



11 July 2014 – There are over 7, 247,000,000 people in the world today – and that number is [growing](#) by the second. Of these seven billion people, approximately 1.8 billion are youth.

Youth shape the economic realities of tomorrow along with the social norms and values, they are both literally and figuratively the future. On today's [World Population Day](#) , the [UNFPA](#) and the UN are calling for investment into the world's largest ever generation of young people.

Many of these youth are born in developing countries and are denied their rightful opportunities to get a quality education, find decent work, and participate in the political life of their societies. Even those able to achieve higher education in developed countries face a lack of jobs or low paying jobs.

In some countries, such as Sri Lanka, investment into youth development has opened doors for the new generation. A recent publication, “ [Investing in the Demographic Dividend: Successes, Challenges and Way Forward for Sri Lanka](#) ”, co-authored by the Colombo-based Institute of Policy Studies and the UNFPA office in Sri Lanka, showed that investments in health and education have generated concrete benefits for youth.

Sustained and increased investments in sexual and reproductive health services [have]

tremendous benefits to women, families and societies,” the report indicates. These services have helped bring about one of the lowest maternal mortality rates in South Asia, with 38.6 deaths per 100,000 live births, according to the publication.

The country has also benefitted from increased investments in education, with a “significant increase in [the] number of teachers in government schools” taking place



between 2007 and 2012. The enrollment rates in primary and junior secondary school have reached 95 per cent and 93 per cent respectively, the report says.

Sivagnanaselvan Dinesh, a Sri Lankan medical student [told UNFPA](#) , “Despite our hardships, I was always determined to turn things around. The key to my success lay in... quality education.”

“Youth are not demanding support,” said Ahmad Alhendawi, the UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy on Youth, who attended the launch of the report. “They are asking for investments.” Lending his voice to the call to action on this day, Secretary General Ban Ki-moon [said](#) , “By empowering today’s youth, we will lay the groundwork for a more sustainable future for generations to come.”