

Population Headliners



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World leaders stand up for population agenda

More than 250 world figures endorsed the United Nations' call to urge priority funding for health care, education, women and family planning in the "World Leaders Statement in Support of ICPD".

Signed by 85 prime ministers and presidents as well as 47 Nobel Prize winners and other key leaders in the social, scientific and political sectors, the Statement reaffirms the vision set forth in the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held at Cairo in 1994.

"Since 1994, both the public and private sectors have made substantial efforts to transform the ICPD's 20-year plan into reality. Meaningful gains have been made, but much remains to be done", the Statement reads.

"We are deeply concerned that the gap between rich and poor is growing and that millions of the world's people, but especially women and young people, are highly vulnerable to HIV/AIDS, sexual coercion and violence, discrimination, and other violations of their human rights", it continues.

"We call on leaders in every walk of life to join us in reaffirming the ICPD's vision for human development, social justice, economic progress and environmental preservation. We call on the

Numerous events have marked the 10th anniversary of the ICPD in 2004. The State of World Population 2004 published by UNFPA is also devoted to taking stock of the progress achieved since the adoption of this landmark document.



international community, national governments and private philanthropic organizations, to prioritize and fund the ICPD Programme of Action. By signing this leadership statement, we pledge to do our part".

A project of the Summit Foundation and the United Nations Foundation, the Statement was handed to United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Louise Fréchette on 13 October by Ted Turner, media mogul and founder of the United Nations Foundation. (See related story page 2)

Lack of funding for population and reproductive health programmes retarding progress

The world has made genuine progress towards achieving the ambitious programme outlined at the 1994 ICPD, a United Nations report found, but a serious funding shortfall is obstructing efforts to provide universal access to reproductive health care, combat HIV/AIDS and improve maternal health.

The *State of World Population 2004* report, issued by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), shows that donors have given only half of what they promised.

In Cairo, international donors pledged to give US\$6.1 billion a year by 2005 for population and

reproductive health programmes, but in 2002 – donors were giving only \$3.1 billion.

The report, entitled *The Cairo Consensus at Ten: Population, Reproductive Health and the Global Effort to End Poverty*, released on 15

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Subcommittee on Socially Vulnerable Groups wraps up first session

The social integration of vulnerable groups, including the poor, international migrants, older persons and persons with disabilities, was at the heart of the discussions of the first Subcommittee on Socially Vulnerable Groups which took place in Bangkok from 13 to 15 September.

Held in the context of the 10-year review of the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995) which tackled poverty reduction, employment generation and social integration, the Subcommittee especially focused on the third priority area of the World Summit; social integration.

Assessing the progress of the Asian and Pacific region towards the goals of the Copenhagen Programme of Action (PoA), the Subcommittee noted that achievements in poverty reduction had been uneven across the region, with greater success recorded in East and South-East Asia.

It noted that a number of countries had achieved or were likely to achieve the first Millennium Development Goal of halving the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015. However, it expressed concern over the likelihood that several countries would not be able to achieve that Goal, attributing this lack of achievement to an absence of clear targets, strategies and accountability measures.

Many social development goals, such as education for all, health for all, shelter for all and the creation of a barrier-free physical environment had not been achieved in most countries of the region, the Subcommittee found.

Gathering representatives from over 24 countries and areas in the region, the Subcommittee placed special emphasis on the Pacific island developing countries in terms of their progress towards the goals of the Copenhagen PoA. It stressed that populations in this subregion were mostly affected by a poverty of opportunity, with limited chances to attain high levels of education and productive employment. Among other approaches, the Subcommittee stressed the need for improved urban management in order to cope with



Photo shows (from L to R): Daewon Choi, Special Assistant to the Executive Secretary and Secretary of the Commission, ESCAP; Keiko Okaido, Deputy Executive Secretary; H. Amberoti Nikora, Chairperson and Minister of Internal and Social Affairs, Kiribati; Thelma Kay, Chief, Emerging Social Issues Division; and Bhakta Gubhaju, o.i.c., a.i, Population and Social Integration Section during the opening of the Subcommittee.

rapid population growth, unemployment and housing shortages. It noted that the issue of population growth was critical for some Pacific island countries.

Other population-related issues were widely discussed under the agenda item entitled "Emerging demographic dynamics: international migration and population ageing". International migration from and within the region has increased rapidly over the past three decades, especially as a result of disparities in the levels of development of countries of origin and areas of destination.

The Subcommittee noted that, while labour migration was increasing in importance, systems of social protection for migrant workers often remained inadequate. It stressed that undocumented migrants, women migrants and unskilled migrants were vulnerable to abuse and exploitation and called for increased protection of

the rights of migrant workers. It observed that women constituted an increasing share of the international labour migrants in the region.

Pointing out the linkages between population ageing and international labour migration, the Subcommittee observed that the increased need for caregivers in ageing populations was likely to stimulate further this type of migration.

The Subcommittee recalled that the Plan of Action on Population and Poverty adopted by the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference included a number of recommendations concerning international migration.

More research, the organization of capacity-building programmes and an international forum, were among the practical recommendations of the Subcommittee in the area of migration.

United States of America says it backs population agenda

One day after refusing to support the World Leaders' Statement in Support of ICPD (see front page), the United States of America's ambassador to the United Nations Economic and Social Council, Sichan Siv, told the General Assembly that its country was firmly committed "to advancing the well-being of women and their families".

Elaborating on the United States position, he said his country was worried the plan could be used to promote abortion. However, after receiving assurances from various countries that such was not the intent, he said "we are pleased to continue to offer our strong support".

Mr. Siv said his country was advancing the Cairo goals in many ways – including by spending US\$475 million annually over the last four years to finance maternal health, family planning and reproductive health programmes. But he stressed "the promotion of behaviour change – encouraging abstinence and fidelity – is integral to our fight against HIV/AIDS".

The State Department had refused to support the Statement because it included the concept of "sexual rights", which had no "agreed definition" according to the State Department.

(Source: AP, 15 October via UN Wire)



LACK OF FUNDING (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

September (see below), indicates that the huge funding gap is having a negative ripple effect, retarding progress in health, education and other fields, especially for women and girls.

More than 350 million couples worldwide, for example, do not have access to a full range of family planning services; at least 500,000 women die each year from problems caused by pregnancy or childbirth, and most of those deaths are preventable; countless girls are unable to attend school; and five million people were infected with HIV last year.

Adolescent health care also remains a problem, with early marriage and childbearing the norm for girls in many countries, and women aged below 24 disproportionately represented in

statistics for sexually transmitted diseases.

But the UNFPA review finds that there have been many advances since 179 governments agreed in 1994 that poverty could be reduced and economic growth sustained if women were given greater rights and if access to reproductive health services was made universal.

The percentage of couples using modern contraception has risen from 55 per cent to 61 per cent; laws and policies to protect the rights of women, especially against violence, have been put in place; and population issues have become integrated into the heart of poverty-reduction strategies. Many countries are also much more aware of the need to tackle the scourge of HIV/AIDS, according to the report.

Launching the report in London, Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, UNFPA Executive Director, cited the impressive gains made by countries worldwide since the ICPD, yet stressed the lack of resources for reproductive health needs. "Unless international assistance rises to the levels agreed to at the Cairo Conference, the numbers of people who need family planning, maternal health care and HIV/AIDS prevention, testing and treatment will continue to grow. Lack of reproductive health care will continue to be the leading cause of death for women in the developing world and the AIDS pandemic will continue to expand and wreak havoc".

"This year's report is, above all, a call to mobilize the political will and resources needed to make the Cairo vision a reality", she concluded.

UNFPA's flagship publication launched in Bangkok

Launched simultaneously in various cities throughout the world, UNFPA's flagship publication, *State of World Population 2004* was also released in Bangkok on 15 September, in an event organized by UNFPA Thailand.

A panel of distinguished experts on population and development from Thailand and the region had been gathered to present the report and discuss the major concerns it raised for Asia and the Pacific. Opened by H.E. Anutin Charnvirakul, Deputy Minister of Public Health, the panel discussion provided an overview of the report, on topics such as population, poverty and environment; migration and urbanization; gender equality and women's empowerment; reproductive health and family planning; maternal health and reproductive health for communities in crisis; preventing HIV/AIDS; adolescents and young people; and action priorities and conclusion.

A special report marking 10 years of the ICPD in Thailand was also presented by Dr. Metee Pongkittilah from the Ministry of Public Health. The report focused on the progress that the country made in implementing the ICPD Programme of Action and highlighted the challenges ahead.



A panel of distinguished experts launched the State of World Population 2004 report in Thailand.

"Thailand is a pioneer in recognizing that population, development and poverty are interrelated... Commitment at the highest political level supported with resources and active advocacy, coupled with women's status and improvements in education and health services contributed to Thailand's success in reducing fertility in a short span of time", explained Dr. Metee.

Reducing disparities in access to basic services among the regions and population groups, meeting the needs of an ageing population, improving quality of education and access to information and services for adolescents are among the important challenges he added.

People in the headlines

After nearly four decades of dedicated services to the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), India, **Prof. Tarun Kumar Roy**, Director and Sr. Professor, IIPS, retired officially on 31 October.

Prof Roy excelled and immensely contributed to teaching and research in the areas of population policies, evaluation of family planning programmes, large-scale demographic surveys and population simulation models.

Prof Roy has been a visiting fellow and consultants to various international and national institutions. Besides producing 16 Ph.D graduates, he published a number of publications in various international and national journals of repute.

The demographic community, his students and colleagues would like to wish him a very peaceful, joyful, healthy and productive retirement.



Key NGO-led gathering sets action agenda for reaching ICPD goals

Nearly 700 leaders, activists and parliamentarians from 109 countries gathered in London from 31 August to 2 September for the Countdown 2015 Global Roundtable, marking the 10th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD).

Organized by the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) in cooperation with Population Action International and Family Care International, the high-profile three-day meeting assessed the progress and mapped the future for the key goals of the ICPD.

At the closure of the meeting, the participants, among whom many of the world's leading experts and advocates in the fields of reproductive health and reproductive rights, issued a final declaration and an Action Agenda, recommending new approaches to achieve the ICPD Programme of Action by its 2015 deadline, including efforts to "challenge those who distort religious teachings".

"We believe that the Cairo Programme of Action permanently altered the framework for discussion

and action on sexual and reproductive health and rights. We affirm the right to health, and that sexual and reproductive rights are human rights – universal, interdependent and indivisible. We believe that these rights must be at the centre of sexual and reproductive health plans, programmes and interventions", the Declaration reads.

Providing highlights and recommendations in 10 areas the Agenda for Action warns that "we risk falling further behind if we do not effectively link our goals to the broader development agenda". "Donor countries must be pushed to reach and/or maintain annual contributions to international family planning of 0.7 per cent of national income", the Roundtable recommended as regards resources, while in order to improve maternal health, it was stressed that "empowerment of women, families and communities can improve mothers' access to care".

In his closing statement, Steven W. Sinding, Director-General of IPPF, summed up the four critical points agreed upon at the meeting. First, he

said, "it is essential that we unite the sexual and reproductive health movement with the movement fighting HIV/AIDS".

Second, he stressed the consensus reached by participants on the fact that time had come "to reinforce a global movement to ensure that every woman in every country has access to safe abortion services when she needs them".

Third, elaborating on the centrality of the ICPD to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), he said "the MDGs are dead letters unless we achieve the goals of Cairo.... The ICPD is the only yeast that can make the MDG bread rise".

Concluding on the central role that young people still ought to play, "with half the world's population under the age of 25, young people must lead the way in changing the world they will soon own. They are our hope for the future, and our generation must pass the torch", he said.

For more information, visit www.countdown2015.org

(News based on EngenderHealth News Release, September 2004.)

Experts call for action to improve health and reduce mortality

As part of UNFPA's funded project on Population, Development and Poverty (2004-2007) seminar on the theme "Emerging Issues of Health and Mortality" was held in Bangkok from 27 to 29 September in order to discuss persistent and emerging issues of health and mortality in the Asian and Pacific region.

Gathering participants from about 14 countries in the region, including academics and representatives from leading population institutes and government departments, the seminar addressed the relationship between mortality, poverty and environment; infant, child and maternal mortality; changing mortality patterns and causes of death; and health and health care of older persons.

At the close of the seminar, various recommendations were issued that support the objective of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. While enhancing primary health-care

services to curb the spread of infectious diseases continues to be necessary in countries in the lower stages of development, it was recommended that governments of countries with more developed economies take appropriate actions to reduce the number of deaths due to non-communicable diseases.

It was also recommended that health-care services be targeted at groups disadvantaged geographically, socio-economically or in other ways, including women, whose mortality rates may be improved through the incorporation of a gender perspective in health programmes.

The need for channeling resources to ensure data accuracy in death registration needed for effective policy formulation and programme implementation was reiterated. It was also stressed that more research was required to examine the spread of HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and

other infectious diseases in the context of economic development, environmental changes and migration.

Other recommendations highlighted the necessity for governments to generate sector-wide interventions and partnerships to link health with initiatives in reducing poverty and improving living standards. In addition, the Seminar emphasized the need for policies to be sensitive to local cultures in order to maximize the effectiveness of health services and health-care utilization.

In the opening address, Ms. Thelma Kay, Chief, Emerging Social Issues Division stressed that "while in countries experiencing high mortality rates, serious efforts were needed to strengthen the health infrastructure capable of combating communicable diseases among infants, children and adults, countries with low mortality rates needed to raise awareness of the responsibility of individuals to lead healthy lifestyles".



Asia-Pacific region urges more holistic approach to achieving gender equality

Recommitting themselves to achieving gender equality and empowering women for decades to come, Asia and the Pacific countries gathered at an ESCAP high-level meeting in early September called for a more all-embracing approach to understanding the issue.

At the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting to Review Regional Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and its Regional and Global (Bangkok, 7-10 September) to review achievements, gaps and challenges since the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, participants agreed on the need to promote gender mainstreaming, economic and social rights, work with men and forge partnerships in order to pursue gender equality.

The four-day Meeting, which was attended by more than 450 delegates from over 40 countries, highlighted five levels of partnerships: between

men and women; between governments and civil society; among government ministries; between and among countries as regional cooperation on transboundary issues such as trafficking, migration and the spread of HIV/AIDS; and at the global level.

Its recommendations and strategies, enclosed in the Bangkok Communiqué, will serve as the regional input to the global review and appraisal of the Beijing Platform for Action to be held next March.

In the Communiqué, delegates reported significant progress since 1995, such as national policies and action plans to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, improvement in women's health, longer life expectancy, revision of discriminatory domestic laws and regulation, and affirmative measures to improve women's political participation.

They also stressed increased access by women to education and a significant decrease in women's illiteracy rate, as well as improved economic empowerment of women thanks to micro-credit, micro-entrepreneurship development programmes and income-generating activities.

However, several countries identified persisting common gaps and challenges such as women's disproportionate representation among the poor, the high prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS among women, women's low level participation in decision-making at various levels, and all forms of violence against women including trafficking.

The Meeting highlighted the importance of ensuring linkages and cross-fertilization with commitments to various relevant convention, resolution and development goals, including the Programme of Action of the International Conference on ICPD and the MDGs.

Population ageing, focus of regional seminar in Macao

An increase in intergenerational social tensions owing to migration and weak social protection schemes, a weakening of traditional support systems that had ensured social cohesion in the past, growing economic and social concerns... These are among the bleak prospects likely to materialize in the face of the rapid population ageing occurring in Asia, as raised by a recent ESCAP seminar held from 18 to 21 October in Macao, China.

Population ageing is occurring at a rapid pace in the low-fertility countries of Asia, while the transition from the young-age population to the ageing population occurred over a much longer period in the West. In 2025, almost three out of five older persons will be residing in Asia, already home to the majority of the world's older people.

Gathering government representatives and experts from 14 countries in Asia and the Pacific, the Regional Seminar on Follow-up to the Shanghai Implementation Strategy for the Madrid and Macao Plans of Action on Ageing, spotlighted an array of issues

related to population ageing and social security protections in particular, and suggested ways to address them.

Building on existing informal support systems with formal schemes to create a balanced and comprehensive social protection system that includes health care, access to entitlements and human rights protections and life-long learning was one of the means suggested by the Seminar.

The Seminar also agreed on an appraisal and review protocol; a bottom-up participatory research approach linked with a matrix of instrumental and outcome indicators, that would help assess the impact of the Shanghai Implementation Strategy (SIS) for the Madrid and Macao Plans of Action on Ageing in Asia and the Pacific.

One of the major objectives of the Seminar was to review the status of



Photo shows (from L to R): Thelma Kay, Chief, Emerging Social Issues Division, ESCAP; Rajwant Sandhu, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, India; Chui Sai On, Secretary for Social Affairs and Culture, Macao, China; Ip Peng Kin, President, Social Welfare Institute, Macao, China during the opening of the Seminar.

implementation of SIS, adopted at the Asia-Pacific Seminar on Regional Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing (Shanghai, 2002), in light of the ongoing demographic transition in the region.

The issue of data and data collection methods related to population ageing, as well as lack of adequate research in the area of health and rural ageing, were also addressed during the Seminar.



Truly intergenerational society, best response to ageing

In a message delivered for the International Day of Older Persons, 1 October, Secretary-General Kofi Annan stressed that the tremendous contribution young and old people could make towards society's development was often ignored.

"Older persons suffer because of outdated stereotypes that depict them as frail and needing care. What is overlooked is that many older persons actually provide care for others", Mr. Annan said.

He added: "Populations in developing countries will age most rapidly in the coming century. Yet those countries have only limited economic resources with which to respond to the ageing of their societies. The challenge will be to ensure that those countries do not experience the ageing of their societies as a burden, but derive from it added value and opportunities for development through an actively engaged older population. In other words, the challenge will be helping those countries build an intergenerational society".

(Photo courtesy of John Knodel)



Nine billion by 2300

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs' Population Division recently released "World Population to 2300", the latest long-range population projections by the United Nations. The report provides projections of world, regional and national population size and growth and demographic indicators for a 300 year projection horizon.

According to the report, world population peaks at 9.2 billion in 2075. The report also includes a set of essays by major population thinkers reflecting on the results.

The report is available at www.unpopulation.org.

UNFPA signs agreement for closer partnership with developing countries

The United Nations Population Fund and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States recently signed an agreement to strengthen their partnership to curb reproductive health problems, including HIV/AIDS, reduce poverty and promote development in 79 ACP developing countries.

The agreement is also meant to mobilize resources to improve the health and well-being of the people of these countries.

The agreement highlights and promotes the close relationship between reproductive health, gender equality, girl's education, women's empowerment and sustainable development.

According to the agreement, the parties will help ACP countries ensure that the goals of the International Conference on Population and Development form part of the cornerstone of policies and programmes promoting sustainable development.

(Source: UNFPA Press Release, 25 October)

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