

Foreword



Population issues are fundamentally about people. No one knows this better than the United Nations Population Fund. For the past 34 years, UNFPA has sought to improve the lives of people in the developing world while helping nations find an equitable, sustainable balance between population and development. In the year 2002, UNFPA provided assistance to nearly 150 developing countries, with special emphasis on increasing the availability and quality of reproductive health services, fighting gender discrimination and violence, formulating effective population policies and reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Over the past year, the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS in particular highlighted the need to invest more in public health and education, as well as the empowerment of women and girls. Only through such an investment can we hope to break the debilitating cycle of ill health and poverty and place the Millennium Development Goals within our reach. Only by working for reproductive health, voluntary family planning and women's rights can we reduce maternal and infant mortality rates, prevent the further spread of HIV/AIDS, and stabilize population growth.

This annual report documents the diverse efforts undertaken by UNFPA as the world's largest multilateral source of population funding, as well as the largest supplier of condoms and other reproductive health commodities. It demonstrates that by helping people make informed, responsible and free choices about their reproductive health, and by providing governments with population data and policy guidance, UNFPA plays an indispensable role in international development.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'K. Annan'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'K' and a long, sweeping underline.

Kofi A. Annan

Secretary-General of the United Nations