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## United Nations Population Fund Background Guide 2020

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# NATIONAL MODEL UNITED NATIONS



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Dear Delegates,

Welcome to the 2020 National Model United Nations New York Conference (NMUN•NY)! We are pleased to introduce you to our committee, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). This year's staff is: Directors Stephanie N. Shady (Conference A) and Melissa Salgado (Conference B). Stephanie holds an MA and a BS in Political Science and a BA in Spanish. She is currently pursuing her PhD in Political Science with a focus on national identity and also teaches at the undergraduate level. Melissa recently finished her MA in Political Science and is currently teaching at the University of Texas at Tyler.

The topics under discussion for the United Nations Population Fund are:

1. Promoting Access to Family Planning in Developing States
2. Increasing Youth Leadership and Participation in Society

Operating under both the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, UNFPA is the leading population-focused entity within the United Nations. The role of the UNFPA within this framework is to promote and support the access and rights to sexual and reproductive healthcare for families and individuals. The United Nations Population Fund addresses challenges related to sexual and reproductive healthcare in relation to socio-economic development and population growth by gathering knowledge, building partnerships, and implementing strategies and aid programs. To accurately simulate the committee, it is key for delegates to emulate the normative and best practice-setting approaches of the United Nations Population Fund and consider how decisions can impact operations on the ground.

This Background Guide serves as an introduction to the topics for this committee. However, it is not intended to replace individual research. We encourage you to explore your Member State's policies in depth and use the Annotated Bibliography and Bibliography to further your knowledge on these topics. In preparation for the Conference, each delegation will submit a Position Paper by 11:59 p.m. (Eastern) on 1 March 2020 in accordance with the guidelines in the [Position Paper Guide](#) and the [NMUN•NY Position Papers](#) website.

Two resources, available to download from the [NMUN website](#), that serve as essential instruments in preparing for the Conference and as a reference during committee sessions are the:

1. [NMUN Delegate Preparation Guide](#) - explains each step in the delegate process, from pre-Conference research to the committee debate and resolution drafting processes. Please take note of the information on plagiarism, and the prohibition on pre-written working papers and resolutions. Delegates should not start discussion on the topics with other members of their committee until the first committee session.
2. [NMUN Rules of Procedure](#) - include the long and short form of the rules, as well as an explanatory narrative and example script of the flow of procedure.

In addition, please review the mandatory [NMUN Conduct Expectations](#) on the NMUN website. They include the Conference dress code and other expectations of all attendees. We want to emphasize that any instances of sexual harassment or discrimination based on race, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, or disability will not be tolerated. If you have any questions concerning your preparation for the committee or the Conference itself, please contact the Under-Secretaries-General for the Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs Department, Tobias Dietrich (Conference A) and Estefani Morales (Conference B), at [usg.hr\\_ha@nmun.org](mailto:usg.hr_ha@nmun.org)

We wish you all the best in your preparations and look forward to seeing you at the Conference!

Sincerely,

**Conference A**

Stephanie N. Shady, *Director*

**Conference B**

Melissa Salgado, *Director*

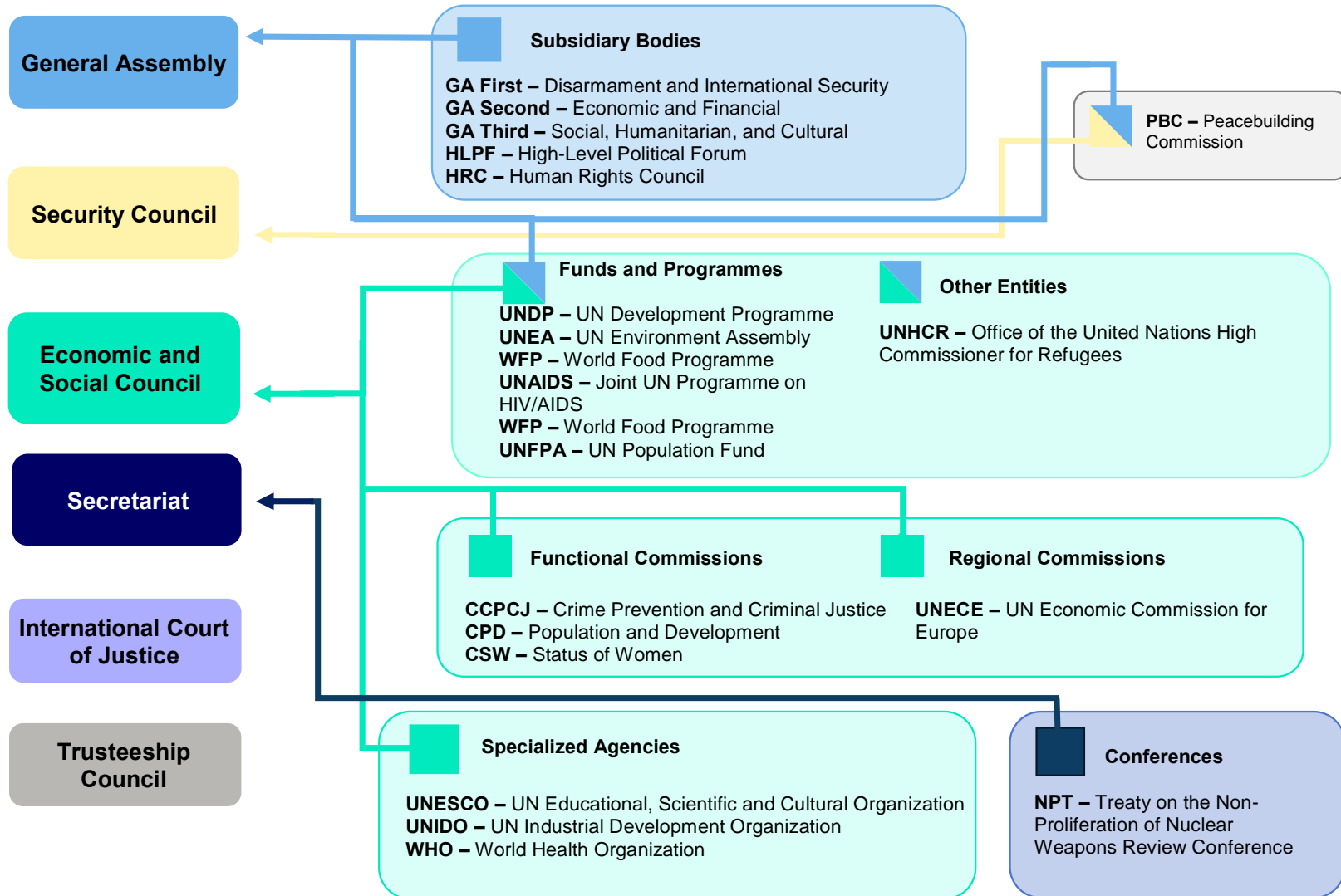


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## United Nations System at NMUN•NY

This diagram illustrates the UN system simulated at NMUN•NY and demonstrates the reportage and relationships between entities. Examine the diagram alongside the Committee Overview to gain a clear picture of the committee's position, purpose, and powers within the UN system.



## Committee Overview

### Introduction

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) was established in 1967 as the United Nations Fund for Population Activities and formally began its operations in 1969, the year that the United Nations (UN) General Assembly declared the right of parents to plan their families.<sup>1</sup> With an emphasis on protecting human rights, especially for vulnerable populations, UNFPA plays a key role in the UN's population initiatives by supporting safe childbirth and planned pregnancies and by promoting gender equality, as women and girls' rights to sexual and reproductive health are often restricted.<sup>2</sup> To reflect its leadership in addressing population within the UN system, UNFPA was officially renamed the United Nations Population Fund in 1987 while retaining its original abbreviation.<sup>3</sup> UNFPA's *Strategic Plan 2018-2020* prioritizes four core areas of interconnected work: sexual and reproductive health rights and services, adolescent and youth empowerment, gender equality and women's empowerment, and population data for development.<sup>4</sup> These core areas include issues such as family planning and contraception, emergency and humanitarian crisis situations, obstetric fistula, HIV infections, and poverty.<sup>5</sup> Across the globe, UNFPA supports reproductive health care services and provides materials for over 150 Member States that benefit 20 million women a year.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, UNFPA works to end sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), which affects one in three women globally, and female genital mutilation (FGM), which affects 3 million girls annually.<sup>7</sup> UNFPA also supports efforts to end child marriages and unwanted teen pregnancies.<sup>8</sup>

The **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)** is a program and fund of the United Nations that reports to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.

### Governance, Structure, and Membership

In 1993, General Assembly resolution 48/162 changed the reporting mechanisms for UNFPA.<sup>9</sup> Where it had previously reported to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNFPA began reporting to the General Assembly starting in 1994, with additional policy guidance from the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).<sup>10</sup> Further governance and structural shifts resulting from General Assembly resolution 48/162 included transforming the UNDP and UNFPA's joint 48-Member State Governing Council into an Executive Board.<sup>11</sup> The Board is comprised of 36 Member States on a rotating basis with representation from each regional block.<sup>12</sup> The regional blocks consist of eight African states, seven Asia-Pacific states, four Eastern European states, five Latin American and Caribbean states, and 12 Western European and other states.<sup>13</sup> The Board holds first and second regular sessions, annual sessions, and

<sup>1</sup> UNFPA, *About Us*, 2018; UNFPA, *Frequently Asked Questions*, 2018.

<sup>2</sup> UNFPA, *Frequently Asked Questions*, 2018; UNFPA, *How We Work*.

<sup>3</sup> UNFPA, *Frequently Asked Questions*, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> UNFPA, *Strategic Plan 2018-2021*, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> UNFPA, *Humanitarian Action 2017 Overview*, 2017; UNFPA, *About Us*, 2018; UNFPA, *Frequently Asked Questions*, 2018.

<sup>6</sup> UNFPA, *About Us*, 2018.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> UNFPA, *UNFPA in the UN System*; UN General Assembly, *Further Measures for the Restructuring and Revitalization of the United Nations in the Economic, Social and Related Fields (A/RES/48/162)*, 1994.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> UNFPA, *UNFPA in the UN System*; UN General Assembly, *Further Measures for the Restructuring and Revitalization of the United Nations in the Economic, Social and Related Fields (A/RES/48/162)*, 1994.

<sup>12</sup> UNFPA, *Executive Board*; UNFPA, *Members of the Executive Board*.

<sup>13</sup> UNFPA, *Members of the Executive Board*.

pre-sessional consulting.<sup>14</sup> It is the responsibility of the Board to provide administrative, financial, and intergovernmental support and to supervise programs and activities within its thematic areas.<sup>15</sup>

Financially, UNFPA is fully supported by voluntary contributions from governments, intergovernmental organizations, private sector groups and foundations, and individuals; it does not receive funds from the UN regular budget.<sup>16</sup> In 2018, total contributions made to UNFPA reached \$1255 million, the highest gross contribution revenue made by the UNFPA to date.<sup>17</sup> Of the total, \$872 million went toward UNFPA's core programmatic efforts, such as the UNFPA Supplies program and the UNFPA Maternal Health Thematic Fund, which incorporates the Campaign to End Fistula.<sup>18</sup> For transparency efforts, UNFPA publishes how it allocates funds to its core areas of work annually.<sup>19</sup> In 2018, gender equality initiatives were allocated the most resources of any core area and accounted for approximately 44.4% of UNFPA's expenditures.<sup>20</sup>

To be an effective UN development agency, UNFPA contributes to intergovernmental and inter-agency processes by participating in debate and by giving policy recommendations on approximately 150 relevant agenda items in the General Assembly.<sup>21</sup> UNFPA also participates in regional intergovernmental commissions of ECOSOC and collaborates with other entities such as the World Health Organization.<sup>22</sup> UNFPA is one of four founding members of the UN Development Group created in 1997 by the Secretary-General to improve coherence of UN development efforts at the Member State level.<sup>23</sup> UNFPA is also a member of the UN Chief Executives Board for Coordination, which meets twice annually and serves as the main instrument within the UN system to coordinate the actions and policies of the executive heads of various entities.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, UNFPA works with civil society organizations, including faith-based and women's advocacy organizations, through the Civil Society Advisory Panel that it formed in 2013.<sup>25</sup> These partners serve as policy advocates, healthcare providers, and sources of up-to-date scientific research to guide UNFPA's work.<sup>26</sup>

### ***Mandate, Functions, and Powers***

ECOSOC resolution 1084 (XXXIX) (1965) and General Assembly resolution 2211 (XXI) (1966) both highlight that the challenges in reproductive health services, as they relate to socio-economic development and population growth in developing countries, should be addressed through a specialized agency within the UN.<sup>27</sup> In response to these observations, the Secretary-General established UNFPA to address population matters for the international community.<sup>28</sup> Adopted in ECOSOC resolution 1763 (1973), UNFPA's mandate calls for gathering knowledge, recommending policies, and building capacity to assist national, regional, and interregional responses to global population needs and family planning.<sup>29</sup> The mandate empowers UNFPA to raise awareness and provide aid to developing countries to help

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<sup>14</sup> UNFPA, *Schedule of Meetings*.

<sup>15</sup> UNFPA, *UNFPA in the UN System*; UN General Assembly, *Further Measures for the Restructuring and Revitalization of the United Nations in the Economic, Social and Related Fields (A/RES/48/162)*, 1994.

<sup>16</sup> UNFPA, *Funds and Funding*; UNFPA, *Frequently Asked Questions*, 2018.

<sup>17</sup> UNFPA, *United Nations Population Fund Financial report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2018 and Report of the Board of Auditors*, 2019, p. 47.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49; UNFPA, *UNFPA Supplies*, 2019.

<sup>19</sup> UNFPA, *Funds and Funding*.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> UNFPA, *UNFPA in the UN System*.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> UNFPA, *Partnering with Civil Society*.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Work Programmes and Priorities in Population Fields (E/RES/1084(XXXIX))*, 1965; UN General Assembly, *Population Growth and Economic Development (A/RES/2211(XXI))*, 1966.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> UN ECOSOC, *United Nations Fund for Population Activities (E/RES/1763(LIV))*, 1973.

address population challenges and implement strategies in accordance with national plans and priorities.<sup>30</sup> The mandate also supports UNFPA's efforts in data collection and developing context-specific approaches and programs, both of which have been recognized as crucial steps to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).<sup>31</sup>

In 1994, Egypt hosted the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the largest intergovernmental conference on the topic, with 179 Member States and over 11,000 participants from governments, UN specialized agencies and organizations, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, and the media.<sup>32</sup> The outcome of the conference was the ICPD *Programme of Action* (PoA), which focuses on improving lives of individuals through strengthened global partnerships, which address sustainable development and advocate for sexual and reproductive health services and rights.<sup>33</sup> This built upon previous initiatives, including the 1984 International Conference on Population held in Mexico City, the outcome documents from the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development, and the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights.<sup>34</sup> Through a set of 15 principles, the ICPD PoA provides guiding actions for Member States that support the mandate of the ICPD to uphold human rights and gender equality, achieve sustainable lifestyles and development, and implement appropriate population-related policies regarding economic development and poverty challenges.<sup>35</sup>

Guided by the aforementioned conferences and the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) (2015), UNFPA particularly focuses on SDGs 3 (good health and well-being), SDG 4 (quality education) and SDG 5 (gender equality).<sup>36</sup> Insufficient maternal healthcare is the leading cause of death of women and girls in many developing countries, so UNFPA has focused its attention on SDG 3 by implementing training for midwives and providing education and resources to prevent sexually transmitted infections.<sup>37</sup> Relatedly, under SDG 4 and its mandate to build knowledge and capacity under ECOSOC resolution 1763 (1973), UNFPA is committed to bringing “comprehensive sexuality education” to all girls and boys.<sup>38</sup> Such education includes body self-awareness, safe sex and contraception alternatives, and healthcare during pregnancy.<sup>39</sup> UNFPA recognizes that knowledge is a crucial tool not only to promote healthy sex and pregnancy, but also to combat SGBV.<sup>40</sup> Under SDG 5, UNFPA uses education and advocacy campaigns to work towards their goals of ending child marriage and FGM, two practices that limit progress towards the full realization of human rights of women and girls.<sup>41</sup> UNFPA's emphasis on education in addition to care access highlights the organization's priority of youth engagement, because teaching and providing care for young girls (and boys) sets them on a path for improved sexual health and gender equality in the long-run.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.; UN ECOSOC, *United Nations Fund for Population Activities (E/RES/1763(LIV))*, 1973; UN General Assembly, *Population Growth and Economic Development (A/RES/2211(XXI))*, 1966.

<sup>31</sup> Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS, *Report of the Annual Session 2017 (DP/2017/28)*, 2017; Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS, *Report of the First Regular Session 2017 (DP/2017/13)*, 2017; UNFPA, *Sustainable Development Goals*.

<sup>32</sup> UNFPA, *International Conference on Population and Development*; UNFPA, *Overview - International Conference on Population and Development*; UNFPA, *Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development*, 2014.

<sup>33</sup> UNFPA, *International Conference on Population and Development*; UNFPA, *Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development*, 2014.

<sup>34</sup> UNFPA, *International Conference on Population and Development*.

<sup>35</sup> UNFPA, *Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development*, 2014.

<sup>36</sup> UNFPA, *Sustainable Development Goals*.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

### **Recent Sessions and Current Priorities**

In 2018, UNFPA began working under its *Strategic Plan 2018-2021*, which aligned its priorities with the 2030 Agenda.<sup>43</sup> The plan outlines specific targets on a regional basis in accordance with UNFPA's commitment to reaching those with greatest and most urgent need first.<sup>44</sup> UNFPA's strategic plan prioritizes four core areas it deems integral to achieving universal access to sexual and reproductive health: 1) sexual and reproductive health services and reproductive rights; 2) adolescent and youth empowerment; 3) gender equality and women's empowerment; and 4) population data for development.<sup>45</sup>

In addition to integrating the SDGs, the *Strategic Plan 2018-2021* builds upon international frameworks such as the *2015-2030 Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction*, the *2015 Paris Agreement*, and the *2015 Addis Ababa Action Agenda*.<sup>46</sup> The *Strategic Plan 2018-2021* expands upon these frameworks by focusing UNFPA's efforts to reach specific targets within SDGs 3, 4, 5, 10, and 17 that relate to the overall well-being of communities, especially women and girls.<sup>47</sup> Although UNFPA's *Strategic Plan 2018-2021* seeks to make transformative improvements in population health, humanitarian crisis management, and sustainable development through data collection, UNFPA still faces considerable challenges moving forward.<sup>48</sup> UNFPA continues to face funding constraints, uncertain political conditions, migration and displacement, and resistance to sexual and reproductive health rights and gender equality, all of which challenge the execution and efficacy of their work.<sup>49</sup>

In May 2019, UNFPA co-hosted a conference in Oslo on Ending SGBV in Humanitarian Crises alongside other UN agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and government representatives.<sup>50</sup> Following two days of hearing from experts on and survivors of SGBV, state, regional, and civil society organizations made written commitments and policy plans to end SGBV.<sup>51</sup> Member States further committed to contribute over \$363 million beginning in 2019 for UN coordination on this matter.<sup>52</sup> UNFPA and the United Nations Children's Fund are jointly supporting local initiatives that educate community members and civil society organizations on combating SGBV, especially FGM, with a goal of ending SGBV by 2030.<sup>53</sup>

In July 2019, UNFPA published an updated *Strategy for the 2020 Round of Population and Housing Censuses (2015-2024)*, with the intent to leverage this data for future development strategies.<sup>54</sup> As the world population continues to grow, UNFPA is grappling with ways to promote family planning in ways that simultaneously are culturally-sensitive and respect human rights.<sup>55</sup> One such program UNFPA has been supporting is Egypt's "Two Is Enough" campaign, which uses financial incentives and family planning education to encourage citizens to keep the birth rate around the replacement rate of 2.1 children per couple, but which has been a debatable practice among international and national stakeholders.<sup>56</sup> Such initiatives highlight the delicate balance that UNFPA seeks as it pursues goals of

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<sup>43</sup> UNFPA, *Strategic Plan 2018-2021*, 2018.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>45</sup> UNFPA, *Strategic Plan*.

<sup>46</sup> UNFPA, *Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development*, 2014.

<sup>47</sup> UNFPA, *Strategic Plan 2018-2021*, 2018, pp. iii-xi.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>50</sup> Oslo Conference on Ending Sexual and Gender-Based Violence in Humanitarian Crises, *Outcome Statement*, 2019, p. 1.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>54</sup> UNFPA, *UNFPA Strategy for the 2020 Round of Population and Housing Censuses (2015-2024)*, 2019.

<sup>55</sup> UNFPA, *Culturally Sensitive Approaches*.

<sup>56</sup> Masri, 'Two Is Enough,' Egypt Tells Poor Families as Population Booms, *Reuters*, 2019; Michaelson, Experts Urge Egypt to Rethink Two-child Population Strategy, *The Guardian*, 2019.



managing population dynamics while respecting both human rights and different cultural values regarding family.<sup>57</sup>

25 years after the ICPD in Cairo, UNFPA uses the perspective of a 35-year old, who would have been 10 years old when the PoA was signed, to measure progress and room for growth.<sup>58</sup> With the tagline “More than my mother, less than my daughter,” UNFPA notes in its latest *State of World Population* annual report (2019) that the past 25 years have brought substantial progress in access to voluntary family planning, reproductive and sexual healthcare, and other services and rights that promote gender equality and sustainable development.<sup>59</sup> More women today work outside the home and are community leaders in addition to being mothers compared with the generation before them.<sup>60</sup> However, in the face of obstacles such as poverty and cultural debates over relationship values and gender roles, some of today’s young women still lack full autonomy to choose whether, when, and how to plan their families.<sup>61</sup> In line with SDG 4 and its interconnectedness with poverty reduction, health, and equality, UNFPA is measuring education access over time at the national and regional levels as it works to provide today’s girls with greater freedom and higher quality of life than their mothers before them.<sup>62</sup> By the time the SDGs expire in 2030, the status of young adults, and in particular young women, throughout the world will serve as a measure of success of UNFPA’s contributions towards achieving the SDGs and fulfilling the Secretary-General’s Every Woman, Every Child movement’s aim to connect universal healthcare rights and access with the SDGs.<sup>63</sup>

### **Conclusion**

From UNFPA’s mandate to the 2030 Agenda, leaving no one behind requires a focus on a human rights-based approach to health and population, as well as providing financial support and programmatic contributions in the areas of gender equality, population management, and sexual and reproductive health.<sup>64</sup> UNFPA continues to serve as the leading entity within the UN system for population management by providing a platform for discussion and collaboration on population dynamics, sexual and reproductive health and rights, and sustainable development.<sup>65</sup> Through programs and strategies such as the strategic plan and the UNFPA Maternal Health Fund, UNFPA will continue to support the 2030 Agenda as it provides assistance to millions of marginalized families, women, and young girls with a focus on UNFPA’s core four strategic areas.<sup>66</sup>

### **Annotated Bibliography**

United Nations Population Fund. (n.d.). *Sustainable Development Goals*. Retrieved 15 July 2019 from: <https://www.unfpa.org/sdg>

*This website highlights the 12 SDGs on which UNFPA works most closely, with particular emphasis on SDG 3 (good health and well-being), SDG 4 (quality education), and SDG 5 (gender equality). The site provides an overview of UNFPA’s priorities and current work towards each goal. Delegates can use this resource as a starting point for understanding the intersection of UNFPA’s work and sustainable development and make use of the links to further information provided next to each goal.*

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<sup>57</sup> UNFPA, *Culturally Sensitive Approaches*.

<sup>58</sup> UNFPA, *State of World Population 2019*, 2019, pp. 137-150.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 137-138.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 138-150.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 131, 158-159.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 2019.

<sup>65</sup> Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA, UNOPS, *Report of the First Regular Session 2017 (DP/2017/13)*, 2017; UNFPA, *About Us*, 2018; UNFPA, *Strategic Plan 2018-2021*, 2018.

<sup>66</sup> UNFPA, *About Us*, 2018; UNFPA, *Strategic Plan 2018-2021*, 2018.

United Nations Population Fund. (2014). *Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development*. Retrieved 19 July 2019 from: [http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/programme\\_of\\_action\\_Web%20ENGLISH.pdf](http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/programme_of_action_Web%20ENGLISH.pdf)

*This PoA is the outcome document of the ICPD, which was held in Cairo, 5-13 September 1994, and placed the human rights of all people at the center of development. The PoA of the ICPD also includes the “Key Actions for Further Implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development” from the 21<sup>st</sup> Special Session of the General Assembly. One key action is to ensure the well-being of society through the empowerment of women and youth in order to deliver inclusive, equitable, and sustainable development. Delegates can use this source to conceptualize the effects of population dynamics on development and to understand how these have been incorporated into the 2030 Agenda.*

United Nations Population Fund. (2018). *Strategic Plan 2018-2021*. Retrieved 14 July 2019 from: [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/18-044\\_UNFPA-SP2018-EN\\_2018-03-12-1244.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/18-044_UNFPA-SP2018-EN_2018-03-12-1244.pdf)

*This document outlines UNFPA’s priorities and goals for 2018-2021 and provides important background information on the most pressing issues that fall under UNFPA’s mandate. This is first new strategic plan UNFPA has adopted since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. In order to work towards achieving SDGs 3, 4, and 5, the plan pays particular attention to the topics of: 1) sexual and reproductive health services and reproductive rights; 2) adolescent and youth empowerment; 3) gender equality and women’s empowerment; and 4) population data for development. Delegates can use the strategic plan to develop an understanding of current UNFPA initiatives as they discuss their own proposals at the conference.*

United Nations Population Fund. (2019). *UNFPA Strategy for the 2020 Round of Population and Housing Censuses (2015-2024)*. Retrieved 16 July 2019 from: [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Census\\_Strategy\\_Final\\_July.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Census_Strategy_Final_July.pdf)

*Pursuant to one of UNFPA’s priorities in its Strategic Plan 2018-2020, leveraging population data for development, this strategy document discusses lessons learned from the 2010 round of population and housing censuses that UNFPA supported. Based on these lessons, it outlines an improved strategy for the upcoming census round, particularly to capture more accurate data on underserved populations such as migrants and persons with disabilities. With more comprehensive data that in particular provides information about vulnerable populations, UNFPA can better design and implement initiatives tailored to the needs of specific communities. Delegates can use this resource as they consider how to improve and leverage data as they address the committee’s topics.*

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## I. Promoting Access to Family Planning in Developing States

### *Introduction*

Family planning, as defined by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), is the “information, means, and methods that allow individuals to decide if and when to have children.”<sup>67</sup> This includes education on sexual and reproductive health, access to contraceptives, and access to adequate health care.<sup>68</sup> In developing states, around 230 million women do not have access to family planning services or educational information on such services.<sup>69</sup> Increasing access to these resources and vital information is difficult to obtain due to a variety of reasons, including a lack of resources, lack of funding for supplies, difficulty travelling to health facilities, social barriers, and others.<sup>70</sup> Due to this lack of access there is an abundance of unmet need for family planning, and a large number of individuals are sexually active but are not using any contraception.<sup>71</sup> These barriers are problematic because having access to family planning services contributes to individual and collective safety, empowers women, creates economic benefits, and contributes to gender equality.<sup>72</sup>

Since 1990, access to family planning services has helped decrease the number of maternal deaths by 44%.<sup>73</sup> Although a significant decline, currently, about 99% of maternal deaths occur in developing countries and 830 women die each day from complications which could have been prevented with the expansion of services like family planning.<sup>74</sup> Additionally, complications during pregnancy and birth for adolescent girls aged 15 -19 is the primary reason for death in this vulnerable group.<sup>75</sup> However, this same group often has the least access to the necessary information to prevent dangerous pregnancies.<sup>76</sup> In 2017, it was reported there are 214 million women of reproducing age in developing regions who wanted to avoid pregnancy but were not using a contraceptive of any kind.<sup>77</sup> In developing regions, 39% of women who want to avoid pregnancy and 57% of women who still have unmet need for contraceptives live in the developing regions of Sub-Saharan Africa or Southern Asia.<sup>78</sup> In both of these cases, family planning has a cultural stigma, and there is a lack of resources to fund and increase educational services for family planning.<sup>79</sup>

UNFPA, as a leading organization in family planning, supports family planning by providing a reliable supply of contraceptives, assisting governments in strengthening their national health systems, advocating for national and international policies that support family planning services, and by helping gather and disseminate data on this issue.<sup>80</sup> In 2018, UNFPA provided seven different contraceptive types to 68 million couples in developing countries, helping to avert over 30 million unintended pregnancies.<sup>81</sup> However, with 12% of the women’s world population facing barriers to access to family planning, the gap between need and unmet need must close to provide healthier reproductive opportunities to and for women around the world.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> UNFPA, *Family Planning*, 2008.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> UNFPA. *Annual Report 2018, 2019*, p. 8.

<sup>72</sup> UNFPA, *Family Planning*, 2008.

<sup>73</sup> UNFPA, *About Us*, 2008.

<sup>74</sup> UNFPA, *Strategic Plan 2018 - 2021*, 2017, p.1.

<sup>75</sup> UNFPA, *Family Planning*, 2008.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Guttmacher Institute, *Adding it up: Investing in Contraception and Maternal and Newborn Health*, 2017.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> UNFPA, *Comprehensive Sexuality Education*, 2016.

<sup>80</sup> UNFPA, *Family Planning*, 2008.

<sup>81</sup> UNFPA. *Annual Report 2018, 2019*, pp. 3, 6, 9.

<sup>82</sup> WHO, *Unmet Need for Family Planning*, 2008.

## **International and Regional Framework**

The importance of the family unit is enshrined in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) (1948).<sup>83</sup> Article 16 of the UDHR states “Men and women of full age...have the right to marry and found a family. The family is a natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State.”<sup>84</sup> This right to create a family is further outlined and explained in terms of family planning in the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW) (1979), which has been adopted by 189 Member States.<sup>85</sup> Article 10 of CEDAW advocates for not only the educational aspect of keeping families informed, but also emphasizes that women specifically have the right to decide the spacing of when to have children, or to decide not to have children.<sup>86</sup> Family planning is further described as a right by the Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, which emphasizes family planning in the context of having safer and healthier sexual and reproductive services to help improve maternal reproductive health.<sup>87</sup>

One of the most important frameworks on family planning is the *International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action* (PoA).<sup>88</sup> Created in 1994, this landmark document outlined the significant impact family planning can have on an individual and on families, encouraging access to safe methods of modern contraception.<sup>89</sup> As the first document to address the needs revolving around family planning, the PoA continues to be the leading document in the international sphere on family planning.<sup>90</sup> Furthermore, since its inception, the PoA has been updated to align with the *Millennium Development Goals* and the subsequent *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDGs).<sup>91</sup> The inclusion of these goals is outlined in the *Framework of Actions for the follow up to the Programme of Action* (2015), which details not only the progress already made, but the progress necessary in moving forward with the PoA.<sup>92</sup>

Additionally, the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2015) also addresses the importance of meeting family planning needs.<sup>93</sup> SDG 3 (good health and well-being) and SDG 5 (gender equality) address reducing the global maternal mortality, increasing universal access to sexual and reproductive health care, and ensuring rights to reproductive and sexual care.<sup>94</sup>

## **Role of the International System**

UNFPA works in over 150 countries and has provided reliable access to contraceptives for 20 million people a year.<sup>95</sup> UNFPA’s Supplies Program, which provides steady and reliable access to contraceptives, medicine, and other supplies to improve family planning efforts has helped prevent an estimated 10.4 million unintended pregnancies.<sup>96</sup> This is in addition to helping 46 countries who have some of the highest rates of unmet needs for planning.<sup>97</sup> A main goal for UNFPA is the “one vision, three

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<sup>83</sup> UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*, 1948, p. 5.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women: Optional Protocol (A/RES/54/4)*, 1999.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> UN ECOSOC, *Substantive Issues Arising in the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights*, 2000.

<sup>88</sup> *Explainer: What is the ICPD and why does it matter?*, UNFPA, 2019; UNFPA, *Programme of Action: Adopted at the International Conference and Population Development*, 1994, pp.64-65.

<sup>89</sup> UNFPA, *Programme of Action: Adopted at the International Conference and Population Development*, 1994, pp.64-65.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., pp.64-67.

<sup>91</sup> UNFPA, *Framework of Actions for the Follow up to the Programme of Action of the ICPD*, 2015.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> UN General Assembly, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> UNFPA, *About Us*, 2008.

<sup>96</sup> UNFPA, *UNFPA Supplies*, 2019.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

zeroes” initiative.<sup>98</sup> This initiative aligns with SDG 3 and SDG 5, and involves having zero preventable deaths, zero gender-based violence, and zero unmet need for family planning by 2030.<sup>99</sup> To achieve this goal, UNFPA seeks to make quality contraceptives more accessible and provide further support for family planning initiatives.<sup>100</sup> UNFPA further seeks to reduce to zero by 2030 the number of women that wish to prevent or delay pregnancy but are not currently using contraceptives.<sup>101</sup>

The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and its PoA were the first time in history where women’s health and reproductive rights were put at the forefront of international development efforts.<sup>102</sup> The PoA was revolutionary in advocating for access to voluntary family planning, comprehensive reproductive health care, and the official recognition that women’s rights and empowerment cannot continue to improve if women do not have access to adequate reproductive care and education.<sup>103</sup> In November 2019, advocates, governments, and others met at the Nairobi Summit to mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ICPD.<sup>104</sup> This summit, led by UNFPA and the governments of Denmark and Kenya, covered how far the international community has come on the PoA such as increasing the number of couples who use contraceptives in developing regions to around 55% since the 1960’s and an overall increase of 25% in the use of contraceptives around the world.<sup>105</sup> Those at the summit also discussed how to move forward in achieving the goals of the PoA.<sup>106</sup>

Regionally, the African Union (AU) with their *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want* (2015) is also working towards increasing access to family planning.<sup>107</sup> Agenda 2063’s focus is on ending all harmful social practices, especially female genital mutilation and child marriages.<sup>108</sup> Additionally, Agenda 2063 aims to lower high fertility rates by addressing the unmet need of family planning and enhancing maternal and new born health.<sup>109</sup> Before their Agenda 2063, the AU had created the *Plan of Action on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights* (2006), known as the *Maputo Plan of Action*, which aimed to improve access to health services, including family planning, and addressed ending unmet need for family planning.<sup>110</sup> The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific has also made a commitment to do the same through their *Asian and Pacific Ministerial Declaration on Population and Development* where they emphasize family planning as a means to help further gender equality.<sup>111</sup> The High Commissioner for Human Rights, also recognizes family as a human right, and partners with UNFPA, the World Health Organization (WHO), and others to ensure that a human rights-based approach is followed when providing supplies and help with family planning.<sup>112</sup> WHO has recently launched an app for eligible criteria regarding contraceptives to help family planning providers determine the most safe and accessible methods of family planning.<sup>113</sup> Additionally, to address the needs in improving sexual and reproductive health, WHO, UNFPA, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank, and UNDP created the Special Programme of Research, Development and Research Training in Human Reproduction whose main purpose is to research human reproduction and to bring

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<sup>98</sup> UNFPA. *Annual Report 2018*, 2019, p. 6.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>102</sup> *Explainer: What is the ICPD and why does it matter?*, UNFPA, 2019.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Nairobi Summit on ICPD25, *About the Nairobi Summit*, 2019.

<sup>105</sup> UNFPA, *ICPD*, 2019.

<sup>106</sup> Nairobi Summit on ICPD25, *About the Nairobi Summit*, 2019, UNFPA, *Programme of Action: Adopted at the International Conference and Population Development*, 1994, p. 60.

<sup>107</sup> African Union, *Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want*, 2015.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> African Union, *Roadmap on Harnessing the Demographic Dividend through Investments in Youth*, 2017, pp. 19-20.

<sup>110</sup> African Union, *Plan of Action on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights*, 2006, p. 12.

<sup>111</sup> UN ESCAP, *Report of the Sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference*, 2013.

<sup>112</sup> UN OHCHR, *Human Rights Based Approaches to Women and Children’s Health*, 2019

<sup>113</sup> WHO, *New App for WHO’s Medical Eligibility Criteria for Contraceptive use*, 2019.

together scientists, healthcare providers, and policymakers to work together on sexual and reproductive health.<sup>114</sup>

UNFPA and its partners work alongside non-governmental organizations (NGOs) whose focus is also on family planning.<sup>115</sup> The leading NGO on increasing access to family planning is the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) which works with populations living in extreme poverty.<sup>116</sup> The main objective of the IPPF is to provide contraceptives as a means of family planning, though they also provided gynecological, obstetric, and pediatric services.<sup>117</sup> Women and girls are the primary recipient of those services, with 84% of all services provided in 2018 benefiting them.<sup>118</sup> One global partnership aiming to increase access to suitable family planning services is Family Planning 2020 (FP2020).<sup>119</sup> An outcome of the 2012 London Summit on Family Planning, FP2020's main goal is to expand access to family planning services to all, including providing contraceptive services to women and girls in 69 of the world's poorest countries by 2020.<sup>120</sup> One of their main projects is the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) which provides small grants to fund time-sensitive projects or projects where there may not be sufficient funds or help in their focus countries who are in need of an immediate intervention.<sup>121</sup> Through technical assistance, training, and advocacy the RRM prioritizes meeting the needs of the FP2020's focus countries by helping NGO's, UN agencies, governments, or even private contractors who are implementing help in an FP2020 focus country.<sup>122</sup> Additionally the H6 partnership, formed in 2008 and composed of UNFPA, UNICEF, World Bank Group, WHO, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, emphasizes the work of the Every Woman, Every Child Global Strategy.<sup>123</sup> This strategy, created under former Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is a global movement to address major health challenges facing women, girls, and adolescents around the world.<sup>124</sup> With its initiative of three main objectives "Survive, Thrive and Transform," the strategy is meant to decrease the number of preventable deaths of women, girls, and adolescents.<sup>125</sup> Since its inception, H6 has sought to expand access to services and is committed to advancing women's political access to adequate health care, including family planning.<sup>126</sup>

WHO has provided assistance on this issue by creating evidence-based guidelines on safety and delivery of different contraceptive methods.<sup>127</sup> WHO also provides online curriculum which can be used by curriculum developers or facilitators who work in family planning to provide high-quality training and education regarding family planning.<sup>128</sup> In November of 2012, the 11<sup>th</sup> International Conference of National Human Rights was held in Amman, Jordan to discuss the "Human Rights of Women and Girls, Gender Equality: The Role of National Human Rights Institutions."<sup>129</sup> The outcome of this conference was the adoption of the *Amman Declaration and Programme of Action* which commits to monitoring Member States' commitments to fulfilling human rights obligations relating to women, girls, and gender equality including protecting reproductive rights and the right to choose the spacing and timing of their children.<sup>130</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> WHO, *About HRP*, 2019.

<sup>115</sup> UNFPA, *About Us*, 2008.

<sup>116</sup> International Planned Parenthood Federation, *Women & Girls*, 2019.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>119</sup> Family Planning 2020, *About Us*, 2019.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> Family Planning 2020, *Rapid Response Mechanism*, 2019.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>123</sup> UNFPA, *H6 Partnership*, 2016.

<sup>124</sup> Every Woman, Every Child, *What is Every Woman, Every Child*, 2016.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>126</sup> UNFPA, *H6 Partnership*, 2016.

<sup>127</sup> WHO, *Family Planning/Contraception*, 2019.

<sup>128</sup> UNFPA, *Training Resource Package for Family Planning*, 2019.

<sup>129</sup> UN OHCHR, *11<sup>th</sup> National Conference*, 2012.

<sup>130</sup> UN OHCHR, *Amman Declaration and Programme of Actions*, 2012, pp.3-8



## **Strengthening National Capacities to Provide Safe Family Planning Services**

As a part of their *Strategic Plan 2018-2021*, UNFPA is committed to ensuring governments increase access to family planning services.<sup>131</sup> Specifically, UNFPA has continuously emphasized the importance of governments collaborating with UNFPA, each other, and the private sector in understanding how vital family planning services are in developing countries to provide healthier and sustainable futures for vulnerable populations.<sup>132</sup> Two obstacles to increasing safe family planning services in developing countries include cultural barriers, which hinder a populations understanding of the need for services, and lack of access to contraceptives, as well as having sufficient resources and access to create and procure the services required to address those needs.<sup>133</sup>

One course of action by UNFPA is encouraging governments to create or implement policies on family planning such as expanding access to effective contraception.<sup>134</sup> By 2015, over 70% of governments had created policies to expand the use of effective contraception.<sup>135</sup> Implementing these policies and keeping them in place, however, are a financial burden many developing countries have trouble maintaining.<sup>136</sup> In many developing states, funding for family planning services comes from external sources like UNFPA, Family Planning 2020, WHO, UNICEF, and other organizations which provide aid.<sup>137</sup> Most of UNFPA's funding comes from voluntary contributions which they use for their "core" programs, but funds are also available for special programs such as the UNFPA Supplies program.<sup>138</sup> Although helpful when provided, developing countries remain at risk of having a sudden loss of resources and family planning programs due to inconsistent funding for programs.<sup>139</sup>

As of 2018, 38 countries have committed to expanding access to voluntary rights-based family planning, but financial stability in developing countries remains a serious obstacle.<sup>140</sup> Partnerships with key stakeholders, such as civil society organizations (CSOs), are essential in helping developing countries create rights-based family planning support policies.<sup>141</sup> For example, the Global Financing Facility for Women, Children and Adolescents (GFF), which helps countries manage how they finance health and nutrition policies, encourages governments to increase domestic spending in areas of health and nutrition to match the SDGs.<sup>142</sup> The focus of the GFF is to foster help both financially and in policy advising governments in figuring out how to finance sexual and reproductive help to women, children, and adolescents.<sup>143</sup> Additionally, partnered with the Family Planning 2020 coalition, the Bill and Melinda Gates foundation, which has committed to increase quality contraceptive access to 120 million women in the poorest countries, supports governments that have committed to FP2020's agenda by providing financial and policy advising assistance.<sup>144</sup>

A different method governments can take when creating policy and encountering cultural barriers and having enough financial assistance involves acknowledging myths and misconceptions on family planning and contraceptives.<sup>145</sup> This has been done through information, education, and communication (IEC) and mass media efforts to spread information on family planning specifics such as the benefits of

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<sup>131</sup> UNFPA, *Strategic Plan 2018- 2021*, 2017, p. iv.

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid.*, p. v.

<sup>133</sup> UNFPA, *State of the World Population 2019*, 2019, p. 104-105.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 105.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.

<sup>138</sup> UNFPA, *Funds and Funding*, 2019.

<sup>139</sup> UNFPA, *State of the World Population 2019*, 2019, p. 112.

<sup>140</sup> WHO, *Family Planning Evidence Brief*, 2018, p. 6.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>142</sup> UNFPA, *State of the World Population 2019*, 2019, p. 114; Global Financing Facility, *About Us*, 2017.

<sup>143</sup> Global Financing Facility, *About Us*, 2017.

<sup>144</sup> Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, *What we do: Family Planning*, 2019.

<sup>145</sup> WHO, *Family Planning Evidence Brief*, 2018, p. 4.

contraception or what contraceptives are actually used for.<sup>146</sup> Additionally, IEC also encourages improving communication between couples, communication with health care workers, and communication with religious leaders in developing countries.<sup>147</sup> This is meant to increase support for using family planning methods such as contraceptives.<sup>148</sup> Other routes governments can take requires creating health care worker programs whose main focus is to provide services on family planning.<sup>149</sup> Additionally, creating programs which can integrate family planning with other health services whose focus is already on reproductive health can increase access and provide education on family planning.<sup>150</sup> Although governments need to increase policies on family planning, some must also re-evaluate policies that require women and adolescents to have third-party consent to receive contraceptives, or health services.<sup>151</sup> Policies which require women and adolescents to obtain third-party consent to receive family planning services can be detrimental as these women are less likely to seek help, and are at higher risk for unsafe pregnancies.<sup>152</sup>

### ***Increasing Education on Family Planning***

In many developing states a lack of understanding by populations of what family planning is presents a problem.<sup>153</sup> Family planning is often challenged with either a cultural stigma or misinformation about what family planning is.<sup>154</sup> Most of the misconception on family planning is centered on contraceptives, and how they are not a form of terminating a pregnancy but rather a form of prevention.<sup>155</sup> Education on family planning is important because women and adolescents in developing regions are at most risk of unmet family planning needs, and are generally less informed on the benefits of family planning, including the safe use of contraceptives.<sup>156</sup> A main barrier to providing greater access to sex education are cultural beliefs surrounding family planning, especially the use of contraceptives.<sup>157</sup> General access to information on health and sexual reproduction stems from a lack of resources to give the information, or is due to a lack of educators.<sup>158</sup>

In 2011, cultural barriers in Ethiopia surfaced when women who were offered condom use as a form of prevention were hesitant to accept condoms or information surrounding the use of condoms.<sup>159</sup> This hesitation stemmed from the idea that condoms were for “promiscuous, unmarried people, or sex-workers.”<sup>160</sup> In a similar case, in Burundi, discussing family planning and especially the use of contraception, is seen as shameful.<sup>161</sup> Barriers in accessing contraceptives are created when the ability of individuals to ask questions about contraceptives is stymied because of cultural stigmas.<sup>162</sup> In the Maldives, youth are addressing stigmas by becoming advocates to break taboos surrounding family planning.<sup>163</sup> By becoming advocates and working towards spreading information on family planning and specifically contraceptives, these organizations are helping youth create brighter futures.<sup>164</sup> In Burundi,

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> UN OHCHR, *Contraception and Family Planning*, 2014, p. 2.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

<sup>153</sup> UNFPA, *State of the World Population 2019*, 2019, p. 104.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> UNFPA, *Comprehensive Sexuality Education*, 2016.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> UNFPA, *Myths, Misperceptions, and Fears: Addressing Condom Use Barriers*, 2007.

<sup>159</sup> *Tackling Taboos to Condom Use in Ethiopia and Elsewhere*, UNFPA, 2011.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> *In Burundi, Sexual Health Education Helps Youth Protect Themselves, Their Futures*, UNFPA, 2019.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> *Youth Advocates for Family Planning Break Taboos in the Maldives*, UNFPA, 2018.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

taboos revolve around openly speaking of family planning methods like contraception.<sup>165</sup> To help end this stigma, UNFPA is helping 18 youth-centered organizations in Burundi by having volunteers take classes to learn how to speak to youth about family planning options.<sup>166</sup> Additionally, UNFPA also worked with the government of Burundi to create a comprehensive sex education program which launched three years ago.<sup>167</sup>

### *Providing Awareness and Education about Family Planning Services to Adolescents*

In developing countries, 20,000 adolescent girls under the age of 18 give birth every day, meaning every year there are 7.3 million births by adolescent girls in developing regions.<sup>168</sup> Adolescent access to family planning is vital because teenage pregnancies often prevent girls from attending and completing their education and is a root cause of poverty.<sup>169</sup> Many unplanned pregnancies do not occur due to conscious choice, but are due to a lack of information on contraceptives and education on other family planning services.<sup>170</sup> Part of UNFPA's work includes offering classes both in and out-of-school settings for adolescents to show the effectiveness of contraceptives, such as male and female condoms.<sup>171</sup> Out-of-school programs include community-based training and education that focus the curriculum toward those who are at most risk, such as married adolescent girls, refugees, homeless youth, and youth in rural areas.<sup>172</sup> In-school sex education provided by the Y-PEER program is supported by the UNFPA, which uses a combination of experiential learning methodologies, social media, and technology to provide information on family planning and health.<sup>173</sup>

Additionally, UNFPA takes many different approaches in teaching about family planning.<sup>174</sup> This includes focusing not only on abstinence only education, but partnering with other groups such as the Society for Health Education (SHE) in the Maldives to spread the access to education.<sup>175</sup> SHE is the only organization in the Maldives which provide services and information to young people on sexual and reproductive matters.<sup>176</sup> UNFPA also has the Safeguard Young People Programme (SYP), which is specific to Eastern and Southern Africa.<sup>177</sup> SYP creates comprehensive interventions for youth and adolescents through policy, health services, and sex education both in and out-of-school contexts.<sup>178</sup> This program currently works in eight countries: Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.<sup>179</sup> SYP has helped expand sexual and reproductive health education to young people who in many cases have no access to it.<sup>180</sup> Programs like SYP also allow adolescents to be in charge of their body and their needs in a well-informed manner that can help them take charge of their life's decisions.<sup>181</sup>

To further help adolescents in creating their own futures UNFPA has launched the "My body, my life, my world" strategy which aims at encouraging youth to feel empowered in making decisions for themselves.<sup>182</sup> Meeting unmet need for family planning would reduce the number of unwanted

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<sup>165</sup> *In Burundi, Sexual Health Education Helps Youth Protect Themselves, Their Futures*, UNFPA, 2019.

<sup>166</sup> UNFPA, *Sexual Health Education Helps Youth Protect Themselves, Their Futures*, 2019.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> *Youth Advocates for Family Planning Break Taboos in the Maldives*, UNFPA, 2018.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> UNFPA, *Comprehensive Sexuality Education*, 2016.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.; *Youth Advocates for Family Planning Break Taboos in the Maldives*, UNFPA, 2018.

<sup>176</sup> *Youth Advocates for Family Planning Break Taboos in the Maldives*, UNFPA, 2018.

<sup>177</sup> UNFPA, *The Safeguard Young People Programme*, 2019.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> *Helping Young People Take Charge of Their Bodies, Their Lives, Our World*, UNFPA, 2019.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

pregnancies for youth by 6 million.<sup>183</sup> This would allow adolescents to increase their chances at planning a future as many who get pregnant as an adolescent have a higher risk of becoming pregnant again within one year of their pregnancy, increasing health risks for both the mother and child.<sup>184</sup> Decreasing adolescent risk cannot be done without the inclusion of men and boys through education.<sup>185</sup> With this in mind, UNFPA partnered with EngenderHealth to create a guide addressing gender norms when it comes to discussing health and health programs.<sup>186</sup> This guide, *Engaging Men in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Including Family Planning*, aims at educating men on reproductive health, gender equality, and addresses stereotypes on masculinity and risky behavior.<sup>187</sup> The overall goal of the guide is to increase men's understanding of women's rights and to increase male support for gender equality.<sup>188</sup> With the help of family planning, and being able to plan their future, adolescents are more likely to stay in school, work on job skills, and be able to participate economically in society.<sup>189</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Family planning is an important service that women and adolescents in developing states can use to create healthier futures.<sup>190</sup> With the creation of the ICPD in 1994 the international community made a commitment to improve the life of women, girls, and adolescents who are often overlooked when it comes to development.<sup>191</sup> Although UNFPA and its partners have made great strides increasing access to family planning, there is still much work that needs to be done.<sup>192</sup> Those with the most need are the ones who have the most trouble in accessing these services.<sup>193</sup> Creating programs, and having access to family planning and especially contraceptives, continues to be a challenge in the areas that need it the most.<sup>194</sup> With 12% of the population still in need of family planning services, and with the goal of “zero unmet need” approaching, the international community must continue to work together on this issue.<sup>195</sup>

### **Further Research**

As delegates begin researching this topic they should consider: How can UNFPA and its partners help developing states create stable family planning programs? Should it be a more policy-based approach focused on family planning or focused on resources needed? How can the creation and provision of necessary supplies, such as contraceptives, be made more cost effective? How can UNFPA, NGO's, and CSO's help governments create financial stability with health services? In addressing cultural barriers, how can UNFPA make women and adolescents feel more comfortable discussing family planning services? How can Member States address the stigma and taboo surrounding family planning in developing countries to have populations understand the benefits of family planning?

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*The ICPD PoA is a landmark program to address needs in family planning, population growth, health and reproductive rights and more. This document outlines promises to*

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<sup>183</sup> WHO, *Family Planning Evidence Brief*, 2018, p. 2.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> EnGenderHealth, *Engaging Men in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, Including Family Planning*, 2017.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> WHO, *Family Planning Evidence Brief*, 2018, p. 2.

<sup>190</sup> UNFPA, *Family Planning*, 2008.

<sup>191</sup> *Explainer: What is the ICPD and why does it matter?*, UNFPA, 2019.

<sup>192</sup> UNFPA, *Family Planning*, 2008.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.

<sup>194</sup> WHO, *Unmet Need for Family Planning*, 2019.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

*make changes in growth in these areas, especially in developing countries where access to help on these issues is not always available. Delegates can use this document to understand the areas of need regarding family planning and to see what the international community has done on this topic so far.*

United Nations Population Fund. (2014). *Framework of Actions for the Follow up to the Programme of Action*. Retrieved 15 July 2019 from: [https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/ICPD\\_beyond2014\\_EN.pdf](https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/ICPD_beyond2014_EN.pdf)

*The first Programme of Action UNFPA helped create was done so in 1994. Since then the follow up to the Programme of Action was created to expand the goals of the International Conference on Population and Development. This document along with reporting on milestones of the first Programme of Action detail what was missed, and what UNFPA plans to do in the future to reach end goals by 2030. This document is just as important as the Programme of Action, as delegates research the topic, they can learn about the direction of the future of family planning and create innovative ideas in further improving access to family planning.*

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*UNFPA's strategic plan is a document that highlights what UNFPA plans on working towards between the years of 2018-2021. The plan showcases UNFPA's three main objectives, as well as outlining where they want to work on these issues, why they want to, and how they plan to do so. Additionally, this document details UNFPA's plan in aligning their goals with the Sustainable Development Goals. As delegates further research this topic, this document is vital in understanding what UNFPA's goals regarding this topic are.*

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*Each year UNFPA produces an annual report which documents the work UNFPA has accomplished the previous year. This document is important because it not only highlights UNFPA's progress on their "three zero goals," but it also details how much work UNFPA has done on a regional basis. This is helpful for delegates as they do country specific research, and with this document they can determine what direction their research may need to go regarding this topic.*

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*Similar to the annual report, UNFPA produces a yearly document to showcase not just family planning, but other issues affecting the world's population. A helpful aspect of this document is it goes into detail about the history of the international efforts on family planning. Delegates can use this document to understand not only the history of UNFPA, family planning, but to understand how governments have fit into the process as well.*

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## II. Increasing Youth Leadership and Participation in Society

### Introduction

Youth between the ages of 10 and 24 account for 1.8 billion people in the world today, making up almost a quarter of the world's population.<sup>196</sup> Of those 1.8 billion young people, 90% live in developing countries, which leaves many youth unable to participate fully in society due to economic, educational, and societal barriers.<sup>197</sup> According to the 2014 report of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), *State of the World Population*, “up to 60% of young people in developing regions are not working or in school, or have only irregular jobs.”<sup>198</sup> Globally, 21.2% of young people were not employed or in school as of 2018.<sup>199</sup> Additionally, as of 2017, over 500 million youth between the ages of 15 and 24 struggle to survive on less than \$2 per day.<sup>200</sup> These hindrances often impede youth participation in issues that affect them such as health, education, employment, and sustainable development.<sup>201</sup>

While there are no universally accepted definitions of adolescence and youth, the United Nations (UN) commonly defines adolescents as persons aged 10-19 years and youth as those between 15 and 24 years old.<sup>202</sup> Those aged 10-24, encompassing both adolescents and youth, are generally referred to as young people.<sup>203</sup> Although UNFPA recognizes these definitions, many UNFPA and UNFPA-supported publications, including those related to youth participation and leadership, tend to use the terms ‘youth’ and ‘young people’ interchangeably.<sup>204</sup> UNFPA utilizes both ‘youth’ and ‘young people’ in reference to those between the ages of 10 and 24.<sup>205</sup> UNFPA also supports a definition of youth participation from the United States National Commission on Resources for Youth, which is, “Involving youth in responsible, challenging action that meets genuine needs, with opportunity for planning and/or decision-making affecting others, in an activity whose impact or consequences extends to others – outside or beyond the youth participants themselves.”<sup>206</sup>

While youth involvement in society has increased internationally and within the UN, young people continue to be excluded from formal political and economic aspects of society.<sup>207</sup> For instance, engagement in institutional political processes such as voting and participating in party politics continues to decline in democracies around the globe for youth between the ages of 18 and 25.<sup>208</sup> Relatedly, the inability or unwillingness of governments to address the issues of young people has led to widespread dissatisfaction with institutional political organizations.<sup>209</sup> The fact that many young people feel as if their voice is not being heard has led to an increase in other forms of democratic participation such as protests and demonstrations.<sup>210</sup> Although both informal and formal participation in politics are important within a democracy, elected officials often ignore the preferences of non-voters, meaning that the issues of young people often go unaddressed due to age-related imbalances within formal politics.<sup>211</sup> Additionally, the

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<sup>196</sup> UNFPA, *UNFPA Strategy on Adolescents and Youth*, 2013, p. 1.

<sup>197</sup> UNFPA, *Adolescent and Youth Demographics: A Brief Overview*, 2013, p. 1; UNFPA, *Youth Participation and Leadership*, 2017.

<sup>198</sup> UNFPA, *State of the World Population: The Power of 1.8 Billion*, 2014, p. 31.

<sup>199</sup> UN DESA, *World Economic Situation and Prospects: April 2019 Briefing*, No. 125, 2019.

<sup>200</sup> UNFPA, *Youth Participation and Leadership*, 2017.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>202</sup> UNFPA, *Adolescent and Youth Demographics: A Brief Overview*, 2013, p. 1

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> Family Health International, *Youth Participation Guide: Assessment, Planning, and Implementation*, 2008, p. 23.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>207</sup> UNDP, *UNDP Youth Strategy 2014-2017: Empowered Youth, Sustainable Future*, 2014, p. 17.

<sup>208</sup> UN DESA, *World Youth Report on Youth Civic Engagement*, 2016, p. 64; UNDP, *UNDP Youth Strategy 2014-2017: Empowered Youth, Sustainable Future*, 2014, p. 5.

<sup>209</sup> UN DESA, *World Youth Report on Youth Civic Engagement*, 2016, p. 14.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>211</sup> Iyengar & Jackman, *Technology and Politics: Incentives for Youth Participation*, 2003, p. 1.

lingering effects of the global economic crisis and high rates of youth unemployment impact young people's economic participation.<sup>212</sup> When youth are able to find employment, it often comes in the form of a low-paying or unpaid internship, or an unstable job with few benefits where they fear participating in trade unions.<sup>213</sup> Meanwhile, in some cases, young people who feel disenfranchised and ignored in the political decision-making processes have been known to resort to violent forms of protest such as rioting, public disorder, or in extreme cases, joining violent extremist groups.<sup>214</sup> Of course, political marginalization is only one factor in youth joining violent extremist groups, but geographic proximity to conflict, economic vulnerability, and exposure to extremist propaganda all increase youth vulnerability to terrorist recruitment.<sup>215</sup> That being said, each of these factors significantly affects many young people, and the combination of any of these circumstances with political or social marginalization may lead to a young person joining a violent extremist group.<sup>216</sup>

Recognizing the unique challenges, perspectives, and contributions of youth, UNFPA aims to empower youth and provide them with opportunities to be effective drivers of change.<sup>217</sup> In order to do so, UNFPA partners with young people to help them participate in decision-making processes and strengthen their ability to advance human rights and positively affect development issues.<sup>218</sup>

### ***International and Regional Framework***

Beginning with the adoption of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) (1948), the UN declared that everyone has the right to participate in government, including youth.<sup>219</sup> However, it was not until 1979 that the UN adopted another resolution regarding youth leadership and participation.<sup>220</sup> General Assembly resolution 34/151 (1979) designated 1985 as "International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace" and stressed the importance of the direct participation of youth in shaping the future.<sup>221</sup> With the adoption of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989), the UN further emphasized the rights of youth and adolescents to fully participate in society.<sup>222</sup> The *World Programme of Action for Youth* (WPAY) (1995) reflected the themes of the first International Youth Year in 1985 with a focus on the full and effective participation of youth in society and decision-making.<sup>223</sup> Implementation of the WPAY-proposed actions included improving access to information, encouraging increased exchange between youth organizations, and asking governments to include youth representatives in their national delegations to the General Assembly.<sup>224</sup> Chapter 25 of *Agenda 21* (1992) from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development calls for advancing the role of young people in sustainable development and actively involving them in the protection of the environment and the promotion of economic and social development.<sup>225</sup>

It was not until 2005 with the publication of *The Case for Investing in Young People* that UNFPA began to focus more on advocating for involving youth in decision-making processes.<sup>226</sup> Since then, UNFPA has continued to promote youth participation in society with publications such as the *UNFPA Framework for Action on Adolescents & Youth* (2007), which named four key areas for the direction of the Fund, one of

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<sup>212</sup> UN DESA, *World Youth Report on Youth Civic Engagement*, 2016, p. 30.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.* 2016, pp. 33-35.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 66.

<sup>215</sup> Darden, *Tackling Terrorists' Exploitation of Youth*, 2019, p. 7.

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7-11.

<sup>217</sup> UNFPA, *Youth Participation and Leadership*, 2017.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>219</sup> UN General Assembly, *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (A/RES/217 A (III))*, 1948.

<sup>220</sup> UN General Assembly, *International Youth Year: Participation, Development, Peace (A/RES/34/151)*, 1979, p. 175.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>222</sup> UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/RES/44/25)*, 1989.

<sup>223</sup> UN DESA, *World Programme of Action for Youth*.

<sup>224</sup> UN DESA, *Participation WPAY*.

<sup>225</sup> UNCED, *Agenda 21*, 1992.

<sup>226</sup> UNFPA, *The Case for Investing in Young People*, 2005, pp. 5-6.

which was Young People’s Leadership and Participation.<sup>227</sup> Within that area, meaningful youth participation was described as “involving, recognizing, and nurturing the strengths, interests, and abilities of young people through the provision of real opportunities for youth to become involved in decisions that affect them at individual and systemic levels.”<sup>228</sup> Further, UNFPA’s *State of the World Population: The Power of 1.8 Billion* report (2014) focuses solely on adolescents and youth and recognizes the importance of meaningful participation and leadership of youth in relation to the future of sustainable development.<sup>229</sup>

Likewise, *Transforming our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2030 Agenda) (2015) acknowledges the need to empower and enable people who are vulnerable, including all children and youth, to participate in society.<sup>230</sup> Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 (quality education), SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth), SDG 13 (climate action), and SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions), outline the need for quality education and employment for young people in order to advocate for their involvement in sustainable development.<sup>231</sup> Moreover, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) adopted the *UN Youth Strategy* (2018), in which the Member States pledged to break down the barriers that keep young people from participation and to engage youth in decision-making processes.<sup>232</sup> The strategy, *Youth 2030: Working with and for Young People*, specifically aims to increase the agency and rights of young people in a way that ensures their participation in the implementation of the SDGs, along with other relevant global frameworks and agendas.<sup>233</sup> In order to do so, UNDP recognized five priorities of the strategy, including: engagement, participation, and advocacy; informed and healthy foundations; economic empowerment through decent work; youth and human rights; and peace and resilience building.<sup>234</sup> In stepping up their efforts in the aforementioned areas, UNDP hopes to engage and empower young people.<sup>235</sup>

### **Role of the International System**

In 2017, UNFPA reaffirmed its position on youth leadership and participation in society in the *UNFPA Strategic Plan 2018-2021* by promising to promote the right of young people to participate in politics and civil society.<sup>236</sup> UNFPA works to uphold this pledge by supporting youth-oriented policies, promoting youth-led projects and groups that endorse equal participation, and creating partnership platforms for young people’s participation in the SDGs.<sup>237</sup> UNFPA also partners with and supports several youth networks, including the Youth Peer Education Network (Y-Peer), the African Youth and Adolescent Network on Population and Development (AfriYAN), Young Positives, and EvalYouth.<sup>238</sup> UNFPA assists each of these networks in developing the access, skills, and leadership needed to represent and advocate for youth at local, regional, and international levels.<sup>239</sup>

Within the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA), the UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development (IANYD) aims to increase the effectiveness of UN work in youth development by strengthening collaboration and conversation between all relevant UN entities.<sup>240</sup> IANYD advocates for, supports, and reviews progress on the implementation of youth-related UN resolutions and conventions,

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<sup>227</sup> UNFPA, *UNFPA Framework for Action on Adolescents & Youth*, 2007, pp. 37-40.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

<sup>229</sup> UNFPA, *State of the World Population: The Power of 1.8 Billion*, 2014, pp. 89-91.

<sup>230</sup> UN General Assembly, *Transforming Our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/RES/70/1)*, 2015, p. 7.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>232</sup> *UN Youth Strategy Commits Support to a new Generation of Leaders*, UNFPA, 2018.

<sup>233</sup> UNDP, *Youth 2030: Working with and for Young People*, 2018, p. 5.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10-12.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>236</sup> UNFPA, *UNFPA Strategic Plan 2018-2021 (DP/FPA/2017/9)*, 2017, p. 14.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>238</sup> UNFPA, *Youth Leadership & Participation*, 2019.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*; UNFPA, *UNFPA Strategy on Adolescents and Youth*, 2013, p. 9.

<sup>240</sup> UN DESA, *UN Inter-Agency Network on Youth Development*.

as well as the SDGs.<sup>241</sup> UN DESA also oversees the Youth Delegate Program, which allows youth representatives from Member States to participate in intergovernmental meetings at the UN.<sup>242</sup>

Elsewhere within the UN system, the *UNDP Youth Strategy 2014-2017* was designed to complement and reinforce the *UNDP Strategic Plan 2014–2017* by deepening the youth focus across all areas of work.<sup>243</sup> It also supported the work of the UN Secretary-General’s Envoy on Youth and IANYD, including support for the implementation of the *United Nations Systemwide Action Plan on Youth* (UN Youth-SWAP) in the areas of employment, political inclusion, civic engagement, and protection of rights.<sup>244</sup> Additionally, the *Youth Global Programme for Sustainable Development and Peace (Y-GPS) 2016-2020* is UNDP’s “first global programmatic offer for youth empowerment for sustainable development and peace.”<sup>245</sup> Through its four thematic areas of work, civic engagement and political participation, peacebuilding and resilience-building, economic empowerment, and youth as partners in the implementation and monitoring of the 2030 Agenda, UNDP seeks to establish the conditions of youth empowerment.<sup>246</sup> UNFPA also works in close collaboration with UNDP and UN DESA on the UN Global Initiative on National Youth Policies (GINYP), surrounding youth empowerment at the global level.<sup>247</sup> GINYP supports the development and enactment of youth policies through technical assistance, advocacy, and sharing of expertise.<sup>248</sup>

### **Youth and the Sustainable Development Goals**

The unprecedented number of adolescents living today, mostly concentrated in developing countries, means that today’s young people will be the ones who have to live with the results of the SDGs.<sup>249</sup> SDG 1 (no poverty) is particularly relevant to young people, as 500 million youth live in poverty, and 156 million of those youth live in poverty despite being employed.<sup>250</sup> SDG 3 (good health and well-being) is also applicable to young people, as they face disproportionately high rates of HIV and generally struggle with access to reproductive information and healthcare.<sup>251</sup> In addition, with around 103 million young people deficient in basic literacy, many of those affected by the issues reflected in SDG 4 (quality education), are young people.<sup>252</sup> Similarly, SDG 5 (gender equality) and SDG 10 (reduced inequalities) are pertinent to young women and girls, who are often denied participation in education solely because of their sex.<sup>253</sup> Connected to both SDG 8 (decent work and economic growth) and SDG 9 (industry, innovation, and infrastructure), young people continue to struggle to find decent, stable work.<sup>254</sup> Finally, SDG 13 (climate action) is of great importance to youth, not only because they will have to live with the consequences of action or inaction on climate change, but also because women and children are 14 times more likely than men to die in a natural disaster.<sup>255</sup> Advances made in quality education and decent work and economic growth are mutually reinforcing; therefore, success in these areas may lead to the realization of the remaining SDGs and improve life circumstances for many youth.<sup>256</sup>

With the understanding of how the SDGs considerably affect young people, youth have unique perspectives and ideas when it comes to the implementation of the SDGs.<sup>257</sup> Additionally, the UN DESA

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<sup>241</sup> Ibid.

<sup>242</sup> UN DESA, *UN Youth Delegate Program*.

<sup>243</sup> UNDP, *UNDP Youth Strategy 2014-2017: Empowered Youth, Sustainable Future*, 2014, p. 3.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

<sup>245</sup> UNDP, *Youth Global Programme for Sustainable Development and Peace 2016-2020*, 2016, p. 2.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid.

<sup>248</sup> UNDP, *1st Global Forum on Youth Policies: Report*, 2014, p. 22.

<sup>249</sup> UNFPA, *Youth Participation and Leadership*, 2017.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid.; UN DESA, *World Youth Report: Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2018, p. 2.

<sup>251</sup> UNFPA, *Sustainable Development Goals*.

<sup>252</sup> Ibid.

<sup>253</sup> UN DESA, *World Youth Report: Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2018, p. 65.

<sup>254</sup> UNFPA, *Sustainable Development Goals*.

<sup>255</sup> UN-Women, *SDG 13: Take Urgent Action to Combat Climate Change and its Impacts*.

<sup>256</sup> UN DESA, *World Youth Report: Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2018, p. 64.

<sup>257</sup> UNFPA, *Youth Participation and Leadership*, 2017.

*World Youth Report: Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (2018) emphasizes the importance of increasing youth participation in sustainable development efforts for successful implementation of the SDGs.<sup>258</sup> Research shows that young people have positively contributed to the fulfillment of the SDGs by developing partnerships, networks, and alliances; influencing their communities and governments; contributing toward development policies; and helping create initiatives for the SDGs.<sup>259</sup> As such, investing in young people and empowering them to participate in the implementation of the SDGs will be critical to achieving the goals.<sup>260</sup>

With that in mind, UNFPA, sometimes alongside other UN agencies, works to not only help carry out the SDGs, but to do so in a way that involves youth for the increased likelihood of achieving the SDGs.<sup>261</sup> UNFPA's *Strategic Plan 2018-2021*, in line with the Executive Board's 2017 decision, commits UNFPA to working with UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) in supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.<sup>262</sup> In their collaboration, although they do take multiple SDGs into consideration, as the UN agency designated with promoting access to sexual and reproductive healthcare, UNFPA's strategic plan is particularly focused on the goal of achieving universal access to sexual and reproductive healthcare and reproductive rights for women, adolescents, and youth.<sup>263</sup> The plan also lays out a model to achieve said goal, in which the participation and empowerment of adolescents and youth is vital.<sup>264</sup> Additionally, UNFPA helped launch the Global Initiative on Decent Jobs for Youth and the Joint Programme on Empowering Adolescent Girls and Young Women through Education, which focus on decent work and quality education, both of which help deliver results concerning the other SDGs.<sup>265</sup>

### ***Supporting Involvement of Marginalized Girls and Young Women***

Girls and young women often face additional educational and societal barriers when it comes to acting as leaders or participants, solely because of their gender or sex.<sup>266</sup> For example, one-third of the more than 500 million adolescent girls currently living in developing countries are married before the age of 18.<sup>267</sup> Child marriage, often followed by pregnancy, not only endangers the lives and health of young women and girls, but it also limits their future prospects, including participation in education.<sup>268</sup> Girls who are forced into marriage are also often forced into dropping out of school to fulfill their domestic duties within the household.<sup>269</sup> In least developed countries, around 63% of girls complete primary school and only 29% enroll in secondary school.<sup>270</sup> Similarly, girls who are not in school suffer from worse health and economic circumstances than if they would have remained in school, which further contributes to diminished participation in society.<sup>271</sup> UNFPA works to empower girls vulnerable to child marriage by promoting education, supporting programs that build life skills, providing sexual and reproductive healthcare, and improving economic well-being.<sup>272</sup> UNFPA also works with governments to foster supportive policies and legislation that promote the rights of married and unmarried girls.<sup>273</sup>

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<sup>258</sup> UN DESA, *World Youth Report: Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2018, p. 3.

<sup>259</sup> Plan International UK, *What's the Evidence? Youth Engagement and the Sustainable Development Goals*, 2018.

<sup>260</sup> UNFPA, *Youth Participation and Leadership*, 2017.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*; UN DESA, *World Youth Report: Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, 2018, p. 64.

<sup>262</sup> UNFPA, *UNFPA Strategic Plan 2018-2021 (DP/FPA/2017/9)*, 2017.

<sup>263</sup> UNFPA *Sustainable Development Goals*; UNFPA, *UNFPA Strategic Plan 2018-2021 (DP/FPA/2017/9)*, 2017, p. 3.

<sup>264</sup> UNFPA, *UNFPA Strategic Plan 2018-2021 (DP/FPA/2017/9)*, 2017, pp. 7-10.

<sup>265</sup> Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA/UNOPS, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP, *Working with Adolescents and Youth to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals*, 2017, pp. 8-9.

<sup>266</sup> UNFPA, *Youth Participation and Leadership*, 2017.

<sup>267</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>268</sup> UNFPA, *Child Marriage*, 2018.

<sup>269</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>270</sup> UNFPA, *Youth Participation and Leadership*, 2017.

<sup>271</sup> UNFPA, *Child Marriage*, 2018.

<sup>272</sup> UNFPA, *Marrying Too Young: End Child Marriage*, 2012, p. 53.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*

Girls and young women also face high risks of having poor sexual and reproductive health as a result of being subjected to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).<sup>274</sup> In addition to SGBV, girls and young women are also exposed to further practices that are harmful to their health such as female genital mutilation and sex trafficking.<sup>275</sup> In an attempt to shield girls and young women from some of these problems, in partnership with UNICEF and the World Health Organization, UNFPA is involved in an initiative to provide girls with the same opportunities and rights as boys.<sup>276</sup> Included in this initiative, which is tailored to the needs of 13 specific countries such as Senegal, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, and India, are the goals to keep girls in school, develop vocational training for adolescent girls, and engage girls in social, political, and economic aspects of life.<sup>277</sup> In order to achieve these goals, UNFPA and its partners are providing girls with comprehensive education and training in income-generating skills as well as educating local communities about the reproductive health needs of adolescent girls.<sup>278</sup> UNFPA also encourages the leadership and participation of marginalized girls through programs such as Action for Adolescent Girls (AAG).<sup>279</sup> This program enables girls and young women to protect themselves by connecting them with resources that help them to know and understand their rights.<sup>280</sup> The AAG initiative was launched in Rajasthan, India, in 2015 and reached approximately 12,000 to 14,000 adolescent girls in 600 villages in the form of peer-led girl groups focused on education.<sup>281</sup> UNFPA also supported community events addressing issues faced by girls as part of the program, which reached over 87,000 community members in about 580 events.<sup>282</sup>

### **Conclusion**

Despite some progress in the rates of youth participation in society, young people are still vastly underrepresented in the political sphere and civil society.<sup>283</sup> While UNFPA and other UN bodies such as UN DESA, UNDP, and UN-Women continue to push the importance of youth leadership and participation in society, many young people still face educational, economic, social, and political barriers to reach full participation.<sup>284</sup> The obstacles are even more challenging for girls and young women, who may face SGBV, child marriage, and a lack of adequate access to sexual and reproductive healthcare.<sup>285</sup> Still, UNFPA aims to increase youth participation and leadership by understanding the issues that young people face; building networks of governments, youth-led organizations, civil society, and other stakeholders; developing the skills of young people; and involving young people in policymaking.<sup>286</sup>

### **Further Research**

As delegates continue their research on this topic, they should consider the following questions: How can UNFPA work with Member States and other UN entities to facilitate the full participation of young people at local, regional, and international levels? How can other UN bodies, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, and civil society organizations be useful in realizing leadership and participation of youth? How can governments better involve youth in decision-making processes that directly affect them? What national and regional practices have been successful in increasing youth leadership and participation, and how might they be adapted and implemented at the international level?

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<sup>274</sup> UNFPA, *Youth Participation and Leadership*, 2017.

<sup>275</sup> UNFPA, *Giving Special Attention to Girls and Adolescents*.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

<sup>279</sup> UNFPA, *Youth Participation and Leadership*, 2017.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> UN Office for Partnerships, *UNFPA's Action for Adolescent Girls, Rajasthan, India / United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) / January 2015 - June 2016*.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

<sup>283</sup> Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, *#YouthStats: Public and Civic Participation*.

<sup>284</sup> UNDP, *Youth Global Programme for Sustainable Development and Peace 2016-2020*, 2016, p. 26.

<sup>285</sup> UNFPA, *Youth Participation and Leadership*, 2017.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

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*This report was published in response to an increased policy focus on youth civic engagement in the years leading up to its publication. It focuses on the changing trends of economic, political, and community-based participation of youth, as well as offering conclusions and recommendations. Delegates should use this source to understand the economic and political trends in and barriers to youth participation in society. Understanding these trends is vital in developing effective solutions to overcome barriers.*

United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2018). *World Youth Report: Youth and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. Retrieved 16 July 2019 from:

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/youth/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/2018/12/WorldYouthReport-2030Agenda.pdf>

*This report examines the mutually supportive roles of current youth development efforts and the 2030 Agenda. The report considers the role that the 2030 Agenda can play in enhancing youth development efforts and examines how evidence-based youth policies can help accelerate youth-related objectives. Delegates will find this source helpful to make a correlation between youth participation and the SDGs. Youth participation is critical to realization of the SDGs and thus it is important for delegates to understand how youth participation and the SDGs are related.*

United Nations Population Fund. (2007). *UNFPA Framework for Action on Adolescents & Youth*.

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*UNFPA's policy and program priorities for young people and its contributions with other UN entities to the development agenda are outlined in this framework. It also lays out the key elements that every UNFPA-supported adolescent and youth program should have, in accordance with UNFPA, while recognizing their diverse needs. This document will be especially helpful to delegates in understanding the relevance of the issue, the associated challenges, and the kinds of ongoing initiatives that UNFPA is undertaking that delegates can adapt and expand upon.*

United Nations Population Fund. (2013). *UNFPA Strategy on Adolescents and Youth*. Retrieved 16 July 2019 from: <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/unfpa-strategy-adolescents-and-youth>

*This strategic framework lays out five areas in which UNFPA planned to contribute to the advancement of adolescents and youth for the following four years and beyond. UNFPA's focus in this strategy is taking bold initiatives to reach marginalized and disadvantaged adolescents and youth, especially girls, and promoting youth leadership and participation. Delegates should use this source to better understand the barriers and challenges associated with youth participation in society to develop thoughtful solutions on the topic.*

United Nations Population Fund. (2014). *State of the World Population: The Power of 1.8 Billion*.

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*This annual report by UNFPA focuses on the 1.8 billion youth alive today and recognizes the importance of their participation in society, as the shapers and leaders of our global future. Although this is an annual report, the 2014 State of the World Population focuses specifically on youth participation and leadership in a way that no report has done since. The report also provides trends and statistics on adolescent and youth populations worldwide. Delegates will find this source particularly useful in providing statistics and definitions of key terms on the topic of youth participation.*

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