

There are more than 1.2 billion people between the ages of 10 and 24, the largest generation in human history. The vulnerability of this group of young people is increased due to thresholds to access health services, risky behaviour such as unsafe sex practices and unhealthy eating habits, poor hygiene and sanitation and the continuing spread of HIV. Health is not merely the absence of disease or infirmity but young people’s health refers to their state of complete physical, mental and social well-being. Global and national interest in the health of adolescents and youth has manifested itself in the last two decennia through international commitments such as the ICPD. But even with the best of intentions, health policy makers, planners and health-care providers continue to make choices that do not maximize the health returns for the youth.

Civil societies in many countries have actively been supporting governments in ensuring that young people’s access to health care and information continues to increase. Civil societies in both Asia and Europe are now increasingly working in tandem with national and local governments and the time has come to increase knowledge-sharing and collaboration among civil societies and state actors in Asia and Europe in identifying ways to further improve health services to the youth, removing barriers to access and involving the youth more actively in health policy making.

Following on the 16th ASEF University on “*Public Health and Vulnerable Groups: Access to Quality Healthcare Services*”, this workshop will focus on the role of youth organisations, networks and movements in the field of Public Health, and the possible initiatives of governments to support such youth initiatives. Special attention will be put on reviewing lessons learned from ongoing projects, in both Asia and Europe, and on seeking ways to improve capacity building and information sharing that would contribute to a higher participation of youth in the development and implementation of health policies and interventions.

Introduction & Background

The increased number of global instabilities, from financial and economic crises to the spread of new pandemic outbreaks, has led to the dire need for deeper cooperation and understanding between the governments of Asian and European countries. Of all these instabilities, ‘global health security’ certainly has become a top priority. It has generally been accepted that adolescents and young people have specific needs with respect to their well-being, including issues related to their social integration, mental well-being, education, and sexuality. The further spread of HIV, and the rise to a global scale of non-communicable diseases, such as obesity, the prevalence of risky behavior and poor mental health all serve to illustrate the diversity of the threats towards the achievement of a status of full health for young people and consequently for social stability and economic prosperity.

In order to combat and prevent the transmission of emerging pathogens and the resurgence of other threats, national health authorities have shown their willingness in sharing the responsibility and collaborating with each other, and with multilateral organisations, to provide and enhance rapid and coordinated response capability to these challenges. The exchange of health knowledge between Asia and Europe has recently received a major boost through the establishment of the ASEF Network for Public Health. In this initiative the need for increased knowledge-sharing and collaboration on addressing youth health issues has been identified.

Continuing the work of the 16th ASEF University held in Lodz, Poland, from 29 June to 9 July 2010 under the topic “Public Health and Vulnerable Groups: Access to Quality Healthcare Services”, this workshop, thus, will attempt to shed some light on possible synergies between the two regions, especially within youth movements and organisations.

Objectives

The three main objectives are, to

1. Follow-up on the recommendations put forward by the participants at the 16th ASEF University, under the topic of “Public Health and Vulnerable Groups: Access to Quality Health Care Services;
2. Focus on the role of youth organisations, groups, networks and movements in the field of Public Health, and the possible initiatives of governments to support such youth initiatives. Special attention will be put on reviewing lessons learned from ongoing projects and on seeking ways to improve capacity building.
3. Establish knowledge-sharing mechanisms that would foster an exchange of ideas on how to increase the role of youth in Public Health in Asia and Europe.

Key Questions

- What is the added value of youth participation in the promotion of Public Health?
- How can Civil Society Organisations improve the participation of youth in the development of Public Health policies and advocate for youth health issues?
- How can public health authorities improve the participation of youth in the development, monitoring and evaluation of Public Health policies?
- What can be done to create opportunities and to enable more youth networks and advocates to come up and act on youth issues? Should the lead be taken by the Civil Society or by government institutions?

Targeted Groups

Participants

- Grassroots practitioners, members of Non-Governmental and Non for Profit Organisations;
- Representatives from relevant Authorities of Asian and European countries dealing with Youth and Public Health;
- Policy makers from International/Interregional Organisations;
- Members/Experts of ASEF Network for Public Health;
- Participants from 16th ASEF University;
- And researchers and medical staff from educational establishments and research labs, and think-tanks in the field of health.

Outcome Audience

- Government officials and policymakers dealing with Public Health related topics, as well as Youth participation projects;
- Youth organisations and networks in Asia and Europe;
- Health professionals and programme managers involved in the planning and implementation of health programmes focused on adolescents and young people.

Co-Organisers

ASEFUAN is an association of former participants of the Asia-Europe Foundation University, a two-week intensive scholarship programme for undergraduates at venues alternating between Asia and Europe, which has been running since 1998. The alumni network was created in Bali, Indonesia, in 2002 and, in 2009, became an international non-profit organisation under Belgian Law. ASEFUAN organises activities to maintain and reinforce the relationships forged among participants of the ASEF University programme and undertakes projects to promote a meaningful intercultural dialogue between Asia and Europe, particularly among the younger generation.

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