



Telebriefing:

**PUTTING SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS ON THE NEXT DEVELOPMENT AGENDA:
WHAT HUMAN RIGHTS FUNDERS NEED TO KNOW**

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**Organized by the IHRFG Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Working Group
and co-sponsored by the Funders Network for Population, Reproductive Health and Rights**

Speakers:

- [Margaret Hempel](#), Director, Sexuality and Reproductive Health and Rights, Ford Foundation
- [Rajat Khosla](#), Independent Consultant
- [Alexandra Garita](#), Executive Coordinator, Realizing Sexual and Reproductive Justice (RESURJ)

The next UN global development agenda, which will replace the Millennium Development Goals in 2015, will be shaped in a series of policy-setting events over the next two years. Given the enormous impact this agenda will have on future governmental policies and priorities, it is critical that it include strong protections and support for sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). This telebriefing helped funders understand what's at stake for SRHR in the global development agenda-setting processes, what civil society groups are doing to integrate internationally recognized SRHR protections, and how funders can strengthen this work.

Margaret Hempel, Director, Sexuality and Reproductive Health and Rights, Ford Foundation

Margaret offered a historical perspective on sexual and reproductive rights within the development agenda. Margaret worked as a Program Officer at the Ford Foundation in the 1990s, when the United Nations (UN) convened multiple issue-specific conferences. She highlighted some lessons learned from these conferences:

- Issue-specific conferences served to advance the human rights framework globally. For example, the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) saw the global community shift its focus from demography to women's rights.
- The SRHR community largely missed the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) process as the community saw the MDGs as economic development more broadly and stakeholders were not initially receptive to SRHR issues.
- After the first set of MDGs was laid out, the community mobilized to gain attention for SRHR issues beyond maternal mortality. SRHR groups are now actively engaged in both the ICPD and MDG processes.

UN Conferences can be important venues:

- They provide global spaces in which stakeholders can develop shared understandings.
- They enhance regional and global networks, allowing cross-country and –issue engagement.
- They shift the balance and allow Global South voices to take a leadership role.
- Many of the community's leading advocates learned through UN processes. Though UN processes are dense, they can also be more accessible to groups in their home countries and allow organizations to build relationships.

- They provide the opportunity to highlight successes in the SRHR community (for example, the Human Rights Council's position on maternal mortality as a human rights violation).

Margaret offered a number of recommendations for funders:

- Fund early: as with any advocacy campaign, it's too late when groups are finalizing language.
- Help groups develop shared frameworks. Ahead of the conferences in the 1990s, donors supported offline, cross-sector conversations to allow groups to present shared agendas.
- Fund across issue areas – this is critical in post-MDG work.
- Fund groups with a strong track record and who will remain on the ground after conferences end. Many groups actively engaged in UN processes in the 1990s, but they had limited capacity to follow up and hold country governments accountable.
- Fund key groups who can monitor the process and facilitate NGO engagement.
- Donors must decide whether to work within the UN, encouraging its engagement with civil society, and when to fund civil society directly.

SRHR will come up in debates, whether funders engage on the issues or not. Countries and groups opposed to human rights often raise SRHR as wedge issues, but there are opportunities to voice the rights community's concerns, especially given youth engagement and progress made in recent years.

Margaret noted that it's easy to lose sight of goals amidst committees and prep meetings and encouraged funders to keep their eyes on the community's desired outcomes.

Rajat Khosla, Independent Consultant

Rajat reflected on the importance of post-2015 work for shared human rights, development, and sexual and reproductive rights agendas.

Rajat reiterated the need for funders to engage in SRHR given the interconnected nature of these issues. For example, SRHR was at the center of conversations on migration, sustainability and adolescence at recent preparatory meetings for the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific. This presents an opportunity for funders to take a holistic approach. The booming global population was also a common topic. Population dynamics are often viewed in terms of population control, rather than from a rights perspective.

Rajat highlighted a number of opportunities for human rights funders within these shared agendas:

- Certain topics, like sexual orientation, gender identity, abortion and adolescence, are often neglected in global negotiations. It is imperative for human rights actors to ensure that these issues are included in the conversation from the start.
- Actors can introduce a human rights frame into the agenda if they invest energy in interdepartmental processes early on. Governance and accountability have emerged as entry points for this conversation.
- Funders can push processes like ICPD+20 and the post-2015 agenda, which are currently moving parallel to one another, to align their agendas.
- Negotiations can better incorporate diverse voices (such as those from the Global South) that have received limited representation.

In addition to traditional opposition to SRHR and gender issues, reproductive health conversations are increasingly watered down to focus only on maternal health and mortality. Funders can search for other entry points – such as governance and accountability – to advance SRHR in an integrated manner.

Alexandra Garita, Executive Coordinator, Realizing Sexual and Reproductive Justice (RESURJ)

Alexandra discussed the role of civil society and the importance of investing in Southern voices in global processes. Alex cautioned against pulling Southern activists into international negotiations at the expense of their work on the ground. Actors can instead support local civil society by engaging on social media, sharing information about global processes and ensuring that key voices are represented on national, regional and global stages.

SRHR is largely seen as a Northern agenda. Southern governments often focus on economic development rather than rights: this dynamic played out in Rio, where reproductive rights were traded for progress on the green economy. Southern civil society must align SRHR with environmental, health, and economic justice agendas to engage their governments on the issue.

Alex reiterated the importance of investing in Southern voices that can work globally but are committed to SRHR advocacy at the national level. International negotiations offer the opportunity to strengthen local movements:

- Mobilizing around global processes builds a new generation of advocates.
- Local actors offer radical voices in support of rights, maintaining pressure on their governments and ensuring that SRHR remain on the agenda.
- Local advocates can continue in-country work and hold governments accountable afterwards.

Governments are reluctant to address SRHR, so they are often the first issues removed from the agenda. But SRHR invariably lie at the center of final negotiations. Through coordinated political engagement at national and global levels, civil society can make progress on SRHR. The Convention on Population and Development and Commission on the Status of Women demonstrate recent successes.

Moving forward, the post-2015 MDG and Rio sustainable development agendas are merging:

- The post-2015 civil society structure is led by two groups, Beyond 2015 and Global Call to Action against Poverty.
- The sustainable development process consists mostly of environmental groups.
- In March 2013, both groups met and discussed advancing their agendas collaboratively. The groups developed joint progressive statements, which were sent to the high-level panel.

Strategic alliances and coordination across movements have positioned civil society to make a greater impact.

Advocates must engage beyond the content of SRHR and look at the economic aspects of a development agenda with human rights at its core. Conferences in the 1990s took a coordinated approach, but modern opposition has made it difficult to discuss SRHR issues in a coordinated manner. Advocates must re-take and advance that middle ground, incorporating Southern perspectives as well as the transparency and accountability of human rights groups.

Questions-and-Answers

One participant asked whether it is too late for funders to engage in these processes. The panelists agreed that it is not; many in the South are just starting to mobilize around the post-2015 agenda and the open-ended working group.

The panelists also addressed specific gaps that funders can fill:

- In Africa particularly, the SRHR movement needs a new generation of advocates. Many of the strong women's and human rights voices are older and no longer actively engaged. Funders can build capacity across Africa by sharing knowledge about SRHR groups engaged on the continent, and by supporting travel and advocacy grants to enable pan-African dialogues. The ICPD+20 review in September 2013 is one upcoming opportunity.
- Funders can facilitate cross-regional dialogues for groups to share lessons and best practices.
- Conversations should take a holistic, progressive approach to rights rather than focusing narrowly on violations, as is common.

A participant expressed concern that Latin American youth and indigenous voices are seldom heard in SRHR conversations and asked how to engage them. Alex agreed that indigenous voices are often marginalized in SRHR and reiterated the opportunity for funders to facilitate dialogue across regions. She noted that Latin American civil society has brought indigenous youth from Mexico and Peru together around the ICPD+20 and emphasized the importance of aligning agendas.

The panelists discussed how funders can engage other marginalized communities in SRHR, responding to a question about the disability rights movement. Disability rights advocates often focus on education, work and other concrete needs rather than SRHR. Rajat explained that groups are bringing different aspects of SRHR into agendas and regional processes, pointing to a July 2013 conference in the Hague as an opportunity,

A participant asked about resources for grassroots groups interested in advocating for SRHR. Alex responded that the post-2015 development process is still unfolding, but there are some resources available (see below) from regional processes surrounding the ICPD+20 review.

One participant returned to the idea of capacity in Africa, noting efforts by over 300 organizations to develop a joint position paper for the African Union. The participant also looked to Latin America, where there are activists but few resources on the ground. As donors pulled out of the region in recent years, Latin America has seen a political backlash with outside and government opposition organizing against SRHR. Both Africa and Latin America offer opportunities for funders to build capacity.

Amid discussion of scaling up civil society engagement in UN processes, one participant asked about building enduring infrastructure to have an impact beyond immediate needs. Panelists offered the following recommendations:

- Strengthen organizations with core support, so groups travelling to participate in international processes can continue their work in-country.
- Strengthen capacity at the local and national level, so diverse perspectives (including youth and disability groups) are incorporated into global negotiations.
- Look beyond 2015 to ensure that progress is implemented and integrate human rights accountability for the development agenda.

To listen to the full telebriefing:

Visit [IHRRFG's website](#) (you will need to enter the password "humanrights").

Resources:

- [World Summits & Conferences](#) Grantcraft report
- [A Red Flag for the Post-2015 High Level Panel](#)
- [We Will Not Be Mainstreamed Into a Polluted Stream: Feminist Visions of Structural Transformations for Achieving Women's Human Rights and Gender Equality in the 2015 Development Agenda](#)
- [Gender Equality and Women's and Girls' Rights in the Post-2015 Framework](#)
- [www.beyond2015.org](#) (a campaign of 620 global human rights organizations pushing for a strong and legitimate successor framework to the Millennium Development Goals)
- [icpdbeyond2014.org](#) (the "Key Events" tab has the upcoming schedule of global and regional events)
- [icpdbeyond2014.org/about/view/13-icpd-global-youth-forum](#) (on the outcome of the Global Youth Conference achieved through the active participation of young people and civil society)
- ["Where We Stand Now in the Post-2015 Process,"](#) The 2015 Post, UN-NGLS e-Magazine, Issue 1, May 2013
- Shannon Kowalski. ["What the Post-2015 High Level Panel Report Means for Women and Girls."](#) AKIMBO, International Women's Health Coalition, 31 May 2013.