

Youth advocacy for climate change: Lessons learnt from sexual and productive health.

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Population dynamics, especially high population growth with less productivity is a factor that exacerbates climate change vulnerability.

High Population growth, an underlying factor for climate change effects

In 37 least developing countries of the world and small island states, high population growth is one of the underlying factors of the country's vulnerability to climate change, NAPA (2007).



Intuitively, therefore, combining population dynamics issues into climate change responses of countries helps to address one of the root causes of vulnerability to environmental degradation and climate change.



Central to population dynamics and the population structure are 4 pillars. Harnessing these 4 pillars can help countries to realize the demographic dividend.



But what is the demographic dividend?

The demographic dividend is the accelerated economic growth that may result from a decline in a country's birth and death rates and the subsequent change in the age structure of the population.

With fewer births each year, a country's young dependent population declines in relation to the working-age population. With fewer people to support, a country has a window of opportunity for rapid economic growth if the right social and economic policies are developed and investments made.

Fertility Must Decline for Countries to Attain the Demographic Dividend.

A common misperception among many leaders is that a large youth population itself is an indicator of a coming demographic dividend.

While youth can be a great force for economic and political change, the key first step toward the demographic dividend is not a large youth population. The first step, in fact, is a transition from high birth and death rates to low birth rates and child death rates—a process referred to as the “demographic transition.



Health particularly Sexual, Reproductive Health and Rights for women and girls plays a critical role in influencing population dynamics and its linkages to climate change.



Investments in SRHR have multiple dividends

When we invest in Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, particularly family planning, we give women and girls better access to the information and services they need to stay healthy, avoid unwanted pregnancy and childbearing, complete more years of school, and obtain the skills necessary to be economically productive.



Pregnancy by choice and not by chance

With access to Sexual and Reproductive Health services like; family planning, women and girls are able to delay, space and prevent pregnancy and child bearing.

Promoting healthy timing and spacing of pregnancies can also improve child health.

Children conceived less than two years after the previous birth have a much higher risk of dying (1.5 to 3 times higher)



Other key benefits of family planning.

For young women, family planning can help delay their first pregnancy until an age when they are physically, psychologically, and socially prepared for childbearing, thus improving health outcomes for both mother and infant.

Norms related to family size are changing, and research indicates that families will choose to have smaller families, when they know that each child has a better chance of surviving.

Investing in health programs that improve child survival stimulates a desire for smaller, healthier families.





A small families puts less pressure on the environment hence reducing vulnerability to climate change and its effects.

Every day, we work with women and girls, communities leader, health service provider and policy makers to promote demand, access and uptake of family planning services for women and girls.



If we ignore and do nothing about high fertility rates, we will pay a high price to mitigate and adapt to climate change effects



SRHR and climate change adaptation and mitigation

Investing in SRHR needs of women and girls and the broader population increases the adaptability and mitigation capacity of communities to climate change effects.

Women and families with few children will spend less time on child care to be able to concentrate on income generation.

Adolescent girls will stay longer in school and delay pregnancy and child birth hence reducing risk of giving birth to children they can't look after who end up putting pressure on the environment through illegal settlements, deforestation among others.



Conclusion

Therefore, it's important to include population dynamics and sexual reproductive health and right in the development and implementation of climate change responses.

In order to achieve this, all relevant stakeholders including communities have to be targeted and opportunities for engagement at sub-national, national and international levels have to be created.



Going forward, let us take;
Action, Action Action



I THANK YOU