

**The Health Perspective**  
**Sixth Session of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals [OWG 6]**  
**9-13 December 2013**

*The Future We Want* affirms health as “a precondition for and an outcome and indicator of all three dimensions of sustainable development.” Accordingly, the post-2015 sustainable development framework must not only establish health as an overarching priority, as the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) framework did, but also ensure that health is integrated across all three dimensions of sustainable development – social, economic, and environmental. All potential sustainable development goals (SDGs) must protect and promote health and well-being for all people of all ages and abilities, and include health-sensitive indicators within proposed goals and targets. Thus, we strongly urge the members of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals, and all Member States and relevant stakeholders, to consider the recommendations below.

***Principles for SDGs***

A framework that promotes action to achieve sustainable human development and promotes human health and wellbeing should be based on the following principles:

- Universal, equitable, rights-based, and human security approaches
- A focus on the poorest and most vulnerable and marginalized populations, including women and girls, people living with and affected by HIV, people living with and affected by neglected tropical diseases (NTDs), non-communicable diseases (NCDs), sexual minorities, older people, people with disabilities, and migrants
- Clear and strong accountability mechanisms, with adequate and sustainable financing
- Inclusion of existing and future health issues, including the MDG priorities, and emerging global health challenges such as NCDs, mental health, and new and emerging infectious diseases
- Policies and programs that support health and development throughout the lifecourse, ensuring access to services to minimize the social and economic impact of experiencing a health condition.
- Active and meaningful engagement with non-governmental organizations and civil society
- Promote human rights for all, including sexual and reproductive health and rights, and ensure enabling environments for the protection of human rights

**Theme: Means of implementation (science and technology, knowledge-sharing and capacity building);  
Global partnership for achieving sustainable development**

**Investments in research** to develop new vaccines, drugs, diagnostics, and other health tools have led to some of the most important global health advances to date. Continued investment in research to develop medicines and technologies across all areas of health is essential to ensure the upward trajectory of innovation is accompanied by an increase in healthy life expectancies worldwide. Advances in the field of science and technology are also important drivers in economic growth, job creation, and ultimately, poverty reduction.

**Mobile technology** has the power to transform the way individuals manage their health, the way health care workers manage their patients, and how health systems manage their data and processes. mHealth projects are harnessing the power of the over one billion mobile phones in the world to register births and deaths,

track essential vital statistics, support and educate health workers, raise awareness about disease prevention, empower patients in managing their own care, and strengthen data and reporting for health systems.<sup>i</sup>

- *Support the call for a sustainable development framework that acknowledges the critical role of health research and development and promotes equitable access to comprehensive, affordable, cost-effective prevention, treatment, and care, including equitable access to affordable, safe, effective, quality medicines, commodities and technologies (including information and communication technologies, and technologies that are accessible to people with disabilities)*
- *Call for the data revolution to monitor and report on successes of health goal targets and indicators by ensuring data is gathered analyzed and disseminated by age, gender, and disability up to and beyond the age of 100 years.*

To promote a truly enabling environment for achieving sustainable development goals, donors and national governments must invest in building systems that promote and sustain **health service delivery and procurement capacity** that delivers to all ages and abilities in low- and middle-income countries.

- *Support indicators to measure advances in scientific and technology capacity building for health, strengthening of local health innovation systems, and improved management of health information systems (including through technology)*

**Multi-stakeholder partners** and international financing and procurement mechanisms such as the GAVI Alliance and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria help lower prices for lifesaving commodities and other technologies, and can support the financial sustainability of efforts to expand access to quality health care. Expanding health coverage for all will further require **increased, pooled financing for health**; the appropriate financing mix for health will vary by setting but will always include investment from national governments aimed at strengthening the health sector, expanding universal social protection, and engaging the private sector as appropriate. In many countries, ensuring universal access to essential health services will require development partners to complement increased domestic resource mobilization, by fulfilling **their commitment to contribute %0.7 of their GNP to overseas development assistance (ODA)**.

- *Call for strengthened global partnerships to achieve sustainable development that protects and promote health for all, including through multi-stakeholder efforts to address the social and economic determinants of health*
- *Include in the SDG framework an expansion of the current MDG target 8(e): In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable, safe and appropriate essential drugs and other health technologies and commodities in developing countries*
- *Support the increased consistency and coherence of policy goals between international institutions, promoting linkages between institutions and between institutions and people, with a focus on the most vulnerable populations*

**Theme: Needs of countries in special situations, African countries, LDCs, LLDCs, and SIDS as well as specific challenges facing the middle-income countries**

Universal health coverage is a roadmap for strengthening the health sector in countries facing the greatest challenges in development. UHC reforms can reduce healthcare-related impoverishment and preventable mortality, increase healthy life expectancies, harness economic growth for health funding, prioritize the health needs of the worst-off, and promote gender equality by guaranteeing universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights.

- *Call for a framework that ensures that LDCs, LLDCs, SIDS, LMICs/MICs, and countries in special situations have proper financial and technical assistance to implement health protection and promotion. Specifically call for countries to make progress toward universal health coverage and access, to guarantee a basic package of health services and complement healthcare services for all across the lifecycle with appropriate health promotion activities across sectors.*
- *Call on high-income countries to support LMICs in the development and implementation of fiscal policies, including through the taxation of tobacco and innovative financing mechanisms, to support the provision of essential health care and services for all*
- *Support all countries in special circumstances in developing nationally and regionally-appropriate capacity and capability to implement policy, practices, and regulatory frameworks that promote and protect health for all across the life course*

**African countries and LDCs** continue to lead the world in deaths and morbidity from communicable, maternal, newborn, and child causes. Rates of adolescent childbearing are a leading cause of death for girls in these countries. By 2020, it is expected that the highest increases in NCD-related mortality will be in Africa with three quarters of deaths occurring in the over-60 age group.<sup>ii</sup> Prevalence of tobacco use is highest among poor people – among high-income and low-income countries; in some of the poorest households in many countries, 15 percent of income is spent on tobacco.<sup>iii</sup> Mental health, neglected tropical diseases, and zoonotic diseases, all of which pose increasing threats to LDCs, must also be addressed.

**Land-locked developing countries (LLDCs)** lack access to major international markets and experience inadequate transport infrastructure and high transport and transaction costs – all of which contribute to growing income and health inequalities within LLDCs. The means of implementation in the post-2015 agenda will be especially crucial for this group of states.

**Small Island Developing States (SIDS)** continue to be threatened by endemic communicable diseases and the rapidly increasing incidence of non-communicable diseases. In addition, SIDS are vulnerable to disasters, both natural and economic. In the coming decades, it is likely that there will be an increase in the intensity and frequency of natural hazards caused by climate change, which will exacerbate existing health challenges, make strengthening health systems difficult, and prevent SIDS populations from making progress in improving health outcomes. This will be compounded by the fact that many SIDS are subject to increased indebtedness with limits on how much they can diversify their economy.<sup>iv</sup>

- *Support SIDS particularly relating to disaster preparedness, strengthening institutions, protection, resilience, and response to the ill health effects of climate change*

Inequality is increasing in **Middle-Income Countries (MICs)**, which are home to the majority of the world's poorest people. Particularly in the urban centers with high population densities, growing environmental pollution, and the neglect of the human rights of women and girls are having significant effects on public health outcomes. This results in malnutrition, food insecurity, high maternal and child mortality, high rates of adolescent childbearing, and lack of access to sanitation and safe water affecting people of all ages and abilities<sup>v</sup>.

### **Theme: Human rights, the right to development, global governance**

Good health is recognized as a human right in a number of international documents, including the Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the constitution of the World Health Organization (WHO).<sup>vi</sup> There is growing consensus that **the human right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health**

**should be recognized as such in the post-2015 development framework.** A rights-based, age inclusive, gender-responsive, and youth-friendly approach to health is essential to reach the poorest, most vulnerable populations, who often bear a disproportionate burden of risk, exposure to the determinants of diseases and conditions, and inadequate access to the necessary prevention, diagnosis, care, and services. A 2012 WHO discussion paper cites universal health coverage as “a practical expression of the concern for health equity and the right to health.”<sup>vii</sup>

Health sector reforms must ensure fulfillment of other human rights, as well, including the rights to social security, an adequate standard of living, information, and the **right to be protected against discrimination by health systems and providers**, and should be complemented by reforms outside the health sector to address social determinants of health, including legal reforms to reduce discrimination based on age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, HIV status, and disability.

- *Call for the integration of a human-rights based approach and human rights norms and principles in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of health-related policies and programs*

Non-state actors have become central to the implementation of **global governance and cooperation**. Global governance institutions in the health sector such as the Global Fund<sup>viii</sup>, the GAVI Alliance, UNAIDS, and the International Association for the Prevention of Blindness have become pioneers in addressing resource mobilization, innovation, and universality, as well as promoting integrated service delivery.

- *Call for inclusive, transparent multi-sectoral global health governance mechanisms that facilitate the full and active participation of civil society organizations*

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<sup>i</sup> “mHealth Projects: Examples from Low- and Middle-Income Countries.” Royal Tropical Institute. January 2013. [http://www.mhealthinfo.org/projects\\_table](http://www.mhealthinfo.org/projects_table).

<sup>ii</sup> World Health Organization. Noncommunicable diseases; 2013.

<sup>iii</sup> United Nations. Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report by the Director-General of the World Health Organization on the global status of non-communicable diseases, with a particular focus on the development challenges faced by developing countries., in Follow up to the outcome of the Millennium summit. UN General Assembly: New York; 2010.

<sup>iv</sup> “Achieving Debt Sustainability and the MDGs in Small Island Developing States.” UNDP. October 2010. <http://www.un.org/en/ga/second/65/docs/hurley.pdf>.

<sup>v</sup> “TST Issues Brief: Needs of Countries in Special Situations – African Countries, Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, as well as the specific challenges Facing Middle-Income Countries.” August 2013. [http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2080TST%20Issues%20Brief%20on%20Countries%20in%20Special%20situations\\_Final\\_14\\_Nov.pdf](http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2080TST%20Issues%20Brief%20on%20Countries%20in%20Special%20situations_Final_14_Nov.pdf).

<sup>vi</sup> United Nations TST issues brief: Health and Sustainable Development.

<sup>vii</sup> “Positioning Health in the Post-2015 Development Agenda: A WHO Discussion Paper.” October 2012. [http://www.who.int/topics/millennium\\_development\\_goals/post2015/WHOdiscussionpaper\\_October2012.pdf](http://www.who.int/topics/millennium_development_goals/post2015/WHOdiscussionpaper_October2012.pdf)

<sup>viii</sup> “The Global Fund Governance Handbook.” June 2012. <http://www.theglobalfund.org/en/documents/governance/>