



# Empowering People to Ensure a Sustainable Future for All





## Empowering People to Ensure a Sustainable Future for All

### UNFPA PROPOSALS FOR POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

The aspiration of the development agenda beyond 2015 is to create a just and prosperous world where all people realize their rights and live with dignity and hope<sup>[1]</sup>. Eradicating poverty in all its forms, tackling exclusion and inequality, and empowering women and girls are instrumental in bringing this vision to life<sup>[2]</sup>.

Consistent with a human rights-based approach and poor people's perspectives, UNFPA encourages Member States to ensure that the post-2015 agenda be designed to, among other priorities:

- **Realize** gender equality and women's empowerment, including fulfilling their sexual and reproductive rights;
- **Achieve** universal access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services throughout the life-cycle, especially for women and adolescents and youth;
- **Expand** the capabilities that young people, especially adolescent girls, require for employment, health, resilience, participation and citizenship;
- **Enhance** national capacity to assess, project and plan for population dynamics that affect sustainable development;
- **Protect** individuals, families and communities from conflict, disaster and violence, including eliminating all forms of violence against women and girls.

#### WHY THESE INVESTMENTS ARE CRITICAL FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:

These are priorities in their own right. They promote and protect fundamental human rights, including sexual and reproductive rights, equality and non-discrimination. With the protection of human rights, sustainable development can flourish.

This paper makes the case for specifically including sexual and reproductive health and rights, gender equality, adolescents and youth needs and rights, and non-discrimination as critical elements of the post-2015 Development Agenda.

### 1. Achieving gender equality and promoting the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and young people, especially adolescent girls, are central to ending extreme poverty, ensuring social cohesion and the three pillars of sustainability (social, economic and environmental)

The cost of inequalities, whether in health, education or economic opportunities, are immense. They include school dropout, lower productivity, reduced efficiencies, slower economic growth, economic instability and weaker social cohesion.<sup>[3],[4]</sup> Women and girls experience the most severe forms of inequalities and often the fewest opportunities, notably:

- Sexual coercion and violence, including domestic violence, everywhere;
- Child marriage, female genital mutilation/cutting and many other harmful practices that violate human rights;
- Lack of access to sexual and reproductive health information and education (including comprehensive sexuality education) and sexual and reproductive health services, especially in low-income rural and urban areas and in contexts affected by natural or man-made disasters.

Inequalities in access to sexual and reproductive health services are enormous in the poorest countries and most severely affect disadvantaged women and young people, which impede inclusive social development:

- Every year, some 16 million adolescent girls (15 to 19 years) and 2 million

girls under the age of 15 give birth. Almost all adolescent births—about 95%—occur in low- and middle-income countries and, within countries, are more likely to occur among poor, less educated and rural populations.<sup>[5], [6]</sup>

- Over 50% of women in sub-Saharan Africa give birth before age 20, most often in the context of child marriage.

- Most maternal deaths are preventable, but high rates persist in low-income countries and in low-income populations in middle-income countries. Globally, 800 pregnant women die each day from pregnancy-related causes.

- In sub-saharan Africa an estimated 480 women and girls die per 100,000 live births, and for every maternal death, at least 30 women and girls suffer short- or long-term disabilities from avoidable pregnancy-related complications.

- An estimated 222 million women in developing countries who wish to avoid pregnancy, are not using modern contraception, most of them in the poorest countries and in the most disadvantaged groups.

- HIV infections are frequently concentrated among poorer and younger women in sub-saharan Africa and represent half of those globally living with HIV and AIDS.

- Deaths due to cervical cancer are on the rise and concentrated in low- and middle-income countries, due to lack of screening and early diagnosis programmes.

Expanding access to good-quality sexual and reproductive health services, especially for disadvantaged women, adolescents and youth, and protecting their human rights, will dramatically reduce such inequalities and advance inclusive social development by improving:

- Women's empowerment and decision making;

- Women and young people's prospects for employment and livelihoods;

- Household income to eradicate poverty;

- Health and well-being of individuals and families;

- Educational attainment of young people, particularly adolescent girls;

- Active involvement of men and boys in gender sensitive programming and policy development;

- Community and national ownership, which strengthens national cohesion;

- Women and young people's adaptation, preparedness and resilience to climate change and environmental degradation.

#### **SOME EVIDENCE OF POSITIVE IMPACT OF INVESTMENTS**

- In Bangladesh, voluntary family planning and targeted maternal and child health interventions contributed to poverty alleviation through improved school attendance, nutrition for girls, and higher wages for more educated women. Households realized health and productivity gains and increased household physical assets by 25% greater per adult.<sup>[7]</sup>

- The empowerment of women, including improving their livelihoods and ensuring girls' and women's access to education and health services, especially sexual and reproductive health, can improve women's and girls' adaptation, preparedness and resilience to climate change and natural disasters.<sup>[8], [9]</sup>

## **2. Investments in sexual and reproductive health and rights stimulate inclusive economic development**

Evidence confirms that investing in sexual and reproductive health and rights is not only right from a human rights perspective, but also is smart for the economy because it is associated with:

- Higher labour force participation by women;

- Productivity gains at all levels;

- Significant savings for the health sector by reducing unwanted pregnancies, maternal morbidity and death, unsafe abortions;



- Reductions of public spending on education, housing, nutrition and infrastructure sectors.

#### **SOME EVIDENCE OF THE COST OF INACTION**

- If all 1.6 million adolescent girls in Kenya completed secondary school and if the 220,098 adolescent mothers were employed instead of falling pregnant, the cumulative effect could have added \$3.4 billion on the Kenya's gross income every year, which is equivalent to the entire Kenyan construction sector. <sup>[10]</sup>

- **Each dollar** spent on contraception by developing countries reduces medical spending on maternal and newborn care by **\$1.40** and, from a broader perspective, reduces unwanted births and unsafe abortions and expenditures associated with these. <sup>[11]</sup>

- In Thailand, for example, **every US dollar** invested in family planning saved more than \$16 across other sectors, while in Egypt, it was shown to save as much as **\$ 31** per dollar invested. <sup>[12]</sup>

### **3. Building national capacity to assess, anticipate and plan for population dynamics is essential for planning and monitoring sustainable development**

The world will begin the post-2015 period with the largest-ever generation of adolescents and youth and will end the period with unprecedented numbers of older people. These changing age structures are expected to be accompanied by unparalleled rates of urbanization and migration—international as well as internal.

These population dynamics present opportunities to advance on the three dimensions of sustainable development—social, economic and environmental—, provided that they are based on human rights principals and gender-sensitive policies.

- Large young populations in low- and middle-income countries present an extraordinary opportunity when taken in conjunction with sound economic and social policies—a potential demographic bonus—to spur social and economic

progress,<sup>[13]</sup> but only if investments are made in the education, health and other capacities of adolescents and youth along with protection of their right to the information, services and resources they need to make fully informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive choices.

- In contexts of low fertility and population ageing, investments to reconcile women's productive and reproductive roles, such as child-care facilities, and to expand social protection, learning opportunities and vocational retraining for older persons will be fundamental to promoting their continued contribution to societies and economies while protecting the human rights of women and the aged.

- Increasing, voluntary migration produces strong benefits for both sending and receiving countries, when migrants have access to social, legal and health services, including sexual and reproductive health, and human rights protections.

- Rapid urbanization globally—by 2050, around 70% of the world population will live in urban areas<sup>[14]</sup> — already posing significant challenges, particularly for low-income and middle-income countries. Analysis of population-related data on urbanization, along with projections into the future, are essential for effective planning to make urban areas safe and healthy places for all, centers for economic growth, environmental sustainability and well-being.

- Assess the complex interrelations between population dynamics and current and future patterns of consumption and production for environmental sustainability. Continuing research is needed in and by all countries, and by the global community, as the foundation for policy decisions and the monitoring of their effects and future prospects.

- Strong country capacity to collect and analyse and make projections with demographic data—information about people—is required to design plans and policies for economic growth and for stewardship of the environment that will re-

duce inequalities, improve the quality and effectiveness of national and global actions, and enable all actors and stakeholders to be accountable for our common commitment to reduce poverty and leave no one behind.

### **UNFPA PROPOSALS FOR THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK**

UNFPA proposes that the following goals, targets and indicators be included in the post-2015 agenda framework:

**1. A stand-alone goal on gender equality and women's empowerment** as well as mainstreaming gender equality throughout the framework.

#### **Specific targets and related indicators should address as a minimum:**

a. Protection and fulfillment of women's sexual and reproductive rights, including developing monitoring and protection systems;

b. Prevention and elimination of sexual coercion and violence against women and girls, including child marriages, FGM/C and other harmful practices, as well as engaging men and boys and promoting positive norm change for the achievement of gender equality;

c. Universal access to essential services for victims and survivors of gender based violence.

**2. A target under a health goal:** Universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

#### **Indicators under this target should measure:**

a. Elimination of inequalities in access to quality sexual and reproductive health services (maternity care, modern contraception, post-abortion services, safe abortion as allowed by law, and prevention and treatment of STIs and HIV), particularly by wealth quintile, age, sex and other characteristics as appropriate;

b. Improvements in the quality of the

services, so that they meet human rights norms as well as public health standards.

**3. A stand-alone goal on investment in the capabilities of adolescents and youth for sustainable development**, including, as a minimum, the following targets and indicators:

#### **Targets:**

a. Provision of comprehensive sexuality education on health, sexuality, gender equality and human rights to all adolescents and youth, in and out of school;

b. Universal access to sexual and reproductive health services for young people, particularly for adolescent girls, on the basis of confidentiality and privacy, that are supportive and non-judgmental;

c. Improved education and training for all young people to facilitate access to decent employment and livelihoods, observing the convention of minimum age for work;

d. Meaningful participation of young people in finding and implementing solutions for sustainable development;

e. Progress in ensuring safety for girls in public spaces, including in and on the way to and from school, as well as safe places and programmes for the most disadvantaged and at risk girls to learn and develop.

#### **Indicators should address:**

a. National policy, curricula and delivery of comprehensive education on health, sexuality, gender equality and human rights;

b. Laws and policies to facilitate access to sexual and reproductive health services by young people;

c. National policies and programmes that provide "safe spaces" to the most vulnerable adolescent girls, who are not in school, lack adequate parental protection, live in poverty, etc.

**4. Targets under a governance goal** (or mainstreamed throughout the framework), relevant both from the perspectives of a human rights-based approach and accountability: Improve national capacity to generate, make available and analyse disaggregated socio-demographic and health data. Good quality data for development ensures evidence based decision making, programming and policy development.

**Targets:**

- a. Universal birth and death registration;
- b. Access to timely and complete data for population trends and projections;
- c. Systematic use of population trends and projections in the formulation of development strategies, goals and targets.

**Indicators should assess:**

- a. Improvements in institutional capacities to generate quality data, disaggregated by age, sex, location, wealth quintiles, among other categories, including birth and death registration, censuses, surveys, service-related management and information systems;
- b. Changes in breadth of access to these data and/or in their use for research and policy analysis, planning and programme design, monitoring and evaluation;

- c. Improvements in capacity to prepare population projections and to use them for the formulation of national, sub-national and sector development strategies, goals, targets and policies.

**Means of implementation: Governance, participation, accountability and financing are crucial**

UNFPA supports the emerging consensus on the importance of guaranteeing an enabling environment for implementing the post-2015 Development Agenda:

- Equity and Human Rights
- Good governance and the rule of law;
- Transparent, responsive, capable, accountable and fair national policies and strategies, supported by national resources and complemented by official development assistance commitments;
- Meaningful inclusive national, local, community and stakeholders' participation and enabling their capacity to do so.

**FINAL MESSAGE**

The world needs to unleash the potential of every person, particularly of women, young people and adolescent girls, to achieve a sustainable future for this generation and those to come.

**Empowering people holds the key to better lives and to a sustainable future**

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- [2] Report of the Secretary General on a life of dignity for all: accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015. paras.83-85. A/68/202
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- [14] UN/POP/EGM-URB/2008/01