



**PSDA** |

**POPULATION & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ALLIANCE**  
**Respecting rights, meeting needs, building resilience**

## **Input to the United Nations Environmental Assembly - 2**

May 26<sup>th</sup> 2016, UNEP Headquarters, Nairobi

The Population and Sustainable Development Alliance hereby presents our inputs to UNEP's delivery on the SDGs and its focus on the theme '**Healthy Environment – Healthy People**'. Working with a human rights based approach to development, it is our aim to bring to your attention the benefits of applying integrated approaches that ensure people's right to health as well as to food, water, safety etc. related to environmental challenges.

A theme that cuts across health, gender and environmental is **population dynamics**. Many of the world's poorest countries face a double difficulty, when population growth exacerbates environmental challenges and stretches resources. This connection was seen for example in 2009 when 40 least developed countries had submitted strategy documents to the Global Environmental Facility, of which 37 countries expressed concern about the impact of rapid population growth on their climate change adaptation abilities.<sup>1</sup>

Among the reasons for population growth is lack of access to family planning services for girls/women including reproductive health services, comprehensive sexuality education and contraceptives. 225 million women in the world today want to use modern contraceptives but are unable to, resulting in 74 million unplanned pregnancies every year<sup>2</sup>. This is a violation of the reproductive health and rights of girls/women and sustains gender inequality.

The good news is that the environment will benefit from the fulfillment of reproductive health and rights of girls/women. Respecting these rights will among other things allow girls/women to decide on the number of children they want. This will improve the health and wellbeing of the girls/women, and their abilities to optimize the necessary resources to provide for the wellbeing of their children. Also of crucial importance, girls/women will improve their ability to participate in activities for environmental sustainability.

As actors working in this area, we experience a continuously siloed approach to these matters. But doing so, we risk missing out on the value added benefits of integrated approaches, such as undermining the environmental sustainability efforts with high population growth and missing out on the girls/women's knowledge and ideas for environmental solutions. We hope that more actors will follow the example of the **IPCC**, who has highlighted population dynamics and the important role that family planning can play as a potential adaptation strategy and in reducing climate change vulnerability<sup>3</sup>.

### **We ask of the UNEP and all its member states to:**

- Work with relevant partners in the health community to fulfill reproductive health and rights as a goal in itself, and as a means solve environmental challenges and adapting to the effects of climate changes
- Politically and financially support integrated environmental and reproductive health interventions using the rights-based approaches
- Recognize girls/women as active rights holder contributing to environmental solutions

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<sup>1</sup>, L. et al (2009) *Climate change and family planning: least-developed countries define the agenda*. WHO Bulletin, 87, pp Byrant. 852-857.

<sup>2</sup> UNFPA and Guttmacher Institute (2014) *Adding it up*

<sup>3</sup> IPCC, Climate Change 2014: Impacts, Adaptation, and Vulnerability