

Youth Delegation
ASTRA Youth

Intervention by Medea Khmelidze, Georgia

2nd Thematic Session: Families, Sexual and Reproductive Health over the Life Course

Young People & Adolescents Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights has been the issue of discussion for so long. Still, there are lots of controversial opinions regarding at what extents youth and adolescents should experience their fundamental rights to lead healthy and pleasurable sexual lives. Various international conventions and declarations, as well as consensus documents, have been addressing sexuality, sexual and reproductive health and rights of young people and adolescents making the governments accountable to comply with their obligations. In daily life we, young people & adolescents, are often deprived of our fundamental rights, our needs are often neglected, our voices are often manipulated or not being heard. The root cause of such forms of discrimination is our governments' inability to consider us as sexual beings, and therefore deserving of respect, protection and fulfillment of our sexual and reproductive rights.

Despite the commitments governments made to a rights based approach where the rights of the individual are in focus, a difficult political climate and strong conservative forces have contributed to a lack of political will and funding for making this happen. Recognizing people's sexual and reproductive rights is needed for an equal and just society where young people are able to be the actors of change. We still lack:

1. Universal access to non-judgmental and non-discriminatory comprehensive, integrated youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services and information. This includes our access to safe and legal abortion, range of contraceptives including, emergency contraception, and testing and treatment for HIV and sexually transmitted infections. For us, accessibility means knowledge of the location of youth-friendly services, that they are accessible by public transit, free of charge and with flexible opening times. Legal barriers, such as parental and spousal consent laws, also often prevent us from seeking services and information. We need our access to these services and information to be without fear of stigma and discrimination. Too often, we are prevented from accessing essential services for fear of discriminatory or judgmental attitudes of service providers. Fearing such treatment, young people and adolescents often avoid seeking essential treatment and information.
2. Access to Comprehensive Sexuality Education; that is needs and rights-based and seeks to equip young people and adolescents with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values we need to determine and enjoy pleasure, and our sexuality physically and emotionally, individually and in relationships. It views sexuality holistically and within the context of emotional and social development it recognizes that information alone is not enough. When empowered with

information regarding our sexual and reproductive health, we are better positioned to prevent the transmission of sexually transmitted infections (including HIV) as well as unwanted pregnancies. We are also able to counter negative gender stereotypes.

3. Marginalized groups, especially young women and girls and young people with diverse SOGIE, are often those most lacking in access to sexual and reproductive health services and information, and therefore most vulnerable to violence and harmful traditional and cultural practices. Addressing root causes is critical to eliminating stigma, discrimination, violence and inequalities, and can be achieved by adopting a positive approach to sexuality, recognizing young people's sexual rights, addressing the systematic denial of rights and providing access to justice.

We restate that sexual and reproductive rights, as the part of the agenda, are fundamental rights. We call for actions that lead to the full integration of the rights based and youth interests oriented recommendations to influence on future policy actions and synergies with the post-2014 UN Development and the Post-2015 Development Agendas.

Meaningful participation of young people to make the contribution in the stating the conditions for the SRHR wellbeing is one of the crucial components of building the democratic and strong society where young people are respected and seen as the present stakeholders leading to desired future.

Thank you for your attention.