

To women like me, adhering to the principles of the **International Alliance of Women – Equal Rights - Equal Responsibilities**, priority issues of a human rights and gender-responsive approach in addressing Population dynamics, are:

– Meet the **need for family planning** of over 200 million women who do not wish to get pregnant, but have no access to unbiased correct information and adequate free or low-cost services or, more generally, access to affordable primary health care.

Family planning to save mothers' and children's lives is a human rights and gender-responsiveness concern, but also an economic issue. It is known to be a very cost-effective intervention. According to the 2009 report *Adding it up* from the Guttmacher Institute and UNFPA, maternal deaths in developing countries could be slashed by 70 percent and newborn deaths cut nearly in half, if investment in family planning and maternal and newborn health care was doubled. Combined and simultaneous investments in family planning and maternal and newborn services could save \$1.5 billion annually.

Funding is not the prime obstacle. Lack of political will and gender disparities, such as unequal power relations, all too often prevent women from exercising their chartered rights to health and to planning their family, enshrined, for example, in the CEDAW.

– Reduce the proportion of children and adolescents given into **early marriage** –a practice that violates women's right to make their own decisions in the matter. As a rule, they have children too early, with increased risks to their physical and mental health. Young men may be unhappy with an arranged marriage too, however, for them, escaping is easier.

– Generally reduce the proportion of **adolescents giving birth** by providing sexuality education at school and improving their access to contraception. Adolescent births often mean for young mothers they cannot or do not continue school, thus their right to –secondary– education is thwarted. This is against the current MDG 3 calling for the elimination of disparities in education between girls and boys. The benefits of reducing high numbers of adolescent mothers include slowing population growth: the younger the mothers the faster the succession of generations, and vice versa.

– Pass and, above all, implement national laws that **hold fathers responsible** for support and well being of all their children and make it more difficult to get away with non-consensual sex resulting in pregnancy. Women's lack of empowerment includes poor condom bargaining power which shows one more link between MDGs 3 and 5.

– Increase the visibility of **temporary or lasting morbidity** as a much more frequent consequence of risk pregnancies and unsafe abortion as compared to maternal deaths. This fact makes investing in family planning all the more important and beneficial.

In June 2009 the U.N. Human Rights Council adopted landmark resolution 11/8 recognizing maternal mortality and morbidity as a pressing human rights concern.

The scene is set for reducing population growth while improving women's development and rights. To achieve fast and lasting progress, female and male decision makers must cooperate.

Unless MDG 3 is seriously tackled, MDG 5 is unlikely to be attained. Both also impact on MDG 4. This holds true whatever the structure of the international post 2015 agenda will be.

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