



Global Network of Sex Work Projects
Promoting Health and Human Rights

The Global Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP) Response to Release of Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General on the Post-2015 Agenda, titled 'The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet'

Debates on the post-2015 agenda have centred on the need to ensure sustainable development goals are not discussed in isolation but rather set within the broader context of achieving a reduction in poverty, ensuring peace and realising human rights. UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon released his Synthesis Report on the Post-2015 Agenda which incorporates these interlinked areas for targeted action to achieve the stated goals.

Whilst NSWP welcomes the release of this report and the areas it highlights, the lack of reference to key populations – in particular sex workers and people who use drugs – is notable. Whilst the commitment to “*leave no one behind*” is restated in these goals, failure to recognise that key populations remain significantly underserved in the global response to ensuring human rights, access to health and justice and freedom from violence and discrimination is for NSWP a glaring omission. It is also particularly disappointing as the report specifically highlights “universal health coverage” as one of the core elements of delivering these sustainable development goals; and one of the 6 ‘principles’ of the Universal Call is to “*address inequalities in all areas, agreeing that no goal or target be considered met unless met for all social and economic groups.*”

The Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals articulated in the year 2000 rightly placed people and communities at their heart. As noted in the synthesis of this report, we know that problems targeted by these goals “*are not accidents of nature or the results of phenomena beyond our control. They result from actions and omissions of people – public institutions, the private sector, and others charged with protecting human rights and upholding human dignity*”. Three decades into the HIV pandemic, sex workers are still disproportionately affected by HIV alongside other key populations, including men who have sex with men, transgender communities and people who use drugs. Whilst the commentary on the successes of the MDGs note that increased access to ART has saved millions of lives, the treatment gaps faced by sex workers are still unacceptable.

Sex workers across the world are subjected to repressive and discriminatory laws and practices which in turn fuel stigma, discrimination, and in a large number of instances, violence and other human rights violations against sex workers. These factors all compound and impact severely on the health and wellbeing of all sex workers including sex workers living with HIV. These factors make it very difficult for sex workers to access HIV prevention, diagnosis, treatment, care, and support services which they need in order to protect their own health by preventing and treating HIV infection. With heightened risks of HIV and other sexually

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transmitted infections, sex workers face substantial barriers in accessing services, largely because of stigma, discrimination, and criminalisation in the societies in which they live. These social, legal, and economic injustices contribute significantly to their high risk of acquiring HIV. Often driven underground by fear and marginalisation, sex workers are at direct risk of violence and abuse daily, both from state and non-state actors. Experiences of these types of violence and human rights violations range from police brutality, arrest and detention, denial of access to ART, raid and rescue operations and forced or coerced rehabilitation programmes.

Whilst the post-2015 discussions have noted a clear need for continued investment into the unfinished work of the MDGs, which includes a key goal of combatting HIV/AIDS, NSWP is disheartened that sex workers are not given the appropriate space or recognition as a key population in the SDGs and wider post-2015 agenda. Particularly in the context of Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights and HIV, key populations – sex workers, people who use drugs, transgender communities and men who have sex with men - must be recognised as groups who continue to endure recurring rights violations. In the absence of recognition and clear related targets, sex workers will continue to be left behind in the post-2015 agenda. This Synthesis Report should have been used as a platform to include a reaffirmed commitment to ensuring the health, human and labour rights of sex workers and other key populations, and call for an end to the stigma, discrimination and criminalisation of these groups.

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