



Why States Should Keep “Reproductive Rights” Out of the SDGs

15 Reasons to Remove “Reproductive Rights” from SDG Target 5.6

UN Member States should remove reproductive rights from the draft SDG Target 5.6¹ which ensures “universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences” for the reasons below. For reasons also explained below, references to “reproductive health services” and “reproductive health” should also be rejected as part of the SDGs.

1. **“Reproductive rights” was specifically rejected by States during negotiations of the Rio + 20 outcome document “The Future We Want”** because this term has evolved in meaning since ICPD and has become one of the most controversial terms in UN negotiations.
2. **Since 1994 when ICPD was negotiated in Cairo, the meanings of the terms “reproductive health” and “reproductive rights” have been deliberately expanded by abortion and LGBT rights activists** with the active support of treaty body monitoring committees² and UN agencies to now include controversial sexual and abortion rights that were never intended by State parties.³
3. **“Reproductive Rights” is not referred to in any binding UN treaties or conventions** because so many countries have restrictions on abortion that it is impossible for States to agree on a working definition.
4. **Modifying “reproductive rights” with “in accordance with” ICPD and Beijing will not prevent NGOs and UN agencies from using the term “reproductive rights” to pressure countries to legalize and fund an unlimited right to abortion and other controversial sexual rights.** They are already using this term to do so now. Target 5.6 will give them even more leverage, which is why they are lobbying so heavily for it.

¹ Based on the latest version available, Open Working Group proposal for Sustainable Development Goals. Available at <http://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/1579SDGs%20Proposal.pdf>

² The CEDAW Committee has pressured 66 nations to legalize, remove penalties for, or increase access to abortion including countries in the following regions: Africa (17), Latin America (20), the Caribbean (4), Asia (13), Europe (4), the Middle East (4), and the Pacific (4).

³ See “The Relentless Push to Create an ‘International Right’ to Abortion” at http://www.familywatchinternational.org/fwi/documents/fwiPolicyBriefonAbortionandHumanRights_FinalforPublication.pdf. This policy brief exposes the orchestrated plan by UN Agencies and pro-abortion NGOs to expand the definition of reproductive health and rights.

5. **Including the term “rights” in connection with “reproduction” in an SDG target elevates it to a priority among the targets** as States are duty bearers obligated to fulfill the internationally recognized “rights” of individuals. Other SDG goals and targets will suffer as a result as nations will be obligated to prioritize reproductive “rights.”
6. **The SDG process requires that every target have measurable indicators. What will the indicators be, and who will decide what they are?** Consider the World Health Organization’s indicators for reproductive rights as specified in their manual, “Safe abortion: Technical and policy guidance for health systems, Second edition.”⁴ These indicators include measuring the number of abortion facilities in a country and the percentage of health providers trained to provide abortion.
7. **UN Member States, abortion rights NGOs,⁵ and UN agencies lobbying for this target intend to use it to pressure states, not just to legalize and fund abortions on demand, but also to decriminalize HIV transmission and laws regulating sexual relations among LGBT populations.** (See UNFPA’s report “ICPD AND HUMAN RIGHTS: 20 years of advancing reproductive rights,” which lists “sexual orientation” (11 Times), “transgender” (6 times), “gender identity” (5 times) and has multiple references to decriminalizing same-sex behavior and implementing public campaigns to eliminate discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. All this under the banner of advancing reproductive health rights.)
8. **Reproductive “health” or “rights,” if it is to be included at all in the SDGs, belongs in the health section, not in the gender equality section.** By placing it in the gender equality section, it takes on the connotation of alleged rights relating to abortion or alleged rights relating to nondiscrimination in reproduction for sexual minorities, rather than the connotation of healthy reproduction. This is exactly why sexual rights activists have placed it there rather than in the health section where it would logically belong to promote healthy reproduction.
9. **The term “reproductive rights” is commonly interpreted by UN-accredited abortion rights organizations including International Planned Parenthood Federation and UN agencies (UNFPA and the World Health Organization) to advance abortion rights.⁶**

⁴ “Safe abortion: Technical and policy guidance for health systems, Second edition.” Available at http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/unsafe_abortion/9789241548434/en/

⁵ See, e.g., Center for Reproductive Rights, “Reproductive Rights: A Tool for Monitoring State Obligations.” Available at http://reproductiverights.org/sites/crr.civicactions.net/files/documents/crr_Monitoring_Tool_State_Obligations.pdf. “[R]eproductive rights issues [include] freedom from discrimination, contraceptive information and services, safe pregnancy and childbirth, abortion and post-abortion care, comprehensive sexuality education, freedom from violence against women, and HIV/AIDS.”

⁶ See IPPF, “Charter on Sexual and Reproductive Rights.” Available at <http://www.ippf.org/resource/IPPF-Charter-Sexual-and-Reproductive-Rights>, and Center for Reproductive Rights, “Reproductive Rights: A Tool for Monitoring State Obligations.” Available at http://reproductiverights.org/sites/crr.civicactions.net/files/documents/crr_Monitoring_Tool_State_Obligations.pdf

10. **As per their report “ICPD AND HUMAN RIGHTS: 20 years of advancing reproductive rights,” UNFPA lists “restrictive abortion laws” and “illegal abortion” as a barrier to “reproductive rights.”** This sends a clear signal that UNFPA will use a reproductive rights SDG target to pressure countries to change any “restrictive” abortion laws. **UNFPA’s report also identifies laws criminalizing same-sex behavior or HIV transmission as barriers to the fulfillment of the reproductive rights.**⁷
11. **Including “reproductive rights” in the SDG goals or targets will open up a Pandora’s Box of controversial legal issues and policy battles related to human reproduction.** For example, the American Society for Reproductive Medicine claims that reproductive rights include rights to assisted reproduction for gay, lesbian and unmarried persons.⁸ What about surrogate pregnancies and other controversial reproductive arrangements or alleged reproductive “rights” that violate the rights of the child to know and be cared for by their parents as specified in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child?
12. **Elevating reproductive rights by including it in an SDG target further pits the alleged “right” of women to abort their child against the right to life of the child,** who, according to the CRC, is entitled to special protections “before as well as after birth.”
13. **Those pushing for abortion as a right under reproductive rights fail to disclose the well-documented mental and physical health risks and complications associated with abortion** that have negatively impacted millions of women worldwide.⁹
14. **The UN Charter, Article 2.7, states, “Nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state.”** Issues relating to abortion are clearly relegated to the states in ICPD; therefore, “reproductive rights” or provisions relating to “reproductive health,” which can be used to advance abortion, should not be included in the SDG targets.
15. **Removing “reproductive rights” or “reproductive health” targets that can be used to pressure countries to legalize and fund abortion shows respect for the numerous countries that have restrictive abortion laws to protect their unborn children.**

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⁷ Available at <http://www.unfpa.org/publications/icpd-and-human-rights>

⁸ See American Society for Reproductive Medicine, “Gay, Lesbian, and Unmarried Persons Reproductive Rights.” Available at <http://www.asrm.org/topics/detail.aspx?id=504>

⁹ See a policy brief on complications from abortion here: http://www.familywatchinternational.org/fwi/policy_brief_abortion.pdf

