

CPD 49 Joint Oral Statement, Submitted by Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights and Red de Salud de las Mujeres Latinoamericanas y el Caribe

On behalf of the Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network and the Women's Global Network for Reproductive Rights, I welcome the opportunity to represent today over a thousand organizations and individuals worldwide, who are committed to advancing sexual and reproductive rights. We welcome this year's focus on strengthening the demographic evidence base for Agenda 2030. If Agenda 2030 is to be implemented to its fullest and truly leave no one behind, comprehensive monitoring and review mechanisms must be in place from the beginning, to ensure a demographic evidence base that allows us to effectively identify achievements, and address challenges as they arise. Central to leaving no one behind, of course, is ensuring that no one is rendered invisible, and that no one's human rights are violated.

All too often, the monitoring of national policies and programmes is too narrow in scope, thereby perpetuating the marginalization of groups who are made vulnerable, such as women and young people, because of a lack of information about their realities. Young people and adolescents in particular often remain overlooked when it comes to national data collection; they also remain among the most affected by persisting inequalities, particularly when it comes to their sexual and reproductive health and rights. Young people account for 41% of new HIV infections worldwide; high numbers of unmarried, sexually active adolescents have an unmet need for modern contraception; and roughly 16 million adolescent girls give birth every year, while pregnant girls under age 15 in low or middle-income countries have double the risk of maternal death and obstetric fistula than older women. And yet when it comes to recognizing young people and adolescents,

they remain invisible in most national and international contexts, where narrow policies and programmes often fail to acknowledge let alone meet their specific needs.

With young people aged 10-24 comprising 1.8 billion of the world's population,¹ the success of Agenda 2030 hinges on fulfilling their human rights, including their sexual and reproductive rights. It is thus essential that as part of strengthening the demographic evidence base, young people in all their diversity are made consistently visible through holistic and comprehensively disaggregated data. This would enable us to better understand whether services are available for young people, whether they are accessing them, and the persistent barriers to these services, in order to assess and comprehensively address the needs of adolescents and young people, and ensure their sexual and reproductive rights. Anything else will result in governments falling short in their implementation of programmes and actions that meaningfully reach “the furthest behind first.”²

Young people are not only potential beneficiaries of comprehensive and sustainable programmes and policies - they are “active agents in decision-making processes and for positive change and development in society,”³ as affirmed by Member States. Young people must thus be centrally involved in the design, monitoring, and evaluation of policies and programmes that will affect their lives. Only in this way can we really begin

¹UNFPA (2013), Adolescent and Youth Demographics: A Brief Overview.

² Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2016), para. 4

³ A/RES/62/126, para. 18.

to understand the realities behind the numbers, and undertake the means through which to fully remove the barriers they face, and realize their rights. Thank you.