

The 3rd Asian Conference on Sexuality Education: Key Note Presentation

“Challenges for Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health in Asia with the Global Perspective”

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Abstract

Asia and the Pacific region is home to over 60 per cent of the world's population. Recently, Asia has shown a rapid decline in population growth rates and fertility levels; however, because of Asia's huge population base, half the world's annual population growth occurs in Asia. This poses challenges, but at the same time, the increase of the young population provides us with great opportunities. Whether this will become a challenge or an opportunity depends on our attitudes and decisions.

Annually, there are 253,000 maternal deaths in Asia and the maternal mortality ratio is 330 per 100,000. In addition, child mortality ratio in Asia is an unacceptable 29 per 1,000. Unsafe abortion is an important concern in many Asian countries. It is estimated that unsafe abortions account for 12 per cent of all maternal deaths in the region. Each year, 38,000 women die from abortion-related complications; half the world's unsafe abortions occur in Asia. And for every maternal death, 30 women will suffer from severe morbidities before/during/after delivery. This includes obstetric fistula, uterine prolapse and mental health problems among others. Twenty to 30 per cent of women experience depression during pregnancy or after childbirth; suicide is a leading cause of pregnancy-related death in some countries.

Currently, 8.6 million people are living with HIV in Asia, and about 1 million people become newly infected a year. Approximately 630,000 died from AIDS-related illnesses in 2006 in the region. The number of people receiving antiretroviral therapy (ARV) is increasing, but the coverage rate is still low at a mere 16%.

Gender-based violence is another critical issue in Asia. Early marriage, human trafficking and physical and sexual violence are prevalent in many countries. In addition, boy preference is associated with forced abortion, infanticide and domestic violence.

These issues should be addressed as part of any programme that aims at promoting reproductive rights and universal access to reproductive health -- which is now a target of the UN Millennium Development Goal 5. And if we will be true to the notion of universal access, we need to include neglected populations such as persons with disabilities.

After the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action (PoA), many countries have developed policies and programmes to improve adolescents' access to sexual and reproductive information and services. In particular, sexuality education in and out of schools, peer education programmes and behaviour change communication interventions have been and will continue to be a key to address these challenges. The international community is looking

forward to Asia's collective leadership in sexuality education as an important contribution to help countries achieve universal access to reproductive health.

Short Abstract (80-100 words)

Asia is the region with the biggest pool of young people in the world. Sexuality education is an important tool for healthy psychosocial development and may serve as a contributing factor for the promotion of reproductive rights and universal access to reproductive health, a target of the UN Millennium Development Goal 5. Sexuality education in and out of schools can also be incorporated into other types of programmes such as peer education and behaviour change communication approaches. . The international community is looking forward to Asia's collective leadership in sexuality education as an important contribution to help countries achieve universal access to reproductive health.