

**If the 1990s paved the road to reproductive and sexual rights,
Why do young people still need to hitchhike?**

Invited to this forum in our individual capacities as youth experts, we would like to take this opportunity to address the pressing issues that young people still face as individuals and members of the largest generation of young people ever.

- 1. Young people must have access to comprehensive sexuality and reproductive health education from an early age.** This education must promote positive sexuality and equip us with the ability to make fully informed and healthy decisions about all aspects of our sexual and reproductive lives.
- 2. Youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services that are confidential, affordable and accessible must be available to us all.** Sexual and reproductive health services are vital in safeguarding and promoting the life, health and wellbeing of young people. This must include services such as safe abortion, condoms, contraception and emergency contraception.
- 3. Barriers that prevent young people from accessing sexuality and reproductive health information, education and services must be eliminated.** Fears about young peoples' sexuality and policies that require parental involvement limit the realization of young peoples' rights and are some of the most harmful policy, legal, social, cultural and economic barriers that continue to persist.
- 4. Gender inequality cuts across young peoples' lives.** Sexuality education will help to break down the gender norms and stereotypes that deny young women control over their lives, especially where sexual and reproductive rights are concerned.
- 5. Sexuality and sexual expression are integral parts of the personal identity of all young people.** Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth need your support to break the silence and fight the stigma. We call for the right to love, along with support, information and services needed to realize that right. In order to design successful policies and programs that improve sexual health for all young people, young people must be empowered to contribute without fearing social stigma or being excluded on the basis of identity.
- 6. Over one half of all new HIV/AIDS infections occur in young people aged 15-24. Young women are particularly vulnerable.** For young people living with HIV/AIDS stigma and discrimination are still a part of their everyday life. The imbalance in the distribution of resources between treatment and prevention must be redressed to prioritize the prevention of new infections. HIV/AIDS is a sexual and reproductive rights issue that cannot be addressed in isolation.
- 7. Reproductive and sexual rights are human rights and young people are human.** Human rights are universal and must not be limited on the grounds of culture, religion or tradition.

8. Youth participation is essential to ensure that sexual and reproductive health and rights programs and policies address the needs of young people. Young people have a valuable contribution to society and must be given a voice in all policy and decision-making processes, which is recognized, respected and incorporated.

Victor Bernhardt, Sweden

Gemma Hobcraft, UK

Elina Juntunen, Finland

Shannon Kowalski, Australia

Cristian Nita, Romania

Anneke Wensing, the Netherlands

Elisabete Gomes Ramos, Portugal