



EXPERT GROUP MEETING

The Cost of Inaction in Reproductive Rights: Linking Sustainable Development, Human Rights and Sexual and Reproductive Health

Date and Time:

Monday, 7 October 2013 / 9.30am – 6pm

Tuesday, 8 October 2013 / 8.30am – 2pm

Venue: Room 5D, UNFPA Headquarters, 605 Third Ave, NY, NY

CONCEPT NOTE

Background:

Increasing attention has been placed on the importance of exploring the intersection between human rights and economic policies and the impact of human rights on improving the health of women and children, including sexual and reproductive health. Building off a meeting convened by the Ford Foundation in 2004, where a group of scholars and activists were brought together to ‘explore the intersections between human rights and economics,’ Balakrishnan, Elson and Patel (2010) produced a document in which they focused on health care expenditures and maternal mortality data to argue that macroeconomic policies need to be crafted from a rights-based perspective. Recently, WHO also published various evidence based studies of the impact of human rights on children and women’s health, concluding that applying human rights to women’s and children’s health policies, programmes and other interventions not only helps governments comply with their binding national and international obligations, but also contributes to improving the health of women and children, including their sexual and reproductive health.

In recent years, the human rights community, including international advocacy NGOs and research institutes, have also invested in the development of human rights assessment methods focusing on state compliance with international human rights obligations, as well as to examine the negative and positive impact of policies from the perspective of the human rights obligations of States as the main duty-bearer to respect, protect and fulfill rights. Human rights assessment methods therefore generally aim to identify the failure of the State to comply with their human rights obligations both by action (taking measures that violate human rights either directly or indirectly) and inaction (failing to comply with their role as duty-bearers).

The term “Cost of Inaction” (COI) has been used in discussions of the economic implications of ignoring climate change and other environmental issues, as well as to measure the consequences of neglecting children’s well-being (see for example OECD 2008, UNEP, 2013 and Anand et al 2012 respectively). Such an approach draws attention to the consequences of a failure to take an action, highlighting the negative consequences that follow when an appropriate action is not taken, including going beyond a narrow focus on state responsibilities, to identify the need for a global response to many problems of inequity. Often, costing exercises focus on the cost/benefit of undertaking an action, and on what the COI approach calls the “*constitutive cost/benefit of an action.*” Constitutive benefits for example include direct benefits that characterize an action. For a healthcare intervention, the constitutive benefit is improvement in an individual’s health. A COI approach, however, emphasizes the importance of including the “*consequential costs/benefits of an action.*” which are the indirect costs/benefits that arise, including the negative consequences that a particular action may avoid. A COI approach proposes that an action should be evaluated in terms of both its constitutive and consequential costs/benefits. This should involve any positive or negative externalities of an action, as well as both short and long term costs/benefits, including intergenerational effects.



The Expert Group Meeting organized by UNFPA will build off these initiatives, to explore advancing gender equality through cost of inaction approaches with an emphasis on reproductive rights and sexual and reproductive health. Addressing the costs of inaction in reproductive rights and sexual and reproductive health is necessary to resolve socioeconomic and gender inequalities and other forms of discrimination with a view to securing social sustainability and addressing inequalities, within the context of the new UNFPA Strategic Plan 2014-2017 and the post-2015 development agenda. While documents developed to date provide an excellent first step towards advancing an agenda that merges a rights and an economic based approach, far more work can still be done in terms of addressing the issue of the cost of inaction, which in turn can be linked to the responsibility of duty bearers to not just respond to human rights violations, but to prevent them in the first place.

Objectives:

The objective of this expert group meeting on the Cost of Inaction (COI) is to discuss new ways of looking at policy analysis and development and exploring ways to expand and apply it to the linkages between sustainable development, human rights and sexual and reproductive health (SRH). The meeting brings together a group of international experts with a diversity of backgrounds (economics, human rights, social development, gender and SRHR), reflecting international development organizations, academia, and civil society representatives, to discuss and brainstorm concerning the following four broad questions:

- What state of the art research has been carried out on the cost of inaction approach, and how can that work be adapted to issues related to gender equality and sustainable development, including social sustainability?
- To what degree and concerning what types of issues, can a cost of inaction framework be adapted more specifically to address issues related to sexual and reproductive health and rights, in particular family planning, youth and adolescents?
- What are the pros and cons of using and expanding a COI approach and to what degree can such an approach be used to shape SRHR policies and programs?
- How can this exercise help inform UNFPA's 2014-2017 Strategic Plan, particularly in the areas of family planning and adolescents and youth?

Format of Expert Group Meeting:

Each Session will be opened with brief remarks (5-10 minutes) by three to five speakers, followed by ample time for open discussion. Please prepare remarks that are informative and thought-provoking, including possible questions that come to mind related to the theme of how to best link the cost of inaction to gender equality and reproductive health and rights issues.

AGENDA

Monday, 7 October

9:30-10:00am: Check-in and Breakfast

10:00-10:30am: Introduction

Kate Gilmore, Deputy Executive Director (Programme), UNFPA
Bruce Campbell, Director, Technical Division, UNFPA

10:30am-12:00pm: What Do We Mean by Inaction: Various Theoretical Frameworks

Moderator: Rachel Snow, University of Michigan/ICPD Beyond 2014 Secretariat, UNFPA

Presentations: 10 minutes each

- Jacqueline Bhabha: Professor of the Practice of Health and Human Rights, Harvard University
 - Framing Inaction Within a Human Rights Perspective
- Akinrinola Bankole: Director of International Research, Guttmacher
 - Key Reproductive Health and Rights Issues
- Mary King: Professor of Economics, Portland State University
 - A Gendered Approach to Social Sustainability
- Elizabeth Gibbons: Senior Fellow, Center for Health and Human Rights, Harvard University
 - Inaction in the Context of Humanitarian Crises

Discussion period: 50 minutes

12:00-12:15pm: Coffee Break

12:15-1:15pm: Conceptualizing Economic and Non-Economic Costs of Inaction

Moderator: Lourdes Rivera, Program Officer, Ford Foundation

Presentations: 10 minutes each

- Jennifer Olmsted, Technical Advisor, UNFPA
 - Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches to Costing
- Mwangi wa Githinji, Assistant Professor of Economics, U. of Massachusetts
 - Critiquing Mainstream Development Economics
- Margareta Grape: Dir. of International Affairs, World Council of Churches
 - The Societal Costs of Inequity- A Cultural/Religious Framework

Discussion period: 30 minutes

1:15-2:00pm: *Lunch*

2:00-3:30pm: Causes and Consequences of Inaction in Reproductive Rights

Moderator: Luis Mora, Chief, Gender, Human Rights and Culture Branch, UNFPA

Presentations: 10 minutes each

- Francoise Girard: President, International Women's Health Coalition
 - The Consequences of Neglecting Reproductive Health and Rights
- Radhika Balakrishnan: Prof. of Women's and Gender Studies, Rutgers University
 - Macroeconomic Policies and Reproductive Health and Rights
- Alys Willman: Social Development Specialist, World Bank
 - Cost of Inaction - A Focus on GBV
- Christophe Guilmoto: Director of Research, Centre Population et Développement
 - Cost of Inaction - A Focus on Sex Selection

Discussion period: 50 minutes

3:30-3:45pm: *Coffee Break*

3:45-5:30pm: Adapting Existing Methodologies/Tools to Address the Cost of Inaction in Reproductive Rights

Moderator: Matthew Michels, Child Protection Consultant, UNICEF

Presentations: 10 minutes

- Sakiko Fukuda-Parr: Professor of International Affairs, New School University
 - Measuring Economic and Social Rights
- Meg Satterthwaite: Professor of Clinical Law, New York University
 - Quantifying Human Rights Violations
- Aslihan Kes: Economic and Gender Specialist, International Center for Research on Women
 - ICRW/UNFPA Approach to GBV Costing
- Fuje Habtamu: Research Coordinator for Health and Human Rights, Harvard University
 - Harvard FXB Cost of Inaction Case Studies
- Shahra Razavi: Chief of Research and Data, UN Women
 - The Pros and Cons of Instrumentalism/Quantification

Discussion period: 55 minutes

5:30-6:00pm: Wrap-up Discussion of Day One



Tuesday, 8 October:

8:30-9:00am: *Breakfast*

9:00-10:00am: UN Interventions/Priorities and the Cost of Inaction

Moderator: Diego Palacios, Coordinator MDG Post-2015, UNFPA

Presentations: 10 minutes

- Rita Columbia, Technical Advisor, Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights Branch, UNFPA
 - Reproductive Health and Rights and the Cost of Inaction
- Randi Davis: Director, Gender Team, UNDP
 - Political Participation and the Cost of Inaction
- Karin Heissler: Child Protection Specialist, UNICEF
 - Children and the Cost of Inaction

Discussion period: 20 minutes

10:00-11:00 am: Break-Out Sessions

- Youth and Social Sustainability – Chair: Laura Laski, Chief, Sexual and Reproductive Health Branch, UNFPA
- Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights/Family Planning – Chair: Francoise Girard, President, International Women’s Health Coalition
- Gender Based Violence – Chair: Ugochi Daniels, Chief, Humanitarian Response Branch, UNFPA

11:00-11:15am: *Coffee Break*

11:15-11:45am: Report back from break-out groups

11:45-1:00pm: The Way Forward - A Discussion of Possible Partnerships

Moderator: Azza Karam, Senior Culture Advisor, UNFPA

1:00-2:00pm: *Lunch*