



**The Future
UNFPA wants
for all**

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KEYS FOR THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, affirms that the empowerment of women, adolescents and young people to exercise their reproductive rights; universal access to sexual and reproductive health services, within a framework of human rights and gender equality; and, understanding the implications of population dynamics, are at the core of sustainable development. These matters, therefore, should feature prominently in the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

The backdrop to this Agenda is a growing and changing global population that – in many countries - is younger than ever before. However, it is also an ageing population; it is migrating, more urban, and – in places – consuming at unsustainable rates. In this shifting milieu, UNFPA considers that the future global development agenda will succeed only if women, adolescents and youth are at its centre. If their individual resourcefulness, creativity and resilience are strengthened, poverty can be comprehensively reduced. The precondition for this however, is investment in their sexual and reproductive health and respect for their reproductive rights.

The Post-2015 Agenda can unlock these rich human resources, creating vast opportunities for progress towards inclusive societies and economies, sustainable environments and genuine peace and security, provided it recognizes and engages the keys to its success which include:

Key 1: Ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights

At the Cairo International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in 1994, the global community recognized and affirmed that sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights are foundational to sustainable development. Twenty years later, it still holds true.

Enshrined in national laws and supported by many international agreements, these rights include the right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly, without coercion or violence, the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so. It includes the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health. These opportunities to make informed choices in respect of one's own sexual and reproductive health are also a prerequisite for the fulfilment of human potential and necessary for full participation in community life, particularly by those who are otherwise, socially or economically, at a disadvantage.

When an individual's reproductive rights are upheld, mutually respectful and equitable gender relations between women and men are more likely. And women and adolescent girls can avoid unintended pregnancies, while all young people can deal with their emerging sexuality in positive and responsible ways.

The dividend of including universal access to sexual and reproductive health, and reproductive rights in the Post-2015 Agenda will be paid in millions of lives saved, grief averted, individual suffering reduced, and families kept intact. Fulfilling the reproductive rights of the 222 million women in developing countries who have unmet need for modern contraception would prevent: 54 million unintended pregnancies, including 21 million unplanned births; 26 million abortions (of which 16 million would be unsafe); 7 million miscarriages; 1.1 million infant deaths and 79,000 maternal deaths.

The Post-2015 Agenda must keep universal access to sexual and reproductive health, and reproductive rights at its core. It should be recalled that, within the current millennium development framework, the target of achieving universal access to reproductive health was only agreed at the World Summit in 2005 and added as MDG Target 5.B only in 2007. This means that targeted implementation has taken place for only five of the MDG's 15 years and there much yet to be achieved.

Key 2: Investing in maternal, newborn and child health

The Millennium Development Goal 5 (MDG5) calls for a reduction in maternal deaths, but it is one of the goals at highest risk of not being met. Since 1990, global maternal death rates have reduced by more than a third, with some countries showing that much can be accomplished through political will and strategic interventions. But yet, every day, approximately 800 women die from pregnancy complications and childbirth, the majority of them in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Most of these deaths can be prevented. For every woman who dies, around 20 more are seriously injured or suffer disabilities.

Maternal health services and voluntary family planning, particularly for women and young people, are vital to reducing maternal morbidity and death. Family planning is crucial for people to exercise their reproductive rights. However, lower fertility also enables women to take up opportunities for engagement in public life including in income-generating activities. Smaller families are positively correlated to improvements in both child survival and children's educational performance. This means families are more likely to rise out of poverty and are better positioned to break the vicious circle of intergenerational transmission of inequality and deprivation. Improving maternal health can also stimulate economic productivity and growth and positively contribute to stable, peaceful and productive societies.

To achieve the maternal, neonatal and child health outcomes that have already been agreed and to sustain progress for the future, the Post-2015 Agenda must uphold and further strengthen these commitments at both global and national levels.

Key 3: Putting young people at the forefront of development

Today's young people (ages 10 to 24) are 1.8 billion strong, representing one quarter of the world's population. This is the largest generation of adolescents and youth ever in history. In some countries, as much as 60 per cent of their populations are under 25 years old. By 2040, there could be around 1.9 billion young people, meaning 34 per cent of the world's population would be under 25.

Young people must be recognized as a crucial resource for realizing the Post-2015 Agenda. However, the harsh reality today is that millions of them continue to face poverty, unemployment, underemployment, inadequate access to education and limited access to health, especially to reproductive health services and comprehensive sexuality education.

Young people, particularly poor, rural and indigenous girls, do not have adequate access to the sexual and reproductive health information and services needed to avoid unintended pregnancies, unsafe abortions and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV. Unmet need for contraception remains high, and demand is rising. Many adolescent girls are exposed to child marriage, forced sexual relationships and other harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation/cutting and human

trafficking for sexual exploitation. These practices are human rights violations and have damaging psychosocial effects and reduce girls' opportunities to complete their education, develop employable skills and participate fully in community *and* national development.

The Post-2015 Agenda must uphold the rights of young people and call for investment in quality education, decent employment opportunities, effective livelihood skills, access to sexual and reproductive health and age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education in order to strengthen young people's individual resilience and create the conditions under which they are more likely to reach their full potential.

Key 4: Embedding gender equality in human rights-based development

Discrimination against girls and women is a denial of their human rights, an inhibitor of their fulfillment as individuals and a communal deprivation, too, in that discrimination deprives communities of needed contributions. Gender equality, in particular, is essential to inclusive social and economic development. Accelerated reduction in gender inequality leads to higher rates of economic growth. Households where women have greater say tend to allocate a greater share of household resources to education and health. These are decisions that help to build the human capital of their communities, which is the most important resource for development.

In a human rights-based approach to development, people, including women and young people, are not considered passive recipients of goods, services or commodities, but, as rights holders, are instead to be empowered. As active agents of their own development, rights holders drive the sustainability of development. They are enabled to make choices, to influence policymaking processes and to hold their governments accountable. The State, as the main duty bearer, has corresponding obligations to respect, protect and fulfill human rights, including reproductive rights. A human rights-based approach also calls for the establishment and strengthening of independent national human rights accountability systems.

The Post-2015 Agenda must recognize and embed gender equality, within the framework of human rights, across its goals, as being also essential for elimination of inequality and necessary to enhance sustainability of development efforts.

Key 5: Upholding reproductive rights of women and young people for peace and security

Every day, women and girls face violence in their homes, in communities, in conflicts and the aftermaths of natural disasters. It is estimated that 7 out of every 10 women experience some form of violence in their lives. They are disproportionately affected by armed conflict, violence, and the widespread insecurity, poverty and social exclusion that characterize fragile contexts. Perilous conditions bring loss of access to family planning services, exposing women and female adolescents to unintended pregnancy and the risk of maternal deaths.

At all stages of conflict and in the wake of natural disasters, women, girls and children continue to be the most vulnerable to sexual and gender-based violence and abuse. The impact of violence, and especially rape and other forms of sexual violence, are often devastating, both physically and emotionally and may include unintended pregnancies and HIV/AIDS. Mental health impacts may lead to anxiety, post-traumatic stress, depression and suicide. Social consequences can include stigmatization and rejection by families and communities.

Protecting the reproductive rights of women and young people in the context of humanitarian crises, conflict and post-conflict and other fragile settings is a prerequisite for their welfare and essential for their needed contributions as actors of positive change in peacebuilding, reconstruction as well as for inclusive social and economic development and human security. These rights must clearly be upheld in the Post-2015 Agenda.

Key 6: Recognizing the influence of population dynamics on sustainable development

Global and national population dynamics and trends—including changes in size, structure, composition and spatial distribution— are key determinants of current and future social and economic development and environmental sustainability and will surely influence the impact of the Post-2015 Agenda.

Population dynamics have direct and indirect implications for inclusive social and economic development i.e. labour markets, income distribution, and demand for social services and support. Population dynamics, in turn, are shaped by these social and economic factors and can impact environmental sustainability, climate change, as well as water, food and energy security. Efforts to reduce poverty, raise living standards and promote the well-being of a large and growing world population will place pressure on natural resources, including land, forests, water and oceans. These stressors will intensify if the developed world's current rates of consumption remain unchallenged.

Population dynamics carry more than challenges; they also provide opportunities for sustainable development. One such opportunity is the “demographic bonus” created by a temporary decrease in the relative presence of dependent populations as compared to the young and economically active populations. This bonus can create the space needed to increase social and household investments in human capital which, in turn, can have a positive influence on growth and development.

Furthermore, while often migration and other forms of human mobility – which are on the increase – are associated with serious challenges, these population movements also enable people to adapt to changing social, economic and environmental conditions. Urban population growth and urbanization— which are accelerated by rapid rural-urban migration particularly in many of the poorest countries—can also contribute positively to sustainable development.

Populations will continue to grow in almost all countries of the world for decades to come. And while the least developed countries continue to see a rapid increase in their youth populations, other countries are witnessing the ageing of population, and some even face decline. These diverse demographic scenarios pose developmental challenges, and demand holistic policy responses to secure sustainable development.

Whether by 2050 world population will reach over 9 billion or grow, instead, to above 10 billion depends on policies that countries pursue today. Rights-based policies to address high fertility and rapid population growth enlarge individual choices and opportunities: universal access to sexual and reproductive health care, including voluntary family planning; investing in youth, with a particular focus on girls; as well as the empowerment of women and young people will also contribute to lower fertility and slower population growth. Efforts to address the challenges and seize the opportunities associated with increased migration and urbanization, over the next decades, can deliver development dividends provided that are grounded in rights-based policies that respect and uphold human freedoms.

Sustainable development requires that countries proactively address, rather than only react to, the population trends that will unfold over the next decades. Population data and projections must inform forward-looking development strategies, policies and programmes.

The Post-2015 Agenda must recognize population dynamics and trends as key determinants of the world's development and engage these to realize social, economic and environmental outcomes that are sustainable.

Key 7: Holding development accountable for its impacts on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as well as population dynamics

To measure progress in population and sexual and reproductive health and rights outcomes and to hold associated actors accountable, a set of robust indicators must be defined. Data collection and analysis is not just a monitoring and evaluation task, but also a means by which to uphold people's rights to freedom of information. In other words, the global community has not only a need, but also a right to monitor the impact of the development agenda.

Governments, donors, United Nations agencies, civil society organizations and academia have duties to intervene in ways that allow and enable the world to track sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights development outcomes and how these affect population trends and dynamics. Transparency in accountability has a key part to play in the success of the Post-2015 Agenda.

Irrespective of the Agenda's content, development results data must be positioned to reveal the actual impacts for people, societies, environments, economies, peace and security. In all instances, indicators must allow for impacts to be disaggregated by sex, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity and related variables, so as to track how the most vulnerable groups progress. **Key areas of measurement and/or indicators of sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights and relevant to population dynamics, which must be included in the Post-2015 Agenda, are:**

- On impacts and consequences for **sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights**,
 - Unmet need for family planning;
 - Contraceptive prevalence rate;
 - Maternal mortality ratio;
 - Adolescent fertility and marriage rates;
 - Antenatal care coverage;
 - Deliveries attended by skilled health personnel.

- On progress in **young people's rights**,
 - Access to primary, secondary and tertiary education, especially of girls, and
 - HIV prevalence among population aged 15-24 years;
 - Youth unemployment rate;

However, more robust indicators are required to better measure investments in the human capital of young people.

- On **human rights and gender equality**:
 - Economic opportunities for women;
 - Women's social and political participation;
 - Removal of punitive laws, policies and harmful practices against women;
 - Social support for older populations.

- On progress in reaping the benefits of a **growing and changing global population**:
 - Availability of quality and timely socio-demographic data for sustainable development planning;
 - Effective utilisation of data on population dynamics in national and sectorial plans.
- On **sustainable consumption and production**:
 - Measures for green growth (e.g., GDP adjusted for environmental degradation and depletion) and technological progress (e.g., resource efficiency).

Public monitoring and evaluation of progress will enable the global community to track their own results, know the impacts and identify when efforts are failing, in order to sharpen strategies and improve focus. But critically, it will enable people themselves and their key civil society agents to hold the development community accountable.

Final remarks

The backdrop for the Post-2015 Agenda is a growing and changing global population. Against this shifting backdrop, it will be individual resourcefulness, resilience and sustainability that are deciding factors in the success of the global development agenda. **Women, adolescents and youth, indigenous people, migrants and people living with disabilities stand out among those groups whose sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights must be prioritized if the Agenda is to deliver a sustainable difference in the world's development.**

For UNFPA, the logical conclusion is to set national targets and global goals for the strengthening of individual resilience as a key component in a person-centered agenda. In this regard, the new development agenda must thread *resilience* and *sustainability* across five interlinking dimensions: the *individual, society, economy, environment, and peace and security*.

A coherent agenda for development across these dimensions would unlock the world's full potential for sustainable development and for this purpose, UNFPA calls for the Post-2015 Agenda to:

- **Uphold universal and equitable access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, including voluntary family planning and maternal health, in particular for women, girls and young people; while protecting vulnerable populations living in conflicts and emergencies;**
- **Put young people at the forefront of development, adopting rights and gender based policies and investments that address young people's, including adolescents', sexual and reproductive health needs and reproductive rights and creating opportunities for young people to realize their full potential;**
- **Embed gender equality as key to human rights-based development, aiming to remove the root causes of gender inequality and discrimination, particularly the cultural, social and economic barriers that prevent women, men and young people's access to sexual and reproductive health services;**
- **Recognize and engage with the invaluable contribution that an understanding and inclusion of population dynamics offers to the success of sustainable development and hold development accountable for its intimate relationship to progress in sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.**