



The World Young People Want Looking Beyond 2014 through The ICPD Bali Global Youth Forum Declaration

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In December 2012, far from the hallways of the United Nations (UN) headquarters and amidst the picturesque coastline and temples of Bali, Indonesia, over 3,000 young people, non-governmental organizations, UN member states, online participants and UN agencies came together to develop what is considered to be one of the most progressive UN led process outcome documents addressing young people and adolescent's human rights in recent history. The Global Youth Forum, the first of three thematic forums to take place as part of the review of the implementation of the 20-year ICPD Program of Action, was convened by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and coordinated alongside a diverse steering committee of youth, government and civil society representatives.

With a forward-looking vision towards emerging priorities for the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action (PoA) ¹beyond 2014, The Bali Declaration provides key recommendations to be considered as part of the global review process, which also informs the post-2015 development agenda. Building on significant gains relating to young people's education, sexual and reproductive health and rights, equality and leadership that had been made at the 45th UN Commission on Population and Development, the Declaration has the rights of young people and adolescents at its core, acknowledges our diversity and contributions while articulating our needs, rights and priorities across the world.

'Preceded by extensive interaction at national and global levels on the themes of staying healthy; comprehensive education; families, youth-rights and well-being, including sexuality; transition to decent work; and leadership and meaningful participation²'; the multi-stakeholder process captured thousands of voices and calls to action related to various areas of young people's and adolescent's lives, supported by UN member states and UN Agencies. The process of developing the Declaration served as an example of how governments and the United Nations system can support and strengthen youth leadership and to implement what it calls 'a new consensus on putting youth rights at the heart of development'.

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International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action (PoA)

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Reference: The Bali Global Youth Declaration 2012, ICPD Beyond 2014.

The significance that the Bali Declaration holds for young people across the world, as the international community defines the next development agenda, cannot be underestimated. The Bali declaration issues calls for concrete actions for improving the lives and wellbeing of young people and adolescents. Made possible by an open platform provided by UN agencies and the commitment of young people and other stakeholders engaged in the process, the Bali Declaration represents the progressive voice of an empowered, excited and determined generation.

The Declaration highlights the particular barriers that marginalized populations such as LGBTQI, Men who have Sex with Men (MSM), drug users, refugees, rural populations, out-of-school adolescents, sex workers, indigenous young people, afro-descendant populations, migrants, young people in conflict and emergency situations, young women and adolescent girls, persons with disabilities, and young people living with HIV and AIDS face in all of the recommendations. This is a significant step in recognizing the diversity of young people and their experience, needs and realities. It does not consider young people as a generic group or percentage of the population, but as rights holders with varied priorities and needs.

This Declaration is a clear call to action to policy makers, UN Agencies and civil society for ending tokenistic youth participation, and strengthening youth leadership and decision-making for policy and program planning and implementation in the decades to come.

Thematic Recommendations from the Bali Declaration

What is striking about the recommendations from the Bali Declaration is the nature of partnerships between diverse stakeholders that young people envisage. The recommendations draw from the analysis that in order for young people's access to skills, opportunities, services and information to ensure their health and well-being be realized, it is critical that governments, civil society organizations, private sector institutions and development agencies synchronize their priorities in the Post-2015 agenda with the voices of young people. The recommendations are clear in that there must be urgent progress towards ensuring that young people are more than engaged, but shaping and determining the next development agenda.

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights find strong mention in all the thematic areas of the Declaration as a key ask as well as recommendation, within which the need to ensure Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) as well as access to Safe Abortion Services proved to be uncontroversial recommendations for the majority:

To provide non-discriminatory, non-judgmental, rights-based, age appropriate, gender-sensitive health education including youth-friendly, evidence based comprehensive sexuality education that is context specific (Staying Health, p4, Bali Global Youth Forum Declaration)

Governments should create enabling environments and policies to ensure that young people have access to comprehensive sexuality education, in formal and non-formal settings, through reducing barriers and allocating adequate budgets. (Staying Health, p8, Bali Global Youth Forum Declaration)

Governments and UN agencies should support the sexual and reproductive rights of

young people including ensuring access to legal and safe abortion that is affordable, accessible and free from coercion, discrimination and stigma, providing support and protection mechanisms that promote the right to choose. (Staying Health, p5, Bali Global Youth Forum Declaration)

Participants from the Global South particularly highlighted recommendations to address the roles of religious leaders and key community mobilizers as both gatekeepers and enablers in ensuring these, in addition to the need for leadership from UN Agencies and governments to remove legal barriers in accessing Sexual and Reproductive Health services at country-level, with the recommendation that:

'Governments should work in partnership with adolescents and youth, media, religious leaders and the private sector to create enabling environments that are conducive to ensuring young people have access to comprehensive affordable health services that are free from coercion, discrimination, violence and stigma – and provide for basic needs through increased funding, improved legislation and policies, accessible and affordable services (Staying Health, p3, Bali Global Youth Forum Declaration)'

Cultural and religious barriers such as parental and spousal consent, and early and forced marriages, should never prevent access to family planning, safe and legal abortion, and other reproductive health services – recognizing that young people have autonomy over their own bodies, pleasures, and desires. (Families, Youth Rights, Well-being and Sexuality, p10, Bali Global Youth Forum Declaration)

Governments must provide, monitor and evaluate universal access to a basic package of youth-friendly health services (including mental healthcare and sexual and reproductive health services) that are high quality, integrated, equitable, comprehensive, affordable, needs and rights based, accessible, acceptable, confidential and free of stigma and discrimination for all young people. As part of this basic package governments must provide comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services that include safe and legal abortion, maternity care, contraception, HIV and STI prevention, care, treatment and counseling to all young people (Staying Health, p4, Bali Global Youth Forum Declaration)

Recognizing that in instances where governments are able to provide commitments to ensuring the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights of all young people but that a lack of adequate financing for the same withholds its successful implementation, The Bali Declaration clearly marks that:

Governments should implement financially sustainable policies and legal frameworks that protect, promote and fulfill the reproductive and sexual rights of all young people, regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identities (Staying Health, p5, Bali Global Youth Forum Declaration)

The significance, dimensions and impact of the development of a UN process declaration by such a diverse range of stakeholders and allies, led by young people, only adds to the weight of this historical document. Significant because of the strong leadership role young people played determining the focus and priorities of the forum, the diversity of stakeholders, sharing of experience and issues related to regional and national contexts, and the impact the outcomes potentially have on the ICPD review process and the Post 2015 development framework.

The Bali Declaration highlights young people's recommendations that monitoring

mechanisms, that essentially work 'for them, yet without them', are not sustainable and that youth need to be seen as active agents within such processes instead of passive recipients of the same. Further, the recommendations are strong in their acknowledgment that Sexual Rights are Human Rights and should further be placed within the development framework that integrates how service providers, young people and governments work together:

Governments must fund and develop, in equal partnership with young people and health care providers, policies, laws, and programs that recognize, promote, and protect young people's sexual rights and human rights. This must be developed in accordance with the principles of human rights, non-discrimination, respect, equality and inclusivity, with a gendered, multicultural and secular approach. (Families, Youth Rights, Well-being and Sexuality, p9, Bali Global Youth Forum Declaration)

Young people and allies involved in the development of the Bali Declaration remain committed to ensuring that these outcomes remain a central focus within the key development processes and are implemented at country level. The Bali Declaration is a landmark outcome that has moved far beyond its predecessors, an uncensored and courageous call, focused on challenging the roots of inequality and discrimination as well as highlighting complex inter-linkages between the various aspects of young people's lives and experiences.

The most significant aspect of the Declaration, is the clear and urgent agenda set by and for young people, where we are no longer willing to allow archaic processes, political agendas and external interests continue to hinder progress and negatively impact our lives and rights.

The Bali Declaration is one of many recent advances where, we, as young people are setting priorities and defining a vision that works for our future. If the impact is significant in the development of an outcome such as the Bali Declaration, the best is yet to come as we will witness young leaders globally implementing its calls.