

A green silhouette graphic is overlaid on the bottom left of the image. It depicts a person running towards the right, followed by a bicycle, symbolizing movement and progress.

UNFPA FRAMEWORK FOR ACTION ON ADOLESCENTS & YOUTH

OPENING DOORS WITH YOUNG PEOPLE: 4 KEYS



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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The case for investing in young people now is more than clear. Almost 1.5 billion people in the world today are between 10 and 25 years old. More than half of all youth—about 525 million people—survive on less than \$2 a day. More than 100 million adolescents do not attend school. Fifteen million adolescent girls become mothers every year. Among mothers under age 20, infant mortality rates average 100 deaths per 1,000 live births; among mothers aged 20-29 and 30-39, the rate is 72-74 deaths per 1,000 live births. Six thousand young people are infected with HIV everyday; most of them are girls in Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia.¹ Ratios of new female-to-male infections among young people between ages 15-24 run as high as 8:1 in South Africa. These are not just numbers. These are the realities of young people at the crossroads. The gap between the MDG targets and the current state of affairs for young people leaves no time for questions. It is time for action.

The Framework for Action on Adolescents and Youth has been developed as a response to several needs. First, UNFPA's work on young people must contribute to the comprehensive, not piecemeal, development of adolescents and youth. We know that sexual and reproductive health is not the only issue that concerns young people. Issues that matter also include education, livelihoods, and citizenship. The Fund therefore needs to position its Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health (ASRH) niche within the broader framework of the holistic development of young people. Second, at a time when the global community is increasingly focusing on poverty reduction and UN Reform is calling upon all UN agencies to work together in support of broader national development goals, a Framework for Action is needed to guide the Fund's support in the area of adolescents and youth. Third, because of the changing development aid environment, a framework that articulates the organization's corporate position is necessary. Such a framework allows regional and country offices to speak a common language based on a common frame of reference and still maintain room for flexibility and adaptation at the country level.

¹ UNFPA's State of World Population Report 2003 and 2005



In response to these needs, the Framework for Action on Adolescents and Youth outlines a strategic direction for this critical area of the Fund; optimizes UNFPA's comparative advantage; highlights the Fund's role in contributing towards meeting the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) on poverty reduction; and increases UNFPA's role in achieving MDG 2 on education, MDG 3 on gender equality, MDG 5 on maternal mortality, and MDG 6 on HIV prevention. With this Framework UNFPA can market itself better and provide an essential package of support to national governments, containing key elements that every UNFPA-supported adolescent and youth programme should have, with scaling up in mind.

This document is based on the Fund's commitment to invest in adolescents and youth and help them gain access to opportunities. For countries experiencing or about to experience the demographic transition and

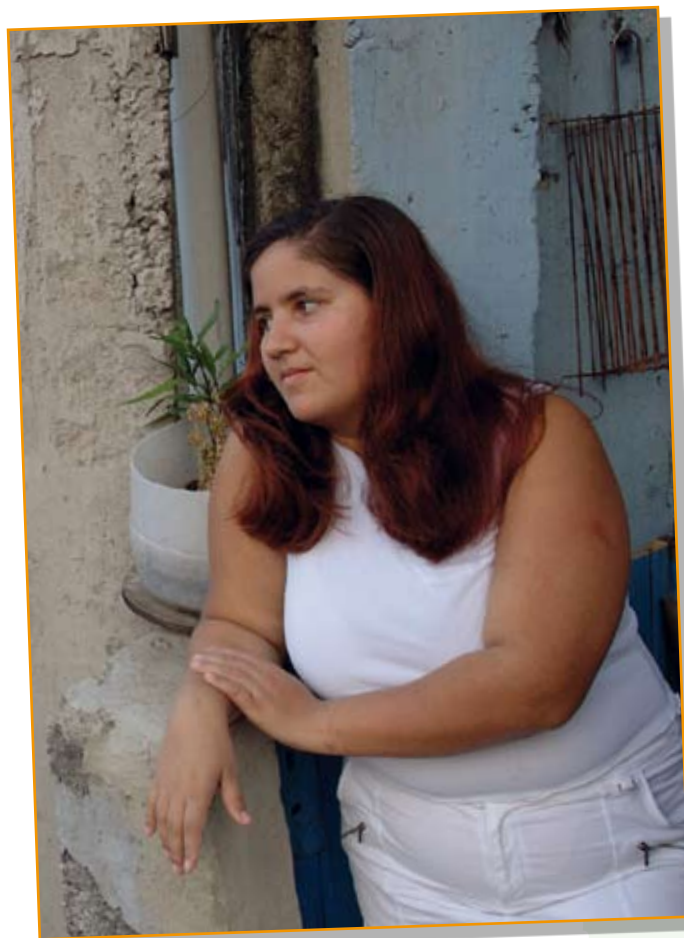
for countries showing a significant youth bulge, social investments in young people can help to achieve a healthy, socio-economically productive and poverty-free society. This document's primary focus is on translating the Fund's commitment to action. It is based on UNFPA's extensive experience of working for more than thirty years in the area of adolescents and youth. It does not provide all the answers, but it charts a roadmap for positioning UNFPA for action.

UNFPA's vision on young people is straightforward: "A world fit for adolescents and youth is one in which their rights are promoted and protected. It is a world in which girls and boys have optimal opportunities to develop their full potential, to freely express themselves and have their views respected, and to live free of poverty, discrimination and violence." Drawing on this vision, the Fund will support governments and partners to:

- Empower adolescents and youth, girls and boys, with skills to achieve their dreams, think critically, negotiate risky situations, and express themselves freely.
- Provide access to health, including sexual and reproductive health information, education, commodities and services.
- Connect young people to livelihood and employment programmes.
- Uphold the rights of young people, specifically girls and marginalized groups, to grow up healthy and safe.
- Encourage young people to participate fully in development plans.
- Recognize the rights of young people to a fair share of education, skills, and services, with a special focus on economically disadvantaged, socially marginalized, and vulnerable groups.

To make all of this happen, the Fund will cross boundaries between sectors and encourage new partnerships. This merging of approaches reflects a vision that sees young people's lives in totality rather than in fragments.

In order to fulfill this vision, UNFPA will strategically position itself in four key areas. Traditionally, UNFPA has focused on SRH education and SRH services. To deliver effective results in these two Key areas, a



supportive environment is needed where policymakers and programme managers are convinced to make social investments in young people. For this purpose, one Key focuses on using population structure analyses and implications of poverty dynamics to make a case for social investments in young people. Participation of young people, the last Key, is at the core of policy and programming processes. Together, the four Keys present a unique opportunity for convergence of the Fund's critical programming areas related to reproductive health, gender, and population with adolescents and youth.

The Four Keys can be summarized as:

KEY 1

Supportive policy making that applies the lens of population structure and poverty dynamics analyses:

The Fund will focus public policy on young people and incorporate their issues in national MDG-based development and poverty reduction strategies. To facilitate this, the Fund will support scenario-building exercises

that demonstrate what could happen to poverty reduction if social investments in this group are made. The Fund's comparative advantage will be used at the policy table by: (i) leveraging data on young people for social development policies and poverty reduction plans; (ii) analyzing population structures and advocating a "demographic bonus" argument for making social investments in young people; and (iii) undertaking poverty diagnostics to map social vulnerability profiles of young people based on the understanding that young people are not a homogeneous group.

KEY 2 Gender-Sensitive, Life-Skills-Based Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH)

Education: The Fund will take a lead in facilitating the provision of comprehensive, gender-sensitive, life skills-based SRH education in schools and community settings. Educational interventions will be delivered through a gender equality promotion and skills approach that will equip girls and boys with the abilities to turn knowledge into practice. The Fund will proactively pursue policy discussions, dialogue, and advocacy on improving the quality of education systems, postponing age at marriage, and retaining girls in schools. It will focus policy on the inclusion of SRH education in school curricula and informal education programmes within the context of sector-wide approaches (SWAPs), poverty reduction strategies (PRs), and education reforms.

KEY 3 Sexual & Reproductive Health Services:

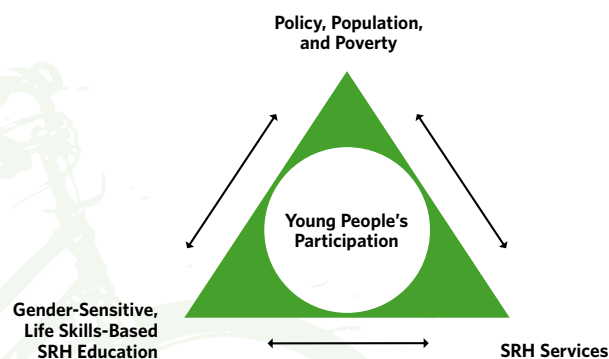
The Fund will promote a core package of health and SRH services and commodities that will include, at a minimum, contraception, HIV prevention, and maternal health services. Service provision will be within the overall context of reproductive health commodity security (RHCS), which will address issues of access and affordability of RH commodities. The Fund will support service delivery models within the national programme context, not as isolated projects. Scaling-up youth- and adolescent-friendly health/SRH services as a fair share for socio-economically disadvantaged groups will be linked with efforts for promoting universal access to HIV prevention, care, treatment, and support. The Fund will combine facility-based service delivery with multiple channels (for example, schools and social marketing programmes), and community outreach activities. For social services, the Fund will network with NGOs, community-based organizations, and other

sectors. Policy dialogue will focus on promoting and costing an essential package of services for young people, targeting in particular those who are out of reach, especially married and unmarried girls.

KEY 4 Young People's Leadership and Participation:

The Fund will pay special attention to working "with" young people through youth-adult partnerships. It will identify institutional mechanisms for incorporating young people's input into policy and programming processes (including planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation). It will invest in capacity building and leadership skills of young people to make them advocates for their own rights and development issues. It will promote peer educators as polyvalent agents for transmitting safe SRH messages, linking peers with services, and allying with young people's networks and coalitions. The Fund will tap into the dynamism of youth movements and their communication networks for advocacy and action on issues of concern, such as, HIV/AIDS and age at marriage.

The Four Keys can be visualized as a pyramid (see below). At the apex is the Key on Policy, Population and Poverty. The base of the pyramid is comprised of the two Keys of SRH Education and Services. Youth Participation is core to all of the Keys. The two-way arrows indicate that each Key feeds into and reinforces the other.



In order to deliver the Four Keys, specific policy and programmatic actions for each Key will be supported. Overall, **at the policy level**, the Fund will position the adolescent and youth agenda within the larger development context of poverty reduction. UNFPA will engage in policy dialogue, policy analysis, and policy advocacy aimed at including young people's issues in the national development strategies, plans, and

processes of SWAPs, PRSs, and MDGs. UNFPA will build alliances and forge partnerships with governments, development partners, civil society, organizations serving youth, and media with the goal of leveraging resources for investing in young people, particularly those who are most vulnerable and socially excluded. The Fund will also leverage the global focus on HIV/AIDS to place adolescent sexual and reproductive health issues on the policy table and the programming agenda.

The Fund will position the adolescent and youth agenda within the larger development context of poverty reduction.

Overall, **at the programme level**, the Fund will advocate for an Essential Package of Social Protection Interventions for Adolescents and Youth comprised of education, SRH services, and livelihood components. The Fund will leverage its expertise in SRH as an entry point for promoting social services and livelihoods (and vice versa), thereby ensuring that the Essential Package is backed by a solid multisectoral plan. It will proactively promote partnerships to ensure that health and non-health components (such as basic education, vocational training, and employment) receive due policy and programme attention. Advocacy efforts will be supported to mobilize the participation of key stakeholders at the national, regional, state, and community levels to create an enabling environment for policy and programmatic interventions.

The Fund will promote intergenerational alliances that will function not only to build support on young people's issues, but as operational teams that will strategize and integrate young people's issues into policy and programming processes.

Underpinning and linking the Four Keys together is the **“keychain”: intergenerational alliances**. The Fund will build and support intergenerational alliances to work towards making the Four Keys open

doors for young people. Safe spaces will be created where young people and adults can meet to discuss young people's concerns related to the Four Keys and concrete strategies for addressing their concerns. These safe spaces will serve as forums for adults and young people to listen to each other, freely express their views, and for young people to gain the support of adults to act on their behalf and in partnership with them. The Fund will identify dynamic adults to champion youth issues and influence other leaders, especially in arenas where young people have yet to gain access or on controversial issues shrouded by “gatekeepers.” Equally important, the Fund will promote intergenerational alliances that will function not only to build support on young people's issues, but as operational teams that will strategize and integrate young people's issues into policy and programming processes.

Above all, the Fund will be guided in its work by four overarching principles:

- (i) achieving social equity by paying special attention to vulnerable and excluded groups;
- (ii) protecting the rights of young people, particularly to health, education, and civic participation;
- (iii) maintaining cultural sensitivity by advocating for SRH in sensitive and engaging ways; and
- (iv) affirming a gender perspective which, while recognizing boys' needs, preserves spaces for girls, especially the poor and vulnerable.

An attempt is made in this Framework to show how these principles can guide policy and programmatic actions. The Framework also addresses issues of systems, capacity enhancement, and coordination with partner agencies in order to deliver better services more resourcefully.

Last, but not least, staff and readers are reminded that this Framework for Action is a guiding and evolving document for UNFPA. Country offices have room for flexibility, creativity, fresh thinking, and action. This document does not address the operational details of implementation, although it provides overall guidance for action. With rich input from field offices, it is proposed to eventually develop operational guidelines, monitoring framework, and tools for implementing the Four Key components of the Framework for Action.

The document is organized as follows: It first introduces the concept of young people, which covers adolescents and youth. Against the backdrop

of the current development scenario and global commitments of the ICPD and MDGs, Section 4 explains the rationale and objective of the Framework for Action. Section 5 briefly details the process of developing the Framework for Action. Section 6 maps the strategic policy and programme direction of the Framework for Action. It also highlights the

underlying principles of the Framework. The Four Key components are outlined in Sections 7 to 10. Section 11 highlights steps the Fund can take to improve delivery of its policy and programme commitments. Following the Conclusion in Section 12, an annexure lists a glossary of key concepts used in the Framework.



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