

“Strategies from the South” at the 42nd Session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD)

42nd Session of the CPD
30 March – 3 April, 2009
New York City

The 42nd Session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) was held in New York from 30 March to 3 April, 2009. The CPD session, with the theme, “**The Contribution of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development to the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDG**”, celebrated the 15th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the resulting Programme of Action (PoA), adopted on 13 September 1994.

Representing “Strategies from the South”, this meeting was attended by Alessandra Nilo of LACCASO/GESTOS and Alejandra Scampini of ActionAid from Latin America and the Caribbean, and Meena Seshu of SANGRAM/APNSW, Rodelyn Marte of APCASO, and Sivananthi Thanenthiran of ARROW from Asia Pacific.

These representatives attended the open sessions of the CPD, from 29 March to 1 April, as well as the NGO Caucuses. They took with them the “Strategies from the South” advocacy document, “**ICPD Contributions to Universal Access for Women and Girls**” (<http://strategiesfromthesouth.blogspot.com/2008/09/sfts-in-ungass.html>). This advocacy document, urging governments at the CPD to adopt a series of key actions to reaffirm their commitments to the Cairo PoA especially related to sexual health and rights and HIV/AIDS, was distributed to the official delegates in English and Spanish and used to do advocacy with governments.



First day of the CPD general discussions

During the first day of the CPD, sexual and reproductive health and rights advocacy groups worked to put their specific advocacy agendas on the table. As of the second day they were focused on promoting language aimed at improving and advancing the commitments to reach the goals expressed in the Cairo PoA from 1994. In the process, the “Strategies from the South” advocacy document was a very useful reference for

drafting language suggestions to give to delegates, particularly on language around integration of sexual and reproductive health and rights and HIV/AIDS initiatives.

“Strategies from the South” representatives also participated in the **NGO daily strategy meetings** with fellow sexual and reproductive health and rights activists.



The project representatives also attended official parallel events, such as the session jointly organized by UNFPA and the Guttmacher Institute on 31 March: **“New Priorities for Investing in Population and Development”** organized by the Guttmacher Institute and UNFPA, where donor country aid agencies spoke on how to best target funding to achieve the ambitious promises laid out in the Cairo PoA and the Millennium Development Goals.

On 3 April, the final day of the meeting, the resolution was adopted by the CPD (http://www.un.org/esa/population/cpd/cpd2009/CPD42_draft_resolution.pdf). During the entirety of the CPD and the preparation process, the advocacy work of sexual and reproductive rights and health activists, women’s rights activists and HIV/AIDS activists was fundamental to the outcome of the meeting and their efforts contributed to make the language in the CPD resolution more progressive.

Some lessons learned by our members attending the CPD were expressed by Sivananthi Thanenthiran of ARROW, with regard to our advocacy, “some countries were given undue prominence as compared to others, and no efforts had been made to engage with them at all”. She reminds us that “it is imperative for any advocacy at a global level to engage with as many different nations as possible”. She gives the example of Iran which is often regarded as having one of the most conservative governments, yet it is the country with more sex change operations than any other nation in the world except for Thailand. Such surgeries were authorized for “diagnosed transsexuals” by a religious edict passed by Ayatollah Khomeini in 1979. Siva suggests that such examples help us “localize our language” to be able to understand and start talking with more countries and open a more inclusive dialogue on these issues. Finally, she suggested that the language of sexual rights is in need of a clear strategy and definition in order to be better accepted and mainstreamed.

The project representatives attending the meeting connected “Strategies from the South” with members of the international SRHR community attending the CPD and explored common grounds for potential future collaboration with other networks and international organizations working in the field.

The push for SRHR and HIV/AIDS program integration –both from governments and NGOs– seems stronger now than ever, and it also implies cross-accessing of SRHR and HIV/AIDS funding. It is necessary to analyze what this means in terms of new programs that are to be developed and funded and that will provide the possibility of reaching the goals of access to contraceptives, including male and female condoms and ARV and other HIV/AIDS treatment.

The experience at the CPD meeting revealed the great importance of coordination between SRHR groups and networks and of their joint advocacy work at the national and regional levels prior to the international level at the UN.

