

NATIONAL YOUTH DECLARATION ON ADOLESCENT REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

WE, the Filipino youth delegates of the 2003 National Population Congress, representing various sectors of the youth (in-school, out-of-school, working and convened this day special youth sectors, Sangguniang Kabataan from different provinces, municipalities and cities nationwide, and other youth-serving organizations), November 28, 2003 at Century Park, Malate, Manila;

RECOGNIZING the vital role we play in the promotion of Adolescent Reproductive Health (ARH) initiatives and in pursuit of over-all development focused on ARH;

RESPONDING to specific challenges, risks and opportunities faced by the youth;

BELIEVING that we can be effective agents in advocating ARH and youth development issues and concerns;

AFFIRMING the recommendations we gave in various youth forums conducted in 2003, calling for our involvement and strong support of various sectors in addressing ARH issues;

ENJOINING our elders -- parents, teachers, government officials, religious and business leaders -- to listen to our voices and help us make the right choices that would impact positively on the lives of Filipinos of this and future generations;

DO HEREBY DECLARE to support and strengthen initiatives and efforts to address the following challenges confronting us:

- A. Some of us engaging in risky behavior without understanding its consequences:
 1. We urge for a sustained information drive to increase our level of awareness on ARH issues and concerns;
 2. We call for the integration of ARH concepts in the school curriculum, and human relations development programs in companies and/or businesses, to ensure that we are informed on the consequences of engaging in risky sexual practices;
 3. We appeal for the conduct of trainings, orientations on ARH by the academe, local government units, religious and business sectors;
 4. We appeal for the conduct of campaigns on substance abuse prevention and awareness raising on various issues on AHYD;

B. Adults not knowing how to communicate openly about sexuality with us:

1. We urge for the implementation of programs that promote responsible parenthood and involvement of parents in sexuality education and ARH;
2. We call for the conduct of seminars for parents and children including employers to intensify parent-adolescent, and employer-young employee relationships;
3. We call for the active involvement of Parent-Teacher Associations, and Human Resource Managers in responding to adolescent reproductive health challenges;

C. Media playing a bigger role in our lives:

1. We propose that the Adolescent Health and Youth Development Program (AHYDP) be a part of the information campaign of the Office of the Press Secretary (OPS) and Philippine Information Agency (PIA);
2. We pledge to create and maintain e-mail groups and websites to serve as regular updates on ARH;
3. We strongly urge that media focus on and develop the competencies of young people rather than solely on their issues and challenges

D. Reproductive Health (RH) and other related policies, programs and services ignoring our needs:

1. We advocate for clear policies and laws that support implementation of ARH such as the Local Youth Development Council Act of 2003 and the Reproductive Health Care Act (in this Congress known as House Bill No. 4110 and Senate Bill No. 2325) and to review PD 603 (Child and Youth Welfare Code) and the Family Code;
2. We call on local government units to put in place institutional mechanisms to maintain and sustain Adolescent Health and Youth Development programs (AHYDP) including allocation of funds, putting in place of staff and strengthening of linkages among various stakeholders;
3. We propose for the establishment and improvement of more youth-friendly and gender-sensitive centers in all local government units (LGUs), ideally with outreach-based services and programs, where gender-sensitive and age-appropriate health services and information are accessible and available;

4. We pledge to develop and implement innovative programs and projects that will enhance our well-being and reduce our tendency to engage in risky sexual behaviors;
5. We call for a responsive system of recognition for fellow youths with outstanding contribution in community development relative to ARH initiatives;
6. We propose for the creation of a national ARH network that would coordinate the different groups in the different regions.

E. Our voices not being heard in some youth-related efforts:

1. We pledge our more active participation in the development and dissemination of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials on ARH and gender/sexuality awareness;
2. We pledge to maximize our involvement in youth sports activities, as well as in environmental protection;
3. We commit ourselves specifically to help fight the battle against ignorance, violence against women, children, and persons with disabilities; unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, gender-based and other forms of discrimination, HIV/AIDS and other reproductive health issues that plague us;
4. We appeal for our greater participation and involvement in planning, formulation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programs and projects that directly or indirectly affect us;

We, therefore, enjoin our fellow youth to promote and exemplify responsible adolescent behavior among our peers, our families, our communities and our society in general. We also enjoin other young people to be vigilant and be involved in all activities that will benefit and make us become better informed and responsible adults in the future; and

Finally, we say, there is no acceptable excuse to the delay of action towards the protection, development and empowerment and the respect and fulfillment of our rights.

Signed in Manila, Philippines, this 28th day of November 2003.

(SIGNATORIES)

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