

EuroNGOs Conference and AGM 2009

“Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health in Times of Economic Crisis”

7-8 September 2009, Riga, Latvia

Outline

Background

In the ICPD PoA in 1994, 179 nations committed themselves to - among others - the goals to reduce maternal mortality and to ensure universal access to reproductive health care, including family planning, assisted childbirth and prevention of sexually transmitted infections (including HIV/AIDS) by the year 2015. All these goals were later included in the targets and indicators of the MDGs, mainly MDG 5: improve Maternal Health.

The year 2009 marks the 15th anniversary of the ICPD Programme of Action, followed by the 10th anniversary of the MDGs in 2010. And still, maternal mortality is the most dramatic indicator of global health inequality, with dramatic figures especially in sub-Saharan Africa and many of the countries in the Asian-Pacific Region. Although approximately 204 Million women worldwide have an unmet need for family planning services, contraceptive prevalence rates are low in many developing countries and access to male and even more so to female condoms is difficult and often unaffordable. Services and contraceptives are furthermore mostly available only to married couples leaving the magnitude of young people without the opportunity to use contraceptive methods.

The unprecedented financial crisis which manifested itself at the end of 2008 and which is compounded by the food-fuel crises and climate change will most probably worsen the situation in the near future. Although – and unlike earlier financial crises in the 1980s and 1990s – the current economic crisis originated in the industrialized world, as it grows and deepens the impacts are starting to be felt in developing countries, and it will be the poor and most vulnerable populations – among these women and children – who will be hardest hit.

In many developing countries, high fuel and food prices have already imposed a heavy economic burden and have increased the incidence of poverty and vulnerability. A further slow or negative growth is likely to cut into government revenue and expenditures on social services, including maternal health and SRH. Increasing prices of drugs and supplies may lead to and increase in cost of care and insurances, and a shortage in drugs and supplies in RH facilities. At the household level, less money available combined with high and/or rising food and fuel prices may further cut expenditures on women's health in general and SRH in particular.

Additionally, the financial crisis is likely to jeopardize the funding streams aimed at implementing programs and changes necessary to reach the objectives of the (health-

related) MDGs. EU Official Development Assistance (ODA) already decreased by € 1,6 Billion from 2006 to 2007. Projections before the financial crisis estimated that Europe – as the world's largest contributor to ODA, could increase its ODA to US\$81 billion by 2010, if it would follow its commitments and presuming positive economic growth. Currently, and only at the starting point of the financial crisis, the OECD forecasts that in 2009 the US economy will decrease by 0.9%, the Euro area by 0.6% and Japan by 0.1%. This will put further pressure on funding from DAC donors to family planning services, including access to safe abortion services, basic reproductive health services, contraceptive methods and other RH supplies, which have already decreased in the last years.

Learning about the options and possibilities to mitigate the impact of the financial crisis and protecting both SRH and SRHR spending internationally is hence crucial for a Civil Society network such as EuroNGOs if it wants to maintain vigilance with regard to the SRHR commitments of governments, donors and international agencies.

Just after the Global ICPD@15 Global NGO forum 2-4 September in Berlin, Germany, the EuroNGOs conference is also perfectly placed to take up the outcomes of the Berlin conference. Looking ahead and beyond the “final” landmark dates of both ICPD@15 and the MDGs in 2014 and 2015, respectively, the EuroNGOs platform will use these outcomes as a ground of discussion to develop an action plan for the years ahead.

Goal and Objectives

The goal of this conference is to develop a common understanding about the impact of the economic crisis on SRHR and SRHR funding among the EuroNGOs members and partners and to agree on appropriate action.

To this end, the conference will be organized around the following issues:

- Latest research on the social impact of the economic crisis on developing countries, with a particular focus on women (macro-perspective)
- Latest research on the impact of economic crisis on household poverty and SRH (micro-perspective)
- Challenges and opportunities to mitigate the possible effects of the financial crisis on SRHR and SRH funding streams
- The social, medical and financial benefits of SRH/family planning and how to use them in our advocacy work

The specific objectives are as follows:

1. to learn about the ways in which the economic downturn may affect SRHR spending, programmes, services, and health outcomes
2. to increase the capacity of the EuroNGOs to make the case to governments and financial institutions regarding the economic, medical and social benefits from investment in SRHR/Family planning, without forgetting that SRH care is an entitlement in its own rights

3. to identify actions that can support Civil Society in their watchdog role towards the commitments of governments, donors and international agencies
4. to develop an action plan following the Global NGO ICPD@15 Forum 2-4 September in Berlin, Germany, with a special focus on the global economic crisis

Programme

The EuroNGOs conference and AGM 2009 will be hosted by its Latvian member organisation “[Papardes Zieds](#)”, and will take place 7-8 September 2009 in Riga, Latvia.

The conference theme “*Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health in Times of Economic Crisis*” is also the annual working theme of the EuroNGOs network and will already have been addressed in several workshops ahead of the conference. Outcomes of these strategic workshops and trainings will have been shared with participants prior to the conference.

On the first day, an international conference will involve stakeholders and representatives (from Civil Society, donor agencies, international organisations and governmental bodies) in the EU 27, the “Global South”, the USA, Canada and New Zealand as well as from other NGOs interested in the theme.

The morning sessions of the conference will be comprised of expert panel presentations and plenary discussions involving the audience. They will deal with the impact of the economic crisis on SRHR and SRH funding streams and discuss alternative approaches and new advocacy tools. The afternoon session will be opened by presenting the outcomes of the Berlin Global ICOD@15 NGO forum, followed by working groups aimed at widening specific issues referred to both in the morning sessions and in Berlin.

Outcomes

The Conference and Membership Meeting 2009 will enhance understanding of the current and possible future impact of the global economic crisis on SRHR and SRHR funding streams. Just after the Global ICPD@15 NGO forum in Berlin, Germany, it will also provide a unique opportunity for EuroNGOs members and partners who did not attend the Berlin meeting to receive first-hand information on the respective outcomes as well as to be involved in the follow-up strategies. Additionally, the conference and AGM will offer an excellent forum to foster East-West-South policy and advocacy debates, and identify areas for mutually beneficial collaboration on SRHR and development cooperation.

Action-oriented and forward looking, it will specifically:

- Provide new and evidence-based argumentation regarding the importance of SRHR for Poverty Alleviation, with a special focus on the new global crises, thus enhancing EuroNGOs advocacy capacity
- Take forward the action plan developed at the Global ICPD@15 NGO forum in Berlin

- Prompt partnership and coalition building among SRHR civil society actors from the EU 27 and the “Global South”
- Raise awareness in Latvia and the Baltic region on the Global SRHR issues within the Development Cooperation agenda in general and on MDG 5 in particular