

Adolescent health to define the UN Secretary General's Global Strategy (2016-2030)

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Twenty- five vibrant, active and passionate young leaders from over 13 Eastern, Southern, Central and Western African countries attending the Adolescent and Youth Pre- Consultation in Johannesburg, unanimously commended the inclusion of adolescent health in the UN Secretary General's 2016-2030 Global Strategy on Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health. The pre-consultations aimed at generating consensus on the priority issues and recommendations for adolescent's health in the zero draft Global Strategy and the young representatives attending appreciated the opportunity given to them by PMNCH to review and input into the Strategy during the Africa Region Stakeholder consultation.

In addition to the Global Strategy's focus and acknowledgement of the importance of adolescent and youths health as drivers for sustainable and improved health outcomes, young people stressed the need for the Global Strategy to reflect on ongoing programmes at the regional and national level and the current negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda. They emphasized the need for the Global Strategy to take advantage of the renewed interest of Africa's investment in young people's holistic development so as to harness the demographic dividend and position adolescents' health within broader development agenda. "Africa is the youngest continent in the world with an unprecedented numbers of adolescent which presents a unique opportunity for achieving the post-2015 sustainable development goals", said Samuel Kissi, a young leader from AfriYAN Ghana.

Young people noted that the inclusion of adolescent health in the updated Global Strategy, represents an "unprecedented opportunity to increase efforts to ensure that every adolescent has the knowledge, skills, and opportunities for a healthy and productive life and enjoyment of all human rights", said Patrick Mwesigye and Yemurai Nyoni from AfriYAN Uganda and Zimbabwe respectively.

Gogontlejang Phaladi from AfriYAN Botswana and Tikhala Itaye from Namibia noted that adolescent and youth's diverse and specific health needs, pose different challenges for the health care system, due to their rapid biological, emotional and social development, hence health service and systems must be tailored to meet these needs. Brian another youth representative from Uganda and Lawrence Kasere from the Democratic Republic of Congo emphasized the need for the Zero draft Strategy to address prevention of injuries and none communicable diseases and other aspects of physical and mental health challenges among young people.

As part of the specific recommendations, for the Zero Draft Global Strategy, young people stressed that it needed to prioritize and place emphasis on health education including comprehensive sexuality education that addresses gender and human rights issues. They called for integration, scale up and making available and accessible quality youth friend health services including access to contraceptives and safe abortion services; addressing other social risk factors in the social environment and focusing on factors that are protective across various health outcomes. These factors they said included eliminating gender based violence, and harmful cultural practices such forced early marriages, FGM, ending teenage pregnancies, supporting and promoting women empowerment and girl child education for social economic development as well as advocating for an enabling legal and policy environment.

Young people also called for disaggregated data for adolescent's health to inform programming and resource allocation, commensurate resourcing and funding for adolescent health. They also demanded meaningful and active youth participation in governance structures and accountability mechanisms for the Global Strategy and other development frameworks both at global, regional and national level. Lastly young people emphasized the need for the Zero Draft Global Strategy to be country owned and to adopt a holistic approach integrating all relevant sectors and most importantly for governments and all sectors to commit to financing and implementation of the Global Strategy.