

NORTHWEST MODEL UNITED NATIONS



PORTLAND



Background Guide for the
UN Population Fund
(UNFPA)

December 1, 2014

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to **Northwest Model United Nations – Portland 2015** (NWMUN-Portland 2015) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The UNFPA committee staff consists of Director Whitney Thompson and Assistant Director Caitlin Pallai. They, along with the rest of the Secretariat, are very excited to work with you in February and appreciate the hard work and research you are undertaking in preparation for what we are confident will be a great conference!

We are immensely pleased to present to you the background guide, written by the United Nations Population Fund committee staff. The topics for the United Nations Population Fund are:

- I. HIV/AIDS and Young People
- II. Adolescent Girls and Child Marriages

Every participating delegation is required to submit a position paper prior to attending the conference. NWMUN will accept position papers until **Friday, January 23rd at 11:59 pm Pacific Time. Please submit all position papers to unfpa.portland@nwmun.org AND positionpapers.portland@nwmun.org.**

Please refer to the following pages for position paper requirements, as well as an example position paper. Delegates' adherence to these guidelines is crucial, because it not only ensures a well-prepared committee, but is also a key component of the evaluation process.

We wish each of you the best as you prepare for this conference and committee. We urge you to move beyond the background guide as you learn more about both the Member State you will represent and the topics we will be discussing. Please do not hesitate to direct any questions or concerns towards your Director or the Director-General. We look forward to meeting you at the conference!

Sincerely,

Whitney Thompson
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Amanda Wong
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NWMUN-Portland 2015
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Position Paper Guidelines

Your position paper should consist of a well-developed introduction and a summary of the position of your country on each of the topics to be discussed in your committee. It is important to remember that while you will have lots of information on your country's actions on a local or national level, you must discuss your country's position on an international level, particularly including suggestions for policies and future action that could be taken by the committee. Examples of high quality position papers are available on the NWMUN website under "Delegate Preparation."

Formatting

Position papers should be formatted using the following specifications:

1. Times New Roman
2. Size 10 – 12 font
3. Single spaced
4. 2 pages in length

Please Note: Anything over two pages will not be read.

Submission Process

NWMUN-Portland will accept position papers until **Friday January 23, 2015 at 11:59 pm Pacific Time.**

1. Please **send each position paper in a separate e-mail to the committee** with the subject line: COUNTRY – COMMITTEE
 - a. Example: BELARUS – HRC
 - b. Example: TRINIDAD & TOBAGO – GA
2. Please **CC all position paper submissions** to positionpapers.portland@nwmun.org.

General Assembly Plenary:	ga.portland@nwmun.org
United Nations Human Settlements Programme:	unhabitat.portland@nwmun.org
United Nations Population Fund:	unfpa.portland@nwmun.org
Security Council:	sc.portland@nwmun.org

Please Note: Delegates who have not submitted a position paper by the specified deadline will not be given consideration for awards.

Content Requirements

Position papers should include, and will be graded, on the following items:

1. **Formatting** and presentation;
2. **Spelling and grammar that is reflective of the level of education** being pursued by attendees to the conference.
3. The content should include:
 - a. **Background information on the topic**, why your country thinks it is important, relevant national commitments and action on the issue. Remember to focus on national policies which influence your country's action on this topic within the UN and internationally.
 - b. **International commitments and your country's support of specific resolutions**, initiatives, conventions or treaties. Describe what actions have been taken by your country to address prior international agreements made by your country.
 - c. **Specific and concrete proposals** for next steps on the topic, priority issues, and how your country can move forward on addressing the topic. This is the most important section of the position paper, and should be the longest paragraph.

Research Tips

1. Look for statements made by your country – you will often find the exact position of your country within a speech that they have been made.
2. Look for the voting record of your country, which indicates its support or lack of support for particular resolutions on the topics when they were previously discussed.
3. Look for recommendations made in Secretary-General reports or within resolutions that have been adopted in order to identify the ways in which you can move forward or take action on the topic.

Key Resources

1. **UN Website “On the Record”**: <http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/unms/>
This website provides direct access to official documents reflecting the views of United Nations Member States.
2. **UN Website “Global Issues”**: <http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/>
This website offers an overview of some of the global issues we will be discussing at NWMUN, and links to other resources where you can get additional information.
3. **UN Population Fund Website**: <http://www.unfpa.org/>
This is the official website of the United Nations Population Fund. Included in this website is information on the UNFPA's mandate, structure, role within the broader United Nations, and its powers and functions. Delegates can also use it to find past documentation of the work of the UNFPA.

Sample Format & Content of Position Papers

Delegation from

(Bold, Italicized, Times New Roman, Size 10-12)

[Member State]

(Bold, Times New Roman, Size 10-12)

Delegation from

(Bold, Italicized, Times New Roman, Size 10-12)

[Member State]

(Bold, Times New Roman, Size 10-12)

Position Paper for [Committee Name]

(Bold, Italicized, Times New Roman, Size 10-12, Centered)

Introductory sentence providing an overview of the topics and, if appropriate, your delegation's relationship with the committee. (Times New Roman, Size 10 – 12)

I. Topic One Title

(Bold, Italicized, Times New Roman, Size 10-12, Centered)

Paragraph #1: Background information on the topic, why your country thinks it is important, relevant national commitments and action on the issue. Remember to focus on national policies which influence your country's action on this topic within the UN and internationally.

(Times New Roman, Size 10 – 12)

Paragraph #2: International commitments and your country's support of specific resolutions, initiatives, conventions or treaties. Describe what actions have been taken by your country to address prior international agreements made by your country (Times New Roman, Size 10 – 12)

Paragraph #3: Specific and concrete proposals for next steps on the topic, priority issues, and how your country can move forward on addressing the topic. This is the most important section of the position paper, and should be the longest paragraph. (Times New Roman, Size 10 – 12)

II. Topic Two Title

(Bold, Italicized, Times New Roman, Size 10-12, Centered)

Paragraph #1: Background information on the topic, why your country thinks it is important, relevant national commitments and action on the issue. Remember to focus on national policies which influence your country's action on this topic within the UN and internationally.

(Times New Roman, Size 10 – 12)

Paragraph #2: International commitments and your country's support of specific resolutions, initiatives, conventions or treaties. Describe what actions have been taken by your country to address prior international agreements made by your country (Times New Roman, Size 10 – 12)

Paragraph #3: Specific and concrete proposals for next steps on the topic, priority issues, and how your country can move forward on addressing the topic. This is the most important section of the position paper, and should be the longest paragraph. (Times New Roman, Size 10 – 12)

(Repeat the topic header and content for other topics if your committee has more than two.)

Example Position Paper

Delegation from
Canada

Represented by
University of Southern Washington

Position Paper for the Economic and Social Council Plenary

The topics before the Economic and Social Council are: 1) Promoting Economic and Social Gender Equality as a Means to Achieve Sustainable Peace, 2) Implementing International Agreements to Ensure Global Public Health, and 3) Promoting Sustainable Cities. Canada is committed to strengthening the role of ECOSOC on the issues before it, and looks forward to promoting enhanced cooperation among Member States in order to reach consensus and take concrete action.

I. Promoting Economic and Social Gender Equality as a Means to Achieve Sustainable Peace

In conflict and post-conflict societies, economic and social rights are often given lower priority than political and civil rights. In these cases, women are not treated equally, and are often the victims of gender discrimination, which manifests itself in violations of human rights such as rape, violence and displacement. The prevalence of these crimes is exacerbated by a lack of protection for women, who often do not possess the right to own land, have no means to receive adequate health care and have no access to justice.

Canada has long been a champion of women's economic, social, and cultural rights. As an original signatory of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (CESCR), and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Canada has a formal commitment to gender equality and, more specifically, supports the explicit and systematic integration of a gender perspective into all peace-building and foreign aid initiatives. Canada continues to press for specific initiatives with concrete and measurable outcomes when addressing gender inequality. The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has developed its own Framework for Addressing Gender Equality Results. This framework has been an important advance in assessing the effectiveness of its initiatives and has consistently provided CIDA with useful and relevant data. Canada recognizes the advancements made in Security Council resolution 1820 (2008), 1888 (2009) and 1889 (2009) to strengthen the original principals of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000). However, Canada firmly believes that ensuring the implementation of SCR 1325 (2000) at the national level is vital. That is why Canada suggests that the CEDAW committee issue recommendations to both the Security Council and ECOSOC on positive models for National Action Plans (NAP) for incorporating SCR 1325 (2000), a set of progress and impact indicators through which its implementation can be monitored, and benchmarks designed towards strengthening the principals of SCR 1325 (2000).

Canada recommends that the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), along with the ECOSOC Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) reach out to local NGOs and civil society organizations (CSOs) to coordinate the monitoring of, and reporting on, the progress of these NAPs. CSW will then report its findings to ECOSOC, the Security Council, and the Secretary-General. Canada urges for the adoption of benchmarks requiring 30% of UN-mandated peacekeeping forces and negotiating delegations be women. Canada also believes that while peacekeeping troops are vital to facilitating the cessation of hostilities, a separate unit with a specialized mandate is necessary to deal with

the psychological and health issues of women that continue in post-conflict situations long after the violence is over. The specialized mandate will also lay the groundwork for legal procedures that may need to be taken to ensure just peace. Canada calls for the creation of this specially trained unit to be deployed in post-conflict situations, with a specific mandate to address sexual and gender based violence, help to eliminate impunity, and offer same-sex interviewers for rehabilitation purposes. The newly created unit will facilitate reconciliation and violence prevention.

II. Implementing International Agreements to Ensure Global Public Health

Effectively addressing global public health lies at the center of achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Through agreements such as the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the Accra Agenda for Action (AAA), and global health initiatives such as the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunizations (GAVI), and the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB, and Malaria, the international community has made significant progress in addressing the world's health concerns. Canada is focused on creating frameworks and resolutions that foster greater coordination, eliminate corruption and overlap, improve AID consistency, encourage the untying of AID, emphasize a focus on national health systems, and hold all the countries involved accountable for producing tangible and measurable results.

Canada has been a leader in the use of innovative funding mechanisms, such as the Advance Market Commitment (AMC), which provides incentives for pharmaceutical companies to accelerate the development of vaccines and sell them at prices that poor countries can afford. This project, which is being implemented in coordination with the World Bank and GAVI, is expected to save an estimated 7.7 million lives by 2030. Canada will continue to urge its fellow member states to become more involved in the creation and implementation of such innovative funding mechanisms.

Especially now, due to the downturn in the global economy, where the world's poor are disproportionately suffering, there is a greater need for all donor countries to fulfill their Official Development Aid (ODA) commitments. Canada was the first country to fulfill its G8 commitment to double ODA in Africa by 2008, and throughout the world by 2010. This has been accomplished through both the African Health Systems Initiative (AHSI) and the Catalytic Initiative to Save a Million Lives. Canada has not only committed USD 450 million to these initiatives, but with them has demonstrated its focus on both strengthening, and developing local ownership, of national health systems. Canada urges the implementation of year-by-year funding targets to ensure that ODA commitments for health initiatives are kept. Currently The Measles Initiative is facing a funding gap of \$59 million for 2010, and the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB, and Malaria is also facing a funding crisis of \$5 billion for this year. These gaps in funding could cause millions their lives. Canada strongly urges it fellow member states to fulfill their commitments to these funds.

Canada is also a strong proponent of the International Health Partnership & Related Initiatives (IHP+). The Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), through the IHP+ framework, is the chair of the Mozambique National AIDS Council (CNCS) and has made long-term financial commitments to IHP+. Canada believes that IHP + will not only prove to be extremely effective in addressing the issues of AID effectiveness, redundancy, and accountability, but will also go a long way towards creating a united front dedicated to improving global public health. Canada urges for the creation of new commitments that compel 15 Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries to join in either bilateral or compact agreements through IHP+ by 2020.

The United Nations Population Fund at NWMUN-Portland 2015

The NWMUN-Portland Secretariat works to create as accurate a simulation as is possible for our delegates. Therefore, we have developed some additional ways for delegates to interact within the simulation, including enabling delegates to take multiple forms of action on an issue, including but not limited to adopting resolutions. This section aims to provide additional, specific information for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) at NWMUN-Portland 2015.

Briefings

When discussing a topic, UNFPA delegates are able to receive briefings from representatives of relevant member states or UN subject matter experts. The specific thematic experts available will be announced on the NWMUN-Portland website, as well as the beginning of the conference.

Mandate

The mandate of UNFPA is:

“[to serve as] the lead UN agency for delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, and every young person's potential is fulfilled.”

Selected Functions & Powers

- Serve as a forum to discuss population issues with a focus on issues related to maternal health, gender equality and young people;
- Participate in conversations and making recommendations to the General Assembly on populations issues;
- Use population data to assist countries with monitoring progress and gaps related to program commitments;
- Submit an annual report to the Economic and Social Council for review the General Assembly.

Outcome Documents

When taking action on a topic, UNFPA can adopt resolutions.

Rules of Procedure

UNFPA will use the standard NWMUN rules of procedure, available on our website under “Delegate Preparation” as well as in printed form at the conference.

Members of UNFPA at NWMUN-Portland 2015

The Executive Board of UNFPA will be simulated at NWMUN-Portland 2015. The members of the UNFPA Executive Board are:

Angola	Finland	Netherlands
Armenia	France	Nicaragua
Belgium	Germany	Niger
Brazil	Guatemala	Norway
Bulgaria	Indonesia	Pakistan
Canada	Iran	Republic of Korea
China	Ireland	Russian Federation
Congo	Lesotho	Sweden
Cuba	Liberia	Switzerland
Ecuador	Montenegro	United Kingdom
Ethiopia	Morocco	United Republic of Tanzania
Fiji	Nepal	United States

Committee History

Introduction

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is the main United Nations (UN) entity that addresses population and development issues.¹ Headquartered in New York, UNFPA has 112 country offices, six regional offices, three sub-regional offices, and three liaison offices.² UNFPA is focused on reproductive health, gender equality and advancing the rights and opportunities of young people.³ In particular, UNFPA has been working to make pregnancies and births safe and healthy for mothers and children, ensure pregnancies are wanted, and increase reproductive health awareness through family planning, preventing human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)/AIDS, and eliminating gender inequalities and violence.⁴ UNFPA works directly in over 150 countries providing guidance and training to governments and its partners in other UN agencies.⁵

Population issues have long been prioritized on the international agenda. On 3 October 1946, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) adopted Resolution 3 (III) creating the Population Commission, which was renamed to the Commission on Population and Development in 1994.⁶ The UN Fund for Population Activities, also known as UNFPA, was founded in 1967 through the adoption of General Assembly resolution 2211 (XXI) titled Population Growth and Economic Development.⁷ The organization began operations in 1969 under the UN Development Programme (UNDP).⁸ General Assembly resolution 3019 (XXVII) (1972) placed the UNFPA under the Authority of the UN General Assembly and established UNDP's Governing Council as the governing body for financial and administrative matters.⁹ In 1987, UNFPA's name changed to "United Nations Population Fund," but the UNFPA abbreviation remained.¹⁰

In 1994, the UN General Assembly adopted resolution 49/128, which discussed the importance of addressing the growing global population.¹¹ This resolution identified the importance of involvement from governments, intergovernmental organizations, and non-governmental organizations in obtaining public support for the goals set forth by the Programme of Action (PoA).¹² In addition, a three-tiered intergovernmental mechanism to monitor the implementation of the PoA was outlined.¹³ Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali designated UNFPA as the lead UN organization for the follow-up and implementation of the PoA from the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), held in Cairo in 1994.¹⁴ The PoA addresses the mandate set forth by the ICPD, which coincides closely with UNFPA's work.¹⁵

Mandate, Structure, Power, and Functions

The mission of UNFPA is to make every pregnancy wanted, for every child birthed to be safer for the mother and baby, and for young people to thrive.¹⁶ UNFPA receives some of its funding through voluntary donor contributions

¹ *Ibid.*

² New Zealand Government, *United Nations Handbook 2014-15*, 2014, p. 245. <http://www.mfat.govt.nz/UNHB2014/UN-Handbook-201415-6Aug-interactive.pdf>

³ UNFPA, *About UNFPA*, n.d. <http://www.unfpa.org/public/home/about>

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *Commission of Population and Development*, n.d. <http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/commission/index.shtml>

⁷ New Zealand Government, *United Nations Handbook 2014-15*, 2014. <http://www.mfat.govt.nz/UNHB2014/UN-Handbook-201415-6Aug-interactive.pdf>

⁸ UNFPA, *UNFPA in the UN System*, n.d. <https://www.unfpa.org/public/about/pid/4629>

⁹ United Nations General Assembly, *United Nations Fund for Population Activities* (3019 XXVII), 18 December 1972.

¹⁰ UNFPA, *UNFPA in the UN System*, n.d. <https://www.unfpa.org/public/about/pid/4629>

¹¹ United Nations General Assembly, *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development* (A/RES/49/128), 19 December 1994. <http://undocs.org/a/res/49/128>

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ UNFPA, *UNFPA in the UN System*, n.d. <https://www.unfpa.org/public/about/pid/4629>

¹⁵ ICPD Report, *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development*, 5-13 September 1994. https://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2004/icpd_eng.pdf

¹⁶ UNFPA, *About UNFPA*, n.d. <http://www.unfpa.org/public/home/about>

from UN Member States, foundations, and private donors.¹⁷ The majority of UNFPA's funding in 2012 was through earmarked funds and substantial voluntary funds with a small portion of other revenue.¹⁸ In 2012, voluntary funding for UNFPA surpassed \$437 million, and the 2012 revenue exceeded \$980 million.¹⁹

UNFPA is involved in debates of GA agenda ideas especially in topics related to population issues, youth, and reproductive health.²⁰ UNFPA collaborates with other agencies including Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UNDP, and the World Health Organization (WHO).²¹ For example, UNFPA and UNICEF co-sponsor the Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting.²² The program has seen the practice of female genital mutilation/cutting be abandoned by 8,000 communities through education and awareness through media, religious and traditional leaders, and legal actions.²³

UNFPA is also a member of the interagency entity, Chief Executives Board (CEB), which works to harmonize efforts between UN organizations by bringing their heads together to discuss substantive matters.²⁴

Membership and Procedure

In 1993, General Assembly resolution 48/162 created the UNFPA Executive Board in order to provide leadership and oversight for all programs.²⁵ The Executive Board consists of 36 country representatives who serve on a rotating basis.²⁶ There are eight African states, seven Asian/Pacific states, five Latin American/Caribbean states, four eastern European states, and 12 western European/other states represented.²⁷ The president of the Executive Board serves for one year; this position rotates between the regions each year.²⁸ The current president is Peter Thomson from Fiji.²⁹

Each year at its substantive meeting, the Executive Board submits a report on its programs and activities.³⁰ This year, the report of decisions adopted by the Executive Board during 2013 acknowledges that UNFPA has become more results-oriented in recent years, including the push towards progress on the ICPD agenda and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).³¹ The report also addresses funding, evaluation processes, existing programs, and much more.³²

¹⁷ UNFPA, *Resources and Management*, n.d. <http://www.unfpa.org/public/home/about/pid/4634>

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ UNFPA, *UNFPA in the UN System*, n.d. <https://www.unfpa.org/public/about/pid/4629>

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² UNFPA, *Rising up for rights of women and girls*, n.d. <http://www.unfpa.org/topics/genderissues/fgm>

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ UNFPA, *UNFPA in the UN System*, n.d. <https://www.unfpa.org/public/about/pid/4629>

²⁵ United Nations General Assembly, *Further measures for the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields*, (A/RES/48/162), 20 December 1993. <http://undocs.org/A/RES/48/162>

²⁶ UNFPA, *Executive Board Overview*, n.d. <http://www.unfpa.org/cms/sites/unfpa/home/about-1/executive-board.html>

²⁷ UNFPA, *Executive Board Membership*, n.d. <http://www.unfpa.org/cms/sites/unfpa/home/about-1/executive-board/membership.html>

²⁸ UNDP, *Rules of Procedure of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, of the United Nations Population Fund and of the United Nations Office for Project Services*, January 2011. http://web.undp.org/execbrd/pdf/Rules_of_Procedure_E.pdf#page=8

²⁹ UNFPA, *Executive Board Membership*, n.d. <http://www.unfpa.org/cms/sites/unfpa/home/about-1/executive-board/membership.html>

³⁰ United Nations General Assembly, *Further measures for the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields*, (A/RES/48/162), 20 December 1993. <http://undocs.org/A/RES/48/162>

³¹ UNFPA, *Compendium of decisions adopted by the Executive Board during 2013*, (DP/2014/2), 4 November 2013. <https://executiveboard.unfpa.org/execDoc.unfpa?method=reportDoc>

³² *Ibid.*

Upcoming Agenda Items

UNFPA Strategic Plan 2014-2017

The UNFPA Strategic Plan for 2014-2017 outlines ideas for changes in the lives of women, adolescents, and youths.³³ Approved by the Executive Board on 19 September 2013, the Strategic Plan is the result of an analytical and consultative process.³⁴ The Strategic Plan is exclusively focused on completing the ICPD goals, with an emphasis on the goals related to sexual and reproductive health and rights.³⁵ At the General Assembly's sixty-ninth session, delegates discussed reproductive health and rights while examining progress on the goals set forth by the ICPD in 1994.³⁶

MDGs 2015 and Beyond

In regards to the MDGs, the UNFPA has been involved in post-thematic consultations on areas that fit within its mission: health, education, population dynamics, and conflict.³⁷ MDG 5, to improve maternal health, is most closely linked to focus of the UNFPA, and is also the MDG furthest away from achieving its 2015 target.³⁸ Although most maternal deaths are preventable, in 2013 nearly 300,000 women died from pregnancy and childbirth related causes.³⁹ The maternal mortality rate is markedly different in different countries, and to date, effective strategies to improve maternal health have not been implemented universally.⁴⁰ The UN has organized many consultations to obtain a diverse array of viewpoints regarding the MDGs since 2012.⁴¹ The UNFPA has pushed for an emphasis on keeping ICPD at the center of goals moving forward.⁴²

As mandated by General Assembly resolution 65/234, UNFPA has worked to review the progress of the goals set out by ICPD while identifying the gaps in progress and noting new obstacles that have arisen in achieving the goals.⁴³ UNFPA's *Global Review Report (A/69/62)* explores five thematic pillars of population and development and notes that dignity and human rights, health, security of place and mobility, governance and accountability, and sustainability are crucial to sustainable development.⁴⁴

The international community, civil society, and private sector have worked together to realize measurable progress towards achieving the MDGs, despite criticism regarding gaps in the MDGs, particularly in terms of the environment.⁴⁵ The 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) called for the cooperative drafting of a set of sustainable development goals (SDGs).⁴⁶ The proposed SDGs were finalized in June 2014; in September the General Assembly decided that they should be the foundation for sustainable development in the post-2015 development agenda after the expiration of the MDGs.⁴⁷ As Wu Hongbo, the Under-Secretary-

³³ UNFPA, *New Strategic Direction*, n.d. <http://www.unfpa.org/public/about/pid/4631>

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ UN Department of Public Information, *Speakers Debate Place of Sexual, Reproductive Rights as General Assembly Charts Progress towards International Population and Development Goals*, 9 October 2014.

<http://www.un.org/press/en/2014/ga11568.doc.htm>

³⁷ UNFPA, *The Post-2015 Development Agenda and a Sustainable Future*, n.d. <http://www.unfpa.org/public/icpd/MDGs>

³⁸ ECOSOC, *The Millennium Development Goals Report*, 2014.

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2014%20MDG%20report/MDG%202014%20English%20web.pdf>

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ UNFPA, *The Post-2015 Development Agenda and a Sustainable Future*, n.d. <http://www.unfpa.org/public/icpd/MDGs>

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ United Nations General Assembly, *Follow up to the International Conference of Population and Development (A/RES/65/234)*, 5 April 2011. <http://undocs.org/A/RES/65/234>

UNFPA, *The Post-2015 Development Agenda and a Sustainable Future*, n.d. <http://www.unfpa.org/public/icpd/MDGs>

⁴⁴ International Conference of Population and Development Beyond 2014, *Population Development: The Five Pillar Breakdown*, n.d. <http://icpdbeyond2014.org/rights-development>

⁴⁵ ECOSOC, *The Millennium Development Goals Report*, 2014.

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2014%20MDG%20report/MDG%202014%20English%20web.pdf>

UNEP, *SDGs and the Post-2015 Development Agenda, including Sustainable Consumption and Production*, n.d.

<http://www.unep.org/unea/sdg.asp>

⁴⁶ UNEP, *SDGs and the Post-2015 Development Agenda, including Sustainable Consumption and Production*, n.d.

<http://www.unep.org/unea/sdg.asp>

⁴⁷ General Assembly, *Draft resolution A/68/L.61*, 2014. http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/68/L.61&Lang=E

General for Economic and Social Affairs, wrote in the 2014 Millennium Development Goal Report, “continued progress towards the MDGs in the remaining year is essential to provide a solid foundation for the post-2015 development agenda.”⁴⁸

Conclusion

UNFPA works to address global population and development issues and within the context of the ICPD, PoA, and the MDG, the UNFPA focuses on gender equality and reproductive health. There have been structural changes since the operations began in 1969. As the deadlines near for the MDGs, and looking at the ICPD for 2014 and beyond, UNFPA’s role is integral in progress for the future. Regular assessment of these concrete goals through UN reports will continue to serve as a barometer for progress.

⁴⁸ ECOSOC, *The Millennium Development Goals Report*, 2014.

<http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2014%20MDG%20report/MDG%202014%20English%20web.pdf>

Topic I: HIV/AIDS and Young People

Introduction

Youth, today, have grown up in a world where the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) has always existed. Despite the fact that HIV is a truly global pandemic, young people do not always have access to the knowledge or resources needed to curb the spread of HIV.⁴⁹ Young people are in the center of the HIV crisis worldwide as they both experience high infection rates and have great potential to create change in this problem.⁵⁰ Young people have the highest rate of infection with more than 50% of all new infections occurring in people aged 15 to 24.⁵¹ In 2012, it was estimated that 2.1 million young people were living with HIV, the majority of which are in sub-Saharan African and South Asia.⁵² Young people are a highly diverse group, with an array of age, sex, religion, socioeconomic status, work status, marital and domestic arrangements, and other factors.⁵³ This diversity puts some sub-sets of young people, like injecting drug users, at greater risk for contracting HIV.⁵⁴ Further, young people suffer from the economic, social, and cultural impact that HIV has on their communities, negatively impacting their development.⁵⁵ Despite the efforts that have already been made to educate young people and involve them in prevention efforts, there are still gaps to fill.

The World Health Organization (WHO) categorizes HIV as a virus that “infects cells of the immune system, destroying or impairing their function.”⁵⁶ The virus, once infecting an individual, causes “the progressive deterioration of the immune system, leading to ‘immune deficiency’.”⁵⁷ HIV can be spread through unprotected sexual intercourse; oral sex; transfusion of contaminated blood; the sharing of contaminated needles, syringes or other sharp instruments; or between a mother and her infant during pregnancy, childbirth and breastfeeding.⁵⁸ In young people, the virus is most often spread through unprotected sexual activity and the sharing of drug injection equipment.⁵⁹

Antiretroviral therapy (ART) is a life-saving treatment for people who have contracted HIV.⁶⁰ In 2013, only 24% of the world’s children with HIV were receiving ART.⁶¹ Statistically, the number of HIV-related deaths overall, has decreased, however the number of HIV deaths among adolescents is on the rise, currently ranking as the second leading cause of deaths among adolescents.⁶²

Given the current situation, there is a global consensus that young people must be at the center, both as participants in the planning process, and as the focus, of prevention strategies, in order meet the specific needs of young people.⁶³ With a mandate to protect reproductive health in mind, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) undertakes crucial work to enhance the opportunities that young people have to live healthy lives.⁶⁴

⁴⁹ UNFPA, *Preventing HIV*, n.d. <http://www.unfpa.org/hiv/people.htm>

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ UNICEF, *Young People and HIV/AIDS: Opportunity and Crisis*, 2002, p. 5. http://data.unaids.org/topics/young-people/youngpeoplehiv_aids_en.pdf

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ UNFPA, *Preventing HIV*, n.d. <http://www.unfpa.org/hiv/people.htm>

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ WHO, *HIV/AIDS*, 2014. <http://www.who.int/features/qa/71/en/>

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Family Health International, *Young People Most at Risk of HIV*, 2010, p. 20. <http://www.fhi360.org/resource/young-people-most-risk-hiv>

⁶⁰ United States of America, *The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and Children's Investment Fund Foundation Launch \$200 million Accelerating Children's HIV/AIDS Treatment Initiative (ACT) to Save Lives*, 2014. <http://www.pepfar.gov/press/releases/2014/230334.htm>

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² WHO, *WHO Calls for Strong Focus on Adolescent Health*, 2014. <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2014/focus-adolescent-health/en/>

⁶³ Family Health International, *Young People Most at Risk of HIV*, 2010, p. 20. <http://www.fhi360.org/resource/young-people-most-risk-hiv>

⁶⁴ UNFPA, *Preventing HIV*, 2014. <http://www.unfpa.org/hiv/people.htm>

International Framework

Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) declares, “everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family.”⁶⁵ Building on this, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), adopted in 1966, states that everyone has a right to enjoy physical and mental health.⁶⁶

Grounded in this framework, in 1994, the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) adopted resolution 1994/24 that began the creation of the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the first United Nations (UN) entity to focus exclusively on HIV/AIDS.⁶⁷ The governing body, the Programme Coordinating Board (PCB), has representatives of 22 governments from all regions of the world, the eleven UNAIDS co-sponsors, including UNFPA and five NGOs.⁶⁸ The inclusion of NGOs is particularly notable; UNAIDS was the first UN entity to include civil society organizations as full members of their governing board. The original co-sponsors formed UNAIDS in 1996 with the mission to guide, strengthen, and support worldwide efforts to promote change against the HIV/AIDS epidemic.⁶⁹ UNFPA was one of the original six co-sponsors of the creation of UNAIDS.⁷⁰

With a rich history of focusing on the right to health and the development of partnerships, health continues to be a priority for the UN. At the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, 179 countries signed onto the Programme of Action, which set to provide universal access to reproductive health services.⁷¹ Reproductive health problems, or problems related to reproductive systems or sexual health, are the leading cause in death and poor health for young women of childbearing age; this includes poor health and death caused by HIV/AIDS.⁷²

In 2000, at the Millennium Summit, 189 Member States ratified The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).⁷³ These goals were based on the ICPD Programme of Action (PoA) and benchmarks, which were added at the ICPD +5 review in 2005.⁷⁴ The PoA set to provide universal access to reproductive health services, increase gender equality, address the impacts of urbanization and migration, and support sustainable development.⁷⁵ MDG 6 focuses on the preventing the spread of communicable diseases, and Goal 6b focuses solely on the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS.⁷⁶ The MDGs aim by 2015 to halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS using the prevalence of HIV among pregnant 15–24 year olds as an indicator and achieve universal access to treatment for those living with HIV.⁷⁷

The UNAIDS Strategy (2011-2015) complements the MDGs, and is working to meet those goals by 2015 and includes goals for treatment and prevention; some of the goals include providing universal access for antiretroviral therapy to eligible people living with HIV, preventing all new HIV cases for young people by way of drug injections, and reducing the transmission of HIV through sexual intercourse by half.⁷⁸

⁶⁵ United Nations General Assembly, *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 10 December 1948.

<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

⁶⁶ OHCHR, *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, 3 January 1976.

<http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cescr.aspx>

⁶⁷ ECOSOC, *Joint and co-sponsored United Nations Programme on human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) (1994/24)*, 26 July 1994. <http://www.un.org/documents/ecosoc/res/1994/eres1994-24.htm>

⁶⁸ UNAIDS, *NGO/Civil Society Participation in PCB*, n.d.

<http://www.unaids.org/en/aboutunaids/unaidsprogrammeordinatingboard/ngocivilsocietyparticipationinpcb/>

⁶⁹ UNAIDS, *Uniting the World Against AIDS*, 2010.

http://www.unaids.org/en/media/unaids/contentassets/dataimport/pub/outlook/2010/20101013_unaidsmission_en.pdf

⁷⁰ ECOSOC, *Joint and co-sponsored United Nations Programme on human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) (1994/24)*, 26 July 1994. <http://www.un.org/documents/ecosoc/res/1994/eres1994-24.htm>

⁷¹ UNFPA, *International Conference on Population and Development – ICPD – Programme of Action*, 1995.

<http://www.unfpa.org/public/icpd>

⁷² UNFPA, *Improving Reproductive Health*, n.d. <http://www.unfpa.org/rh/index.htm>

⁷³ UNFPA, *ICPD: International Conference on Population and Development*, n.d. <http://www.unfpa.org/public/icpd>

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ ECOSOC, *Millennium Development Goals and Beyond*, n.d. <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/aids.shtml>

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ UNAIDS, *UNAIDS Strategy 2011-2015*, n.d. <http://www.unaids.org/en/aboutunaids/unaidstrategygoalsby2015/>

The MDGs and the post-2015 development agenda closely relate to the UNFPA's mission and further link to the issue of HIV/AIDS. The MDGs, which are intended to help the world's poorest countries, were designed to be achievable and measurable development markers.⁷⁹ UNFPA is working with a broad coalition of partners to ensure that the principles of the ICPD and the MDGs, including the emphasis on the right of all individuals to sexual and reproductive health services, remain a focus for any future development agenda.⁸⁰ Moving forward, it will be necessary to expand the range of the MDG 6 focusing on curbing the spread of HIV, to include additional areas of health.⁸¹ Although much notable progress has been made on the MDG agenda, there is agreement that the goals will not be completed by 2015.⁸² The proposed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) addresses healthy lives for all ages with SDG 3; the General Assembly has decided these goals will be the foundation for sustainable development in the development agenda beyond 2015.⁸³

UNFPA Strategies

There are four areas that WHO, UNFPA, and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) emphasized as important for the health and development of young people.⁸⁴ These areas are comprehensive health information and life skills; services, including counseling and commodities; safe and supportive environments; and opportunities for participation in the social change.⁸⁵

UNFPA focuses on prevention through educational campaigns and capacity -building particularly for women, girls, and young people.⁸⁶ Within UNAIDS, for example, UNFPA was given the lead responsibility for HIV prevention among sex workers starting in 2005.⁸⁷ Another example of UNFPA's programming can be seen in the campaign entitled "CONDOMIZE!," which, founded in 2010 as a joint effort between UNFPA, the Condom Project, UNAIDS, and the Condom Interagency Task Team, had the goal of reducing condom stigma and providing access to quality condoms.⁸⁸ Using attractive marketing targeted at young people to encourage condom use, the CONDOMIZE! campaign calls on local governments to increase access to condoms as a primary defense against the spread of HIV.⁸⁹ Despite interest in the campaign, lack of funding has been an obstacle and limits the program from expanding.⁹⁰

UNFPA has a five-pronged method for engaging children and young people to participate in programs that benefit young people.⁹¹ The approach includes providing evidence and promoting changes at the local levels; providing sexuality education to young people; increasing the capacity for sexual health education to make it approachable for young people; actively reaching marginalized populations of young people, with an emphasis on girls; and promoting youth leadership.⁹² A side event for young leaders was held in conjunction with the 2011 High Level Meeting on AIDS and emphasized how young people can provide meaningful contributions to HIV initiatives.⁹³ The youth conference had a lot of discussion and came to the clear consensus that it is essential for young people to

⁷⁹ UNFPA, *ICPD: International Conference on Population and Development*, n.d. <http://www.unfpa.org/public/icpd>

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ WHO, *HIV, Universal Health Coverage, and The Post-2015 Development Agenda*, p. 9.

http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/128120/1/9789241507530_eng.pdf?ua=1

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ General Assembly, *Draft resolution A/68/L.61*, 2014. http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/68/L.61&Lang=E

⁸⁴ Family Health International, *Young People Most at Risk of HIV*, 2010. <http://www.fhi360.org/resource/young-people-most-risk-hiv>

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ UNFPA, *Protecting the Health of Women and Girls*, n.d. <http://www.unfpa.org/hiv/women.htm>

UNFPA, *Preventing HIV*, n.d. <http://www.unfpa.org/hiv/>

⁸⁷ UNFPA, *Protecting the Health of Women and Girls*, n.d. <http://www.unfpa.org/hiv/women.htm>

⁸⁸ The CONDOMIZE! Campaign, *About*, n.d. <http://www.thecondomizecampaign.org/Default.aspx>

⁸⁹ UNFPA, *Condomize! Campaign Hits AIDS 2012*, 24 July 2012. <http://www.unfpa.org/public/home/news/pid/11538>

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ UNFPA, *UNFPA Strategy on Adolescents and Youth*, 2013.

<http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/youth/UNFPA%20Adolescents%20and%20Youth%20Strategy.pdf>

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ UNAIDS, *Young People in the AIDS Response: Taking the Lead*, 9 June 2011.

<http://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/featurestories/2011/june/20110609eyoungpeople/>

be at the center of the global response to HIV/AIDS.⁹⁴ In 2011, the General Assembly adopted Resolution 65/277, “Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: Intensifying Our Efforts to Eliminate HIV and AIDS;” this resolution reaffirms the important role of the family and young people in planning, implementing and evaluating HIV prevention and treatment programs.⁹⁵

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have played a vital role, thus far, in efforts to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Through organizations such as YouthForce, young people have worked to spread knowledge to communities by specifically targeting schools, orphanages, and clinics to raise awareness about prevention and treatments.⁹⁶ YouthForce provides training to young people to advocate on issues relevant to youth, such as the rights of young people with HIV.⁹⁷ When young people are providing the services, the targeted audience of their peers feel more connected.⁹⁸ Education has proven to be an effective means of preventing new cases of HIV.⁹⁹ Educated women are more likely to know how to prevent HIV infection and to take measures to protect themselves including delaying sexual activity and using condoms during sexual intercourse.¹⁰⁰ Studies have indicated that reproductive health education also makes men more receptive to HIV prevention measures, including condoms.¹⁰¹ Furthermore, young people have been effective in working to develop education methods that their peers will connect with to promote safe sex practices. One example of youth involvement is through participation in conferences, like the International AIDS Conference as Youth Advocates.¹⁰²

Key Issues

Poverty, gender inequality, and social marginalization of key populations impact the spread of HIV/AIDS and the treatment of those living with the infection.¹⁰³ When facing this issue, there are structural and societal factors that increase a young person’s vulnerability to HIV.¹⁰⁴

Poverty and Risky Behavior

Although poverty cannot be tied directly to the spread of HIV, a correlation can be made between poverty and risky behaviors.¹⁰⁵ Poverty can leave young people, especially girls and young women, vulnerable to exploitation, including human trafficking, sex-work, and early marriage.¹⁰⁶ The risky behaviors that increase the risk of HIV, including injecting drugs and sex-work, are often illegal, and young people face greater social stigmas than adults when participating in these risky behaviors.¹⁰⁷ Also, men who have unprotected sex with men are at increased risk for HIV since physiologically receptive anal intercourse is five times more likely to transmit HIV than receptive vaginal intercourse.¹⁰⁸

⁹⁴ UNAIDS, *Young People in the AIDS Response: Taking the Lead*, 9 June 2011.

<http://www.unaids.org/en/resources/presscentre/featurestories/2011/june/20110609eyoungpeople/>

⁹⁵ United Nations General Assembly, *Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS: Intensifying Our Efforts to Eliminate HIV and AIDS (A/RES/65/277)*, 8 July 2011. <http://undocs.org/A/RES/65/277>

⁹⁶ UNFPA, *What Works in HIV Prevention Engaging Young People*, 2006. <http://www.unfpa.org/public/global/pid/189>

⁹⁷ UNAIDS, *The Power of Youth at AIDS 2008*, 25 July 2008.

<http://www.unaids.org/en/Resources/PressCentre/Featurestories/2008/July/20080725YouthForcePowerYouthAIDS2008/>

⁹⁸ Family Health International, *Young People Most at Risk of HIV*, 2010, p. 16. <http://www.fhi360.org/resource/young-people-most-risk-hiv>

⁹⁹ UNFPA, *Women and HIV/AIDS: Confronting the Crisis*, n.d. <https://www.unfpa.org/hiv/women/report/chapter5.html>

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² UNFPA, *What Works in HIV Prevention Engaging Young People*, 2006. <http://www.unfpa.org/public/global/pid/189>

¹⁰³ UNFPA, *Promoting Equity for Children in a World with HIV and AIDS*, 2012, p. 3.

¹⁰⁴ Family Health International, *Young People Most at Risk of HIV*, 2010. <http://www.fhi360.org/resource/young-people-most-risk-hiv>

¹⁰⁵ UNICEF, *Promoting Equity for Children in a World with HIV and AIDS*, 2012, p. 3.

http://www.unicef.org/aids/files/PromotingEquity_Final.pdf

UNAIDS, *Redefining AIDS in Asia*, 2008, p. 107.

http://data.unaids.org/pub/report/2008/20080326_report_commission_aids_en.pdf

¹⁰⁶ UNFPA, *Poverty and AIDS: What Really Drives the Epidemic?*, n.d. <http://www.unfpa.org/conversations/facts.html>

¹⁰⁷ UNAIDS, *Prevention, Treatment, Care and Support for Young People*, 2011, p. 1.

http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/iattyp/docs/Technical_Guidance_HIV_Young_People_en.pdf

¹⁰⁸ Family Health International, *Young People Most at Risk of HIV*, 2010, p. 29. <http://www.fhi360.org/resource/young-people-most-risk-hiv>

Lack of familial support; exposure to sexual violence or human trafficking; lack of information, education, and health services; and social norms that encourage at risk behaviors are all be factors that can increase a young person's likelihood to participate in behaviors that place them at higher risk for contracting HIV.¹⁰⁹ For example, young girls marrying older men are at an increased risk for HIV; these girls are often not in a position to participate with their husbands in reproductive/family planning decisions.¹¹⁰ HIV has a negative financial impact and causes families to become further impoverished.¹¹¹ It is estimated that in Asia alone HIV/AIDS will cause 6 million households to fall below the poverty line by 2015 from the increased medical costs and the inability of ill family members to find employment.¹¹² Families impacted by HIV bear 90% "of the costs of responding to the impact of the epidemic."¹¹³

Young people are impacted when parents or other family members contract the virus.¹¹⁴ Children orphaned by AIDS are at a greater risk for malnutrition, illness, and exploitation than children orphaned by other causes.¹¹⁵ Young people who do not have parental care are at an increased risk for HIV infection.¹¹⁶ Young people may be forced to leave the home to look for work, leading to more vulnerability and risky behavior.¹¹⁷ Orphaned children, or those forced to become caretakers for ill parents, often drop out of school and thus end up trapped in poverty.¹¹⁸

Lack of Access to Health Education, Prevention, and Medical Treatment

Treatment and counseling for young people living with HIV is not universally accessible.¹¹⁹ In addition to the lack of facilities to provide treatment and counseling on reproductive health, young people face additional obstacles.¹²⁰ Local laws, such as parental consent laws, may prevent young people from accessing the services that they need for HIV testing and treatment.¹²¹ Sex workers are subject to social stigmas and discrimination that prevent them from accessing the health services they need.¹²² Providing accessible reproductive health services to prevent HIV, as well as reducing the stigma for treatments for HIV, is a key issue of HIV/AIDS among young people.¹²³ In areas without consistent prenatal care, young women living with HIV may not have access to information and treatments that could keep their infants from contracting the virus.¹²⁴

Gender Inequality

Gender inequality is pervasive, regardless of country, income or social status in both public and private areas of life.¹²⁵ Gender inequality has an impact on relationships between husbands and wives, for example, many men may

¹⁰⁹ Family Health International, *Young People Most at Risk of HIV*, 2010, p. 29. <http://www.fhi360.org/resource/young-people-most-risk-hiv>

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

UNAIDS, *Redefining AIDS in Asia*, 2008, p. 107.

http://data.unaids.org/pub/report/2008/20080326_report_commission_aids_en.pdf

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ UNICEF, *Promoting Equity for Children in a World with HIV and AIDS*, 2012, p. 12.

http://www.unicef.org/aids/files/PromotingEquity_Final.pdf

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ UNICEF, *Young People and HIV/AIDS: Opportunity and Crisis*, 2002, p. 23. http://data.unaids.org/topics/young-people/youngpeoplehivaids_en.pdf

http://data.unaids.org/topics/young-people/youngpeoplehivaids_en.pdf

¹¹⁶ UNAIDS, *Prevention, Treatment, Care and Support for Young People*, 2011, p. 3.

http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/iattyp/docs/Technical_Guidance_HIV_Young_People_en.pdf

¹¹⁷ UNFPA, *Poverty and AIDS: What Really Drives the Epidemic?*, n.d. <http://www.unfpa.org/conversations/facts.html>

¹¹⁸ UNICEF, *Young People and HIV/AIDS: Opportunity and Crisis*, 2002, p. 23. http://data.unaids.org/topics/young-people/youngpeoplehivaids_en.pdf

http://data.unaids.org/topics/young-people/youngpeoplehivaids_en.pdf

¹¹⁹ UNAIDS, *Prevention, Treatment, Care and Support for Young People*, 2011, p. 1-2.

http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/iattyp/docs/Technical_Guidance_HIV_Young_People_en.pdf

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

¹²² UNFPA, *HIV and Sex Work: Preventing HIV Risk and Vulnerability*, n.d.

https://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/factsheets/media_fact_sheet_sexwork.pdf

¹²³ UNAIDS, *Redefining AIDS in Asia*, 2008, p. 133.

http://data.unaids.org/pub/report/2008/20080326_report_commission_aids_en.pdf

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ UNAIDS, *Redefining AIDS in Asia*, 2008, p. 108, 121.

http://data.unaids.org/pub/report/2008/20080326_report_commission_aids_en.pdf

be the decision-makers regarding reproduction or sexual encounters.¹²⁶ Without an equal voice in reproductive and family planning decisions, women are often subjected to unprotected sex with their partners.¹²⁷ The numbers in southern and eastern Africa highlight how gender inequalities play a role in the HIV epidemic as young women (aged 15-24) in this region are twice as likely as young men to have HIV.¹²⁸

Case Studies: Civil Society Partnerships

UNFPA partners with civil society organizations (CSOs), private sector companies, and governments to carry out its mission.¹²⁹ UNFPA partnered with Pathfinder International to form the African Youth Alliance (AYA) in Tanzania in 2002.¹³⁰ AYA focused on six key program components, including youth-friendly services with the objective of increasing the high quality and youth-friendly sexual reproductive health services and life planning skills to increase knowledge, skills, norms, and positive attitudes towards practicing safer sex.¹³¹ AYA worked with young people 10 to 24 years of age in 10 districts in Tanzania that were chosen due to poverty levels, population density, prevalence of high-risk practices, occupations, and known prevalence of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, among other factors.¹³² AYA worked to create an environment and local capacity for sex education for young people that empowers them to be involved in the education through communication and service delivery.¹³³ The programming focused on changing risky behaviors and life planning skills.¹³⁴

Youth RISE (Resource, Information, Support, and Education), is an international organization dedicated to harm reduction for young people, led by young people.¹³⁵ The group trains young people to run youth engagement activities focused on young people and engage youth in decision-making processes.¹³⁶ Through Youth RISE, it is clear that peer education has been effective in spreading education and awareness to promote safer choices, like not having unprotected sex or using injecting drugs.¹³⁷

In August 2014, the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF) and the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) launched Accelerating Children's HIV/AIDS Treatment (ACT), which aims to double the number of children across ten African countries who receive antiretroviral therapy treatment for HIV between 2014 and 2016.¹³⁸ CIFF has worked in Zimbabwe to reduce the transmission of HIV from mother to child.¹³⁹ Through HIV testing of pregnant women, treatments of antiretroviral prophylaxis or antiretroviral therapy for those with HIV, and education and implementation of safe breastfeeding techniques to reduce transmission, CIFF is working to reduce the transmission of HIV from mother to child.¹⁴⁰ CIFF is also testing children for HIV at 18 months, and providing treatments to children who have contracted HIV.¹⁴¹ PEPFAR has focused on the most at risk groups by providing access to condoms, sterile needles, and HIV testing.¹⁴² In Vietnam, a needle exchange café

¹²⁶ UNAIDS, *Redefining AIDS in Asia*, 2008, p. 108.

http://data.unaids.org/pub/report/2008/20080326_report_commission_aids_en.pdf

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ WHO, *HIV, Universal Health Coverage, and The Post-2015 Development Agenda*, p. 41.

http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/128120/1/9789241507530_eng.pdf?ua=1

¹²⁹ UNFPA, *Preventing HIV*, n.d. <http://www.unfpa.org/hiv/people.htm>

¹³⁰ UNFPA, *Evaluation of the African Youth Alliance in Tanzania*, 2007. <https://data.unfpa.org/docDownload.unfpa?docId=12>

¹³¹ *Ibid.*

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ *Ibid.*

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Family Health International, *Young People Most at Risk of HIV*, 2010, p. 16. <http://www.fhi360.org/resource/young-people-most-risk-hiv>

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ The United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, *The U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief and Children's Investment Fund Foundation Launch \$200 million Accelerating Children's HIV/AIDS Treatment Initiative (ACT) to Save Lives*, 2014. <http://www.pepfar.gov/press/releases/2014/230334.htm>

¹³⁹ CIFF, *Prevention of mother-to-child HIV transmission in Zimbabwe*, n.d. <http://ciff.org/investments/prevention-mother-child-hiv-transmission-zimbabwe/>

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴² Family Health International, *Young People Most at Risk of HIV*, 2010. <http://www.fhi360.org/resource/young-people-most-risk-hiv>

that provides sterile needles and safe disposal of used needles, is providing information about HIV risks.¹⁴³ The café also distributes condoms and provides access to a clinic for sexually transmitted infections; it is located in a park where the local police have agreed to not target, nor arrest those injecting drugs.¹⁴⁴

Conclusion

The number of new HIV cases worldwide has dropped 38% since 2001, but over 2 million people are infected annually, the majority of which are in sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁴⁵ An estimated 240,000 children were infected in 2013 worldwide, and overall, youth comprise the majority of new infections.¹⁴⁶ When exploring solutions for achieving the MDGs in relation to HIV prevention and treatment, there are a number of risk factors for young people that should be considered. There is a known lack of access to age-appropriate information, community support for use of reproductive health services by young people and opportunities to participate in programs that affect their health. It is important to look at the progress that has been made over the last 20 years, identify the gaps and chart out where the international community can go next. Through the concerted effort of UNFPA, UNAIDS, partnerships with governmental agencies, NGOs, and other groups, the international community is meeting the MDG to begin to halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS, however there is still work to be done, particularly for young people.

Questions for Consideration

There are many questions to consider when looking at the crisis of HIV/AIDS and young people: What health services are already available for the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS? How does the conversation change when discussing accessibility for young people? There are a number of existing resources and programs that have been available in select regions, but are not universally available. What can the UNFPA do to further progress in the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS in young people? What role will civil society organizations have in this progress (e.g. Caribbean Regional Network for People Living with HIV, Housing Works, International Treatment Preparedness Coalition, African Men for Sexual Health and Rights)? UNFPA has played a large role in the evaluation of the ICPD goals and MDGs, but how does a focus on prevention or treatment play into the MDGs and beyond? How can young people be more involved in the solutions?

¹⁴³ UNICEF, *Young People and HIV/AIDS: Opportunity and Crisis*, 2002, p. 19. http://data.unaids.org/topics/young-people/youngpeoplehiv aids_en.pdf

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ UNAIDS, *Fact Sheet*, n.d. <http://www.unaids.org/en/resources/campaigns/2014/2014gapreport/factsheet/>

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

II. Adolescent Girls and Child Marriages

“Child marriage is an appalling violation of human rights and robs girls of their education, health and long-term prospects. A girl who is married as a child is one whose potential will not be fulfilled. Since many parents and communities also want the very best for their daughters, we must work together and end child marriage.”
– UNFPA Executive Director Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin¹⁴⁷

Introduction

Adolescents and youth constitute a quarter of the world’s population, numbering close to 2 billion. Grounded in a range of international human rights norms and development frameworks, it has been well established that all people, including youth, have the right to live healthy and productive lives.¹⁴⁸ A child’s transition to adulthood is a time of great change, characterized by personal growth and empowerment, for many girls in particular, a time of increased inequality.¹⁴⁹

Child marriage is not a new phenomenon, and it remains a threat to the human rights, lives, and health of children, particularly adolescent girls, in over 100 countries.¹⁵⁰ Although the practice also affects boys, on average globally only about five percent of males marry before reaching the age of 19.¹⁵¹ In 2014, around 20 percent of females, or more than 700 million women worldwide, were married before their 18th birthday; of these women, more than one in three, equaling seven percent or 250 million, entered into a union before the age of 15.¹⁵² According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), if present trends continue around 142 million girls will be married by their 18th birthday by 2020, which translates into 14.2 million girls married each year or 39,000 each day.¹⁵³ By 2030, it is estimated that the number of girls married prior to their 18th birthday will rise to 15.1 million a year.¹⁵⁴ The reality is that child marriage impacts girls in greater number and prevents them from having healthy and productive lives.¹⁵⁵

Marriage is a formalized, binding partnership between consenting adults; however, child marriage involves child spouses and typically occurs on the basis of a community’s civil, religious or customary laws as opposed to national and international laws.¹⁵⁶ UNFPA defines child marriage as “a formal or customary union where one or both partners are under 18,” and the practice is often considered forced as children, based on their age, are unable to give free and informed consent.¹⁵⁷ Numerous interconnected factors including poverty, cultural factors, and the misguided belief on the part of parents and families that such a union will keep their daughters safe, all place a child at risk of child marriage.¹⁵⁸ Child marriage is a universal issue because it is found among people of every religion

¹⁴⁷ Too Young to Wed, *Too Young to Wed*, 2012. <http://tooyoungtowed.org/#/explore>

¹⁴⁸ UNFPA, *Health, Safety, Education, Engagement, Empowerment of Adolescent Girls*, 2014, p. 2.

<https://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/youth/UNFPA%20Action%20for%20Adolescent%20Girls%20brochure.pdf>

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ UNFPA, *Marrying Too Young*, 2012, p. 10.

<http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2012/MarryingTooYoung.pdf>

¹⁵¹ UNFPA, *Ending child marriage: A guide for global policy action*, 2006, p. 10.

<http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2006/endchildmarriage.pdf>

¹⁵² UNICEF, *Ending Child Marriage: Progress and Prospects*, 2014, p. 2.

http://www.data.unicef.org/corecode/uploads/document6/uploaded_pdfs/corecode/Child-Marriage-Brochure-7_17-HR_164.pdf

¹⁵³ UNFPA, *Marrying Too Young: End Child Marriage UNFPA Fact Sheet*, 2012, p. 1.

http://unfpa.org/files/live/sites/unfpa/files/youngtowed/WhatIsChildMarriageFactSheet2_1.pdf

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ UNFPA, *Marrying Too Young*, 2012, p. 4-6.

<http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2012/MarryingTooYoung.pdf>

¹⁵⁶ UNFPA, *Ending child marriage: A guide for global policy action*, 2006, p. 7.

<http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2006/endchildmarriage.pdf>

UNFPA, *Marrying Too Young*, 2012, p. 11.

<http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2012/MarryingTooYoung.pdf>

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

and in all regions of the world with the highest numbers and proportion of child brides in South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.¹⁵⁹

International Framework

In 1945, the Charter of the United Nations reaffirmed the belief in and respect for fundamental human rights that are inherent to both men and women.¹⁶⁰ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) echoed this belief in 1948 and “specified sex as being among the impermissible grounds of differentiation.”¹⁶¹ Article 16 of UDHR explicitly states “marriage shall be entered into only with the free and full consent of intending spouses,” yet, elements of coercion and inequality are inherent to most child marriages.¹⁶²

Adopted by the UN General Assembly as resolution 1763 A (XVII) in 1962, the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age of Marriage and Registration of Marriages questions the validity of child marriage and lays out a basic framework for countries to follow when constructing related legislation.¹⁶³ It recalls Article 16 of the UDHR, which states that “men and women of full age [...] are entitled to equal rights as to marriage, during marriage and at its dissolution,” and emphasizes that consent by both spouses must be intended.¹⁶⁴ The Convention recommends that its signatories take “legislative action” to establish a minimum, legal marriage age, and that all marriages be registered by a “competent authority” of that State, e.g. the Office of Vital Statistics as in the United States.¹⁶⁵

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979, provides explicit clauses pertaining to child marriage.¹⁶⁶ CEDAW asserts a woman’s right to choose whom to marry, to retain her human and civil rights regardless of marital status and to be afforded the same considerations as men regarding property.¹⁶⁷ CEDAW reaffirms the necessity of consent and a minimum marriage age of 18 while requesting that signatory’s document and register all marriages.¹⁶⁸

Although the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) does not specifically address child marriage, it presents and guarantees a number of human rights undermined by child marriage.¹⁶⁹ This includes a child’s right to life, health, and to freedom from abuse and exploitation.¹⁷⁰ According to UNFPA, upon signing the CRC, Member States are committing to take measures to abolish traditional practices that can impact the health of children, including the practice of child marriage.¹⁷¹

¹⁵⁹ Greene, *Ending Child Marriage in a Generation: What Research is Needed?*, 2014, p. 1.

<http://www.fordfoundation.org/pdfs/library/EndingChildMarriage.pdf>

¹⁶⁰ United Nations, *Global Issues: Human Rights*, n.d. <http://www.un.org/en/globalissues/humanrights/>

¹⁶¹ De Silva-de-Alwis, *Child Marriage and the Law*, 2007, p. 2.

http://www.unicef.org/french/files/Child_Marriage_and_the_Law.pdf

¹⁶² United Nations General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 10 December 1948.

<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>

¹⁶³ OHCHR, *Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages*, 7 November 1962.

<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/convention.pdf>

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

¹⁶⁶ OHCHR, *Fact Sheet No.22, Discrimination against Women: The Convention and the Committee*, n.d., p. 2.

<http://www.ohchr.org/documents/publications/factsheet22en.pdf>

¹⁶⁷ United Nations General Assembly, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, 18 December 1979. <http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/cedaw.pdf>

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ UNFPA, *Ending child marriage: A guide for global policy action*, 2006, p. 25.

<http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2006/endchildmarriage.pdf>

¹⁷⁰ OHCHR, *Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/Res/44/25)*, 20 November 1989.

<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/ProfessionalInterest/crc.pdf>

¹⁷¹ UNFPA, *Marrying Too Young*, 2012, p. 10.

<http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2012/MarryingTooYoung.pdf>

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), held in Cairo in 1994, reached the consensus that the equality and empowerment of women is a global priority.¹⁷² 179 Member States signed and adopted the ICPD Programme of Action (PoA).¹⁷³ Also known as the Cairo Consensus, this historic international benchmark drew attention to the relationship between a woman's role and freedoms in marriage and society, and her lifetime health and well-being.¹⁷⁴ Member States agreed on measures to eliminate child marriage, including the enforcement of laws to ensure that marriages are formed on the basis of mutual consent.¹⁷⁵ In the years since the Conference, Member States have established institutions and implemented measures to promote women's empowerment and gender equality; over 97 percent of countries party to the ICPD PoA reporting having programs, policies, and/or strategies that address "gender equality, equity and [the] empowerment of women."¹⁷⁶

There have been regular five-year reviews of the ICPD PoA since its implementation to evaluate the progress made and future steps.¹⁷⁷ From April 7-11, 2014, the 47th Session of the Commission on Population and Development (CPD47) reviewed the implementation of the ICPD PoA and produced the ICPD Beyond 2014 Global Report.¹⁷⁸ Just as the ICPD PoA and the benchmarks added at the ICPD +5 review informed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the recent report is meant to guide the post-2015 development agenda and the proposed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).¹⁷⁹ The report reemphasizes that, despite progress against the practice of child marriage, considerable work remains especially if proposed Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls," is to be met.¹⁸⁰ According to the report, 158 countries have established a legal marriage age of 18 years as of 2000; yet, from 2000 to 2011, 34 percent of women aged 20 to 24 in developing regions married before age 18, with another 12 percent marrying before age 15.¹⁸¹ Furthermore, among the 41 "priority countries" where marriage before age 18 affects over 30 percent of adolescent girls, three of those countries had not addressed child marriage while another 11 did not provide a response to the question as to whether child marriage had been addressed.¹⁸²

In October 2013, the UN Human Rights Council adopted A/HRC/24/L.34/Rev. 1, the first resolution dedicated to the elimination of the practice of child marriage.¹⁸³ The resolution recognizes child marriage as a human rights violation, acknowledges its multi-faceted impact, and calls for its elimination as a requirement for the post-2015 development agenda.¹⁸⁴ The resolution received cross-regional support, including support from several countries

¹⁷² UNFPA, *Overview: ICPD – International Conference on Population and Development*, n.d.

<http://www.unfpa.org/public/icpd/>

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁴ United Nations General Assembly, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Framework of actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014 (A/69/62)*, 12 February 2014. http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/62&referer=/english/&Lang=S

¹⁷⁵ UNFPA, *Marrying Too Young*, 2012, p. 10.

<http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2012/MarryingTooYoung.pdf>

¹⁷⁶ United Nations General Assembly, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Framework of actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014 (A/69/62)*, 12 February 2014. http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/62&referer=/english/&Lang=S

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service, *The ICPD Programme of Action and Beyond 2014 Review Should Guide The Post-2015 Development Agenda, Say Experts at CPD47*, 2014. http://www.un-ngls.org/spip.php?page=article_s&id_article=4426

¹⁷⁹ UN-NGLS, *The ICPD Programme of Action and Beyond 2014 Review Should Guide The Post-2015 Development Agenda, Say Experts at CPD47*, 2014. http://www.un-ngls.org/spip.php?page=article_s&id_article=4426

¹⁸⁰ United Nations General Assembly, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Framework of actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014 (A/69/62)*, 12 February 2014. http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/69/62&referer=/english/&Lang=S

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

¹⁸³ Girls Not Brides, *States adopt first-ever resolution on child, early and forced marriage at Human Rights Council*, 27 September 2013. <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/states-adopt-first-ever-resolution-on-child-marriage-at-human-rights-council/>

¹⁸⁴ Center for Reproductive Rights, *UN Takes Major Action to End Child Marriage*, 2013. <http://reproductiverights.org/en/feature/un-takes-major-action-to-end-child-marriage>

with high rates of child marriage like Ethiopia, South Sudan, Sierra Leone, Chad, Guatemala, Honduras, and Yemen.¹⁸⁵

UN System Involvement

As part of its 2012 Adolescent and Youth Strategy and new Strategic Plan 2014-17, UNFPA is committed to increasing its efforts to combat child marriage by further supporting governments to reach adolescent girls at greatest risk of child marriage and to support already married girls.¹⁸⁶

Within the UN system, UNFPA has been a long-standing champion for adolescent girls and their rights, collaborating closely with UN Women, the UN organization dedicated to gender equality and women's empowerment, and the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF), the UN program dedicated to the long-term humanitarian and developmental assistance to children and mothers in developing countries. At the global level, UNFPA has been a crucial supporter and driver of major "girl-centered" programs, including the UN Adolescent Girl's Task Force, an interagency collaboration aimed at developing effective programs in line with the MDGs to address the rights and needs of adolescent girls, and the Secretary-General's Every Woman Every Child initiative, a global movement that mobilizes and strengthens international and national action from the government level to civil society in an attempt to address the major health challenges facing women and children.¹⁸⁷

These partnerships serve as a platform to advocate and popularize adolescent girls' issues within the international community.¹⁸⁸ UNFPA also works with national and local governments, various civil society groups, and research institutions like the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), a leader among organizations advocating for the United States to take a more active role in curbing the practice of child marriage.¹⁸⁹ These additional partnerships and the programs and strategies created and implemented, reflect UNFPA's commitment to mobilize countries and employ culturally sensitive approaches in an attempt to reshape social norms favorable to child marriage.¹⁹⁰

On October 11, 2012, the first International Day of the Girl Child (established with the adoption of General Assembly resolution 66/170), UNFPA announced the Action for Adolescent Girls initiative.¹⁹¹ The initiative's goal is to protect adolescent girls' rights, and it places emphasis on delaying the age of marriage and childbearing.¹⁹² Taking an evidence-based approach, UNFPA directly supports governments in their efforts to educate and empower adolescent girls at risk of child marriage and adolescent pregnancy, particularly in rural areas where child marriage and adolescent pregnancy are concentrated.¹⁹³

In conjunction with the initiative, UNFPA released a comprehensive report on child marriage entitled "Marrying Too Young: End Child Marriage."¹⁹⁴ The report explains the cause and effects of child marriage, provides a global snapshot of the issue, and describes what countries may face if current trends continue.¹⁹⁵

¹⁸⁵ Girls Not Brides, *States adopt first-ever resolution on child, early and forced marriage at Human Rights Council*, 27 September 2013. <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/states-adopt-first-ever-resolution-on-child-marriage-at-human-rights-council/>

¹⁸⁶ UNFPA, *UNFPA Action for Adolescent Girls: Programme document*, 2014, p. 1. https://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/youth/UNFPA%20AAG%20programme%20document_31jan2014.pdf

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ International Center for Research on Women, *Preventing Child Marriage*, n.d. <http://www.icrw.org/preventing-child-marriage>

¹⁹⁰ UNFPA, *Marrying Too Young*, 2012, p. 4-6, 12. <http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2012/MarryingTooYoung.pdf>

¹⁹¹ UNFPA, *UNFPA Action for Adolescent Girls: Programme document*, 2014, p. 6. https://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/youth/UNFPA%20AAG%20programme%20document_31jan2014.pdf

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ UNFPA, *Child Marriage Trends, Consequences, Highlighted in New UN Report, Multimedia Exhibition*, 2012. <http://www.unfpa.org/public/home/news/pid/12160>

¹⁹⁵ UN Regional Information Center for Western Europe, *New UNFPA Report launched: Let Girls Be Girls, not Brides!*, 2012. <http://www.unric.org/en/latest-un-buzz/27917-new-unfpa-report-launched-let-girls-be-girls-not-brides/>

On July 22, 2014, the first-ever Girl Summit was hosted by the United Kingdom and UNICEF and discussed efforts to end child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM).¹⁹⁶ UNFPA announced while participating in the Summit that it will devote \$276 million between 2014 and 2017 to address the needs of adolescents and youth, particularly adolescent girls.¹⁹⁷ Other outcomes of the summit included the European Union committing 100 million Euros to the causes of ending child marriage and FGM, and the creation of the Girl Declaration, a call to action that aims to ensure that adolescent girls are included in the post-2015 development agenda.¹⁹⁸

Key Issues

Although often packaged as a “social necessity,” child marriage is a human rights abuse that is equal to enslavement and exploitation.¹⁹⁹ Child marriage poses grave consequences for adolescent girls, communities and societies, and future generations.²⁰⁰ It brings a girl’s childhood to an unnatural end and the practice jeopardizes a girl’s rights to education, health, and survival and limits her opportunities to develop to her fullest potential.²⁰¹

Due to the cumulative effects of reduced educational opportunities, maternal morbidities and mortality, the long-term psychological impact of early marriage and childbearing on children, and the continual emergence of a future generation further entrenched in cycles of poverty, disenfranchisement, and disease, the practice of child marriage presents itself as a significant impediment to development.²⁰² The practice erodes the health and welfare of adolescent girls and communities while undercutting “international efforts to fight poverty and HIV/AIDS, improve child health and survival, and support other international development initiatives, making billions of development assistance dollars less effective.”²⁰³ Child marriage not only hinders the complete success of the MDGs but also the future sustainable development. Member States will not fulfill their commitments to reduce global poverty and ensure gender equality if the practice of child marriage remains unchallenged.²⁰⁴

Consequences of Child Marriage

Child marriage is associated with numerous health risks. Exposed to frequent and early sexual relations, often with limited access to reproductive health services and contraception, girls are particularly vulnerable to HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases given that they are often unable to negotiate safe sex with their husbands who are commonly older and more sexually experienced.²⁰⁵

Pressured by their husband’s family, their own family, and the wider community to prove their fertility by producing children soon after marriage, these young girls may experience repeated pregnancies.²⁰⁶ Pregnancy-related deaths are the leading cause of mortality for girls 15 to 19-years-old and girls under the age of 15 are five times more likely to die during childbirth than those over 20.²⁰⁷ Furthermore, children born to young mothers are twice as likely to be stillborn or to die within the first week of life, and their risk for malnutrition is far greater than a child born to a 20-

¹⁹⁶ UNFPA, *Girl Summit aims to end child marriage and FGM/C*, 2014. <http://www.unfpa.org/public/home/news/pid/17906>

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁸ The Girl Effect, *Girl Summit 2014, As It Happened*, 2014. <http://www.girleffect.org/news/2014/07/live-girl-summit-2014-as-it-happens/>

¹⁹⁹ UNFPA, *Ending child marriage: A guide for global policy action*, 2006, p. 6.

<http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2006/endchildmarriage.pdf>

²⁰⁰ Greene, *Ending Child Marriage in a Generation: What Research is Needed?*, 2014, p. 1.

<http://www.fordfoundation.org/pdfs/library/EndingChildMarriage.pdf>

²⁰¹ UNFPA, *Marrying Too Young: End Child Marriage UNFPA Fact Sheet*, 2012, p. 1.

http://unfpa.org/files/live/sites/unfpa/files/youngtowed/WhatIsChildMarriageFactSheet2_1.pdf

²⁰² Greene, *Ending Child Marriage in a Generation: What Research is Needed?*, 2014, p. 1.

<http://www.fordfoundation.org/pdfs/library/EndingChildMarriage.pdf>

²⁰³ International Center for Research on Women, *Too Young to Wed: Education & Action towards Ending Child Marriage:*

Seeking Policy Solutions, 2005, p. 4. <http://www.icrw.org/files/publications/Too-Young-to-Wed-Education-and-Action-Toward-Ending-Child-Marriage.pdf>

²⁰⁴ Girls Not Brides, *What is the impact?*, n.d. <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/what-is-the-impact/>

²⁰⁵ UNFPA, *Marrying Too Young*, 2012, p. 11.

<http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2012/MarryingTooYoung.pdf>

²⁰⁶ Girls Not Brides, *5 reasons why an end to child marriage will improve maternal health worldwide*, 2013.

<http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/5-reasons-why-an-end-to-child-marriage-will-improve-maternal-health/>

²⁰⁷ UNFPA, *Ending child marriage: A guide for global policy action*, 2006, p. 11.

<http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2006/endchildmarriage.pdf>

year-old.²⁰⁸ Those girls who survive childbirth are susceptible to disabilities associated with early childbirth, such as obstetric fistula, a treatable and preventable reproductive health complication.²⁰⁹

UNFPA understands that reproductive health, particularly adolescent reproductive health, is central to development, and it encompasses key areas of the UNFPA mission.²¹⁰ Supporting a gender and rights-based approach to sexual and reproductive health, UNFPA strives to provide quality care to both men and women by establishing partnerships with civil society, as evidenced by its Stronger Voices for Reproductive Health, a UNFPA-led project that supports partnerships to improve the quality of sexual and reproductive healthcare in six developing countries.²¹¹ Given UNFPA's strong track record of mobilizing communities and using culturally sensitive approaches to bring about normative change, UNFPA is in a good position to enact lasting change when it comes to countering unequal marriage roles between men and women and the resulting health complications.²¹²

Another consequence of child marriage is that a girl's education and social development is cut short.²¹³ Girls may be removed from school for many reasons, including as a result of individual circumstances like child marriage, when families or communities pressure girls to pursue more traditional family roles, or even because schools forbid pregnant mothers from attending.²¹⁴ Child brides, particularly uneducated girls from poor families, experience isolation from family and friends.²¹⁵ Uneducated mothers are three times more likely to be married before they are 18 compared to those girls with some secondary education.²¹⁶ In addition to being denied an education, these girls are exposed to a higher risk of domestic abuse, increased economic dependence, and an overall denial of decision-making power.²¹⁷

A major challenge to educating girls about their rights and the health risks associated with unprotected sex and childbirth at such an early age is the perception that the investment in a girl's education as being wasted once a girl marries.²¹⁸ As an advocate for youth and particularly adolescent girls, UNFPA is committed to the consultation and engagement with young people on the design and implementation of its policies and programs.²¹⁹ UNFPA, therefore, possesses great potential to engage with both adolescent girls and boys on the topic of education for all.

Factors that Promote and Perpetuate Child Marriage

Child marriage is enforced around the world through religious and traditional practices and as a result of its social acceptance, the practice continues.²²⁰ In parts of Africa and Asia, child marriage is a means of consolidating powerful relations between families, settling disputes, and making deals over land or property.²²¹ These children are

²⁰⁸ UNFPA, *Marrying Too Young: End Child Marriage UNFPA Fact Sheet*, 2012, p. 2.

²⁰⁹ UNFPA, *Ending child marriage: A guide for global policy action*, 2006, p. 11.

<http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2006/endchildmarriage.pdf>

²¹⁰ UNFPA, *Improving Reproductive Health*, n.d. <http://www.unfpa.org/rh/index.htm>

²¹¹ UNFPA, *Reproductive Health: Improving Reproductive Health Services*, n.d. <http://www.unfpa.org/rh/services.htm>

²¹² UNFPA, *UNFPA Action for Adolescent Girls: Programme document*, 2014, p. 10.

https://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/youth/UNFPA%20AAG%20programme%20document_31jan2014.pdf

²¹³ UNFPA, *Marrying Too Young*, 2012, p. 11.

<http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2012/MarryingTooYoung.pdf>

²¹⁴ UNFPA, *Motherhood in Childhood: Facing the challenge of adolescent pregnancy*, 2013, p. 26.

<http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/swp2013/EN-SWOP2013-final.pdf>

²¹⁵ Whiting, "Q+A: Why does child marriage happen?", 2011. <http://www.trust.org/item/?map=qa-why-does-child-marriage-happen/>

²¹⁶ UNFPA, *Marrying Too Young: End Child Marriage UNFPA Fact Sheet*, 2012, p. 2.

²¹⁷ Whiting, "Q+A: Why does child marriage happen?", 2011. <http://www.trust.org/item/?map=qa-why-does-child-marriage-happen/>

²¹⁸ Friedman, "Why Is It So Hard to Combat Child Marriage?", 2012. <http://world.time.com/2012/06/28/why-is-it-so-hard-to-combat-child-marriage/>

UNFPA, *Child Marriage in Southern Asia: Policy Options For Action*, 2012, p. 20.

<http://unfpa.org/webdav/site/asiapacific/shared/Publications/2012/Child%20Marriage%20in%20Southern%20Asia.pdf>

²¹⁹ UNFPA, *UNFPA Strategy on Adolescents and Youth*, 2013, p. 9.

<https://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/youth/UNFPA%20Adolescents%20and%20Youth%20Strategy.pdf>

²²⁰ UNFPA, *Ending child marriage: A guide for global policy action*, 2006, p. 17.

<http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2006/endchildmarriage.pdf>

²²¹ *Ibid.*

seen as disposable commodities and their rights as individuals are often disregarded.²²² Conflict and other humanitarian crises also increase girls' vulnerability to child marriage.²²³ Known as "famine brides" in Kenya, daughters are married off as a last resort to bring income to the family or to receive protection.²²⁴

Due to perceived benefits to the daughter and the family, child marriage is also valued as an economic coping strategy against poverty as it reduces the costs of raising daughters.²²⁵ The reality is that child marriage perpetuates poverty and vice versa.²²⁶ Child marriage affects the poorest in a population and helps to reinforce the cycle of poverty by undermining "livelihood capacities," e.g. educational potential, financial and social security, and maternal health, of large sections of society.²²⁷ Poverty ultimately fuels child marriage which perpetuates "the feminization of poverty;" it is this continuing cycle of disempowerment and disenfranchisement that must be recognized as the true outcome of the practice of child marriage.²²⁸

Despite international statements and commitments to empower women and improve gender equality, in many societies the existing power structures are still male-dominated. Child marriage is one method that enforces the existing status quo, ensuring that girls and women accept their domestic responsibilities and have limited roles in society.²²⁹ Furthermore, since in many societies, a girl's virginity and chastity are directly linked to the honor of a family or clan, child marriage is traditionally perceived as a way to control a girl's sexuality and reproduction.²³⁰ In many communities where child marriage is prevalent there is also a strong social pressure to conform; otherwise there is the increased likelihood of "ridicule, disapproval or family shame."²³¹

Although conventions and reports have been signed and ratified by numerous countries, including many of the countries where child marriage is most prevalent, the issue of implementation and enforcement remains.²³² The challenge for governments and the international community is to demonstrate their commitment by introducing appropriate laws and policies in combination with political will through enforcement, accountability, and supporting sources.²³³

Case Study: Child Marriage in Ethiopia and the Berhane Hewan Programme

The Amhara region of Ethiopia has the lowest median age for marriage in the country at 14.7 years and one of the highest rates of child marriage in the world.²³⁴ According to UNFPA, around 56 percent of the girls in the region are married by 18, with one in four giving birth prior to age 18.²³⁵ In 2004, UNFPA implemented the Berhane Hewan programme as a pilot program within the Mosobo neighborhood of Yilimana Densa, a district in the Amhara region,

²²² UNFPA, *Ending child marriage: A guide for global policy action*, 2006, p. 17.

<http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2006/endchildmarriage.pdf>

²²³ UNFPA, *Marrying Too Young*, 2012, p. 12.

<http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2012/MarryingTooYoung.pdf>

²²⁴ *Ibid.*

²²⁵ Whiting, "Q+A: Why does child marriage happen?", 2011. <http://www.trust.org/item/?map=qa-why-does-child-marriage-happen/>

²²⁶ UNFPA, *Marrying Too Young*, 2012, p. 12.

<http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2012/MarryingTooYoung.pdf>

²²⁷ UNFPA, *Ending child marriage: A guide for global policy action*, 2006, p. 15-6.

<http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2006/endchildmarriage.pdf>

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ Whiting, "Q+A: Why does child marriage happen?", 2011. <http://www.trust.org/item/?map=qa-why-does-child-marriage-happen/>

²³⁰ UNFPA, *Ending child marriage: A guide for global policy action*, 2006, p. 19.

<http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2006/endchildmarriage.pdf>

²³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

²³² *Ibid.*, p. 26.

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ UNFPA, *Kindling Hope in Northern Ethiopia by Keeping Adolescent Girls in School*, 2007.

<http://www.unfpa.org/public/global/pid/306>

²³⁵ UNFPA, *Marrying Too Young*, 2012, p. 53.

<http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2012/MarryingTooYoung.pdf>

through combined efforts with the Population Council, the Ethiopian Government, the Amhara Region Bureau of Youth and Sports, and through additional funding from the United Nations Foundation and the Nike Foundation.²³⁶

Amharic for “Light for Eve,” Berhane Hewan has helped young girls avoid child marriage by increasing their life options through the promotion of “schooling, functional literacy, life skills, sexual and reproductive health, and HIV information and services.”²³⁷ Additionally, the program teaches the risks of child marriage and alternatives to the practice through Community Conversation meetings and by offering economic incentives such as a goat to those families who kept their daughters unmarried.²³⁸ The program encourages families to keep their daughters in school and provides girls with school supplies and the opportunity to engage in girls’ mentoring groups.²³⁹

Three years after the implementation of the program, a review conducted by the Population Council determined that girls who participated, particularly those aged 10 to 14, “were nearly three times more likely to be in school than non-programme participants, and were 90 percent less likely to be married.”²⁴⁰ Furthermore, already married girls who participated were nearly three times more likely to have used family planning compared to non-participants.²⁴¹ Due to the initial program’s success, it has since been expanded to 36 other communities in three districts of the West Gojjam Zone of the Amhara region and has impacted the lives of over 11,000 girls.²⁴²

In 2013, the Berhane Hewan program was awarded the first prize in UNFPA’s agency-wide contest to identify good practices related to adolescents and youth.²⁴³ Berhane Hewan is a prime example of a successfully executed multi-pronged approach, that, when combined with “dedicated resources targeted to girls themselves, it is possible to eliminate harmful social and cultural practices such as child marriage in a short period of time.”²⁴⁴ Since January 2013, the program has been successfully taken over by the regional government and is expected to expand to further districts within Ethiopia with the assistance of long-standing and new outside support.²⁴⁵

Conclusion

Despite international commitments against child marriage, the practice persists particularly in rural and poor areas of the developing world.²⁴⁶ Perpetuated by a variety of interconnected factors, most stemming from tradition, child marriage is the result of limited opportunity in the face of poverty and conflict. An internationally recognized human rights abuse, child marriage, must be viewed through this lens and not one of perceived necessity if the practice is to be entirely eliminated.²⁴⁷ Preventing millions of girls both now and in the future from achieving their full potential, child marriage is an impediment to development at the individual and societal level. As the deadline for the MDGs nears and the international community looks beyond 2015 and to the post-2015 development agenda, it is imperative that ending the practice of child marriage and its effects on adolescent girls all over the world be incorporated.

²³⁶ Erulkar, *Celebrate the African Child: Free African Girls of Child Marriage*, 2013.

<http://tooyoungtowed.org/blog/tag/berhane-hewan/>

²³⁷ UNFPA, *Marrying Too Young*, 2012, p. 53-54.

<http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2012/MarryingTooYoung.pdf>

²³⁸ Erulkar, *Celebrate the African Child: Free African Girls of Child Marriage*, 2013.

<http://tooyoungtowed.org/blog/tag/berhane-hewan/>

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁰ UNFPA, *Marrying Too Young*, 2012, p. 54.

<http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2012/MarryingTooYoung.pdf>

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

²⁴² UNFPA, *Award-Winning Programme Gives Ethiopian Girls a Safer Transition to Adulthood*, 2013.

<http://www.unfpa.org/public/home/news/pid/12659>

²⁴³ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁴ Erulkar, *Celebrate the African Child: Free African Girls of Child Marriage*, 2013.

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²⁴⁵ UNFPA, *Award-Winning Programme Gives Ethiopian Girls a Safer Transition to Adulthood*, 2013.

<http://www.unfpa.org/public/home/news/pid/12659>

²⁴⁶ UNFPA, *Marrying Too Young*, 2012, p. 58.

<http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2012/MarryingTooYoung.pdf>

²⁴⁷ UNFPA, *Ending child marriage: A guide for global policy action*, 2006, p. 26.

<http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2006/endchildmarriage.pdf>

Questions for Further Consideration

In relation to the issue of adolescent girls and child marriage, there are several questions to consider in approaching this topic. How can UNFPA further emphasize ending child marriage in light of the upcoming SDGs and the post-2015 development agenda? In what ways can efforts be increased until that time? How can UNFPA continue to work with other UN bodies, civil society organizations (CSOs), and governments to develop a multi-pronged approach to deal with this issue? How can international agreements and national laws be better enforced and how can measures and laws be introduced where they do not exist? What actions can be made that are culturally sensitive and also aim to educate families and communities on the importance of ending the practice and its negative effects? What can be done to help young brides to educate them about early pregnancy? How can adequate care services and access to family planning be offered to even the most rural communities where girls are at the highest risk for child marriage, and to already married girls?

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