

## **IWHC, RESURJ, DAWN and YCSRR Analysis of Rio+20**

In close coordination the International Women's Health Coalition (IWHC), Realizing Sexual and Reproductive Justice (RESURJ), Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), and the Youth Coalition for Sexual and Reproductive Rights (YCSRR) actively engaged in five inter-governmental negotiations leading up to and including the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio +20) from December 2011 through June 2012.

Our informal coalition worked closely with members of the Women's Major Group (through DAWN) and the Children and Youth Major Group (through the YCSRR) in shaping discussions and advocacy from a gender equality and human rights perspective on all three pillars of sustainable development (social, environmental, economic). Key issues included the post-2015 development agenda, financing and governance issues, women's inheritance and property rights, the right to food and water, TRIPS, right to prior and informed consent, and population dynamics, among others.

This analysis focuses on the work we did over the last six months to ensure a reaffirmation of previous agreements on women's and young people's sexual and reproductive health and rights. Since they began engaging in the Rio+20 process, the SRHR, youth and women's organizations involved were cautiously optimistic of the potential for progress. In light of the positive outcome of the 45<sup>th</sup> Commission on Population and Development in April 2012, where for the first time the UN recognized the "sexual" rights of adolescents and young people, the Rio+20 review could have been better.

However, although the final Outcome Document "The Future We Want" is weak overall, and in the last days of the negotiation was significantly weakened in the section dealing with the social pillar of sustainable development, particularly in relation to women's and adolescent's sexual and reproductive rights, we and some very vocal Member States were able to ensure that the Health and Gender Equality sections retained clear commitments to achieving the full implementation of the ICPD and Beijing agreements and maintained a human rights perspective.

We also worked closely with ally organizations not present in Rio, who quickly rallied in their countries to put pressure on their governments in support of our issues. In addition to the work with governments, the Rio+20 process also made it possible for a number of social justice movements to work together, marking a step forward in collaboration with non-traditional partners. For example, a result of our engagement and capacity building efforts within the Major group on Children and Youth, the Women's Major Group and our sustained work with the media, a number of organizations began stating positions on women's rights, reproductive rights, youth and adolescent SRHR, organizations that traditionally had not been vocal on these issues. A longtime advocate and Executive Director of Greenpeace, Mr. Kumi Naidoo noted in his speech that " [the deletion of reproductive rights is] scandalous, that again a male dominated gathering wants to dictate to the women of the world how they should control their bodies" and that "we need to "understand that it cannot be activism as usual. We will be investing more in strengthening, crossing silos and will ensure that we take the struggle to every capital and boardroom and mobilize". Alliances with environmental groups and other social justice activists will be critical for ensuring that sexual and reproductive rights and health are central to the post-2015 development process.

## **Government Positions on SRHR at Rio**

Since the inter-governmental negotiations began in December 2011, we were told by key countries within the G77, including Brazil and South Africa, that the group would not break over differences of position on SRHR and gender equality and that the issue of SRHR was “too controversial” and “more important issues were at stake”. Disappointingly, this was Brazil’s consistent position throughout the process as it sought to affirm its leadership within the Global South and obtain gains on other, non-SRRH issues such as the green economy and trade. The lack of supportive voices on SRHR and gender equality from our allies both from the North (EU) and the South (Brazil, South Africa, Kenya, Indonesia), was a central reason for the loss of “reproductive rights” in the final outcome. Allies who remained vocal throughout the process and worked closely with us were Peru, Bolivia, Uruguay, Argentina, the United States, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland, New Zealand, Australia, Israel and Mexico.

Other countries that were less vocal but we worked with and whose SRRH officials in capital tried to influence their delegation’s positions (although unsuccessfully) included Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Indonesia and the Philippines. While the EU were unable to reach a consensus position due to Malta’s and Poland’s opposition and, very disappointingly, chose not to break over SRRH because of other, higher priority considerations such as the green economy and the international financing mechanism for sustainable development, we know that Sweden, Denmark and Finland continued to advocate internally for a stronger position. Unfortunately, even though many of the Asian and African governments had been vocal allies during the CPD negotiations (including most importantly South Africa and Indonesia), they would not speak up in Rio on our issues, even though they had instructions from their capitals to do so. It is important to reiterate, however, that the success we did manage for paragraphs 145, 146 and 241 could not have been achieved without key Latin American allies within the Group of 77, supported by other member states such as Switzerland, the United States, Iceland and Norway. We should also note that, at the last hour, the G77 finally broke on “reproductive rights,” although too late to save the phrase. During the Summit’s closing plenary, a number of governments strongly voiced their concern about the deletion of women’s reproductive rights from the text, including Bolivia, Peru, Switzerland, USA, Norway and Iceland.

## **Excerpts from the Outcome Text**

### **Achievements related to women’s and young people’s SRRH include the following key paragraphs:**

**Health 145:** “We call for the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action and the outcomes of their review conferences including the commitments leading to sexual and reproductive health and the promotion and protection of all human rights in this context. We emphasize the need for the provision of universal access to reproductive health, including family planning and sexual health and the integration of reproductive health in national strategies and programmes”.

**Health 146:** “We commit to reduce maternal and child mortality, and to improve the health of women, men, youth and children. We reaffirm our commitment to gender equality and to protect the rights of women, men and youth to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality, including access to sexual and reproductive health, free from coercion, discrimination and violence. We will work actively to ensure that health systems provide the necessary information and health services addressing the sexual and reproductive health of women, including working towards

universal access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable modern methods of family planning, as this are essential for women's health and advancing gender equality".

**Gender 238:** "We resolve to unlock women's potential as drivers of sustainable development, including through the repeal of discriminatory laws and removal of formal barriers, ensuring equal access to justice and legal support, the reform of institutions to ensure competence and capacity for gender mainstreaming and the development and adoption of innovative and special approaches, to address informal, harmful practices that act as barriers to gender equality. In this regard, we commit to creating an enabling environment for improving the situation of women and girls everywhere, particularly in rural areas and local communities and among indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities."

**Gender 240:** "We are committed to women's equal rights and opportunities in political and economic decision-making and resource allocation and to remove any barriers that prevent women from being full participants in the economy. We resolve to undertake legislation and administrative reforms to give women equal rights with men to economic resources, including access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, credit, inheritance, natural resources and appropriate new technology."

**Gender 241:** "We are committed to promote the equal access of women and girls to education, basic services, economic opportunities and health care services, including addressing women's sexual and reproductive health, and ensuring universal access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable modern methods of family planning. In this regard, we reaffirm our commitment to implement the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Key Actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.

### **Analysis of Select Text**

The document is 49 pages- 283 paragraphs in total. There are 52 references to "women" and 16 to "gender equality" in the document. However, in sharp contrast to twenty years ago at the historic Earth Summit when linkages between gender and all three pillars of sustainable development were substantively acknowledged, the Rio+20 outcome document has relegated women's rights and gender equality to the periphery without recognition of a wider structural analysis.

Para 157 highlights the importance of protecting the human rights of migrants, particularly *women migrants* and their children.

Para 153 recognizes *women's unpaid work* (but fails to recognize the unequal and disproportionate burden they carry in sustaining the care economy). For example para 116 makes reference to the root causes of excessive food price volatility, including its structural causes, but is not linked to the risks and burdens that are disproportionately borne by women.

Para 109 recognizes the critical role that *rural women* play in the provision of *food security* and nutrition in their communities and families, including through traditional sustainable agricultural practices. However these are under severe threat unless governments stop prioritizing export oriented agribusiness.

Paras 229, 236, 237, 242, 244 all address the importance of *women's participation and leadership* in achieving sustainable development.

Para 238 highlights barriers to achieving gender equality and calls for the *review of discriminatory laws and policies* in order to create enabling environments for women.

Para 239 calls for gender sensitive *indicators* and *sex disaggregated data* for development planning

Para 240 recognizes women's right to "equal access to" *land and inheritance*- but does not commit to ensuring women's human rights over access to resources.

Para 241 calls for *equal access to education and health services*, including sexual and reproductive health

Para 268 recognizes the crucial role that women have to play in *business and entrepreneurship*.

Para 272 recognizes women's contributions to *science and technology*.

Para 279 calls for the participation of female scientists in contributing to *research* and monitoring of sustainable development policies and programs.

The Health and Population Section is perhaps one of the strongest ones in the document and includes:

-A recognition of the *relationship between health and sustainable development* and a call for the full realization of the *right to health* (para 138).

- A pledge to *strengthen health systems* to provide *equitable universal health coverage* (para 139).

- An emphasis on communicable diseases and a commitment to redoubling efforts to achieve *universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support* and to strengthening the fight against malaria, tuberculosis and neglected tropical diseases (para 140).

- A commitment to strengthen health systems and promote affordable access to prevention, treatment, care and support related to *Non Communicable Diseases*, especially cancers, cardiovascular diseases, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes (para 141).

-A reaffirmation of the right to use the provisions contained in the *TRIPS* agreement to the full extent (para 142).

-A call to strengthen health systems through increased health financing, recruitment, development, training, and retention of the *health work force*, improved access to affordable and quality medicines (para 143).

-A commitment to consider *population trends and projections* in national, urban and development strategies and policies (para 144).

-A call for the full and effective implementation of the Beijing PFA and the ICPD PoA and emphasizing the need for providing *universal access to reproductive health* and integration in national strategies and programmes (para 145).

-A commitment to gender equality and to *women's men's, and young people's rights to have control over and decide on their sexuality* free of coercion, discrimination and violence, and a commitment to work actively to ensure that health systems provide the information and sexual and reproductive health services women need (para 146).

There are only 12 mentions of "youth" and "young people" in the text, and with that, the removal of the word "adolescents" from para 146, and the deletion of comprehensive sexuality education from the Education section.

- Youth employment - specifically, ILO taking the lead on developing global youth employment strategy, but fails to address other facts that contribute to youth unemployment and how these can be addressed (para 24). - Calls for Youth participation, decision-making, and intergenerational dialogue (para 50) - Recognition of the rights of young people to have control over their sexuality, but deleted adolescents (para 146)

- Employment (paras 152, 54,55) and a focus on young women's employment (para 148)

-Non-formal education (para 231)

Agenda 21 and the Rio Principles, including Principle 7 on Common but Differentiated Responsibilities, were reaffirmed – but the three pillars of sustainable development (economic; social; environmental) are not addressed in a balanced manner. The social pillar which includes efforts towards poverty eradication, gives little attention to gender-based and other inequalities, education and health. Critical environmental issues such as climate change, desertification, water and sanitation and sustainable consumption and production patterns are weak with no new commitments on the part of the international community to address these in a coordinated and meaningful way. The economic section of the document is dominated by attention to the “Green Economy” - with 19 paragraphs (56-74)- more than any other “issue”, which does not challenge business as usual and emphasizes economic growth over equity or the ecology.

There were a handful of decisions and new commitments made at the summit:

- Strengthening of the *Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development* (paras 75, 76), including mandating the General Assembly to work on a resolution that would strengthen UNEP (para 88)
- Creating a *High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development* and launching a negotiation process for the format of this forum (paras 84, 86)
- Creating a process for establishing the *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs) (paras 248, 249) as well as Financial Mechanisms for their implementation.

The overall assessment by social movements and organizations that participated in the Rio+20 process is that it fell short of making any real progress and commitments for addressing pressing and critical sustainable development needs. Against the backdrop of an unwieldy process, multiple and often competing agendas, it is unsurprising that the outcome lacked content and clarity. Moving forward as the post-2015 development discussions take shape, and if Rio+20 is to serve as an indication of how this process will unfold, it is critical that women’s and young people’s voices are heard in this process, and that social movements continue to pressure their governments to uphold their commitments to achieving sustainable development, gender equality, poverty eradication, and the realization of human rights for all.