

TOWARDS A POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

POSITION PAPER

BACKGROUND

This paper aims to develop a common position for the European sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) community on the post-2015 development framework and how SRHR should feature in it. The principles outlined in this paper are meant as a basis for our shared work and to complement each individual member organization's own specific position.

As the European voice of SRHR NGOs, our goal is to work together to ensure that ***the next global agreement takes a human-rights-based approach to development and has a strong and explicit focus on SRHR.*** We believe that the post-2015 development agenda should promote positive change for all people in all countries.

What are sexual and reproductive rights?

Sexual and reproductive rights are the rights of all people to make decisions regarding their own sexuality, without infringing on the rights of other people; to decide if, when and how many children to have; to have all the necessary information, means and services available to reach the best possible sexual and reproductive health; and to be free from coercion, stigma and discrimination¹.

VISION FOR THE POST-2015 FRAMEWORK

We believe that the post-2015 framework should promote transformative change for an equitable and sustainable world without poverty, where all individuals can realize their human rights, including their sexual and reproductive rights. To achieve this, it is imperative to:

- **adopt a human-rights-based approach to development**, in which every person is recognized as a rights-holder, and every government respects, protects and fulfills every right. In practice this will require the integration of principles such as participation, accountability, transparency, non-discrimination, empowerment and rule of law;
- **eliminate the root causes of poverty** by promoting equality of opportunity and of outcome and empowerment for all, especially for those living in poverty and vulnerable, marginalized and under-served populations, with an explicit focus on youth and women;
- **root the future framework in existing international human rights instruments** (e.g. UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UN CEDAW, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) **and key political consensus documents** (e.g. ICPD Programme of Action and Beijing Platform for Action);
- **mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment** in the framework, as well as ensuring sector-specific attention to these approaches. This will require data collection disaggregated by sex, and gender-sensitive targets and indicators; and
- **integrate the ICPD+20, Beijing+20 and Rio+20 processes with the post-2015 framework.**

LACK OF ACCESS TO SRHR IS A KEY DRIVER OF POVERTY

Poor health, poverty and social inequities are inextricably linked. Full realization of SRHR, including ensuring that women have the ability to choose the number, timing and spacing of pregnancies, is critical for gender equality and increases women's opportunities for education, employment and full participation in society.

Investment in education and family planning improves maternal and child health and has multiple and complementary effects for women, their families and development. Comprehensive sexuality education and youth-friendly reproductive health services are critical for ensuring the health, education, rights and empowerment of girls and young people.

THREE PRIORITIES FOR THE POST-2015 FRAMEWORK

The future agenda should be as comprehensive as possible and include the wide range of different aspects of SRHR. However, we believe that three elements, in particular, should be explicitly incorporated in the post-2015 agenda:

01

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT, INCLUDING HEALTH, ACHIEVEMENT OF UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO SRHR AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Beyond 2015 it will remain critical to **invest in human and social development and maintain a strong focus on global health and education**. Within these sectors, special investment should be reserved for SRHR, which is the ‘enabler’ for reaching any other poverty reduction target² and listed by the UN as a social development priority for the post-2015 agenda³. Pursuing more inclusive and sustainable development pathways beyond 2015 calls for innovative approaches. We believe that **universal access to SRHR** is a fundamental instrument to accomplish the work begun with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) so far and to achieve at least six of the current goals. Universal access brings transformative change and calls for the removal of supply- and demand-side barriers such as social exclusion and discrimination, lack of information and lack of decision-making power to seek necessary services.

Universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights means...

Achieving:

- universal access to sexual and reproductive health;
- universal recognition of sexual and reproductive rights; and
- strengthened systems for financing sexual and reproductive health.

02

GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT OF VULNERABLE GROUPS, PARTICULARLY PEOPLE LIVING IN POVERTY, WOMEN, GIRLS AND OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE

The MDGs have been criticized for failing to reduce inequalities, which remains essential to achieve inclusive development and economic growth. The new framework should focus on **promoting equality and empowerment** as well as on **tackling the structural factors that enable the reproduction of inequalities** across generations and the perpetration of the poverty cycle. This means putting women, girls and youth at the heart of the post-2015 framework. One of the key components of a strategy that promotes gender equality and women’s empowerment is ensuring sexual and reproductive rights. This in turn includes promoting the universal recognition of sexual and reproductive rights, protection from all type of sexual violence and the removal of legal and social barriers to access to sexual and reproductive health services.

03

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, WITH EQUAL EMPHASIS ON THE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSIONS

Sustainability is one of the major global challenges beyond 2015, and **SRHR is a cross-cutting issue** relevant to each of the three pillars of sustainable development. If progress on the MDGs is to be made, crucial investments should be made in the **social dimension of development**, particularly in terms of SRHR. MDG 5 is the goal that is furthest off track, and lack of universal access to SRHR represents the biggest obstacle to achieving sustainable development and making substantive progress in terms of poverty reduction. Achieving universal access to SRHR, therefore, offers the potential to advance a wide range of development priorities and is critical to the overall achievement of sustainable development.

THE SOCIAL PILLAR SRHR, HUMAN DEVELOPMENT & GENDER EQUALITY

SRHR is key to achieving all the health-related MDGs, MDG 2 (primary education) and MDG 3 (gender equality and women's empowerment)⁴:

MDGs 4,5,6 - Ensuring universal access to SRHR contributes to the achievement of all the health-related MDGs. Prenatal care and the ability to avoid high-risk births reduce infant and child mortality. Family planning, maternal health and safe abortion services save women's lives. Preventing and treating sexually transmitted infections including HIV/AIDS is essential to avoid poor health and mortality.

MDG 2 - Lack of comprehensive sexuality education, youth-friendly reproductive health services and measures to prevent early and forced marriages, sexual harassment and violence prevent young people, particularly girls, from attending school and completing their education, driving gender inequalities and poverty.

MDG 3 - Ensuring that women have the ability to choose the number, timing and spacing of pregnancies is a critical aspect of women's empowerment and increases women's opportunities for education, employment and full participation in society.

THE ECONOMIC PILLAR SRHR, GROWTH & POVERTY REDUCTION

SRHR is key to addressing the issues of leveraging people out of poverty (MDG 1) by helping young people, especially girls, to access education and engage in productive activities, thus lowering the level of household poverty and contributing to economic growth, as well as by addressing the issue of population growth which in turn affects economic growth rates.

Many developing countries are experiencing high rates of population growth, which is associated with high levels of poverty and low levels of human development. Addressing the unmet need for family planning, along with wider investments in SRHR, education and empowerment, can reduce fertility levels and facilitate the demographic transition in developing countries, offering opportunities for economic growth, job creation, women's employment and poverty alleviation.

THE ENVIRONMENTAL PILLAR SRHR, ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE

SRHR is key to addressing population dynamics and migration issues which impact the environment and climate change. This includes, in particular, addressing the huge unmet need for family planning in areas of increased climate change and environmental degradation, which is a key strategy to increase poor people's resilience to climate change.

Population dynamics, including growth, urbanization and migration, interact with the environment to influence consumption and availability of natural resources, including land, food, water and energy. Population growth is highest in the world's poorest countries, which are most vulnerable to food and water insecurity. These countries are also the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change but have done the least to cause it. Many of these countries identify population growth as undermining climate change adaptation by exacerbating pressure on resources. Addressing the unmet need for SRHR services, including voluntary family planning, offers scope to advance environmental sustainability, support climate adaptation and increase resilience in ecologically fragile areas.

Progress on MDG 5

Data for 2012 from the WHO *Trends in Maternal Mortality* confirm that progress towards achieving MDG 5 has been dramatically slow and uneven and that: a) many countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, are most likely to miss both target 5a and 5b; and b) there is a pressing need to put in place accelerated interventions now. The UNDP *2012 MDG Progress Report* notes that the international community is a long way from achieving MDG 5. There were an estimated 287,000 maternal deaths in 2010, and since the 1990s progress to increase contraceptive use has slowed, with unmet need for family planning remaining persistently high in some of the poorest regions of the world, including sub-Saharan Africa.

Slow progress is, among other factors, related to the initial omission of SRHR from the MDGs framework. The inclusion of Target 5b in 2007 (ensuring universal access to reproductive health) was TOO LITTLE TOO LATE. The impact of this has been profound not only in terms of progress in reaching MDG 5 but also, and most significantly, to achieve all other MDGs and is an indicator of the essential need to anchor the post-2015 framework on SRHR.

CHANGING PERSPECTIVE: A MULTI-LEVEL FRAMEWORK

The future development agenda needs to build on the lessons learned from the MDGs and acknowledge the changing political-economic landscape and the emergence of new pressing global challenges. It should embrace a new perspective and be:

UNIVERSAL

The post-2015 framework must be universal, i.e. applicable in all countries and based on shared responsibilities between nations. It must move away from the donor-beneficiary/North-South approach and allow for contextualized national targets.

INCLUSIVE AND PARTICIPATORY

The post-2015 framework should go beyond the current concept of public action by fostering inclusion and participation of a variety of stakeholders, including governments, parliaments, civil society organizations, the private for-profit sector and emerging donors. An inclusive and participatory framework will require clarity on the roles of all stakeholders at different levels of the process, particularly the role of civil society grassroots organizations and representatives from the most marginalized communities, in setting implementing and safeguarding norms, services and policies. People living in poverty and the most vulnerable groups – i.e. young people, women, people with disabilities – need to be included at all levels of the process.

PEOPLE-CENTRED

The framework must address social inequalities and the drivers of poverty, with a focus on the poorest, most vulnerable, marginalized and under-served populations, particularly women, girls and youth. All people, regardless of whether they live in low-, middle- or high-income countries, should be included in and benefit from the new framework. A people-centred framework requires going beyond global, regional and national averages and addressing the huge variance in intra-national development. There is a need to ensure a focus not only on 'the poorest countries' but also the poorest populations and sub-populations elsewhere by investing in the collection of disaggregated data – according to sex, age, economic status, marital status, rural/urban setting and other variables – as well as ensuring that meaningful metrics are chosen.

What gets counted, counts!

A number of important SRHR performance metrics are usually neglected, including:

- mortality/morbidity due to unsafe abortion;
- prevention and treatment of violence against women, including sexual violence;
- youth-friendly services; and
- access to contraceptives for young people and the poorest women.

LEARNING FROM THE PAST

WE NEED CLEAR FUNDING COMMITMENTS

Discussions on how to resource the new framework will be most likely influenced by the current global recession and particularly by the economic crisis. This implies drawing on different sources (public and private) and using different 'blending' strategies, in addition to Official Development Assistance (ODA). Those sources could include: domestic financial resources for development; foreign direct investment; public-private financing mechanisms; loans; innovative financing mechanisms; trade flows; and South-South cooperation. However, we believe that the ODA financing for the post-2015 framework should be consistent. Developed economies should maintain their commitment to the ODA target of 0.7% of GNP, and aid must become more predictable, effective and coherent.

instance, ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health services and women's, girls' and couples' right to choose when and how many children to have will empower women, improve gender equality, stimulate women's and youth employment and have a positive impact on environmental and economic sustainability.

WE NEED AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

Health, education and gender have been too segmented. In the current framework, they have suffered from an approach that is too narrow and not rights-based. Beyond 2015 the cross-cutting issues of SRHR, gender equality and women's empowerment should be integrated throughout the framework, as well as being assured sector-specific attention. For

WE NEED A MULTIDIMENSIONAL APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT

We need to avoid an overly dominant focus on economic growth at all costs but should ensure that the economic focus in the framework promotes a green economic model based on fairness and equity. The post-2015 agenda should maintain a multidimensional approach to poverty eradication focusing on the interrelated economic, social and environmental root causes.

WE NEED A BOTTOM-UP APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT

Unlike with the MDGs, this time around we need a global agenda that results from a genuinely participatory and inclusive process and a shift away from a top-down/donor-driven approach to development.

1. For official definitions see the International Conference on Population and Development Program of Action, 1994, Cairo, and the Fourth World Conference on Women Declaration and Platform for Action, 1995, Beijing. See also WHO Department of Reproductive Health and Research (2012) Working Definitions.
2. UN Secretary General Kofi Annan (2002), *Message of the Secretary-General to the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference*.
3. UN System Task Team on the post-2015 agenda (2012), *Realizing the future we want for all*. The document refers to the narrow category of reproductive health instead of sexual and reproductive health and rights.
4. See also Guttmacher Institute and UNFPA (2009), *Adding it up: The costs and benefits of investing in family planning and maternal and newborn health*.



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