Civil Society
African Common Position Paper
on
The International Conference on Population
Development

Key Messages in Brief

2013

Key Messages of the Civil Society African Common Position Paper on the International Conference on Population Development (ICPD)

1.   Human Rights

The document is fundamentally based on human rights. This means that the main objective of all development policies and programmes and their implementation must be to respect, protect and fulfil human rights for all.

1.1.   **Demography and population growth:** The document clearly addresses the potential abuses of demographic and population growth policies and strategies that ignore the human rights of individuals. It also demands that all population growth and structure, and demographic work is approached with a human rights and gender responsive lens. It requests guarantees that policies to address high fertility and rapid population growth will focus on enlarging, not restricting, individual choices and opportunities. Clear policy guidelines must be developed and implemented so as to ensure that human rights and gender responsive lens is used through to clinic level so that abuse and misinterpretation does not occur.

1.2.   **All vulnerable people included:** The document identifies vulnerable and key affected populations that require better inclusion and more focussed policies, programming and implementation in order to realize their full socio-economic and civil and political rights and freedoms. It acknowledges the role of both the vulnerable and the role of the already empowered and that they need to engage in promoting equality, equity and empowerment for all.

1.3.   **Duty-bearers and rights-holders:** Both duty-bearers and rights-holders are identified throughout the document as a means to better identify the needs and entitlements of the former, and the obligations and duties of the latter. It also speaks to where capacity is lacking in order to empower the latter to hold the former accountable.

2. Accountability and Transparency

The document highlights the need for accountability which can be gained from collective transparency, open dialogue and greater focus on implementation and action with the attainment of human rights for all as the ultimate goal.

2.1.   **Reporting:** To report in a timely manner, accurately and transparently on progress made. To ensure that monitoring and accountability mechanisms adopt a systemic and sustained human rights approach towards the implementation of the ICPD, Maputo Plan of Action (MPOA) and other relevant commitments;

2.2.   **Quality of data:** To improve the quality of reporting by improving data, increasing quality and quantity of responses in reporting documents, using a collaborative process with civil society for the completion of reports, and ensuring appropriately disaggregated data is available and included in reporting.

2.3.   **Dialogue between government and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs):** Use open dialogue between government, civil society and policy organs, to create more discussion around current status, national responses and challenges surrounding the attainment of universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and health services on the continent.

3. Focus on Implementation

The document highlights the need for a "less talk, more action" stance. This includes a focus on implementation of budget, human resource development and improved national ownership rather than policy and/or commitment development.

3.1. **Budget allocation and spending:** To boost funding for health, especially SRHR, by implementing the commitment made in Abuja to dedicate 15% of national budget to health. In addition, the document calls for implementation of the MPOA commitment to allocate 15% of health budget to family planning commodities. It is important to also identify alternative funding sources. There is a need to improve monitoring and evaluation and financial controls of existing budgets and expenditures;

3.2. **Focus on African capacity:** To allocate budget and implement capacity building for health systems strengthening through improved human resources. This is for health staff as well as national institutions, community systems and Ministry of Health staff. It is necessary to mount evidence-informed and rights-based responses, whilst also working on retaining existing staff, improving the existing quality of training and promoting South-South cooperation.

3.3. **Leadership and national ownership:** To commit to an all-inclusive and accountable leadership that ensures integration of SRHR into national development instruments. Leaders must also create space for national debate on priorities, strategic investments, social protection and legal measures. Leaders are required to create and adhere to good governance practices in all aspects of health systems strengthening.

4. Future forward

The document highlights the possibilities available to us as well as the need for innovative, modern and cutting edge knowledge, attitudes, decisions and strategies to be used in strengthening African health systems.

4.1. **Technology:** Use of innovative technologies, up to date knowledge, scientific and evidence-based decision-making to ensure that health systems are modern, sustainable, and intelligent. Decisions must be based on cutting edge philosophies and forward-looking thinking. We should be including newly developed yet proven safe services and commodities.

4.2. **Quality and acceptability of services and commodities:** ensure that sexual and reproductive health services and commodities are high-quality, available, accessible, and acceptable to all people. Ensure that the widest range of services and commodities and innovative technologies are provided as part of the modern health system.

4.3. **Protect the population's human rights:** Prioritise human rights in sexual and reproductive health programmes by guaranteeing that services are designed to respond to individual's health needs. This includes overcoming barriers faced by marginalized groups. This must be done through service provision that is free from stigma, coercion, discrimination and violence, based on full and informed consent, and that affirms the right to pleasure and thus looks to an African future for health systems based on human rights.

For more information, the full Civil Society African Common Position Paper and contact details click here