**Adolescents and Youth: Language Recommendations for OWG 12**

The zero draft for OWG 12 is very weak on adolescents and youth, with no mention of adolescents and only a handful of references to young people under the focus areas on education and employment. The document does not include a target on comprehensive sexuality education, a critical omission that must be addressed. Furthermore, there are no references to adolescent girls or adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health and rights. It is imperative that governments take urgent action to integrate the needs and rights of young people into the SDGs.

At the World Conference on Youth, Member States and young people agreed to a bold and progressive outcome document that explicitly calls on governments to fulfill young people’s sexual and reproductive health and rights. The Colombo Declaration calls for “universal access to sexual and reproductive health services and information” and “universal access to health including sexual and reproductive health and rights”, among other important priorities.

The Global Youth Call presented at last week’s ECOSOC Youth Forum also contains targets that demonstrate the strong consensus on adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health and rights. Key recommendations include targets on “comprehensive education on human sexuality” and “universal access to sexual and reproductive health, reproductive rights and HIV services.”

**Chapeau**

**Recommendations:**

Include the following additions in paragraph 5 of the chapeau:

**We further recognize that the needs of adolescents and young people, as the stewards of this next development agenda, must be integrated across all dimensions of sustainable development. Adolescents and youth should be involved in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of programs that impact their lives.**

**Key Messages:**

* A critical shortcoming of the MDGs was their failure to substantively address the needs of adolescents and young people. There are over 1.8 billion young people in the world today, 90 percent of whom live in developing countries (UNFPA 2013). It is essential that the Post-2015 Development Agenda recognize multifaceted and cross-cutting needs of adolescents and youth, with a focus on their human rights and health needs.
* It is essential that young people be integrated as subjects, not objects, of sustainable development.

**4. Provide equitable and inclusive quality and life-long learning opportunities for all**

There is no mention of adolescents or comprehensive sexuality education in the Zero Draft. Sustainable development will only occur when girls and boys alike understand their bodies, know their rights, and have the necessary skills to negotiate on important aspects of their lives.

**Recommendations:**

Preferred new target:

**4.10** **By 2030, ensure universal access to comprehensive sexuality education that promotes values of respect for human rights, tolerance, gender equality and non-violence for all, in and out of schools.**

Or, include CSE in target 4.7, as follows:

**4.7** By 2030 integrate relevant knowledgeand skills in education curricula and training programs, **including comprehensive sexuality education, life skills**, education for sustainable development, **and human rights education** and awareness-raising on culture’s contribution to sustainable development.

**Key Messages:**

* Over 50 governments spoke up in support of CSE during OWG 8, and governments have committed to providing “evidence-based comprehensive education on human sexuality” as recently at CSW 58 and CPD 47.
* Comprehensive sexuality education, linked to comprehensive and integrated sexual and reproductive health services for all young people, particularly adolescent girls, both in and out of school, is a key strategy for preventing unwanted pregnancy, HIV and other STIs, and enables adolescents to make relevant choices for themselves.
* CSE should be understood as education about human rights, human sexuality, gender equality, relationships and sexual and reproductive health and rights through the provision of scientifically-accurate, non-judgmental information that is delivered in a manner consistent with their evolving capacities. Comprehensive sexuality education is essential for young people to be able to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancy, HIV and sexually transmitted infections, to promote values of tolerance, mutual respect and non-violence in relationships, and to plan their lives.
* A review from UNESCO of studies of 87 comprehensive sexuality education programs, including 29 in developing countries, found a number of positive outcomes: delayed initiation of sexual intercourse, decreased number of sexual partners, increased use of condoms and decreased sexual risk taking. No studies showed hastened initiation of sex, an increased number of sexual partners, or decreased use of condoms.

**4.6** by 2030 ensure that people in vulnerable situations and marginalized people including**, adolescent girls**, persons with disabilities and indigenous peoples have access to inclusive education, skills development and vocational training aligned with labour market needs.

**4.8** by 2030 ensure that all schools and other educational institutions provide safe, healthy, non-discriminatory and inclusive learning environments for all**, especially adolescent girls.**

**3. Attain healthy life for all at all ages**

**Recommendations:**

**3.8** By 2030 ensure universal access to **high-quality comprehensive, equitable and integrated** sexual and reproductive health **services, information and education,** **and respect, protect and fulfill all human rights in this regard,** with a particular focus on adolescents and young people**.**

**Key Messages:**

* It is essential to include a reference to adolescents and young people in target 3.8.Adolescents and young people have unique sexual and reproductive health needs that require urgent action:
	+ Adolescents aged 15-19 are twice as likely to die during pregnancy or child birth as those over age 20; girls under age 15 are five times more likely to die.[[1]](#footnote-1)
	+ According to the most recent data available (2004), adolescents account for an estimated 2.5 million (14%) of the approximately 19 million unsafe abortions that occur annually in the developing world. In Sub-Saharan Africa, adolescents account for 25% of the total unsafe abortions.[[2]](#footnote-2)
	+ In 2010 young people aged 15–24 accounted for 42% of new HIV infections in people aged 15 and older. Among young people living with HIV, nearly 80% (4 million) live in sub-Saharan Africa.[[3]](#footnote-3)

**5. Attain gender equality, empower women and girls everywhere**

**Recommendations:**

Strongly support the inclusion of girls in the goal heading and relevant targets.

**5.3** Strongly support the inclusion of child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

**5.9:** By 2030 ensure ~~universal access to~~ sexual and reproductive health and ~~reproductive~~ rights **free from stigma, violence, coercion and discrimination for all women and girls of all ages** ~~in accordance with the Programme of Action of the ICPD~~

**5.4** ensure equal access to quality education**, including comprehensive sexuality education,** and eliminate gender disparities at all levels of education and training

**Key Messages:**

* It is essential to recognize women and girls of all ages in target 5.9. Adolescent girls face unique barriers to realizing their sexual and reproductive rights, including discriminatory laws and practices such as parental and spousal notification laws.
* Adolescent girls face unique barriers to realizing their sexual and reproductive rights, including discriminatory laws and practices such as parental and spousal notification laws.
* As recently as CPD 47 (para 11), governments recognized the need to promote, respect, protection, and fulfill the reproductive rights of girls.

**6. Secure water and sanitation and all for a sustainable world**

**6.2** Strongly support the focus on women and girls’ access safe and affordable sanitation and hygiene.

**10. Reduce inequality within and among countries**

**Recommendations:**

**17.36** Strongly support the disaggregation of data by age (as well as income, gender, race, ethnicity, and rural/urban location.

**Key Messages:**

* It is particularly important for age-disaggregated data to be collected for adolescents aged 10-14, as programs frequently fail to address the needs of young adolescents. Additional categories for data disaggregation should include disability status, geographical location, wealth quintile, HIV status, among others.
1. UNFPA State of the World’s Population Report, Motherhood in Childhood: Facing the Challenge of Adolescent Pregnancy, 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Shah I and Ahman E, Age patterns of unsafe abortion in developing country regions, *Reproductive Health Matters*, 2004, 12(24 suppl.): 9–17. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. UNAIDS World AIDS Day Report, 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)