

## **Stockholm Call to Action: Investing in Reproductive Health and Rights as a Development Priority**

*Promoting development and eradicating extreme poverty is an urgent global priority that demands bold action. This ambitious agenda, embodied in the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), requires governments, civil society, and international agencies to address population issues, in particular to secure people's right to sexual and reproductive health, as agreed by 179 countries at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, and its 5year review. However, reproductive health and rights remain elusive for the vast majority of the world's people. Complications during pregnancy and childbirth are among the leading causes of death and illness for women in developing countries, and the HIV/AIDS pandemic takes approximately 3 million lives each year. This undermines development by diminishing the quality of people's lives, exacerbating poverty, and placing heavy burdens on individuals, families, communities, and nations.*

*UNFPA and the Government of Sweden convened the high-level roundtable, "Reducing Poverty and Achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): Investing in Reproductive Health and Rights" on 11 and 12 April 2005 in Stockholm to draw global attention to the need for increased investments in reproductive health and rights and build on progress made in reproductive health policies and programmes in many countries. Participants, including Ministers, Parliamentarians, heads of the United Nations and other multilateral agencies, donor representatives, and leaders of non-governmental and youth organizations, recognize the following:*

1. The development goals contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration adopted by the General Assembly in September 2000 and the goals set by the other international conferences of the 1990s, especially the ICPD and its 5year Review, provide a broad and coherent framework of commitments to guide member states, international agencies, civil society and other stakeholders to address extreme poverty in its many dimensions;
2. Achieving women's empowerment and gender equality, as agreed in CEDAW and as reiterated in Vienna, Cairo, Beijing, and at UNGASS on HIV/AIDS, are highly important ends in themselves and crucial to the achievement of the MDGs by 2015, and investments in reproductive health and rights are needed to promote women's ability to take advantage of economic and political opportunities;
3. Strong links exist between poverty, unequal gender relations, fertility, ill-timed and unwanted pregnancies, and unsafe abortion; and evidence shows that investments in and access to reproductive health, including family planning and sexual health, are essential to breaking the cycle of poverty and freeing national and household resources for investments in health, nutrition, and education, promoting economic growth with tangible returns;
4. Access to reproductive and sexual health information and services is integral to efforts to curb the HIV/AIDS epidemic and prevent individuals and households from falling deeper into poverty, given that the overwhelming majority of HIV infections are due to sexual transmission or associated with pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding, and since women and girls are highly vulnerable to HIV infections for social and biological reasons;
5. Addressing the persistence of high levels of maternal mortality and morbidity in low-income countries, despite the existence of effective interventions, requires stronger health systems including universal access to reproductive health and greater attention to the nutritional needs of women and children;
6. Investments in young people's health and education are needed to address their particular vulnerability to reproductive and sexual health risks and to realize their potential as healthy and productive members of society;
7. Reproductive health programmes should be rights-based and put individuals, particularly girls and women, at the center of service provision, recognizing that access to reproductive health requires participatory approaches building on cultural diversity, focusing on the special needs of marginalized groups and including communities and leaders.

***We affirm our commitment to the attainment of the MDGs and call others to join us in the following actions:***

1. Mobilize political commitment to advance reproductive health and rights, and their contributions to reducing poverty and achieving the MDGs, in national and global meetings, including the 2005 review of the UN Millennium Declaration, and in the implementation, at all levels, of the commitments from the major international conferences;
2. Welcome the report by the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit and its reference to population issues, including reproductive health; and support the recommendations on reproductive health and rights in the Millennium Project reports, including using universal access to reproductive health by 2015, as a target for MDG 5 on Maternal Health with appropriate indicators;
3. Invest in efforts to increase women's decision-making power in all aspects of their lives, including reproductive health, and strengthen institutional mechanisms and socio-cultural practices that protect and promote the human rights of women and girls, combat gender-based violence, and advance gender equality, the achievement of which requires the involvement of men;
4. Building on effective programme experiences, strengthen health systems to support reproductive and sexual health, promote child and maternal health, and combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, by ensuring sufficient investments, motivated, well-trained and adequately paid health workers, scaled-up infrastructure, improved supply chain for commodities and supplies, and strong management and information systems;
5. Ensure priority investment in reproductive health, guided by the Reproductive Health Strategy adopted by the World Health Assembly in 2004, in national and sectoral development plans and budgets (including through poverty reduction strategies, sector-wide approaches, medium term expenditure frameworks, public-private partnerships and other mechanisms) to ensure access to quality reproductive health services, including youth-friendly services;
6. Link HIV/AIDS and STI prevention, counseling, treatment and care efforts with sexual and reproductive health, including integrating HIV/AIDS and STI programmes within existing reproductive health settings, and vice versa, with special attention to female-controlled methods and the reproductive health needs of people living with HIV/AIDS;
7. Invest in young people's health and development to ensure they have access to gender-sensitive reproductive and sexual health and HIV/AIDS information, education and services, with privacy and confidentiality, without discrimination, within a comprehensive approach to develop their life skills and opportunities and support their human rights;
8. Continue to work toward improved aid effectiveness, harmonization, and alignment, as per the Paris Declaration, in support of national action such as through sector-wide approaches, and improve monitoring and evaluation systems to increase accountability and manage for results;
9. Secure the financial commitments at national and international levels, made at the 1994 ICPD Programme of Action, and advocate for an increase in official development assistance and a higher proportion to support human rights, gender equality, and reproductive health, and close existing funding gaps on reproductive health commodities and logistics, in the context of the March 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development (Monterrey), the completion of the Doha Round, and the implementation of MDG 8 on global partnerships;
10. Work with all partners (including governments, parliamentarians, UN system organizations, bilateral and other multilateral agencies, regional development banks, civil society organizations, the media, the private sector, youth, and women's groups) to reach out to leaders around the world, emphasizing the multiple benefits from increased investments in reproductive health and rights, and the centrality of these efforts under strong national leadership toward the achievement of the MDGs.