

UNFPA Contribution - 2020 HLPF "Accelerated action and transformative pathways: realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development"

April 2020

1. Key policies and measures for realizing the decade of action and sustainable development: Full and effective Implementation of the ICPD Agenda as an accelerator for the SDGs

- Sustainable development depends on systemic, comprehensive, and integrated investments in populations to ensure that they can achieve their capabilities and contribute fully to development. These include, inter alia, the fulfillment of **dignity, equality and human rights including sexual and reproductive health and rights; universal access to quality education, decent work, and lifelong good health; security of place; accountable systems of governance based on transparent national data; and resilience in the face of environmental and other humanitarian threats**. This summarizes the core message of the ICPD – that a fundamental commitment to individual dignity and human rights is the basis of a resilient and sustainable future.
- 2019 marked the 25th anniversary of the ICPD, and at its 52nd Session, the UN Commission on Population and Development in 2019 emphasized that the **full and effective implementation of the Programme of Action and the key actions for its further implementation are essential to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**. The **Nairobi Summit on ICPD25**, reiterated the importance of rights and choices for all, re-energized the sexual and reproductive health and rights movement, as critical for achieving sustainable development.

2. UNFPA contribution to accelerating action and realizing the decade of action and delivery

a. Universal access to Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and eliminating Gender-based Violence (GBV) as an accelerator for sustainable development

- UNFPA's Strategic Plan, 2018-2021, aims to support programme countries to meet their development priorities, focusing on "three transformative results of" - **ending preventable maternal deaths SDG 3.1; ending the unmet need for family planning SDG 3.7; and ending gender-based violence SDG 5.2, and harmful practices including child marriage and female genital mutilation SDG 5.3**. (Please see Annex I for interlinkages between the Three Transformative Results and the SDGs)
- UNFPA has embarked on the first ever costing¹ of how much it would take to achieve its three transformative results - ending preventable maternal death, ending unmet need for family planning and ending gender-based violence and harmful practices globally. **Achieving these in 10 years will cost the world \$264 billion**. This groundbreaking work raises our collective ambition, and imbues the global community with a sense of urgency to close the implementation gap by accelerating the financing momentum (funding to financing) to deliver on these goals by 2030. UNFPA stands ready to share the methodology and results of this costing exercise with the UN System to support the fulfilment of all SDGs.

¹ <https://www.unfpa.org/featured-publication/costing-three-transformative-results>

- We must **invest in human capital throughout the life course of individuals**, particularly **building the capacities of adolescents and youth** and enabling their meaningful engagement and leadership in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes, such as those related to job-creation and employment, with a view towards realizing their full potential. As young people state ‘nothing about them without them’ - they need to be the drivers of their own destiny where along their journey they can share and mature their ideas to spearhead innovative solutions that respond to their generations needs and priorities. UNFPA has recently developed a youth strategy ‘My Body, My Life, My World’ as a contribution to the broader UN efforts to implement the UN's Youth Strategy.
- **Women’s and girls’ rights and well-being are central to the long-term welfare of humanity.** Yet we have gained little ground in the effort to end gender-based violence (GBV) and harmful practices against women and girls. Despite rhetoric at all levels, gender-based violence and harmful practices against women and girls continues in every country, and conflict, displacement and pandemics can increase the risk of GBV. GBV prevention and response services, including referral pathways remain inadequate, especially in humanitarian and fragile settings. Access to justice and enforcement of laws is uneven, and security for women and girls remains elusive. As part of the **Spotlight Initiative**, a global multi-year partnership between the European Union and United Nations, UNFPA is partnering with other UN sister agencies in implementing large-scale investments to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls by 2030.
- The launch of the **SDG3 Global Action Plan** is of particular importance in enhancing the momentum for implementation of the Political Declaration on Universal Health Coverage, which includes ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights (SRHR). This provides a golden opportunity for countries to move to scale on SRHR interventions for their populations throughout the life course, from infancy to childhood through adolescence and into adulthood and old age.

b. Availability and use of Data as a critical accelerator for the SDGs

- **Quality, disaggregated population data** is essential for empowerment, inclusion and equality. UNFPA as a lead population data agency (capitalizing on long-standing support to **population censuses and demographic intelligence**) is working with countries and the United Nations system to build stronger population data systems that can reach the furthest behind and leave no one behind
- The 2030 Agenda marks huge progress in addressing and measuring women’s reproductive rights. For the **first time an international development framework includes targets (SDG 5.6) that address the barriers and human rights-based dimensions of sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights (SRHR)**. UNFPA is the lead agency and custodian for indicators (SDGs 5.6.1, and 5.6.2) and in collaboration with UN sister agencies and partners, has generated an internationally recognised methodology and data on these indicators 5.6.1 and 5.6.2. Having this data and information allows governments to address issues at the heart gender inequality and discrimination, which impede women and girls’ agency, autonomy and empowerment, and ultimately hinder progress on the realization of the Sustainable Development Agenda by 2030. UNFPA continues to support governments to inform policy and societal change, as a next step realisation of universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

- The **Population Data Thematic Fund (PDTF)** proposes key investments to expand the quality and scope of population data within UNFPA programme countries, and to increase the effective use of the data to identify those left behind, inform evidence-based policy and strategies, support UN Common Country Analyses (CCA), and target investments accordingly with the aim to accelerate progress towards the SDGs. **UNFPA recognizes that without quality population data we cannot plan and prioritize for the optimal provision and utilization of quality services, we cannot ensure that people are empowered to exercise their rights, and we cannot fulfil commitments of the 2030 Agenda to “serve first those with the greatest need.”**

3. Suggested key recommendations for the HLPF Political Declaration:

- **Efforts to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will be a critical accelerator for all SDGs** - Gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls is a critical driver for accelerated action on the 2030 Agenda. To that end, the gender equality agenda is indivisible and there must be a “push-back on the push-back” on progress achieved in this agenda. There is **no gender equality without sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights**. Efforts must be made to accelerate the elimination of **all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres**.
- **Addressing the needs of adolescents and youth is a critical lever to leave no one behind** - Supporting adolescents and youth as they go through life’s critical transitions – from adolescence and education to family formation and work to old age – without risk of being derailed by child marriage or teenage pregnancy, maternal mortality or morbidity, exposure to harmful practices, conflict, violence or displacement, or the pain of discrimination - will be critical in supporting the achievement of the SDGs. More efforts are required to provide children, adolescents and youth with a **nurturing environment for the full realization of their rights and capabilities, supporting countries to reap the demographic dividend**.
- **Due attention to population dynamics and trends is essential to the development of appropriate policies to support SDG implementation and acceleration** - Sub-Regional, national, regional and global population trends and projections are critical inputs into effective policy making in support of the 2030 Agenda. Governments should prioritize and increase public investments (technical, human and financial resources) in **population data systems**, including the **2020 round of census**, which will provide the most robust basis for data disaggregation. High quality geospatial data and new estimation methods offer new tools for identifying inequalities and better distributing national services to improve access to basic services.
- **The full and effective implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) will be a key driver for the decade of action’s efforts to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and the pledge to leave no one behind**.

Annex I - Interlinkages between the Three Transformative Results and the SDGs

A wide range of research shows the centrality of health (SDG 3) and gender equality (SDG 5) to poverty reduction and prosperity (SDG 1). Reductions in maternal mortality and morbidity through improvements in health have had significant impacts on economic growth and poverty reduction in low and middle-income countries (SDG 1, 8).² Poor health reduces children's ability to attend school, their performance and future earnings (SDG 4,8).³ Within the arena of sexual and reproductive health, the HIV epidemic resulted in a decline in the agricultural workforce of 12 high-prevalence countries by three to 10 percent, contributing to food shortages and poverty.⁴ (SDG 1, 2,) Unplanned pregnancy can increase household poverty, perpetuating intergenerational cycles of inequality and deprivation.⁵ SDG (1, 10). Death and disability from unsafe abortion, and lack of access to post abortion care, result in an estimated five million years of lost productive life annually (SDG 8).⁶ Overall, sexual and reproductive health-related illness represents approximately 14 percent of the global burden of disease⁷, and pregnancy and childbirth are the leading cause of death among girls aged 15-19 globally⁸

Gender inequality continues to be a major driver of poverty. (SDGs 1, 5) Entrenched social norms and values, and power structures hold girls and women back, including assumptions and expectations of women as men's subordinates and of women's role as only caregivers and mothers.⁹ Women and girls' lack of autonomy and decision making over their sexual and reproductive health can severely limit their health and economic outcomes, and in the most severe cases, their lives, through death from gender based violence and preventable causes during pregnancy and in childbirth. Child marriage and adolescent pregnancy can not only limit or end girls' education and thereby their economic potential but they preclude women and girls from participating in the marketplace for years.¹⁰ (SDGs 5, 3, 1, 4, 8). Closing the gender gap in labour force participation could increase global GDP by nearly 12% by 2030 (SDGs 5, 8).¹¹ Women and girls bear a disproportionate burden of unpaid care and household work, which undermines their access to education and the labour market. Reducing this burden has the potential to increase agricultural labour productivity by 15% and capital productivity by as much as 44% in some countries. (SDGs 5, 8, 10)¹².

² Lancet, Dec 2013. Global health 2035: a world converging within a generation.

³ Stenberg, K et al. (2013). Advancing social and economic development by investing in women's and children's health: a new Global Investment Framework. *The Lancet*, Volume 383, No. 9925, p1333–1354, 12 April 2014.

⁴ UNAIDS (2006) Report of the Global AIDS Epidemic, UNAIDS: Geneva.

⁵ Hakkert, R, JM Guzman, M Herrmann and D Schensul (2012). "Impacts of Population Dynamics, Reproductive Health and Gender on Poverty." UNFPA Working Paper.

⁶ Singh, S (2006). Hospital admissions resulting from unsafe abortion: estimates from 13 developing countries, *The Lancet*, Volume 368, Issue 9550, Pages 1887 - 1892, 25 November 2006.

⁷ Global Burden of Disease database, 2013.

⁸ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescents-health-risks-and-solutions>

⁹ Clinton, Hillary (2014) Unfinished business for the world's women in *The Economist*, The World in 2015 edition, Nov 20, 2014. Based on OECD projections of increased female labour participation in OECD member states - see Gender Dynamics: How Can Countries Close the Economic Gender Gap?, speech by OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland, 25 January 2013.

¹⁰ International Center for Research on Women, "Too Young to Wed," p. 6.

¹¹ Clinton, Hillary (2014) Unfinished business for the world's women in *The Economist*, The World in 2015 edition, Nov 20, 2014. Based on OECD projections of increased female labour participation in OECD member states - see Gender Dynamics: How Can Countries Close the Economic Gender Gap?, speech by OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría at the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland, 25 January 2013.

¹² OECD (2009) Gender and Sustainable Development: Maximizing the Economic, Social and Environmental Role of Women.