

High-Level Task Force for ICPD

RIGHTS, DIGNITY & HEALTH FOR ALL

MOVING FORWARD ON SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE
HEALTH & RIGHTS BEYOND 2015

The High-Level Task Force for ICPD

*envisions a world where all women and men,
adult and young, have **equal opportunities,**
freedoms and **choices** to forge their own
life aspirations and **destinies.***



About the High-Level Task Force for ICPD

The **High-Level Task Force for the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)** is comprised of experienced and eminent leaders and activists committed to furthering human rights, equality, dignity and justice globally in the 21st century.

Established in September 2012, the Task Force aims to galvanize political support for sexual and reproductive health and rights, and ensure that international development efforts prioritize these investments. This includes programs and policies that promote gender equality, women's empowerment and the health and rights of young people worldwide.

Task Force members are individuals from a range of countries and regions who share a long record of dedicating their talent and time to the struggle for equality and equity and championing the rights of those who most lack power and voice. Their profiles and experience reflect a rich diversity—of service as former heads of state, ministers and parliamentarians, civil society leaders, philanthropists, recipients of awards and the Nobel Peace Prize.

Mission of the Task Force

In 1994, at the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo, a landmark agreement emerged for human rights, health and gender equality. For the first time, 179 governments committed to safeguarding and furthering reproductive rights—everyone’s fundamental rights to make decisions about their sexuality and childbearing, free of discrimination, coercion and violence. They affirmed that popu-

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lation and development are inextricably linked, and that effective policies must be rooted in human rights principles, the advancement of women’s empowerment and gender equality, and the elimination of violence against women.

The Conference adopted a 20-year

Programme of Action (PoA), which set clear goals for governments to achieve, among the most salient of them—ensuring universal access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services.

Despite considerable progress in many corners of the world towards realizing the Programme of Action, much remains to be done. Maternal mortality, violence against women and girls and the lack of basic sexual and reproductive health services affect the well-being of millions worldwide and represent a huge drain on societies and economies.

The year 2015 will be a milestone for the international community. The United Nations will bring together the world's governments to make decisions that will chart the global development agenda for years to come. They will set priorities for action and funding that will have a direct bearing on the lives of individuals and communities of the world. Several global processes in the lead up to 2015 will be underway—including reviews of progress towards achieving the Cairo Programme of Action and the Millennium Development Goals, and the twenty-year anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action on women's rights and gender equality—all with implications on the global sexual and reproductive health and rights agenda, and more broadly, the future of poverty reduction and sustainable development efforts.

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The Task Force will seize key opportunities across these UN-convened processes to present a bold and strategic vision of priorities for action for 2015 and beyond. It will set out to inspire and compel policymakers to strengthen their commitment to ensuring basic rights protections and access to information and services for millions of women, young people and men throughout the world. The Task Force will engage with global movements and partners, including networks of women's and youth rights advocates, men committed to gender equality, environmentalists and HIV/AIDS activists. Drawing on robust research and decades of experience, the Task Force will advocate for sound public policies, funding and mechanisms to hold governments and the international community accountable for fulfilling pledges made in these global agreements.

Shaping a Future based on Rights, Dignity and Health

The right to make informed decisions about the most fundamental aspects of one's life—one's body, sexuality, health, relationships and having children—is among the most basic and essential human rights.

However, throughout the world, millions of women, men and young people are unable to exercise this fundamental right—because they live in poverty or are otherwise disenfranchised and marginalized.

Gender inequality and taboos about sexuality further compound the already-limited access to accurate information and quality services. These underlying factors make it challenging to secure adequate investments in sexuality education and sexual and reproductive health services such as contraception, care during pregnancy and childbirth, and prevention, care and treatment related to HIV and AIDS.

The result of these inequalities, within and among countries, are pervasive and lethal:

- **Every day, 800 women die from pregnancy and childbirth-related causes**, a total of nearly 300,000 every year – with 99% of these maternal deaths occurring in developing countries.
- **More adolescent girls die due to complications related to pregnancy and childbirth than any other reason** in most developing countries.
- **Child brides – girls married before their 18th birthday – number over 60 million.** They run especially high risks of early pregnancy and delivery complications, HIV and abuse.
- **Every 30 seconds, a young person becomes HIV-positive.** Young women are particularly at risk, representing approximately 60 percent of the 5 million young people in the world living with HIV and AIDS.
- **More than 200 million women in developing countries want to prevent pregnancy** but lack access to effective contraception – resulting in 80 million unintended pregnancies, 30 million unplanned births and 40 million abortions – many unsafe, with life-threatening consequences.

- Worldwide, as many as **7 in 10 women experience domestic and/or sexual violence** in their life-time—with ravaging consequences for their sexual and reproductive health.
- **Up to 1 in 4 women experience abuse during pregnancy**, increasing the chances of miscarriage, stillbirth and abortion, premature labour and low birth weight. Many are kicked or punched in the abdomen.
- **Nearly 1 million people acquire a sexually-transmitted infection every day.** Every year, 448 million new cases of curable sexually-transmitted infections occur, with consequences for reproductive, maternal and newborn health.

At the core of the Task Force’s mission is the conviction and knowledge that these problems, and their heavy toll on individuals and countries, are preventable. Maternal mortality and morbidity can be eliminated as a public health priority: It has been done before, a century ago in industrialized countries. A new generation of HIV-free young people is within reach. Teenage pregnancy can be averted, especially when girls are given life opportunities for schooling and for their potential to flourish.

Investments in sexual and reproductive health and rights are critical and universally-relevant, across communities and cultures. They are life-saving, life-enhancing and cost-effective. They are also common sense: for individuals and families, for public health and well-being, and for communities’ and countries’ prospects for sustained social and economic development.

Unlike other daunting challenges in today’s world, these are problems with proven solutions.

The Task Force will dedicate its efforts and work with partners across the world in the coming years, driven by the mission of striving to make sexual and reproductive health and rights a reality for all.

High-Level Task Force for **ICPD**

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The Secretariat of the High-Level Task Force for ICPD
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