

Interactive Youth Forum

Youth Advocacy Network Pakistan – YANP and Institute for Social and Youth Development - ISYD conducted an Interactive Youth Forum 2019 on 29th July, 2019 with the support of Asia Safe Abortion Partnership (ASAP) under the project entitled “Breaking stereotypes and to advocate for enforcement of SRHR”. This activity was held at The Millennium Universal College, Phase 6, DHA, Lahore, Pakistan. Institute for Social and Youth Development organized “Interactive Youth Forum” with the collaboration of Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports – Government of Pakistan, International Youth Alliance for Family Planning (IYAAP), MASHAL and CHANAN.



The purpose of this forum was to disseminate the demanded information, knowledge and understanding of importance of SRHR and Family Planning education for adolescents and youth and to promote health based awareness and initiatives being taken by civil society, young leaders, Government and United Nations in Pakistan. More than 100 people joined the forum from different fields e.g. civil society, educational institutes, community, college faculty and youth.

The event started off with the National Anthem of Pakistan followed by the welcoming notes by Mr. Joshua Dilawar (Founder – Institute for Social and Youth Development – ISYD) alongside sharing the agenda and objectives of the Forum with all the participants. Mr. Joshua Dilawar (Project Coordinator, 120 Under 40 – Bill and Melinda Gates Institute’s Family Planning Young Leader) provided the introduction of Asia Safe Abortion Partnership (ASAP), Youth Advocacy Network – Pakistan (YANP), Institute for Social and Youth Development (ISYD), 120 Under 40 and about the Project to all the participants for better understanding.



Ms. Namra Nasyr (MC) then took the stage to kick off the forum.

Ms. Namra Nasyr invited the 1st speaker

- **Ms. Tanzila Khan** upon the stage. (*Tanzila Khan is the founder of Girlythings.pk which is a disabled friendly mobile application through which we deliver sanitary napkins and other products and also urgent menstrual kits to women anywhere in public. She wrote her first book, ‘A story of Mexico’ when she was 16 and then went on to publish her second book, ‘The Perfect Situation’ later. She has sold her books to fund community projects in the fields of disability, women empowerment, education and environment. Her NGO is Creative Alley that trains and*

empowers the community through events and projects. She launched her company, Iwish to create sustainable solutions to achieve the SDGs. Tanzila has also been a public speaker and Trainer across 17 countries and has been awarded fellowships such as Young Connector of the Future by Swedish Institute and Young Leader by Women Deliver).

She explained how we need to change approaches towards the disabled people and people who have limited access to health facilities and rights. She further went to explain the motive of the event. Ms. Tanzila said, we all have to work together to make this society a better place for all to live in. She appreciated the team of ISYD on organizing the forum and on gathering such a diverse audience.



The event continued with the Documentaries display on the concern them which included “She for Her” by Namra Nasyr. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JqR4yd9xVZg&t=4s>)

“Women, everywhere across the globe, are facing gender based violence in physical, psychological, emotional, economic, political and social forms. Often (and sometimes, rightly so) men are blamed for the GBV. But this documentary video gives another perspective to GBV. This video is meant to open the eyes of the women, whose unintentional, and sometimes intentional actions, lead to violence against their fellow women. This is a message to all the sisters across the globe, that it is us who need to stand up for each other first; it is us, whose training as mothers matters; it is us, who need to speak up for our sisters; and it is us, who can fight this war, not against any specific gender, but against ignorance”.



Another short video was screened named, “Sochiye” by Creative Alley (<https://www.facebook.com/CreativeAlleyHQ/videos/945272859155583/>)

“A campaign to call for just one thought, one moment and one step towards tolerance and equal opportunities. Imagine a world where society lives in harmony despite conflicts and differences. Imagine how much we all would thrive if we put our differences aside and accept and appreciate each other. Let's seek value and comfort and dismiss difference and competition.

Let's see beyond gender, class, complexion, career or identity and hold on to humanity. The society is we and we are society”.



After the screening of these 2 short documentaries, participants were asked to share their feedback.

- ❖ **Rana Said** said, “Visual mediums are very strong to disseminate social messages in this world. These documentaries showed great messages on how females should play their vital role to support other females and how everyone should think about the acceptance of everyone”.
- ❖ **Abishay Gill** said, “I’m a media student and never thought about to use my skills to promote social messages like this. Now I would like to make some videos on SRHR, Family planning and co-existence”.
- ❖ **Ayat Shahzad** said, “I loved the concept of second video, “Sochiye”, because its making a think about what we have been doing, what we are doing and what we will be doing, if we won’t understand that what is wrong and what is right”.
- ❖ **Mahnoor Kashif** said, “I would like to get these videos to be shared in our friends’ circles. I’m a university student and I would like to promote these messages in my university to support you all”.



After this productive discussion a youth group performed a theatre performance on the theme of Gender equality, Early age marriages, SRHR, importance of Family planning education and health based awareness. This theatre performance was also entitled “Sochiye”.

This theatre performance by the youth group mesmerized the audience with its emotional display of how society discriminates between male and female gender. It further highlighted how under aged girls are forced to get into an unwanted marriage. The act further showed the turmoils of these marriages leading with harassment and disappointment to continue for their whole lives. The importance of reproductive health of women and family planning were also the lime lighted issues displayed in the act. The drama titled "Sochiye" actually made the participants ponder over the criticality of gender inequality deeply rooted in our society. The act was well coordinated and it received immense applause and appreciation from the viewers.



Afterwards a panel was invited on the stage including:

➤ **Ms. Laraib Abid, Director – MASHAL**

Laraib Abid is passionate about campaigning with all gender minorities in the community & teaching Gender-focused Sociology in a University. She started MASHAL to work for sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and gender equality, with one focus being Punjab SRH Policy and the stereotypes surrounding contraception affecting specific genders. Her organization implemented three advocacy campaigns to highlight the thematic issue.

She said that, "I want to be a leader in the field of Sexual and reproductive rights because I love taking challenges to burst bubble of myths while creating innovative solutions. A lot of stories of my friends' suffering is my inspiration to do something so that there's no next suffering in SRH among young people. Using technological means, I hope to create a change in the lives of young people providing authentic literature & access to free services with privacy, confidentiality and efficiency. I love spending time with young people sharing how they can come out of their comfort zones to bring out positive change in the society and motivating them to play their part as a responsible citizen too."



Recently I developed Pakistan's First Mobile Application which not only spreads awareness about HIV/AIDS regarding its symptoms and treatment but also includes the Contraceptive methods for both men and women. The main component of the application is the Geo-fenced Family Planning services available nearby for free, just a click away. Along-with it, Psychologists centers providing counselling to young people for free of cost are also included”.

➤ **Mr. Shoaib Ahmed – Technical Specialist, UNFPA Pakistan**

Mr. Shoaib is passionate regarding SRH campaigns and work. He has been working actively to strengthen and promote awareness regarding SRH and FP in Pakistan. He has been working closely with Population Welfare Department, Punjab to implement the projects in Pakistan and to support PWD technically to develop strategies to achieve FP2020 commitment and SDGs in Punjab.

Mr. Shoaib said, “UNFPA Pakistan has been working with different organizations on SRH and Family Planning. UNFPA has developed few youth friendly health centers in Punjab Province. This is our major problem that we don’t have youth friendly access and health center. Youth of our society need a safe space, youth corners, youth friendly health centers and services without being judged and questioned. UNFPA is working actively now closely with Population Welfare Departments (PWD) of Pakistan. Population Welfare department is creating spaces and youth centers in hospitals for youth. These initiatives are very important. If we talk about safe abortion, we have a lot of stereotypes and myths regarding it because this is a super sensitive topic in Pakistan to be discussed. Abortion under specific conditions/circumstances is legal in Pakistan. People usually don’t know this but Abortion is legal in Pakistan. Estimates cited by a report indicate that 48% of pregnancies in Pakistan are unintended, of which 54% are terminated, mostly in an unsafe way. Around a third of all women who undergo abortions suffer complications, ranging from heavy bleeding to a perforated uterus and deadly infections.



Pakistan has a high number of unintended pregnancies due to very low contraception use rates. According to the recent Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (2017-2018), around 34% of married women use some form of family planning. Yet, only 25% of them use modern contraceptive methods, while the others rely on less effective traditional methods (withdrawal and breastfeeding). The use of contraceptive methods has remained stagnant over the past five years, when the last such survey was conducted.

➤ **Ms. Moon Ali, Executive Director, Khawaja Sara Society**

She belong to Trans-gender community and severing as Program Manager/Director since 2012, at one of the community based organizations, named Khawaja Sira Society based in Pakistan working in field of HIV/AIDS and health related issues of TG community. Being a program director of Khawaja Sira Society she has successfully implemented the multiple projects. She has also experience to work with other small national grant to provide day-to-day management task of the office, ensuring that Plans are developed and implemented, along with the effective functioning of the office in meeting its Goals, objectives and deadlines and also she has experience to provide assistance and guidance related to policy development in service centers.

Ms. Moon said, “Being a Trans activist I would like to share that I’ve faced many issues to make my identity. Every transgender is not a beggar in our society and it’s not only our responsibility to work for transgender people. We all should work together to support transgender community. In regards to health, we are not being treated well in clinics, hospitals and other medical institutes. So how we can get the health facilities and information?”



She shared her experiences, challenges and success stories of her projects she conducted in Pakistan. She said, SRH education is very important for transgender community as well. We have limited access to proper information and access to SRH services, but young leaders as me from transgender community can make difference and create spaces for other community to get proper SRH information. I want to request you all please to accept, respect and create opportunities for people from transgender community”.

➤ **Mr. Umair Asif, Executive Director – Kafka Welfare Organization**

Mr. Umair is a youth activist and founder/team leader of Kafka Welfare Organization. He is former Country Coordinator of International Youth Alliance for Family Planning, and member of Expert Advisory Community FP2020 Goals. He is also an expert of using sports for social development. He is a Women Deliver Young Leader 2018 as well.

Mr. Umair said, “I founded Kafka in 2010 when I was a student to empower young people in Pakistan, especially the vulnerable and disadvantaged one. We focus on social development through sports and used it to boost Family Planning and SRH campaigns. We make safe spaces in the form of sports fields where youth talk about taboos and break stereotypes without fear of cultural barriers and external constraints. In addition, sports give boost to



social campaigns by adding them into sports events. We are also using digital media advocacy and social media as a tool and helpline to sensitize young people on SRHR”.

➤ Moderated by **Ms. Baila Anjum**

She is currently enrolled in her final year of liberal arts program at Beaconhouse National University (BNU). Previously, she was studying global social science at Middlesex University Dubai. She was working with Amizade organization as a volunteer and work with multiple nonprofits organizations locally and globally. She being a liberal arts student have a profound interest in issues around gender and how we can bridge the gap in our society through art and theatre. She’s equally passionate about anthropology, sociology, gender, activism and theatre for social change.

All the speakers shared their experiences and expertise in regards to the objective of the Forum and what are their initiatives to promote and strengthen health facilities in Pakistan. They shared information regarding FP2020, SDGs particularly goal #3, #5 and #10. The panel was quite productive and informative. The panel was concluded by Ms. Baila Anjum saying, “Health based awareness and education is very important for young people. They should have youth friendly health services to overcome the health based issues we are facing in our society particularly youth”.





Later on an amazing guitar performance by Mr. Casper William energized the event (Youth member of ISYD). Moving forward Mr. Joshua Dilawar invited Ms. Zarina Sadik – Head of Institute – Future World School & The Millennium Universal College. She said that I’m very impressed to see the youth of our society to be working on such importance and neglected issues. I’m glad to see the young voices on the stage, working, struggling, and listening to their success stories and experiences made me feel happy.



Furthermore, youth group performed a flash mob on “We Are Family” song by Bill and Melinda Gate Institute and IYAAP. Edutainment is a creative and effective way to promote social awareness and messages in community as well.





At the end Mr. Malik Umer Farooq (Chief Guest), Special Assistant to Chief Minister, Youth Affairs and Sports appreciated the team of ISYD and said, "I strongly support young people of our society because I believe they have energy, potential, passion but have less facilities and platforms to showcase their efforts and to work. I support women empowerment, youth empowerment and participation. Such health based awareness is very important in our society, our ministry is looking forward to work with such young leaders in future to strengthen their voices to be heard".



The event successfully concluded with closing remarks by Mr. Joshua Dilawar, he said, "We all should work together to bring positive and sustainable change in our society. Educational Institutes, Government, Civil Society, community and young people should join hands in hands to spread health based awareness in society to achieve FP2020, SDGs 2030 and sustainable change in our society".

At the end ISYD presented token of appreciation to the respected Speakers and volunteer team of the Forum.





Comments by the participants

❖ Hira Baig

Interactive Youth Forum!!!Where to begin with... it's always overwhelming when youth comes up with the ideas of bearing and sharing the burden of eradicating stigma around false/exaggerated beliefs. In the prevailing scenario where from the lot of Human Rights, SRHR are the most unrealized ones, such an initiative taken by the youth and for the youth is commendable.

As per my experience the agenda of the forum was a full package comprising a very topic oriented and yielding panel discussion taken place among SRHR Services providing fraternity and a theatre display as an effective advocacy tool with such a heartfelt theme, clarifying the myths, gratifying and depicting the unaddressed discriminatory practices prevailing in the society. Going through such an unprecedented experience i grabbed an exposure of knowing more about real facts and the ways youth is paving towards the alteration of rigid mindsets

❖ Abishay Gill

Youth Forum 2019 was a very informative event as I got to know about different horizons of Sexual Reproductive Health Rights and Family Planning. The session and discussion with panellists was one of the great thing organized by the facilitators as we got the opportunity to ask questions directly about future of SRHR and FP in Pakistan. I like the musical flashmob in the end of the event it was an eye candy plus the beautiful lyrics which describes how we can change the society by breaking the stereotypes it was a new thing in Pakistan and I as audience liked it the most.

❖ Rana Saad

I have learnt upholding human rights for sexual and reproductive health is key to ensuring that all people can be equal and free to make decisions in all spheres of their lives, without discrimination, without violence or coercion, and with the assurance of their dignity upheld.

We have learnt that women rights are indeed human rights, and these are the rights which are honored to every new born baby when he or she comes in the world.

We have to prefer choices and how these rights can should be exercised. If all women who want to avoid an unplanned pregnancy had access to modern contraceptives, the life-saving benefits would be substantial. Maternal deaths would drop by 67%. Newborn deaths would drop by 77%. Unintended pregnancies would drop by 70%.

When human rights in sexual and reproductive health are upheld total claims on a country's health budget are reduced while economic productivity and growth are stimulated, promoting a demographic transition that boosts both economic growth and individual wellbeing.

❖ Muhammad Zain

This forum was quite effective and informative. I came to learn many thing regarding SRHR advocacy and facilities from government of Pakistan, United Nations and from other young leaders in Pakistan. I think there should be such type events in our society on regular bases, where young people are gathered and are getting health based awareness and information. I felt this event was so inclusive and conducive. I would like to congrats ISYD team on conducting a successful event and I'm looking forward to participate actively in more activities of ISYD.

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