

Population Headliners



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States should promote jobs and education for older people, says Commission on Population and Development

Governments should tackle the implications of the ageing of world population by increasing the self-reliance of older persons, including by promoting their continued participation in the workforce and their continuing education, the United Nations Commission on Population and Development stated on the last day of its Fortieth Session in New York.

Concluding its annual meeting which was held from 9 to 13 April, the Commission, also called on Governments to invest in young people, to have in place policies ensuring adequate economic and social protection and to ensure the sustainability and solvency of pension schemes. It invited Governments to set up mechanisms assisting individuals to accumulate assets through personal savings and investment, so as to cover consumption needs at older ages.

“These are real challenges posed by ageing populations”, WHO expert Somnath Chatterji told the Commission, “including higher costs for social services, possible labour shortages and higher costs for pensions and health care”.



The Commission on Population and Development concluded its 40th session in New York (United Nations Photograph by Eskinder Debebe).

Asia and the Pacific is home to 400 million older persons, the largest number of older persons [for a region] in the world. According to UNESCAP, represented by Ms. Keiko Osaki, Chief, Population and Social Integration Section, Emerging Social Issues Division, the number of

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 4)

2.5 billion increase in world population by 2050: United Nations estimates

The world's population is on track to surpass 9 billion persons by 2050, according to the newly released 2006 Revision of the United Nations population estimates and projections, which also predict that the number of elderly persons will hit 1 billion.

“One of the surprises is that population growth is most concentrated in the 60 plus age group”, Hania Zlotnik, the Director of the United Nations Population Division said during the launch of the report recently in New York.

“The place where the action is is the older population”, she said. “The biggest change will occur in the developing world, and developing countries will have to cope with the situation” by investing in both education and care of the elderly.

According to the new estimates, the world population will likely increase by 2.5 billion over the next 43 years, passing from the current 6.7 billion to 9.2 billion in 2050.

As a result of declining fertility and increasing longevity, the populations of more and more countries are ageing rapidly. Between 2005 and 2050, half of the increase in the world population will be accounted for by a rise in the population aged 60 years or over, whereas the number of children (under age 15) will decline slightly.

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UNESCAP marks 60th anniversary with pride and commitment

UNESCAP marked 60 years of service to the region on 28 March with a celebration held at the United Nations Conference Centre in Bangkok. Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon sent a video message and special guests included Thailand's Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, Thai Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont and Nobel laureate Amartya Sen. The event also featured a dance performance and singing by heads of United Nations agencies in Bangkok.

"Throughout these six decades, UNESCAP has worked closely with the peoples of the Asia-Pacific region in their endeavour to build freedom from fear and freedom from want", said Mr. Ban. "Today, this region of four billion people is a powerhouse for global economic growth".

"Building an Asia-Pacific Century" was chosen as the theme for the 60th anniversary celebrations. "It is our privilege to serve the people of the region, and to be associated with their success", said UNESCAP Executive Secretary, Kim Hak-Su. "On this historic occasion, we rededicate ourselves to building an 'Asia-Pacific Century'".

The keynote address was delivered by Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn. "Since its inception, ESCAP has been assisting



Heads of United Nations agencies in Bangkok heartily singing "Unity in Diversity" to the tune of the well-known song "We are the world" (Photograph by Han Htay Aung).

Member States by fostering regional cooperation and providing technical assistance in economic and social development", she said. "As people are the real wealth of nations, the aim of development is to expand the choices that people have to lead their lives in dignity".

Princess Sirindhorn continued: "Despite significant economic and social progress in Asia and the Pacific over the course of the past six decades, we cannot be complacent. Some 680 million people still live in extreme poverty. There is still much work ahead for ESCAP. As the only intergovernmental forum in the entire Asia-Pacific region with universal membership, ESCAP is our platform

for articulating the voice of this region on development issues".

As part of the celebrations, Nobel laureate in economics Amartya Sen received UNESCAP's first ever Award for Lifetime Achievement. Professor Sen gave a special lecture before the ceremony, on the topic of "Asian Immensities" (see below).

UNESCAP was founded as the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE) on 28 March 1947. ECAFE moved its headquarters from Shanghai to Bangkok in 1949.

Note: See related story about the First Parliament of Asia, page 3.

Why should "son preference" be so strong: Amartya Sen

On the occasion of UNESCAP 60th anniversary, celebrated economist and Nobel laureate Amartya Sen was conferred an Award for Lifetime Achievement. Giving a special lecture to United Nations staff in Bangkok on the subject of "Asian Immensities", Professor Sen catalogued some of the contributions made by Asian civilizations to the world throughout the centuries, and many of the different ways in which Asians have learned from one another.

"Our immensity lies not just in our size, but also in our willingness to accept that we can have diverse beliefs and disparate life styles, and can still cultivate constructive interactions with each other", Prof. Sen said to a packed conference hall.

He continued: "Asia played a central part in the making of what we can now call the "global civilization". Asia's claim to civilization does

not lie in its efforts to build some impenetrable uniqueness that could not be repeated anywhere other than in Asia. It lies rather in our efforts to develop knowledge and understanding from which the whole of mankind can benefit".

But Prof. Sen also pointed out to the various fields "in which scope for further learning remains possible", in the form of a sequence of questions or "useful inquiries".

On the "long-standing blot in Asia's record in gender justice through higher female mortality rates compared with what could be expected on the basis of male mortality may have been reversed in many Asian countries", Prof. Sen questioned "Can this terrible inheritance of Asia be made into a thing of the past in all Asian countries and regions"?

On the skewed sex ratio prevalent in a few Asian countries, the Nobel

laureate questioned: "What should be done about natality differential against women in the form of sex-specific abortions, which is quite widespread in many countries such as the Republic of Korea, China, and even in the northern and western states in India? Why should "son preference" be so strong even in countries in which women do so very well in many other ways, especially since that is not the case in other parts of Asia?"

These questions deserve attention, Prof. Sen stressed. "The relevance of these questions does not in any way diminish the value of what Asia has already achieved... We have reason to be proud of what we Asians have been able to do for ourselves and for world civilization. But there is a lot to do still".

"I would like to be able to say: the best is yet to come!" Prof. Sen concluded.



UNESCAP 60th anniversary book reflects on demographic transition, looks back at contribution in field of population

As part of UNESCAP 60th anniversary celebrations, a book was prepared entitled *The First Parliament of Asia* which relates the history of the regional commission -- how it emerged as a Commission for Asia and the Far East in March 1947 and how its activities changed over the years to match the priorities of the Governments in the region.

The story fast extends beyond linear chronology to embrace the Asian and the Pacific region's history, covering economic, political, social and environmental issues.

Divided in five chapters, the 160-page book devotes chapter three to the profound social changes that have unfolded in the region and have allowed millions of people to climb out of poverty, taking also into account the remarkable progress in health and social welfare of the 1950s and 1960s.

"This rapid reduction in death rates was a considerable achievement. But since it was not immediately matched by a corresponding reduction in birth rates it provoked a rapid growth in population. By the end of the 1940s Asia was already home to more than half of the world's people", the book explains.

"As the implications emerged, some governments started to act. In 1952, India was the first to respond with a national family planning programme, followed after a couple of years by a number of other countries, and a decade later by China.

"ECAFE had also become concerned about this issue around the same time, having sponsored a population seminar in Bandung, Indonesia in 1955. But the United Nations as a whole did not become actively involved in population until the 1960s. Under the auspices of ECAFE one of the first major activities was the organization of the first Asian Population Conference in New Delhi in 1963... At that point, only five administrations had official population policies. But by the time of the second conference in 1972, owing partly to the work of what is now the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), ECAFE

and others, 15 countries had adopted relevant policies and 10 others were actively supporting family planning programmes".

Explaining the early work of the Population Division, established in 1969, the book touches upon the long-standing collaboration with UNFPA, established in 1969 as well, stating that "Together, ESCAP and UNFPA have contributed to improving the capability in the region to monitor population trends and their impact on development, promote advocacy and knowledge sharing, and provide technical support".

Note: The book will soon be made available online and accessible from www.unescap.org



"Large funding gap" for family planning highlighted

During the recent Commission on Population and Development (see page 1), Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, Executive Director, UNFPA, raised the issue of financial flows for the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD).

"The good news is that the flow of resources for population assistance is on the rise. However, I would like to caution that even if estimates and projections hold and the financial targets are surpassed, the resources mobilized will not be sufficient to meet current needs, which have grown dramatically since the targets were agreed upon in 1994", Ms. Obaid said in her keynote address.

Underscoring the far-reaching changes that have occurred in the world's population and health situation, Ms. Obaid acknowledged that "no one had foreseen the escalation of the AIDS pandemic, from 14 million

People in the headlines

UNFPA Headquarters and UNAIDS have announced on 19 March 2007 the appointment of **Ms. Purnima Mane** as the new Deputy Executive Director (Programme) of UNFPA. Ms. Mane joins UNFPA from UNAIDS, where she served as Director of Policy, Evidence and Partnership. She joined the Global Programme on AIDS of WHO in 1994, moving to UNAIDS at its inception in 1996, where she provided oversight to the area of behavioural sciences research and gender and AIDS. She also managed the Executive Office.

From 1999 to 2003, she worked at the Population Council in New York, where she later became Vice-President and Director of International Programmes. In 2003, she went on to work for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, where she was Chief Fund Portfolio Director and Director, Asia.

Ms. Mane's appointment follows the retirement in January of Mr. Kunio Waki (see *Headliners* No. 316).

people living with AIDS in 1994 to 40 million people today".

She continued: "As a result, the ICPD financial target of USD18.5 billion in 2005 will not be sufficient to meet current developing country needs in the areas of family planning, sexual and reproductive health, sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS, and basic research..."

"The bottom line is that money invested in sexual and reproductive health services will be repaid many times over in direct savings on other health and social services. It will also promote economic growth, poverty reduction and gender equality, and will help to fight the economic and social devastation caused by HIV/AIDS".

Ms. Obaid called "on countries to increase investments for all areas of the ICPD population package including in support for reproductive health commodity security".



Gender inequality costs the region 80USD billion a year, says 2007 Economic and Social Survey

The Asian and Pacific region is losing USD42-47 billion a year because of restrictions on women's access to employment and another USD16-30 billion because of gender gaps in education, according to the recently released UNESCAP's annual flagship publication, the *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2007*.

Devoting an entire chapter to one of the region's most pressing socio-economic issues – gender discrimination, the Survey examines the economic cost to the region of denying women access to employment, education and health services. The publication proposes practical and effective actions in each of these areas, drawn from Asia-Pacific's good practices.

If India's female work force participation was placed on par with that of the United States, according to the Survey, its gross domestic product would be lifted by 1.08 percentage points, signifying a gain to the economy of USD19 billion. Significant gains could also be secured in Malaysia and Indonesia, but less in China where female labour force participation is already considerably higher, the Survey says.

Failure to allow women to realize their economic potential in the work

place has led to gaps of between 30 and 40 per cent in male-female labour force participation rates across the region. Disparities exist over a wide range of areas – from low access to education and health services, to economic opportunities and through to political participation.

According to the Survey, gender balance could be achieved with minimum effort and cost, provided there is political commitment at the highest level. The Survey makes various policy recommendations to eliminate gender discrimination, such as improving access to education, improving access to health care, enhancing economic participation of women as well as their access to material resources.

The Survey, entitled "Surging Ahead in Uncertain Times", also reviews the region's economic performance in 2006 and looks at the critical issues, challenges and risks facing the region. Management of exchange rates appears as one of the biggest challenges facing Asian and Pacific economies in 2007, while the external environment appears slightly adverse, owing mainly to the



The region is losing USD42-47 billion a year because of restrictions on women's access to employment opportunities, according to the 2007 Economic and Social Survey. (Photo in India, Mumbai, by Wanphen Sreshthaputra)

slowing of the American economy and a moderate decline in global electronics demand.

"As a whole, the 2007 outlook is above 7 per cent economic growth", noted UNESCAP Executive Secretary Kim Hak-Su at the launch of the Survey. "The three big Asian economies – China, India and Japan – will maintain the growth momentum and may provide good opportunities to other developing countries", he said.

Note: The *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2007* is available online at www.unescap.org/survey2007.

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1) States should promote jobs for older people

older persons is increasing at a rate twice as high as the growth rate of the total population. However, many countries in the region do not have sufficient national social security for older persons.

Highlighting the work of UNESCAP in this field over the past few years, Ms. Osaki stated that the regional commission had acted as a focal point on ageing and had been widely recognized as a leading voice for older persons. She informed the Commission that a Regional Seminar on the Social, Health and Economic Consequences of Population Ageing in the Context of Changing Families would take place in Bangkok in July 2007.

Focusing this year on "Changing

Age Structure of Populations and their Implications for Development", the Commission also discussed follow-up actions to the recommendations of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development.

The 47-country Commission reviewed its programme of work in the field of population. In this connection, Ms. Osaki explained that UNESCAP monitors key demographic trends and issues, conducts training courses for population professionals, disseminates information and facilitates the exchange of knowledge and experience. Ms. Osaki noted that most of UNESCAP's operational activities in the population field were made possible with support from

the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

During the project cycle 2004-2007, UNESCAP is implementing a UNFPA-funded project entitled "Population, Development and Poverty: Emerging Challenges", the overall goal of which is to contribute to more effective national and sectoral development plans that incorporate emerging population issues in ways that reduce poverty, improve reproductive health and empower women and older persons, Ms. Osaki said.

The present *Population Headliners* and the *Asia-Pacific Population Journal*, are both prepared and disseminated as part of this project.



2007 ESCAP Population Data Sheet displays poverty rates and figures on disability

According to the 2007 ESCAP Population *Data Sheet*, prepared by the Emerging Social Issues Division, the population of Asia and the Pacific stands at 4.1 billion and is projected to reach 4.8 billion by 2025. The population of the region has been growing at a decelerating rate. Over the past decade, the region's population growth rate has dropped from 1.6 to 1.1 per cent per year. Similarly, the total fertility rate of the region stands at 2.3 children per woman, in contrast to the relatively high fertility rate of 2.9 children per woman a decade ago. However, this total fertility rate masks considerable subregional differences. The total fertility rate is lowest (1.7 children per woman) in East and North-East Asia and North and Central Asia, while South and South-West Asia exhibit relatively high fertility rates at 2.9 children per woman. In South-East Asia and the Pacific, the total fertility rate is 2.3.

Teenage fertility has dropped significantly in the region over the past decade. The regional average is now 39 births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 19 years. There are, however, wide differences in teenage fertility among countries in the region. In East and North-East Asia, teenage fertility stands at 7 births per 1,000, whereas it is as high as 64 births per 1,000 in South and South West Asia.

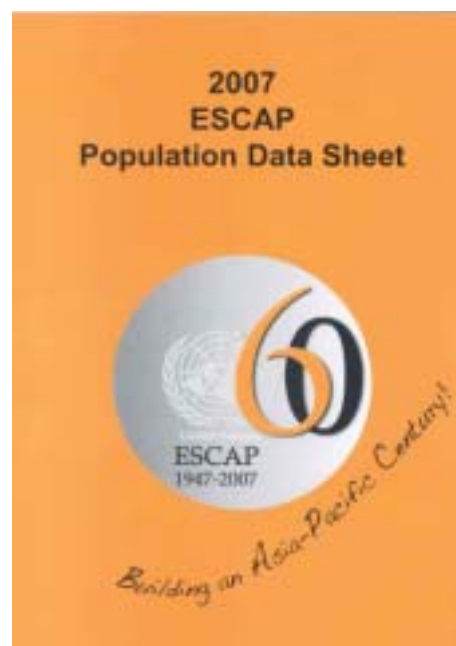
With regard to development indicators, the *Data Sheet* presents this year for the first time data on national poverty and proportion of persons with disabilities, based on recent publications prepared by ESCAP. The proportion of disabled persons is seen varying from 1.0 per cent in Malaysia to about 20 per cent in Australia, owing mostly to variations in national concepts, definitions, methodologies and capacity for data collection.

Some of the other demographic and socio-economic development indicators presented in the *Data Sheet* include crude birth and death rates, infant and under-five mortality, life expectancy at birth, percentage of urban population, gross secondary

school enrolment ratio, contraceptive prevalence rate and the Human Development Index.

A major demographic characteristic of Asia and the Pacific is the phenomenon of population ageing. As a consequence of declining fertility and increasing longevity, the proportion of population aged 60 and older is on the rise, accounting for 10 per cent of the region's population. Japan leads as the most aged country in the region with 28 per cent of its population over the age of 60; the proportion of older persons exceeds 15 per cent in Hong Kong, China; Georgia; Russian Federation; Australia; and New Zealand. The potential support ratio – the number of persons aged 15 to 64 divided by the number of persons aged 65 and older – for the region as a whole stands at 11. This figure is expected to decline further, raising the burden placed on the working population. In the rapidly ageing subregions of East, North and Central Asia, the potential support ratio is as low as 8. The 2007 *Data Sheet* also presents data on sex ratio for older persons and population by two broad age groups: 0-14 and 60+.

Released every year around early April, the *Data Sheet* highlights demographic and selected socio-economic development indicators for



the region. It presents the most recent national data collected from censuses, surveys, estimates and projections prepared by the Population Division of the United Nations and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community.

Note: The *Data Sheet* is available online at http://www.unescap.org/esid/psis/population/database/data_sheet/index.asp or can be obtained by writing to the Chief, Emerging Social Issues Division, UNESCAP (see page 6 for full address).

New release

Population Ageing in Cambodia

The Secretariat of the National Committee for Population and Development, Office of the Council of Ministers, Cambodia has recently issued a brochure - *Population Ageing in Cambodia: Planning for Social Protection*. Prepared with support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Country Office in Phnom Penh, the brochure is bilingual (English/Khmer) and provides concise information about the challenge of population ageing and current policy responses. Though the proportion of older persons in the population of Cambodia at 6.0 per cent is the lowest in South East Asia, the older

population is projected to increase at a much higher rate than the average for the region. Also, due to much greater number of deaths of male adults during the Pol Pot era (mid-1970s), Cambodia now has a disproportionately higher proportion of single older women than older men.



Note: The brochure is available online at <http://cst.bangkok.unfpa.org/3306.htm>



AFGHANISTAN: UNFPA urges investment in women's health to stem maternal death

Afghanistan, which has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world, must intensify efforts to improve the health of women and children as part of overall efforts to boost conditions in the war-ravaged country, the head of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) said recently in Kabul.

"I would like to make a strong call for greater investment in the health and well-being of Afghanistan's women and their families", said Thoraya Ahmed Obaid.

In Afghanistan, UNFPA is supporting a national census while seeking to promote gender equity and women's empowerment and foster maternal health, reproductive health and HIV prevention.

Ms. Obaid said work in these areas will benefit Afghanistan as a whole. "In our work in Afghanistan and the overall strategy of the country, the big challenge facing human development

in Afghanistan is to support women and girls so they can exercise their rights to education, to health, to decent work, to live free from violence, coercion and discrimination, and to participate fully in public life", she said.

A central concern is addressing the problem of violence against women, in law enforcement and through public awareness. "But most importantly violence against women will not stop if the men themselves do not participate in stopping the violence", she said.

On average, one Afghan mother dies for every 60 births, but maternal death rates in some provinces are several times higher, according to UNFPA, which is working with the authorities to train female health personnel to deal with the problem.

(Source: UN New Centre, 23 April)



Ms. Thoraya A. Obaid and Minister of Public Health of Afghanistan Dr. Sayed Mohammed Amin Fatemi inaugurating Afghanistan's first facility for obstetric fistula surgery. (Photograph by William A. Ryan/UNFPA)

Don't forget to complete the readership survey!

Population Headliners is conducting a readership survey, sent to you along the present March-April issue of the newsletter. Kindly take a few moments to fill out the questionnaire and return it to us by fax at 66-2-288 1009 by 10 September 2007.

Alternatively, fill it up online at <http://www.unescap.org/esid/psis/population/popheadline/index.asp> Looking forward to your feedback!

Thank you very much in advance.

The editor

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