## Draft General Comment on Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights – Right to Life.

## UNFPA Submission

UNFPA welcomes the draft General Comment no. 36 on the right to life, in particular the recognition that state parties must provide safe access to reproductive health services, in particular to adolescents, as a central part of ensuring a life with dignity.

UNFPA would like to suggest that the draft strengthen its attention to the unique and specific risks that women, in particular girls and adolescents, face in their enjoyment of their Article 6 rights as a result of their reproductive roles, discrimination and gender based stereotypes.

1. ***Specific risks that women and girls face due to their reproductive roles and gender based stereotypes***

UNFPA urges the committee, under para. 9 of “General Remarks”, and under para. 27 and para. 30 of Part III: The Duty to Protect Life, to:

* Recognise the specific risks that women and girls face and the need to guarantee women access to a broad spectrum of reproductive health services in order to realize their right to life without discrimination.
* Address State’s obligation to adopt positive measures to reduce and eventually eliminate preventable maternal deaths and morbidity. Recent data shows that around 303,000 women and girls die every year due to complications during pregnancy or childbirth. Moreover, complications in pregnancy are the leading cause of death among adolescent girls in developing countries (second cause globally).[[1]](#footnote-2) The current draft needs to recognize the States obligation to prevent mortality, not only by ensuring women and girl’s access to quality care before, during and after childbirth, but also by addressing to discriminatory and social barriers that women face, including the unequal status of women and girls, (which remain an underlying cause for the inability or delay in care seeking); lack of access to knowledge, decision making and financial powers, violence against women and girls and gender stereotypes.
* Call on the need for disaggregated data on maternal morbidity and mortality
* Call on states to adopt positive measures to reduce early pregnancy, including by setting the minimum age of marriage at 18 and ensuring that adolescent girls have access to CSE and youth friendly health services (para. 30)
* Reaffirm the importance of access to contraception, including the need for contraceptive services to be of good quality and be administered in line with the principles of non-discrimination, free and informed consent and freedom from the threat violence or coercion.

1. ***Adolescent Girls***

Recent data from the World Health Organization indicates that suicide is now the second leading cause of death for adolescent girls between ages 10 and 19 at the global level, and the leading cause of death for adolescent girls between ages 15-19.

UNFPA urges the committee, under para. 10, to recognise the high risk of adolescent girls to suicide, and under, para. 30, the need for States parties to take appropriate measures to address these risks, in particular the need for better access to sexual and reproductive health care, information and education. UNFPA also would like to suggest that the draft calls on States to adopt measures to protect girls from school bullying, sexual violence and other forms of gender based violence. In this case, the Committee could refer to para 18 of the CEDAW General Recommendation no. 35 on Violence Against Women, which states that violations of sexual and reproductive health and rights are a form of violence.

1. ***Gender Based Violence***

UNFPA is concerned at the lack of gender dimension when addressing domestic violence in the draft General Comment (para. 27 & 30). Emphasising the gender dimension of domestic violence, is particularly important given the high risk that women face of gender based violence. The latest comparable data for 87 countries from 2005 to 2016, including 30 from developed regions, shows that 19 per cent of girls and women aged 15 to 49 years have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner in the past 12 months.

1. 2017 HLPF Thematic Review of SDG3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/14367SDG3format-rev\_MD\_OD.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-2)