ACTIONS FOR ADOLESCENTS' HEALTH: CIVIL SOCIETY AND YOUTH NETWORKS

AN ACCOUNTABILITY AGENDA TO ENSURE UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE FOR ADOLESCENTS

Introduction

Adolescents are a vibrant population of every country and the voters of the future. They have a right to be heard and have a right to health. They will play a central role in achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Today, there are 1.2 billion people aged 10-19 years. That is 16% of the world's population. Many demand a more sustainable future. This includes health – a fundamental right of every human being.

Universal health coverage (UHC) is a target of SDG3, which countries have agreed to deliver. **Civil society organizations and youth networks that represent adolescents' voices are key to holding governments accountable for delivering UHC.** Governments need to invest in adolescents' health, now and in the long term. This will not only help young people as individuals but also result in a healthier, more productive workforce. It will greatly reduce poverty and disease passed down the generations. Civil society organizations and youth networks should urge governments to prioritize adolescents who are marginalized or vulnerable – paying particular attention to the special needs and vulnerabilities of adolescent girls – so that no one is left behind by UHC and the SDGs.

A strong accountability system is essential to ensure these results are delivered. It should uphold rights and ensure effective use of resources. It is essential that **adolescents actively engage in participatory processes and are able to make their voices heard.**

This accountability brief outlines critical actions civil society organizations and youth networks should take to develop and strengthen accountability mechanisms. It covers the entire accountability cycle – **MONITOR, REVIEW, ACT and REMEDY** – to ensure adolescents' health and rights within UHC.

MONITOR

REVIEW

ACT

REMEDY

INDEPENDENT ACCOUNTABILITY PANEL
EVERY WOMAN, EVERY CHILD, EVERY ADOLESCENT.

Why adolescents need the support of civil society organizations and youth networks on accountability

- **Every year 1.2 million (every day 3000) adolescents die, mainly from preventable causes,** including road injury, interpersonal violence and self-harm.

- Up to **50%** of all mental health issues start **before 14 years of age. Suicide** is a leading cause of death among adolescents.

- Lives could be saved and adolescents' health improved dramatically by annual investment of **US$5.2 per capita** across 75 low-income and middle-income countries. This would deliver **economic and social benefits at 10 times** the cost by **saving 12.5 million lives** and preventing more than **30 million unwanted pregnancies.** Investments are needed in programmes to improve physical, mental, sexual, and reproductive health and to reduce road traffic injuries.

- More than **130 million people need humanitarian assistance**. They are often forced to flee their homes at risk of **injury, trauma and gender-based violence**. The most vulnerable are children and adolescents.

What actions should civil society organizations and youth networks take to ensure accountability for adolescents' health?

Civil society organizations and youth networks are closest to communities and to adolescents and their families. They are well placed to represent their needs and should participate in activity to hold governments to account for delivering UHC for adolescents. This includes for priority setting, policy and budgetary formulation at national and sub-national levels.

ADVOCACY ACTIONS
1. Make a case for adolescents.

- Build advocacy and leadership capacity of adolescents and youth networks.

- Use quality data to raise awareness, including among adolescents, about gaps in the health service package and/or discrimination in access to health services.

- Advocate for adolescents who are excluded from accessing health services to be prioritized as UHC beneficiaries, including the urban and rural poor, those with disabilities or discriminated by gender, sexual orientation, racial, ethnic, or exploited groups.

2. Capitalize on the power of digital platforms and technologies to:

- Advocate for inclusion of adolescent health interventions in UHC.

- Meaningfully engage a larger number of diverse adolescents in voicing their priorities, ideas and concerns.

- Spread the word about entitlements of adolescents under UHC, how to protect their rights, respond to biases and discriminatory services, and seek redress when rights are violated.

- Enable adolescents to use digital technologies to mobilize, including social media and other platforms.

PARTICIPATION ACTIONS

Use and convene participatory mechanisms to:

- Monitor progress and act on results, including citizen hearings and other social accountability tools.

- Track the implementation of UHC at national and sub-national levels, including municipalities.

- Advocate for systemic and meaningful adolescent focused consultations integrated into local governance systems and processes, supported by funding for adolescents and youth groups as well as the adolescents' participation in those consultations and policy-making processes.

- Participate inclusively and with full transparency in all processes related to priority setting, public policy formulation and budget allocation.

- Get involved in citizen hearings and use community score cards and digital tools to voice adolescents' needs and capture where their rights have not been fulfilled.

- Demand clear and transparent participatory mechanisms – including resources – from the beginning of UHC processes and at all levels of decision-making and oversight.

- Include younger adolescents and diverse voices where possible, taking into consideration adolescents' funding capabilities.

DATA COLLECTION ACTIONS

Collect data generated by citizens, including adolescents themselves.

- Use data on human rights violations, barriers and inequalities in access to services, poor quality of health care and the adolescent experience of care to advocate for and monitor the inclusion of all adolescents' health needs in UHC schemes. Adolescents and youth network should seek training on this.

- Gather data to assess and seek redress for health service delivery gaps and bottlenecks, bias and discriminatory services, inequities and violations of human rights.

ABOUT THE IAP

The Independent Accountability Panel for Every Woman, Every Child, Every Adolescent (IAP) is appointed by the UN Secretary-General. It is composed of an internationally-recognized group of experts in health and human rights, who serve in their individual capacities. The IAP's main functions are to:

- Independently review progress and accountabilities towards achieving the EWEC Global Strategy objectives aligned with Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3; and provide actionable recommendations

- Disseminate IAP reviews and recommendations to support country action and impact

- Promote accountability principles and advocate for remedy and action.

The IAP is the only independent accountability mechanism established under the SDGs so far. The panel recommends the development of an integrated accountability mechanism under UHC, addressing non-communicable and communicable diseases, emergencies and other SDG 3 issues. It should prioritize accountability for the health of women, children and adolescents, and others left furthest behind.

This brief is developed by the IAP based on the IAP's 2017 report "**Transformative Accountability for Adolescents**". The IAP has taken into consideration contributions from PMNCH, the H6 agencies, The Rockefeller Foundation and other partners.

WE SUPPORT
EVERY WOMAN
EVERY CHILD
FOR HEALTHY AND EMPOWERED WOMEN, CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS