



Linking Population and Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights to Sustainable Development & Climate Change

Key Messages and Policy Asks for COP21

PSDA brings together civil society organisations from the Global North and South that work on the inter-linkages between population, sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), and sustainable development issues. The Alliance believes that population dynamics are of critical importance to sustainable development, which can be advanced through accelerated progress towards SRHR. The Alliance seeks to raise awareness and foster constructive and accurate dialogue among policy-makers and civil society about population dynamics and climate change, and to counter misinformation or oversimplification of these complex but critical relationships.

Members of PSDA first came together to promote these linkages at the 15th Conference of the Parties Climate Summit in Copenhagen (COP 15) in October 2009 and have remained active advocates in the COP process since then. PSDA urges the international community gathered at COP 21 to recognise the economic, social and environmental relevance of these inter-linkages and accelerate the adoption of voluntary, rights-based SRHR projects and programmes as a cost-effective, viable climate adaptation and mitigation approach.

Unsustainable consumption patterns and elevated Green House Gas (GHG) emissions from wealthy nations are accelerating and exacerbating climate change and global environmental degradation.

Climate change does not affect us all equally: Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and developing countries are the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change - yet they have contributed least to it. China and the United States alone account for 40% of global GHGs.ⁱ LDCs also need to grow- in economic terms- in order to develop and be better able to respond to climate related challenges. To get close to eliminating \$1.25-a-day poverty by 2030, developing countries will need to expand their Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at about 4.5% each year from 2012 to 2030.ⁱⁱ This means increasing carbon dioxide emissions and consumption levels.

Communities would benefit from men and women's enhanced resilience and adaptive capacities to climate change

Many of the world's poorest countries face a double difficulty: having to ensure economic growth while already experiencing the effects of climate change. Many identify population growth and a lack of access to SRHR as exacerbating the effects of climate change, as well as outpacing and undermining poverty alleviation efforts.

Those developing countries that have submitted strategy documents to the Global Environmental Facility clearly express their fears regarding increased food and water insecurity, depletion of natural resources, and extreme weather patterns. **Hard fought development gains are increasingly vulnerable to storm surges, flooding, and increased risk of cyclones in certain regions.** In **Bangladesh**, during cyclone-related disasters, critical SRHR services are not available for women in need and pregnant women are at increased risk of death and injury.ⁱⁱⁱ In the **Philippines**, the government has strengthened SRHR programmes as strategic interventions in order to reduce fishing efforts and to address the looming crisis in food fish availability.^{iv}

The term "sexual and reproductive health and rights" (SRHR) was explored nearly 20 years ago and builds on the World Health Organisation's (WHO) definition of health:

A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and...not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes.

Reproductive health therefore implies that people are able to have a satisfying and safe sex life and that they have the capability to reproduce and the freedom to decide if, when and how often to do so. Implicit in this last condition are the rights of men and women to be informed and to have access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of family planning of their choice, as well as other methods of their choice for regulation of fertility which are not against the law, and the right of access to appropriate health-care services that will enable women to go safely through pregnancy and childbirth and provide couples with the best chance of having a healthy infant (para 72).

Cairo International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) in Beijing.

We define 'population dynamics' as demographic trends and changes including population growth and decline, ageing, urbanisation, and migration, which influence the size, composition, and spatial distributions of population.



93% of the 40 LDCs that have submitted strategy documents to the Global Environmental Facility have expressed concern about the impact of rapid population growth on their ability to adapt to climate change.^v Population growth rates and other demographic dynamics have significant impacts on the state of the environment, intensifying vulnerability and adaptation challenges.

In this regard, **rights-based voluntary SRHR programmes represent an integral component of adaptation and resilience-building strategies.** Thus, the approach to climate change should be multi-sectoral; shared by the ministries of environment, health, gender equality, climate and others.

Is rapid population growth undermining development potential in Mali?

In Mali 86% of the population are considered extremely poor; in 2010 that share had declined to 50%. Had progress continued at the same rate, the figure would be 43% in 2015, but due to population growth, the absolute number was barely reduced, falling by only 493,000 people between 2010 to 2014 from 7.5 million to just over 7 million.

Berlin Institute for Population and Development and UNFPA (2015) *Consequential Omissions: How Demography shapes development- Lessons from the MDGs for the SDGs.*

PHE: SUCCESSFUL PROGRAMMES INCORPORATING SRHR IN NATIONAL ADAPTATION PROGRAMMES OF ACTION (NAPA)

*Successful examples of projects integrating environmental and health outcomes already exist. For instance, British marine conservation organisation **Blue Ventures** has developed a holistic approach integrating SRHR services with sustainable coastal livelihood and resource management initiatives in southwest **Madagascar.***

Blue Venture's integrated "Population-Health-Environment" approach enables couples to plan and better provide for their families; improving food security, empowering women to play a more active

role in natural resource management, and building socio-ecological resilience to climate change. Since Blue Ventures started offering SRHR services in 2007, it is estimated that over 900 unintended pregnancies have been averted among a population of 20,000 across two service delivery zones covering locally managed marine reserves and adjacent inland communities.

*In **Ethiopia**, thanks to advocacy by Population, Health and Environment networks, an explicit reference to the importance of mainstreaming SRHR into the agricultural sector has been included in the Ethiopian National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPA).*

Robson, L. Blue Ventures Conservation (2014) *Improving human and ecosystem health by integrating family planning services with sustainable resource management initiatives in coastal Madagascar.*

Byrant, L. et al (2009) *Climate change and family planning: least-developed countries define the agenda.* WHO Bulletin, 87, pp. 852-857.



Women's human rights, equality and equity facilitate climate change resilience: a win-win for women and the planet

Women are often among those with the fewest resources and are therefore disproportionately susceptible to the negative effects of climate change; yet empowering them can help boost climate resilience. In developed as well as developing nations, poor and disadvantaged women are unequally affected by natural disasters and over-represented in death tolls.^{vi} More than 70% of those killed in the 2004 Asian tsunami were women.

However, in Honduras, the village of La Masica was the only community to register no deaths in the wake of the 1998 Hurricane Mitch. Six months earlier, a disaster agency had provided gender-sensitive community education on early warning systems and hazard management and women took on the task of continuously monitoring the warning system. As a result, the municipality was able to evacuate the area promptly when the hurricane struck.^{vii}

Women play an important role in the management and use of natural resources; their responsibilities of fetching water and fuelwood for example, makes them acutely aware of the state of the environment and the devastating effects of environmental degradation, including climate change. Women, therefore, can be powerful agents of change through adaptation activities in their households, workplaces, communities and countries.^{viii}

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) guarantees women equal rights in deciding “freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights” (art. 16). CEDAW also specifies women's right to education includes “access to specific educational information to help to ensure the health and well-being of families, including information and advice on family planning” (art. 10).

UNMET NEED FOR MODERN CONTRACEPTION

- 225 million women in developing countries have an unmet need for modern contraceptive methods
- Each year, an estimated 74 million unintended pregnancies occur in the developing world, either because women do not use contraceptives or because their method fails

Guttmacher Institute and UNFPA (2014) Adding it up.

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) have pointed out that access to comprehensive reproductive rights and health is central to individual dignity and human rights and a contributing factor to individual and collective development aspirations.

Policy measures that aim to empower women and girls, including promoting girls' education, greater economic opportunities for women and increased access to reproductive health and family planning – are vital to strengthening

women's capacity to adapt. Empowering men and women to achieve their desired family size leads to improved health outcomes and enables women to pursue educational and employment opportunities, thus strengthening their productive role in society.^{ix} Improved public health, economic well-being and women's empowerment are crucial building blocks of resilience- a win-win for women and the planet.

ⁱ World Bank (2014) Global Carbon Project, AP Research.

ⁱⁱ Bloomberg Environment (2014) Poor Countries Shouldn't Sacrifice Growth to Fight Climate Change <http://www.bloomberg.com/bw/articles/2014-08-29/poor-countries-shouldnt-sacrifice-growth-to-fight-climate-change>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Asian-Pacific Resource & Research Centre for Women (ARROW) (2014) Public Statement: SRHR Issues are Climate Justice Issues.

^{iv} Castro, J and L. D'Agnes PATH Foundation Philippines Inc (2014) Integrating Population, Health and Environment Approach For Human and Ecosystems Health in the Philippines and Beyond: Experiences from the South.

^v Byrant, L. et al (2009) Climate change and family planning: least-developed countries define the agenda. WHO Bulletin, 87, pp. 852-857.

^{vi} UNFPA and WEDO (2009) Climate Change Connections.

^{vii} IUCN (17 June 2009) How Natural Disasters Affect Women.

^{viii} UNFPA and WEDO (2009) Climate Change Connections.

^{ix} UNFPA (2015) Information series on SRHR: Contraception and Family Planning.

Policy asks:

- **Gender equality and women's empowerment must be put high on the international development agenda and women need to be included in important climate change decision making:**

To achieve this, gender inequality in climate actions needs to be dealt with by tackling the current socioeconomic and political barriers. Access to education, employment and SRHR, including voluntary and rights-based SRHR are important components of strengthening women's ability to adapt. Providing women and families with tools to prevent unwanted pregnancies can improve the socio-economic status of women, reduce strain on the environment, and improve natural resource conservation – all of which make significant contributions to resilience in the face of climate change.

- **Governments must revise and strengthen National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) and other climate change adaptation**

programmes to include SRHR: Empowering women by providing access to SRHR must be acknowledged and recognised as an essential part of the solution to adapt to the effects of climate change, increasing resilience and ultimately contributing to reducing emissions as integral parts of sustainable development strategies and approaches. Siloed approaches have been tried – and have failed.

- **Developed countries need to recognise that the most vulnerable have contributed the least to climate change:**

All societies must participate in finding solutions to the global challenge of climate change, demanding global action to ensure immediate and long-term reductions. Developing countries should not have to sacrifice growth today for sustainability tomorrow; if ever a sustainable development issue demanded concerted international action based on globally fair solutions, this is it!

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