were a number of barriers for allowing the entry of young people into the organisation in the form of examinations, YHDRA managed to change these structures to ensure that young people get hired. In addition, YHDRA has provided wide ranging capacity building to the young people it works with. This includes project management, project implementation, administrative affairs, etc.

Young people have been taken from ethnic communities and trained to be leaders on SRHR, advocating for their rights and spreading awareness among other young people. One such girl had been an intern of YHDRA under the WHRAP-SEA project. After receiving trainings and the exposure from working with YHDRA, she was supported by YHDRA to start her own organisation within her community. She now has over 30 young people working with her to facilitate SRHR training in 10 villages and engage in youth-adult partnerships with the community members. YHDRA provided them with technical assistance as well as helping to conduct a dialogue with the older leaders in the community in order to persuade them to provide opportunities to the young people. YHDRA also helped this youth organisation to raise resources by building their capacity to negotiate with government officials.

Apart from this, young people are consistently involved in YHDRA's advocacy initiatives, including at conferences, resulting in YHDRA youth being invited as experts to various fora. Resource mobilisation for youth projects is also handled by young people at YHDRA. An example of this was a project to reach university students with SRHR and HIV related information. YHDRA got the project after the young staff met with the donors to pitch the project. They are now involved in the implementation of this project.

About this position paper:

The Internal Management Committee (IMC) of WHRAP-SEA provides the partnership guidance in terms of programme and is comprised of representatives of national and regional partners that roll-out youth thematic projects at local and national levels as well as participate in the regional strategy. Through a consultative process that was based on reflections of the national and regional project, the IMC members in their second meeting (Yogyakarta, 23-24 October 2012) agreed to focus WHRAP-SEA's work in providing evidence to support CSE in their countries. Moreover, the discourse of meaningful youth participation has been an overarching principle within the project design, implementation, monitoring and governance.

Therefore, to guide the WHRAP-SEA partnership in scaling-up our work, this is a key document that captures our views on CSE, meaningful youth participation and rights-based approaches in youth projects.

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The Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women (ARROW) is a regional, non-profit organisation with a consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, ARROW has been working since 1993 to advocate and protect women's health needs and rights, particularly in the areas of women's sexuality and reproductive health, and to enhance civil society capacities to hold governments accountable to their international commitments related to the same. ARROW's work spans information and communications, evidence generation, capacity building, regional monitoring of progress, partnership building for advocacy, engagement at international and regional fora, and contributing towards enhancing the organisational strength of both ARROW and partners. We work with more than 30 national partners in 17 countries across the Asia-Pacific region, with regional partners from Africa, Middle East, Eastern Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean, and with some international organisations from the global North.