



Global Partners in Action:

NGO Forum on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Development

Invest in Health, Rights and the Future

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www.globalngoforum.org

Strategic Options for NGOs: Cairo, Berlin and Beyond

NGOs have played a central role in the development, promotion and implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) since the time it was developed in Cairo in 1994. The diversity of NGOs' perspectives, functions, scope, origins, missions and goals from around the world have created a comprehensive approach to SRHR that is vital for the full implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action. Now, fifteen years later, the role of NGOs is more important than ever to achieve the goals and objectives articulated in Cairo.

On September 2 – 4, 2009, 400 leaders of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) from more than 130 countries came together in Berlin for the Global Partners in Action NGO Forum. The Forum served as a venue for NGOs to exchange information, share best practices, and collaboratively strategize how to secure political and financial investment in sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

National and regional discussions were held before the Forum, where thousands of people shared inputs from regions around the world. A Youth Symposium also took place before the Forum, where young advocates agreed on priorities for ensuring the health and rights of young people worldwide. During the Forum, participants took part in 24 workshops and other participatory events, all of which facilitated a highly inclusive and participatory process. The feedback from each of these events, along with the wealth of information provided by the 2000 applicants, was the raw material for drafting the Forum's two outcome documents: the Berlin Call to Action and the Strategic Options for NGOs.

The **Berlin Call to Action** summons governments, policy-makers and other leaders to commit to take urgent action on:

1. Guaranteeing that sexual and reproductive rights, as human rights, are fully recognized and fulfilled.
2. Investing in comprehensive sexual and reproductive health (SRH) information, supplies and services as a priority in health system strengthening
3. Ensuring the sexual and reproductive rights of adolescents and young people.
4. Creating and implement formal mechanisms for meaningful civil society participation in programs, policy and budget decisions, monitoring and evaluation.
5. Ensuring that national governments and donors allocate sufficient resources and budgets that meet the needs of all people's sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The **Strategic Options for NGOs (SONGS)** is a forward-looking framework, outlining possible strategies and actions that NGOs can take to further implement the ICPD Programme of Action and contribute to fulfilling the Berlin Call to Action. The SONGS aims to articulate and expand the different roles and contributions of NGOs in furthering sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) of all, as well as define ways to strengthen the capacities of NGOs to play such roles. The document was designed as an optional roadmap that NGOs can adapt to their respective regional, national or local contexts.

The SONGS identify five priority areas for NGO action:

1. **Monitor, evaluate and hold governments, donors, financial institutions, multi-lateral agencies, and for-profit health organisations accountable to commitments on SRHR for all**
2. **Influence policy outcomes to ensure SRHR for all**
3. **Strengthen partnerships, coalition building and harmonization of actions and strategies**
4. **Strengthen civil society and constituency engagement and refine the role of NGOs in promoting SRHR for all**
5. **Develop evidence-based advocacy messages and strengthen communications strategies to promote SRHR for all**



1. Monitor, evaluate and hold governments, donors, financial institutions, multi-lateral agencies, and for-profit health organisations accountable to commitments on SRHR for all

a. Monitoring policies, programmes and budgets; evaluating progress

- Monitor and evaluate the implementation of SRHR policies and programmes – inspect how policies are put into practice, translated into programmes and delivered
- Actively and consistently monitor and track national budgeting, spending and expenditures, as well as the allocation of international development assistance by donors, financial institutions, and multi-lateral agencies
- Publicly expose perpetrators of SRHR violations and failures to deliver on commitments by governments, donors, financial institutions, multi-lateral agencies and for-profit health organisations

b. Advocacy strategies for monitoring, evaluating and holding to account

- Enhance advocacy by better monitoring and making use of policy documents, international agreements, national laws and human rights instruments related to SRHR. For example, tracking government commitments to CEDAW, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the ICPD Programme of Action, the Beijing Platform for Action, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Millennium Declaration, national reproductive health policies, population policies, youth policies, anti-violence laws, etc.
- Advocate for governments to ratify and lift reservations on relevant treaties, agreements, optional protocols, etc.
- Advocate for greater accountability and transparency in policy, programming and budgeting processes of all stakeholders
- Advocate for the integration of SRH services, especially where vertical funding mechanisms are being implemented, to ensure that systems are able to provide a range of services to citizens (for example, the integration of HIV and SRH services and the integration of family planning services with maternal and child health services)
- Engage in public budgeting processes to influence budgetary allocations and expenditures in national development plans
- In countries where Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers and Sector Wide Approaches are being implemented, advocate and ensure a comprehensive range of sexual and reproductive health services are calculated within the Essential Service Packages including access to abortion to ensure the sexual and reproductive rights of citizens
- Advocate for the establishment of official and accessible monitoring mechanisms with the meaningful participation of civil society
- Hold governments, funders (including private foundations, multi-lateral agencies and financial institutions) and decision-makers accountable to their commitments to fund and support rights-based NGOs and initiatives
- Advocate for sustained meaningful participation of civil society in the development and monitoring of national laws and policies

c. NGO capacity-building for monitoring, evaluating and holding to account

- Build capacity of NGOs to use treaties, declarations, national and international laws and commitments as tools to hold governments, donors, financial institutions, and multi-lateral agencies accountable
- Build capacity of NGOs in monitoring and evaluation of government and international policy processes
- Conduct in-service training, with sustained funding to enhance NGOs' capacities in data collection, data analysis and the use of evidence – including, scientific, medical, legal and social science data – in programming and advocacy

d. NGO self-monitoring and evaluation

- Apply and disseminate effective M&E tools and guidelines, with appropriate, user-friendly and relevant process, measuring output and impact indicators of NGO initiatives, using appropriate qualitative and quantitative indicators

2. Influence policy outcomes to ensure SRHR for all

a. Strategies to Influence Policy Processes

- Consistently raise awareness about SRHR issues and priorities among policymakers, including: parliamentarians, political party leaders, high courts, ministries, and non-elected public servants, with a special focus on existing SRHR champions in decision-making positions, as well as those not yet engaged with SRHR issues
- Develop well-defined goals and clear objectives for advocacy efforts in collaboration with relevant stakeholders
- Demand the separation of state policy from religious institutions
- Promote the Berlin Call to Action with policy makers at the national, regional and international levels
- Advocate for an inter-governmental meeting highlighting the inter-linkages between the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and ICPD
- Integrate the use of MDG language to help connect SRHR with other global development priorities and agendas
- Advocate for the expansion of the MDG framework to include indicators on currently neglected SRHR issues
- Develop strategies for NGOs to be fully and meaningfully involved in developing the next global development agenda, ensuring a rights-based approach



- Engage in broader development policy arenas to ensure SRHR are addressed as development priorities. e.g. engage in the Copenhagen Climate Conference (December 2009) by bringing awareness about the important interplay between SRHR and climate change, especially for adaptation efforts

b. Pertinent Issues to Address in Policy Processes

- Promote a more cohesive, rights-based and comprehensive approach to SRHR issues
- Address safe abortion within a human rights framework and as a public health priority, in addition to maternal mortality and morbidity. Ensure safe abortion care for all women, including young women.
- Focus greater attention to the needs of women and specific population groups, including youth, adolescents, racial and ethnic marginalized groups, indigenous populations, dalits (untouchables) and minorities, people living with disabilities, people living with HIV, lesbian, gay, transgender and bisexual people, men who have sex with men, migrants, refugees, sex workers, etc.
- Raise awareness and understanding about the meaning, importance and implications of sexuality, sexual rights and sexual rights violations
- Vigorously advocate for comprehensive sexuality education and youth-friendly SRH services to be included as part of government programmes for all young people
- Focus greater attention on gender based violence, transactional sex and sexual orientation from a rights-based perspective
- Promote the meaningful inclusion of men in SRHR efforts, both as partners who should promote women's SRHR and a specific target group for SRHR information, services and care. Promote the ICPD Programme of Action as a programme for men as well as women
- Vigorously advocate for programs and policies contributing to women's empowerment and gender equality and equity as substantial to achieve both the ICPD Programme of Action and the MDGs
- Ensure the promotion and provision of affordable and accessible forms of contraception, including female condoms and emergency contraception
- Improve and strengthen health services, especially primary care to deliver universal access to comprehensive and rights-based SRHR services, information and care through piloting innovations.
- Build skills among constituencies to ensure people can discuss and negotiate safe, consensual, pleasurable sex based on equal power relations

c. NGO Capacity Building For Influencing Policy Outcomes

- Develop capacity building opportunities for NGOs to strengthen rights-based (including SRHR) perspectives on globalisation, economic crisis, climate change, and politicisation of religion
- Develop capacity building opportunities for NGOs to strengthen advocacy skills for district, national, regional and international level advocacy, as appropriate
- Enhance NGOs' ability to use evidence and data from effective service delivery, programming and other interventions to strengthen advocacy initiatives

3. Strengthen partnerships, coalition building and harmonization of actions and strategies

a. Partnerships and harmonization among NGOs

- Expand, strengthen and support South-to-South and South-to-North partnerships among NGOs
- Strengthen and expand partnerships with other sectors and social movements, including: women's rights, human rights, environment, poverty reduction, health rights and children's rights.
- Work in partnership to increase awareness about the linkages between SRHR and broader development issues, including: climate change, environmental degradation, poverty reduction, economic crisis, food crisis, etc.
- Create NGO-only spaces for exchange and networking, e.g. by increasing possibilities to share best practices to promote SRHR and capitalising on electronic forms of communication to share information
- Organize regular strategic NGO meetings and communications initiatives
- Invest time and resources to develop and implement more integrated and collaborative programmes and projects

b. Partnerships and harmonization with other stakeholders

- Strengthen partnerships with governments, donors, the private sector, UN agencies and other multi-lateral agencies while maintaining autonomy over NGO decision-making, to ensure that NGOs set their own agendas and priorities
- Work closely with such partners in the lead up to 2015 and to establish the forthcoming global development agenda and framework
- Build strategic alliances and coalitions with diverse stakeholders, including: women's groups, health care providers, media (both traditional and new media), youth groups, religious leaders who uphold SRHR for all, indigenous groups



- Advocate for the harmonization of donor programmes, priorities and funding cycles, calling for greater alignment with national and civil society priorities
- Plan a second Global Partners in Action NGO Forum in the lead up to 2015 to bring NGOs, governments, donors and other stakeholders together to assess progress made and strategize for the post-ICPD and post-MDG development framework

c. NGO capacity building for partnerships, coalition building and harmonization

- Build capacity of NGOs to enhance network building, strategic planning, accountability, service and intervention delivery, IT skills and advocacy
- Create spaces to approach partnerships between NGOs and other stakeholders with an honest and nuanced view about best practices, opportunities and challenges

4. Strengthen civil society and constituency engagement and refine the role of NGOs to promote SRHR for all

a. Strategies to strengthen civil society and constituency engagement, and the role of civil society

- Increase, support and advocate for the meaningful participation of marginalised constituencies at all levels of decision-making, program planning, implementation and evaluation
- Create a coordinated mechanism for NGOs in high, middle and low-income countries to support mentoring, coaching and joint action on agreed-upon goals. This should be a long-term, relationship-based initiative, with sustained funding
- Work collectively at the grassroots level to address local inequalities of race, age, ethnicity, geographic location, sexual orientation and gender identities, etc.

b. NGO capacity building for strengthening civil society and constituency engagement

- Support and provide capacity building opportunities for organizations and initiatives led by specific constituencies. Recognize the autonomy and work of grassroots organisations and strengthen critical awareness of constituencies in human rights, SRHR and broader economic, political and development processes
- Ensure and enhance accountability of NGOs towards the constituencies they work for or represent

5. Develop evidence-based advocacy messages and strengthen communications strategies to promote SRHR for all

a. Strategies to develop and strengthen evidence-based advocacy

- Promote greater use of evidence-based research in advocacy and programming
- Increase involvement of NGOs in research, data collection and data analysis
- Strengthen links with academic and research institutions to produce and disseminate evidence
- Strengthen the evidence base about the linkages between SRHR and other development areas (e.g. demographic dynamics, climate change; economic recession, gender/social/economic inequalities; poverty reduction, etc)
- Improve information dissemination channels among NGOs and other stakeholders

b. Strategies to strengthen communications strategies

- Strategically identify target audiences and develop core messages tailored to each specific target group
- Apply a balanced mix of traditional media outlets (e.g. radio, newspaper) and new media (e.g. internet, email and blogging)
- Work with target groups to identify which means of communication are most conducive and effective to provide information and engage communities as activists
- Integrate pop culture and theatre as communication channels where appropriate, especially when working with young people
- Work in partnership and invest in creating a stronger marketing and awareness campaign for SRHR that energizes, excites, engages and informs target audiences
- Translate messaging into all relevant languages
- Use everyday language, rather than jargon when developing messages for general public
- Develop personalized, emotional, real-life and culturally sensitive messaging and communications campaigns
- Work towards influencing religious leaders on SRHR, using alliances with progressive leaders as entry points
- Use national and regional networks to disseminate the outcomes of the Global Partners in Action NGO Forum

c. NGO capacity building for developing evidence-based advocacy messages and communications

- Build capacity of NGOs to develop effective messaging on SRHR issues
- Build capacity for NGOs to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and impact of communications' campaigns and initiatives
- Build capacity of NGOs to integrate the use of new and traditional media into programmes
- Build capacity of NGOs to collect, interpret and analyze scientific, medical, legal and qualitative data