

Japan has to change its laws on reproductive rights

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Message of Solidarity to Advocates of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) in Japan.

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As leaders of the G-8 prepare for the June 2010 ministerial meeting in Canada, at which maternal and child health initiatives will be under the spotlight, the Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights and our allies extend our support to the efforts of our member organisation in Japan, Space Allies. We fully endorse their campaigns for the decriminalization of abortion in Japan, as well as for meaningful contributions of overseas aid to projects that promote Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and gender equality.

The Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights (WGNRR) is a grassroots network of over one thousand autonomous organizations and individuals from 157 countries supporting the realisation of SRHR for all peoples. Since the formation of this network in 1984, the network's strongest Japanese civil society members have been active through their organisation Space Allies, and are well respected by colleagues in all corners of the world. With five years left in for the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, WGNRR continues to campaign to hold governments accountable to the fulfillment of their commitments, particularly in terms of promises made to provide universal access to reproductive health. The countries of the G-8 all share significant responsibilities to support the implementation of the MDGs and the realization of universal human rights, including SRHR.

It is in the spirit of international solidarity that the WGNRR salutes Space Allies, the Japanese Organisation for International Cooperation in Family Planning, and other allied Japanese NGOs in their efforts to call on the Japanese government to commit sustained resources for the fulfillment of promises made under the MDGs, particularly in matters related to reproductive and child health. It is urgently needed for overseas development aid to be committed to projects, non-governmental organisations and community based groups that prioritize and promote:

- the reduction of maternal mortality rates;
- comprehensive reproductive health (RH) services—including family planning and safe, legal abortion; and
- the full realisation of SRHR for all.

Furthermore, as WGNRR member groups such as Space Allies emphasise, it is not acceptable for governments of the G8 to speak about the promotion of maternal health in an international context, when abortion services are illegal or inaccessible domestically. Reproductive justice—including

access to full, comprehensive and legal sexual health and reproductive services—cannot be considered optional in any context, but rather a building block of healthy communities everywhere. Indeed, as the UN CEDAW Committee in August 2009 recommended, Japan should seek to amend “legislation criminalizing abortion in order to remove punitive provisions imposed on women who undergo abortion, in line with the Committee’s general recommendation No.24 on women and health and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action”.

We, the undersigned, call upon the Government of Japan to heed the calls of Space Allies to follow through on binding commitments made to advance universal access to full range Sexual Health and Reproductive rights within the context of the MDGs, the ICPD PoA, CEDAW and the Beijing PoA internationally and domestically. We look forward to hearing from the responsible ministers.

Respectfully,

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