



UNFPA views on the linkages between population dynamics, gender equality and inclusive economic growth

The Fifth session of the Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals will be devoted to the analysis of sustained and inclusive economic growth, including issues related to macroeconomic policy, infrastructure development, industrialization, and energy.

In this regard, UNFPA would like to highlight some interrelations of population dynamics and gender equality with the issues of inclusive economic growth and sustainability:

While recognizing that human wellbeing goes well beyond the satisfaction of material needs and desires, the enjoyment of goods and services is a fundamental precondition for wellbeing. In a world characterized by large and growing inequalities, there is a growing scope to promote human wellbeing through a more equitable distribution of goods and services, and by ensuring universal access to essential goods and services. But a more balanced distribution of goods and services, or income, will not be enough to satisfy the needs of current and future generations; it will also demand a considerable increase in the production of goods and services.

Policy makers will have to recognize that efforts to reduce poverty, raise living standards, and promote the well-being of a large and growing world population will intensify pressure on the environment and all natural resources, including land, forests, water and the oceans. The world's current rates of consumption, if unchallenged, will drive this resource demand more intensively than population growth alone. This global challenge will require effective global and national commitments, policies and actions to (i) achieve greater progress in human development at the same rate as economic growth, and (ii) adopt more sustainable patterns of consumption and production to

significantly reduce the impact of economic growth on the environment.

Coherent environmental and economic policies must promote investment in the real economy with a focus on encouraging a greater reliance on safe and renewable energy sources, an increase in overall resource efficiency, and a decrease in waste. The quest for sustainable development will also require profound changes in the production and consumption patterns of today.

The ambition to eradicate extreme poverty and reduce inequalities must be at the center of these innovative and forward looking environmental and economic policies. Priority must be given to the poorest population groups that lack productive and remunerative employment, in particular women and young people who are often marginalized in labor markets and have limited access to social protection schemes.

Unemployment of young persons is typically two to three times as high as the unemployment of adults, and the unemployment of young women is often even higher than that of their male counterparts in most regions.¹ Likewise, women and young people tend to be more

affected by underemployment and often engage in low paid, temporary and unregulated activities. To address these employment challenges, countries will need to strengthen the employability of women and young people by investing in their human capital and, at the same time, create more employment opportunities through productive investment.

💡 Given the critical contributions that women and young people can make to their economies and societies, the development of human capital requires investment in their capabilities as well as in their health, including their sexual and reproductive health. Too many young women become teenage mothers, too many drop out of school, too many encounter discrimination and exclusion, too many are unable to actively participate in labor markets and economic, social and political life more broadly, and too many are getting stuck in poverty.

💡 Investments in education beyond the primary level ---in secondary and tertiary education, as well as technical and vocational training--- is critical for addressing the needs of young people, and particularly young women, and for increasing their choices and opportunities.ⁱⁱ Improving the quality, relevance and inclusiveness of education, and building on successful experiences in vocational education that emphasize life skills and livelihoods, are important for women and young people.

💡 The use of population research, data and projections is critical to inform socio economic planning aimed at raising living standards while protecting the environment. Without taking into account how many people will be living in a country, where they will be living, and how old they are, it will be impossible to strategically, efficiently and sustainably orient social and economic

investments. Adequate planning for public services, housing, transport and energy, amongst others, simply cannot be accomplished without a specific knowledge of population dynamics.

To achieve inclusive social and economic development, the post 2015 development agenda must have human rights at its centre and must give due consideration to the interrelations between population dynamics, gender equality and sustainability.

To learn more about UNFPA's position and key asks in the post-2015 development agenda in the areas of health, education, gender equality, adolescents and youth, as well as data and governance, we invite you to review UNFPA's paper "Empowering People to Ensure a Sustainable Future for All".ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱ In 2013, as many as 73 million young people are estimated to be unemployed, which amounts to youth unemployment rate 12.6 per cent, according to ILO estimates.

ⁱⁱ Whereas in some regions girls have achieved parity or even surpassed boys with respect to educational indicators, two thirds of the world's 776 million illiterate people are still women, and female education continues to lag behind male education in much of Africa and Asia.

ⁱⁱⁱ<http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/news/2013/Post%202015%20Position%20Paper.pdf>