

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL'S INDEPENDENT ACCOUNTABILITY PANEL
FOR EVERY WOMAN, EVERY CHILD, EVERY ADOLESCENT

HIGHLIGHTS from 2017

Locking in Accountability to Adolescents under the SDGs

Introduction: The Role of the IAP

Mandate: The Independent Accountability Panel (IAP) for Every Woman, Every Child, Every Adolescent was mandated by the United Nations Secretary-General in 2015 to provide an independent review of progress on the implementation of the [Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health \(2016-30\)](#) – from the specific lens of *who is accountable to whom, for what and how*. The IAP is thus empowered to command attention from the global community across the Global Strategy's “Survive, Thrive, and Transform” pillars, with emphasis on human rights, gender equality and equity. The IAP provides annual reports and recommendations for action which address a wide range of stakeholders, including Member States, parliamentarians, the UN System, development cooperation partners, donors, civil society organizations and the private sector. It is also entrusted under the Global Strategy to dive into a specific theme every year.

Membership: The IAP is composed of an autonomous group of internationally-recognized experts and leaders in the field¹ appointed by the UN Secretary-General in 2016. They serve in their individual capacities and represent diverse regions and disciplines – from legal, human rights and health specialists to government representatives, statisticians and academics, and civil society representatives, including from the women's and youth movements. Members are supported by a small Secretariat based in Geneva, which was established in 2017 and is hosted by the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH) at the World Health Organization (WHO).

Value-Added Proposition: The IAP's unique niche within the Every Woman, Every Child (EWEC) architecture is its function in strengthening accountabilities for delivering on the Global Strategy and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The IAP is also the only fully independent accountability mechanism established by the United Nations on women's, children's and adolescent health under the 2030 Agenda. As such, it can serve as a model for generating learning to advance accountability across other sustainable development issues.

By comparison to other lead reporting efforts on the Global Strategy, focused on data tracking and monitoring, the IAP brings added value because it is centred on analysing and reporting on accountability processes – guided by its comprehensive conceptual framework across the full cycle of *monitor, review, act and remedy*. Building on the framework first presented by the Commission on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health, the IAP's addition of “*remedy*” has contributed to wider awareness of the transformative potential of accountability, by addressing the need for both preventative and reparative measures to stay aligned with the 2030 Agenda aspirations of leaving nobody behind.

¹ IAP Members: Carmen Barroso, Brazil, and Kul Gautam, Nepal (Co-Chairs); Brenda Killen, Ireland; Pali Lehohla, South Africa; Winfred Osimbo Lichuma, Kenya; Elizabeth Mason, UK; Vinod K. Paul, India (former Member); Giorgi Pkhakadze, Georgia; Dakshitha Wickremarathne, Sri Lanka; Alicia Ely Yamin, USA.

Accountability to Adolescents

In 2017, its second year of operation, the IAP made a strategic decision to bring the attention of policy-makers to one group at considerable risk of being left behind on the roadmap to 2030: girls and boys 10-19 years old. This population is 1.2 billion strong, representing 1 in 6 people globally.

The IAP's report on [*Transformative Accountability for Adolescents*](#) was the first to ever assess the state of global accountability to adolescents' health and rights. It was launched at [a high-level event](#) co-hosted by the Governments of Denmark and South Africa during the United Nations' General Assembly in New York in September. The IAP report was highlighted as one of seven [top highlights of EWEC](#) in 2017.



Adolescents as a distinct group have achieved greater prominence in the new Global Strategy (where they feature as a specific group). But accountability to adolescents remains largely absent in policy discourse and review processes. The IAP report directly addresses this gap by offering fresh insights and recommendations. It also amplifies shared concerns and critical shortfalls in implementation of policies and programmes for adolescents, as well as broader issues of women's and children's health.



IAP submits report to the UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, High-Level Steering Group meeting, 20 September 2017, New York

The IAP report contains **six recommendations** (see page 5) which are available in five United Nations languages and through a [web-based launch](#). Stakeholders strongly welcoming the IAP's findings and recommendations upon its release included ministers, civil society organizations, women's and young people's rights activists, the global funds, academics, and senior-level UN representatives, alongside a supportive message received from the UN Secretary-General. The report received emphatic affirmations from various constituencies of the Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health (PMNCH), including from adolescents and youth themselves, who concurred with the IAP's bold proposals.

Mobilizing Engagement on Accountability

The IAP is often asked how it is promoting follow-up on its recommendations, including at country levels. The IAP recognizes the importance of this challenge. In response, in 2017 the IAP intensified stakeholder engagement. This began with early engagement in report preparations through the public Call for Evidence, widely disseminated in order to invite contributions; exchanges with key informants, case study sources and experts; bilateral consultations and confidential interviews; and targeted requests for generating original analyses and tapping into unpublished information and knowledge.



Adebisi Adenipekun, Women Deliver Youth Leader, at the Multi-Stakeholder Consultation, 25 May 2017, Geneva



Ambassador Carsten Staur, Permanent Representative of Denmark to the UN in Geneva, Multi-Stakeholder Consultation, 25 May 2017

“Where’s the Accountability to Adolescents?” was the theme of a highly participatory, dynamic [multi-stakeholder consultation](#) which was convened by the IAP during the 2017 World Health Assembly. It also included a dedicated session with adolescents and youth. Of note, the West African Academy of Public Health spontaneously convened its own forum to prepare inputs for this consultation, and issued [a communique](#) encapsulating the sub-region’s stakeholder recommendations for IAP consideration.

Engagement on the report’s follow-up was facilitated by the IAP’s rolling outreach plan, whereby the IAP proactively identifies opportunities to reach strategic stakeholders. In addition to maximizing dissemination of the IAP recommendations, IAP Members’ outreach and speaking engagements in key fora lay the foundations for follow-up dialogue to promote their implementation. Below are examples covering select constituencies and early indications of follow-up prospects.

Governments, foremost Accountable Parties

In 2017, the IAP achieved its objective of enhancing its positioning vis-a-vis Member States. For the first time, the report was launched with ministers and governments as convenors and participants in the highest order of inter-governmental space (UN headquarters in New York). This is symbolic politically, given the sensitivities in UN deliberations on the very topic of accountability. The report was also formally circulated to all UN ambassadors and missions in New York and Geneva, with a suggestion to facilitate the report’s distribution to key ministries at capital levels responsible for adolescent health and well-being.

The [first-ever national launch](#) of an IAP report, in October 2017, was spearheaded by the Minister of Social Welfare together with the Minister of Health of Jordan, who convened a cross-section of other ministries and stakeholders from parliament, civil society, the UN system, adolescents and youth, and the media. A high-level opening was followed by a technical workshop focused on follow-up to the IAP recommendations.



IAP Report Launch in Amman, with H.E. Hala Bsaisu Lattouf, Minister of Social Development, and H.E. Mahmoud Al-Sheyyab, Minister of Health, 18 October 2017

It is also important to note [Member States’ responses to the IAP’s Calls for Evidence](#). For instance, the Government of Uruguay submitted its experience in pioneering a multi-sectoral approach for adolescents. The Government of the Philippines reported back to the IAP on the 2017 report, pointing to newly adopted national policies on adolescent health. For the 2018 Call for Evidence, the Governments of Malta and Peru sent in their contributions for the IAP’s forthcoming report on private sector accountability to women’s, children’s and adolescents’ health.

At the [inter-governmental level](#), the IAP has also addressed government delegates, such as on the IAP report during a [Human Rights Council](#) panel on implementing maternal mortality resolutions (March 2017), and at the launch of the [CEDAW](#) General Recommendation 35 on violence against women (September); or during the [High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development](#) in July. The IAP also established collaboration with the [Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development](#) (OECD), whose work includes standard-setting for Member States and bilateral donors to strengthen accountability to people’s well-being and development.

Parliamentarians, Civil Society, Young People —Keys for Independent Accountability



Hon. Mariam Jashi and Hon. Akaki Zoidze receive the IAP at the Parliament of Georgia, 6 February 2018

Another first for the IAP at country level was the [launch of the IAP report at the Parliament of Georgia](#), hosted by the Chair of the Education, Science and Culture Committee and the Chair of the Health and Social Affairs Committee, which was covered by the media. The exchange focused on Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and the IAP's emphasis on inclusive approaches for adolescents; as well as on financing for health and the SDGs, in the context of Georgia's Presidency of the Leading Group on Innovative Financing for Development. The IAP also held a dedicated session with the **UN Resident Coordinator and H6 Partnership** member agencies.

Outreach to parliamentarians was also facilitated via collaboration with the **Inter-Parliamentary Union**. This included their submission to the IAP of emerging national experiences of legislators working in the area of adolescent health at the country level, and an invitation for the IAP to brief their Advisory Group on Health on the IAP recommendations.

Adolescents and Youth – ‘Nothing for them, without them!’

For the IAP, civil society represents the pulse of the Global Strategy and sustained voices for meaningful, inclusive accountability processes. Civil society organizations were engaged throughout the process of report preparations and outreach, from the public Call for Evidence, to IAP multi-stakeholder events, and through ongoing exchanges with key networks. Some of these organizations are part of the Global Strategy's inner circle through membership in the PMNCH, with valuable institutional memory, expertise and insights to share, particularly when it comes to the IAP's challenging task of assessing accountabilities within the complex EWEC ecosystem.

IAP outreach efforts to young people were amplified with the support of the **PMNCH Adolescent and Youth Constituency** and its Secretariat, **Women Deliver's network of Young Leaders**, and the **International Federation of Medical Students Associations**. Networks such as these not only enabled the participation of young people at key events, but also ensured that the report's key messages would be shared with young people through social media. The IAP also addressed the May [Citizen's Hearing](#) focused on adolescents during the World Health Assembly. And it convened young people and youth-serving organizations at a dedicated session on the IAP report during the 2017 [World Congress on Adolescent Health](#) (October, New Delhi).

The UN Partner Agencies

Following the report launch, the IAP Co-Chairs formally requested the senior leadership of the UN H6 Partnership agencies to circulate the recommendations to their country and regional offices, and to consider convening national stakeholders to reflect on how to implement them. Ongoing follow-up by the IAP has included both high-level and technical-level outreach, such as with the United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS, as H6 Chair) and the World Health Organization (WHO), with a focus on UHC for adolescents. It also included IAP participation in WHO regional technical meetings with the aim of reinforcing key IAP recommendations in institutional priorities and work plans.

2017 Recommendations to Transform Accountability

1. Leverage accountability to achieve the SDGs

- 1.1 Lock in accountability for Every Woman Every Child commitments
- 1.2 Reduce overlaps and duplication among global partners

2. Make adolescents visible and measure what matters

3. Foster whole-of-government accountability to adolescents

- 3.1 Harness demographic dividends by focusing on adolescents and gender equality
- 3.2 Make schools work for adolescents' well-being
- 3.3 Ensure effective oversight institutions

4. Make universal health coverage work for adolescents

- 4.1 Provide a package of essential goods and services for adolescents, including mental health and prevention of non-communicable diseases
- 4.2 Ensure that all adolescents have free access to essential goods and services

5. Boost accountability for investments, including for adolescents' health and well-being

- 5.1 Increase resources and adopt adolescent-responsive budgeting
- 5.2 Strengthen accountability of development cooperation partners, including of members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC)

6. Unleash the power of young people

- 6.1 Ensure young people's meaningful participation, move away from tokenism
- 6.2 Empower the e-Generation to seize the full potential of the digital age

Health & Human Rights Professionals

Beyond the IAP's ongoing public speaking engagements and report dissemination to these key constituencies, the IAP published a [commentary in *The Lancet*](#) on the report's theme, raising the alarm on the urgency of strengthening accountability to adolescents (September 2017). It also issued a [critique of global monitoring efforts of universal health coverage](#) (December) – warning that adolescents, human rights and excluded groups are being left behind, including those living with mental health conditions, disabilities and in humanitarian settings.

In a related development, the IAP presented the report at the [UHC Forum](#); and, following IAP Members' participation in the [UHC2030 Partnership Steering Committee](#), the IAP was invited to advise on the development of their accountability strategy.

Visions of Change: The IAP Recommendations At Work

The examples above bode well for the IAP's progress and trajectory for the future. They reflect the high degree of receptivity of stakeholders. They also demonstrate that in its second year of operation, the IAP has been able to enhance its positioning, its operations and its outreach. Most importantly, it has generated increased understanding of, interest in, and commitment to accountability issues.

Since the IAP launched its report in September 2017, key stakeholders have been reporting that they are in the process of considering how to take forward the IAP's recommendations. This includes [WHO](#) and other members of the [UN H6 Partnership](#), the [OECD](#) and the [Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation](#).

The IAP's recommendations on improving accountabilities and streamlining the [EWEC global architecture](#) spurred the [alignment exercise](#) initiated in the fall of 2017 under PMNCH coordination, in consultation with the UN Deputy Secretary-General and core EWEC partners. In addition, the [PMNCH](#) is following up with its [Adolescents and Youth Constituency](#) on the IAP recommendations; and will be investing in strengthening adolescent and youth capacities for enhanced engagement in multi-stakeholder national platforms—a potential access point for their meaningful participation in leading monitoring and accountability systems.

Of the **global funds**, for example, **GAVI** sent in a report to the IAP informing on its strong record around transparency, and importantly, its role in pushing for the human papilloma virus (**HPV vaccine for adolescent girls to be part of the SDG indicators**). Methods are also being explored by EWEC partners on how to include adolescents in the next stage of **improved official development assistance (ODA) tracking for RMNCH**.

Among other encouraging signals are the unexpected references to the IAP recommendations in recent publications – such as on the IAP proposal for an **adolescent health and well-being index** in Plan UK’s report on *“Noncommunicable Disease Prevention and Adolescents”*; or calls for **independent oversight mechanisms in humanitarian situations** that adopt the IAP’s accountability framework, as found in the submission of the Global Respectful Maternity Care Council to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Another positive signal was the first-ever earmarking of funding for the IAP by the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID). These are among various developments indicating that the IAP recommendations are striking a chord with stakeholders.



IAP Report Launch, United Nations, New York, 18 September 2017

Moving Forward

The IAP’s objective is to ensure that its reports serve as living documents that offer learnings and actionable recommendations to prompt change and transformation for the health and human rights of women, children and adolescents. The IAP, however, does not have a mandate, resources or capacities to implement the recommendations itself. Rather, the role of the IAP is to foster trust, credibility, transparent participation and inclusiveness in its outreach and consultation processes, while at the same time maintaining its integrity and independence. This participatory, open approach lays the groundwork for the recommendations to be constructive, relevant, doable, awaited and readily-received for implementation once issued.



Dr. Francis Ohanyido, Director, West African Academy of Public Health, convenor of the consultation on IAP report, Abuja, 18 May 2017

The year 2017 brought to light new insights and opportunities. One is the IAP’s aspirations for increased occasions to undertake **national report launches**, for which it relies on country-based partners to facilitate. Another was the West African initiative to deliver inputs for the IAP’s report, which demonstrated the level of untapped hunger and **keen interest among stakeholders at the country level to work on accountability** issues. It also raises the prospect (however seemingly remote given limited capacities), that the IAP is properly positioned to serve as a **hub or network of “accountability satellites”** of stakeholders and institutions committed to women’s, children’s and adolescents’ health.

Overall, the IAP repeatedly found that across many of the stakeholders consulted in preparing for its report there is a surge of commitment to, and advocacy about, accountability. But at the same time, there is a limited understanding of what accountability truly means or how to put it into practice. The IAP is among the few bodies with the high-profile potential that may serve to **educate and expand understanding of meaningful accountability**. The bottom line is that strengthening accountability at all levels will require investments – not only to build capacities and know-how, but also to support its mechanisms and processes. Only by fostering a culture of accountability, spearheaded by political and institutional leadership at all levels, will the Global Strategy and the SDGs be achieved for every woman, every child and every adolescent – everywhere.