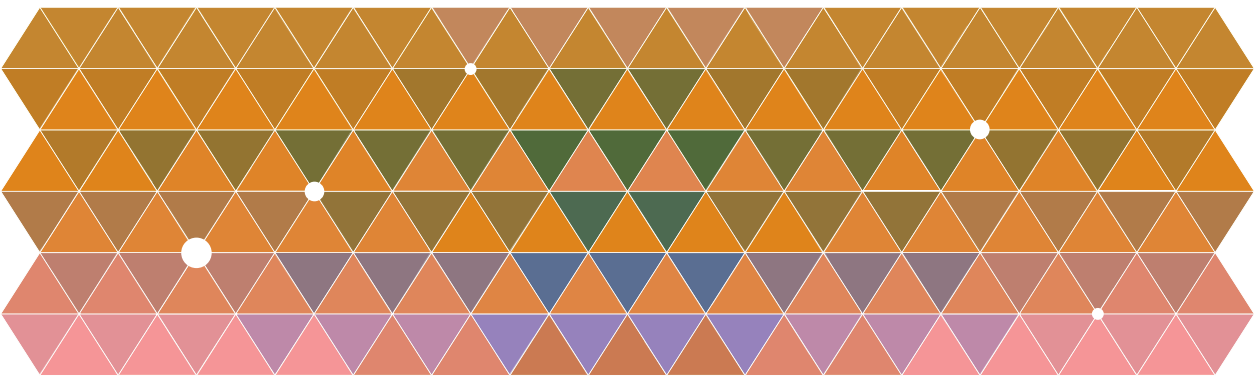


GUIDELINES FOR DEBATE

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS OF YOUNG PEOPLE






BY ALEJANDRA PADILLA PADILLA

This edition of *Guidelines for Debate*, aims to show the importance of promoting and ensuring the sexual and reproductive rights of young people. In order to achieve this objective, we offer different activities that will allow the reader to deepen their understanding of the history of these rights, and to better comprehend the obstacles faced by young people when exercising them. It also provides some tools for young people to actively participate in the promotion and defense of their sexual and reproductive rights.

The aim of the series GUIDELINES FOR DEBATE is to influence the formulation, implementation and evaluation of programs and policies through guidelines that foster the debate of ideas from a progressive approach. The collection features a cool exchange of data and theoretical and methodological tools for analysis and action aimed at emerging political generations.



OFF WE GO

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS

During the first International Conference on Human Rights, organized by the United Nations in 1968, one of the fundamental rights of each and every person came up for discussion, namely that “parents have a basic human right to determine freely and responsibly the number and the spacing of their children”. Nevertheless, it wasn’t until the World Population Conference in 1971 when the term “reproductive rights” was first used. The phrase was immediately given a broad interpretation as the number and spacing of children was not only considered a decision of parents, but also one of individuals. During the International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo in 1994, women first brought the subject of their sexual rights, and the sexual rights of young people, to the table for discussion. This was no small achievement. In the Final Declaration of the Conference and during the Fourth World Conference on Women the following year, women’s sexual and reproductive rights became officially recognized. Furthermore, in both conferences, the issue of youth and adolescent sexuality was tackled, first within the context of sexual and reproductive health, then further within the frameworks of gender, family, community, and society as a whole.¹ It was from this point onwards that the sexual and reproductive rights of adults and youth, and of men and women, began to be recognized within the area of human rights. Little by little, this subject has permeated both the public debate and policies, at the local, national and international levels.

An important step forward on this issue was achieved last year when the Commission on Population and Development issued a resolution which calls on governments to: recognize the right of youth to make decisions on everything related to their sexuality;

offer access to sexual and reproductive health services, including legal and safe abortion; have qualified health professionals who can offer youth friendly services; promote the right of young people to enjoy their sexuality free from violence and discrimination; and finally, provide health services and information with complete confidentiality.

In July 2012, the Special Committee of United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) on Population and Development² urged member states to “strengthen comprehensive and inclusive mechanisms and policies on youth in order to advance towards the recognition and the guarantee of the rights of adolescents and young people, including the right to a comprehensive sexuality education, while respecting the informed decisions that adolescents may make concerning their sexuality; to provide access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services; and to ensure the continuation of the education of pregnant adolescents and young mothers”.

ACTIVITY 1

Gather a group of **20 to 25** people. You will need cards (**7.5CM X 12.5CM**) of the same color. Give one card to each person and ask them to write **A BRIEF DEFINITION** of sexual and reproductive rights. When everyone has finished, take the cards back from everyone. Write the main ideas found on each card on a blackboard or flip chart, while also **READING OUT LOUD** to the group what was written on each one. Once every card has been read, encourage a group discussion, in order to put together **A GENERAL DEFINITION**.

The aim of this exercise is to **REFLECT** about what the group believes should be guaranteed by the sexual and reproductive rights. During the discussion it's important to highlight the importance of **PROTECTING** these rights, especially with regard to youth.

To **GUIDE THE DEBATE** and achieve a clear definition of concepts, the facilitator may use the following questions:

- What are **HUMAN RIGHTS**?³
- Imagine a society **WITHOUT** human rights, what would it be like?
- Why is it **IMPORTANT** that sexual and reproductive rights exist?

ON WE GO

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS: TOGETHER, BUT NOT TOO CLOSE

Sexual and reproductive rights are those that protect the complete freedom of women and men to make decisions about their own bodies concerning sexual and reproductive issues, regardless of their age, sex, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, religion, among other factors. It's important to emphasize that sexual rights and reproductive rights are related in many ways, however they are not the same. This distinction is of fundamental importance because, for a long time, it was mistakenly considered –and in some areas is still considered– that sexuality, particularly that of women, cannot be separated from reproduction.

Understanding this distinction can help us to accept that every human being, regardless of sex, gender, or sexual orientation, has sexual rights.

WHAT ARE SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS?

SEXUAL RIGHTS

- The right to freely make decisions about my body and my sexuality.
- The right to publicly show affection.
- The right to fully exercise and enjoy my sexual life.
- The right to have my private life respected.
- The right to decide freely with whom, how and when I wish to exercise my sexuality.
- The right to live free from discrimination and sexual violence.
- The right to receive a comprehensive sexuality education.
- The right to complete, timely, scientific and secular information on sexuality.
- The right of access to sexual health services.
- The right to equal opportunities.
- The right to participate in public policy on sexuality.

REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

- The right to determine freely and responsibly the number and the spacing of children.
- The right to decide freely with whom, how and when to have children.
- The right to a timely and comprehensive education on reproductive health.
- The right to complete, timely, scientific and secular information on reproductive health and rights.
- The right to information about contraceptives methods, and access to them.
- The right of access to safe and legal abortion services.
- The right of access to reproductive health services, free from discrimination and violence.
- The right to participate in public policy on reproductive health.

ACTIVITY 2

In this activity you will classify, with the help of the group, **THE MAIN IDEAS** taken from the cards used in the previous activity. Again, you will need a blackboard or a flip chart on which to **DRAW A TABLE** similar to the one shown below:

WHAT DO SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS PROTECT?		
SEXUAL RIGHTS	REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS	RIGHTS THAT SHOULD BE GUARANTEED TO FREELY EXERCISE OUR SRRs

Together with the group, **THINK ABOUT** and **CLASSIFY** the ideas that came up in **ACTIVITY 1**, in order to fill up the first two columns: **SEXUAL RIGHTS** and **REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS**. If new ideas are suggested during the discussion, they should be included in the table. As mentioned before, it is very important to **DISTINGUISH** sexual rights from reproductive rights, and that the exercise of one's sexuality is not limited to reproduction.

Once finished, encourage a group discussion on rights that should be **GUARANTEED** so that a person can fully exercise their sexual and reproductive rights. The ideas suggested here should be **WRITTEN DOWN** in the third column: Rights That Should be Guaranteed to Freely Exercise Our SRRs. If the facilitator needs to guide the discussion, below is a list of some of the rights that **SHOULD BE PART OF A DEBATE** on this subject.

- The right to **EQUAL** legal protection
- The right to live free from **DISCRIMINATION** and **VIOLENCE**
- The right to life, **FREEDOM**, security and bodily integrity
- The right to **PRIVACY** – and health services that respect privacy
- The right to personal **AUTONOMY** and knowledge of it before the law
- The right to freedom of thought, opinion and **EXPRESSION**
- The right to **HEALTH** and the benefits of scientific progress
- The right to **EDUCATION** and **INFORMATION**.

ACTIVITY 3

Discuss the following question with the group: **WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS FACED BY YOUNG PEOPLE WHEN EXERCISING THEIR SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS?**

After this debate, divide the group into **TWO TEAMS**. Preferably, there should be a similar number of women and men in each group.

- Ask **TEAM 1** to make a list of barriers or obstacles that **YOUNG MEN** face when exercising their sexual and reproductive rights.
- Ask **TEAM 2** to do the same, but of the barriers or obstacles that **YOUNG WOMEN** face when exercising their sexual and reproductive rights.

At the end of the discussion, a speaker from **EACH GROUP** will read out **THE LIST** to the rest. Once this is done, ask the group to take into account the following questions:

- Are men and women offered **DIFFERENT** sexual educations?
- Why would these **DIFFERENCES** exist?
- How do young women and men **EXERCISE** their sexuality differently?
- What **MYTHS** exist concerning the sexual conduct of women and men?
- What kinds of **BARRIERS** do young women face when exercising **A FREE REPRODUCTIVE LIFE**?
- What **NEEDS TO BE DONE** to get rid of these barriers?

Here, it is important to **HIGHLIGHT** that the barriers faced by young men and women exist because of **SOCIAL STEREOTYPES**, **TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES**, and an **ADULT VISION** that limits the rights of young people. The importance that men and women enjoy **THE SAME** sexual and reproductive rights, should also be emphasized.

ACTIVITY 4

For this activity, everyone will remain in **THE SAME GROUPS** as in **ACTIVITY 3**. The group that analyzed the barriers faced by men will make a series of recommendations to answer the following question: **WHAT ACTIONS CAN HELP ELIMINATE THE BARRIERS THAT LIMIT THE EXERCISE BY YOUNG MEN OF THEIR SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS IN MY COUNTRY OR COMMUNITY?** Meanwhile, the group that analyzed barriers faced by women will answer: **WHAT ACTIONS CAN HELP ELIMINATE THE BARRIERS THAT LIMIT THE EXERCISE BY YOUNG WOMEN OF THEIR SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS IN MY COUNTRY OR COMMUNITY?**

Both teams will present **THEIR SUGGESTIONS** to the rest of the group. Afterwards, the facilitator will **ENCOURAGE** the participants to discuss general actions that can be carried out to **ELIMINATE OBSTACLES** for both sexes. The importance of **YOUNG PEOPLE** participating in **DECISION-MAKING** and in the creation of public policy related to their sexual and reproductive rights should be highlighted here.

Below are some **RELEVANT POINTS** to be considered during the discussion.

- The promotion of **EQUAL RELATIONSHIPS** between men and women, based on **RESPECT** for the **INTEGRITY** of the other, and on changing traditional models of masculinity and femininity.
- The provision of **INFORMATION** and **EDUCATION** on sexual and reproductive rights to young people, which should be looked at within the framework of Comprehensive Sexuality Education.
- The guarantee of **ACCESS** to sexual and reproductive, youth-friendly, health services in order to **PREVENT** sexually transmitted diseases and infections, including HIV/AIDS, as well as unwanted pregnancies.
- The **REINFORCEMENT** or **REFORMATION OF LAWS**, with the purpose of obtaining true protection of rights.
- The promotion of **COOPERATION** between civil society and governments to work against discrimination and sexual violence.
- The necessity that young people **DEFEND** their sexual and reproductive rights through **CAMPAIGNS** and **COLLABORATING** with NGOs or, at least, talking about these issues with friends. The important thing is the **ACTIVE** and **MEANINGFUL** participation of youth.

1. Alianza Nacional por el Derecho a Decidir (2005). Los derechos sexuales y reproductivos de las personas adolescentes y jóvenes.

Available at: http://www.andar.org.mx/docs_pdf/D.SEX.REP.ADOLES.pdf (Spanish Reference)

2. Agreements of the Special Committee of ECLAC on Population and Development. Quito, July 4-6, 2012

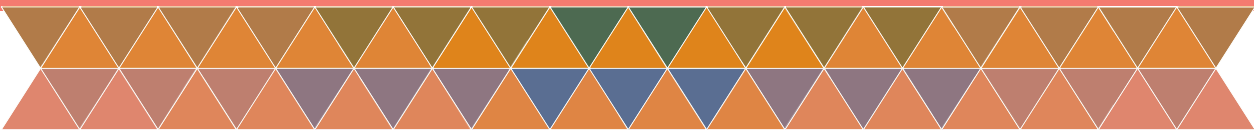
<http://www.cepal.org/celade/noticias/paginas/2/46852/CEPD-Agreements-final.pdf>

3. For more information on this topic, visit: <http://www.ohchr.org/en/issues/Pages/WhatareHumanRights.aspx>

4. Harriet Presser and Gita Sen, eds., Women's Empowerment and Demographic Processes (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 22–23.

5. Comprehensive sexuality education does not only study sexually transmitted diseases or pregnancy. It also takes into account biological, physical, emotional and social issues. For more information you can go to: <http://ippf.org/resources/publications/ippf-framework-comprehensive-sexuality-education>

6. This is not an exhaustive list so the group can provide other ideas.



The views expressed in the text, as well as the analyses and interpretations contained therein, have not been subjected to editorial review and are the sole responsibility of their authors. They do not necessarily reflect the views and stance of Espolea A.C.

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