

NO DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT WITHOUT SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS!



Sustainable growth and jobs creation are a priority of the European Commission in its internal and external policies. In its recent EU-Africa strategy¹, the Commission underlines that this push for sustainable growth and jobs “requires [...] **universal health coverage, access to quality health services, including family planning, and fighting against inequality and discrimination**”, with a particular focus on women and youth.

Gender equality, human development, access to universal health coverage (UHC), including sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), are therefore particularly important to achieve the Commission priority on sustainable growth and jobs and the Agenda 2030. All interventions linked to this priority must be based on the EU values and principles of human rights and gender equality.



Kisenyi, Kampala, Uganda - Youths from Muvubuka Agunjuse Youth Group in Kisenyi, Uganda make reusable sanitary towels for school girls and young people in the community. The group has 30 members and making this sanitary towels is one of their income generating activities. DSW provides machines that they use to make the towels.

ACCESS TO SRHR SUPPORTS WOMEN'S AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

Achieving sustainable growth that works for people is only possible if we empower women and youth, which in turn is only achievable if we focus on gender equality and SRHR. SRHR services are critical for women, girls and young people to live healthy lives, to address violence and power relations in their lives, to be free to participate in economic but also social and political life, and to make decisions governing their bodies freely. Barriers in access to care and information affect women's and young people's ability to exercise free choice, participate meaningfully in economic life and contribute to sustainable development and growth. Promoting access to SRHR and gender equality is also cost-effective, as every \$1 invested in family planning can save governments up to \$6² and yields as much as \$60 to \$100 in long-term benefits from economic growth.³



ECONOMIC GROWTH
AS EVERY \$1 INVESTED IN
FAMILY PLANNING CAN SAVE
GOVERNMENTS UP TO \$6 AND
YIELDS AS MUCH AS \$60 TO \$100
IN LONG-TERM BENEFITS

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/communication-eu-africa-strategy-join-2020-4-final_en.pdf, March 2020

² UNFPA, <https://www.unfpa.org/resources/unfpa-supplies-world%E2%80%99s-largest-provider-donated-contraceptives>, last consulted December 2020

³ FP2020, https://www.familyplanning2020.org/sites/default/files/Data-Hub/ROI/FP2020_ROI_OnePager_FINAL.pdf, last consulted December 2020



1 INVESTING IN SRHR AND GENDER EQUALITY TO ENSURE WOMEN'S ACCESS TO DECENT WORK

Studies have shown the positive influence of lower fertility in women access to labour market and employment. Globally, female labour force participation decreases with each additional child by about 10 to 15 percentage points among women aged 25 to 39.⁴ Without access to essential SRHR services such as family planning, women cannot choose if, when and how many children to have. This can, in turn, increase their care burden⁵, decrease their capacity to access decent work and to contribute to sustainable growth, and exacerbate already existing inequalities. It should be noted though that to be empowering, access to the labour market must mean access to decent employment that protects women's rights. Research suggests that providing women with access to income without access to support mechanisms, such as parental leave, childcare, access to contraceptives and equal opportunity policies, does not lead to economic empowerment.⁶ On the contrary, failure to ensure these policies causes women to remain in the informal or agricultural sectors, where they are more vulnerable to poverty, ill health and precariousness. Under such circumstances, they cannot make a full contribution to sustainable growth. When access to SRHR is combined with access to employment women's economic stability, health, well-being and capacity to contribute to sustainable growth improve.



2 ENSURING ACCESS TO YOUTH-FRIENDLY SERVICES TO SUPPORT YOUNG PEOPLE'S ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

If young people, including young women, are to contribute to an economy that works for people and for the environment, all aspects of empowerment must be taken into account. Providing job opportunities to young people in developing countries is not enough. They also need access to a comprehensive package of youth-friendly SRHR services, including but not limited to family planning and to comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), as these equip them to better understand their rights, to counter harmful gender norms and stereotypes and to engage in the economic, social and political life of their communities. When young people have access to health services that meet their specific needs, they can make choices, protect themselves from coercion and violence, exercise their right to health and live healthy lives. They can avoid potential economic hardship resulting from gender inequalities and from events such as unintended pregnancies, often leading girls and young women to drop out from schools and being trapped in poverty.⁷ Access to a comprehensive package of SRHR, including but not limited to family planning and CSE, is absolutely fundamental to ensure that young people can be actors of positive change and participate in a sustainable economy.

"NO NATION CAN ENJOY A SUSTAINABLE AND INCLUSIVE ECONOMY IF YOUNG PEOPLE DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO DECENT JOBS. TOO OFTEN YOUTH - ESPECIALLY YOUNG WOMEN - ARE NOT ABLE TO AVOID UNINTENDED PREGNANCIES, CAN NOT ACCESS CHILD CARE AND SUFFER FROM VIOLENCE SUCH AS FORCED MARRIAGE. THEY NEED TO UNDERSTAND THEIR RIGHTS AND HAVE ACCESS TO SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH TO BE ECONOMICALLY INDEPENDENT."

YORDANOS, ETHIOPIA

GIRLS WAGES

EVERY ADDITIONAL YEAR OF PRIMARY SCHOOL BOOSTS GIRLS' EVENTUAL WAGES BY 10-20%, AND AN EXTRA YEAR OF SECONDARY SCHOOL BY 15-25%

⁴ Grepin KA and Klugman J (2013) Investing in Women's Reproductive Health: Closing the Deadly Gap Between What we Know and What we Do. Washington: World Bank. Available at http://www.womendeliver.org/assets/WD_Background_Paper_Full_Report.pdf

⁵ Care work describes the unpaid reproductive labour that is disproportionately undertaken by women and which includes, but is not limited to, childcare, elder care, taking care of ill family members, cooking and cleaning.

⁶ https://www.ippf.org/sites/default/files/2020_gender_equality_report_web.pdf, last consulted December 2020

⁷ According to UNICEF, every additional year of primary school boosts girls' eventual wages by 10 - 20 per cent, and an extra year of secondary school by 15 - 25 per cent. https://www.unicef.org/media/media_58417.html, last consulted December 2020

BEST PRACTICES

WOMEN AND YOUTH ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND SRHR



IPPF INNOVATIVE WORKPLACE PARTNERSHIPS – CAMBODIA

In Cambodia, thousands of young women from rural areas move to cities to work in factories. These women often do not know where to go for SRH care and, for many, the services remain inaccessible due to cost or limited opening hours. The Reproductive Health Association of Cambodia (RHAC), an IPPF Member Association, is responding to this unmet need by providing information and free care to women working in factories. RHAC has established formal partnerships with 30 factories in three major urban areas of Cambodia. Its staff deliver interactive and entertaining events at lunchtimes to provide information on SRHR. Workers are given vouchers that they can redeem at RHAC clinics for a range of free SRHR services including contraception, post-abortion care, cervical cancer screening and treatment, HIV counselling and testing, referrals for antiretroviral treatment, and testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections. Since the women work six days a week in the factories, RHAC has adapted its clinic hours to ensure it is open on Sundays during the workers' time off. For those factories that have on-site clinics to treat workplace injuries and minor illnesses, RHAC has provided training to the factory clinic staff on health education, client rights, basic clinical skills, providing information about contraception and testing for sexually transmitted infections. RHAC is developing plans to upgrade these factory clinics to provide more services on site.⁸

DSW INTEGRATED APPROACH TO YOUTH EMPOWERMENT - KENYA, ETHIOPIA, TANZANIA AND UGANDA

For many, in particular young people, asking information about SRHR is uneasy, or even taboo, as comprehensive sexuality education is rarely available at schools or at home. Most turn to their peer for advice and information: peer-to-peer engagement is therefore key to improving access to SRHR for adolescents and young people, which is then critical for them to access decent and sustainable livelihood. In Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda, DSW works with independent local in- and out-of-schools youth clubs and youth empowerment centres, providing young people with SRHR information and services, as well as training peer educators on SRHR. In addition, youth clubs are also a central place for young people and an opportunity to support them in improving their sexual and reproductive health as well as socio-economic situation in general. DSW's holistic approach to youth empowerment includes addressing life skills, participation and leadership skills, talent and career development, where young people are supported to gain skills, develop their professional plans and are referred to partners who could offer financial opportunities (career fairs, micro credit institutions, etc.). This integrated approach allows first of all young people to lead healthy and self-determined lives, while at the same time providing them with the skills and support needed to overcome the barriers that hinder their economic development.

⁸ It should be noted, however, that there is a distinction between the positive promotion of health programmes at work and the exploitative practices such as obligatory pregnancy testing and other forms of reproductive and sexual health rights violations.



www.countdown2030europe.org
 @C2030Europe