

Case Prisma – Mutual Grounds & Opportunities for Collaboration

To the meeting about working on SRHR in “constrictive Environments” Prisma, a Cooperation of Christian Development Organisations also contributed.

One of the main things that was discussed in the groups was to be aware of how we talk about SRHR and contraception and abortion. In environments in which values and facts are all charged, it is very important to start the conversation (with your target group, but also with you adversaries) open, try to find out what others mean and to what extent we can find a common ground. How can we not speak in normative judgment, but speak in terms of shared concerns.

This touches on a number of issues, for example, what is the definition of an unmet need for Contraception and Abortion, what is the definition of an unmet need for Family Planning. How well are we informed by and through the many different cultures. The same is true for using controversial terms such as ‘family-centred’ or ‘women-centred’, what do we mean by that and what are the concrete needs of these women, who often act in the context of a family. Maybe a shared vision can be created around a ‘human-centred approach, because “We might be pro-life or pro-choice, but we are all pro-human”.

When we start denouncing another, this will always result in alienation, while there is so much fruitful common ground to work with even across cultures, religions and in constrictive environments. Also many Christian organisations, that work with dedication in the field of SRHR are unhappy with the Mexico City Policy, that blocks much good work that is being done to provide sexual care and education for women, men, girls and families. To care for these people and their informed decision power and their sexuality is a shared pro-human dedication that should not alienate all organisations from each other, but bring together.

Especially these values should be shared by advocacy, organisations should not shun conversations about values, but bridge the gap and start searching, in all sensitivity and maybe even vulnerability, for shared values.

The meeting at the Prisma table was, if anything a plea to not further dividing camps or splitting the debate in half, but searching for a way forward by starting up and searching for dialogue, value clarification and middle ground. This will not only open possibilities for cooperation between different NGOs on SRHR and fruitful shared learning, but also does justice to a great majority of people for whom any issue surrounding SRHR, contraception and abortion is neither black or white, but who mostly seek a safe environment to talk about and go about a the fragile subject of SRHR, sexuality and SRHR.

In summary, the next things were written on the flipchart:

- Definition of unmet need for Contraception & Abortion
- Use of evidence-based research for advocacy used for different types of messages
- Central position of family/women should be the focus
- Need to incorporate values in advocacy
- Common ground for religious/non-religious organizations of pro-family/pro-women --) pro-human.