

Speech at ICPD +25

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Good afternoon. My name is Uluk, I'm 19 years old. I am from Kyrgyzstan. It is a great honor for me to be here and represent the voice of teenagers and young people. I will share with you stories that show that programs for young people are not successful enough. And this will help us understand how to correct the mistakes that we are making now.

When I was 12 years old, I began to learn more about my body, namely what is below the abdomen and how it all functions. Of course, I did not find out about this from my parents or school. I was lucky! I ended up in the only organization that promotes sexual and reproductive health and rights at all levels. However, in Kyrgyzstan, and even in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, this topic is tabooed by the society itself. And my classmates had to watch porn and study their bodies like that. It is our reality. Teachers in our countries are not ready to talk about reproductive health. And more people are not ready to talk about sex and sexuality. States don't want to change policies to make sex education accessible to us. Our society is often afraid that knowledge of sexual and reproductive health will lead to corruption of minds of young people. But our organization understands that it is not the case. Information is protection. It is a protection against risky behavior, protection against HIV, from unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections. It is proved that young people who have the correct information about sex education, often live a protected sex life, and also begin to have sex later than those who do not have this information. To ensure access to comprehensive sex education now, we need political leaders interested in changing the school system.

I am also worried about my future. Now I am a first-year psychology student and I want to work in this area. I understand that the knowledge that I receive at my university cannot guarantee that I can find a good and well-paid job in my country. Despite the fact that my university uses one of the most advanced teaching methods, I am still afraid that I will not be demanded by the country. States must understand the need and relevance in the society of the professions that we receive in universities, and create maximum conditions for employment of young people after receiving diplomas. I started thinking about leaving the country in order to do what I want and like to do. You know, this situation happened to many of my friends. Some of them have already left the country that means they could not fulfill their potential at home. Honestly, I do not want to leave, but I am afraid that I will have to. I ask myself this question: Do I need my country?

My dream is for every young person to get a quality education and find a decent job in their own country without leaving it. I believe that this is real and possible.

I'm not the only one. There are thousands of such stories. And no one is interested and our problems are not solved. Yes, the government began to listen to us, but this is not enough. We do not want to be just on a paper, we do not want to be at the next important meeting just for the visuals. We want to be considered as full partners.

It is important for us now to solve existing problems, namely to introduce sex education as a formal education, to provide quality education and employment, to involve us in decision-making processes that relate to our lives. Everyone says that youth is the future, but we are the present!