

Overview



Developing countries that have invested in family planning, smaller families and slower population growth have achieved higher productivity, more savings and more productive investment. This confirms what we have always known: reproductive health information and services improve the lives of the poor, especially women. By giving greater policy attention and resources to population and reproductive health issues, we will actually make greater progress to reduce poverty and maternal and child mortality, halt the spread of AIDS and ensure sustainable development.

In this annual report, we draw attention to the many different ways in which UNFPA is working to reduce poverty by meeting reproductive health needs in developing countries, especially among the poorest and most vulnerable.

In 2002, UNFPA continued its support to family planning programmes to save mothers' lives and safeguard the right of couples to plan the size of their families. We also extended emergency reproductive health assistance to people in 22 countries and territories suffering from crisis. In the field of HIV/AIDS prevention, UNFPA continued working with its partners, particularly the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), on raising awareness of the infection and promoting effective prevention methods, including condom programming. To assist government planning, UNFPA supported census-taking and demographic research in a number of countries, such as Afghanistan and Albania, that lack data essential for meeting the needs of their people.

In October 2002, we launched a campaign to end obstetric fistula, an injury caused by prolonged labour, in 11 African countries. Surgical treatment for this devastating condition enables women to return to normal lives.

To strengthen UNFPA overall, we completed an 18-month transition process towards a more effective, responsive and results-based organization. Among the many changes were a new visual identity and web site design. In 2002, UNFPA welcomed the highest-ever number of donor countries and recorded one of our highest levels of programme expenditure in three core areas: reproductive health, population and development strategies, and advocacy. Our flagship publication, *The State of World Population*, made the link between population and poverty and the benefits of health and education.

Throughout the year, UNFPA continued to build stronger partnerships and support for our mission. This effort was aided by the increasing recognition that population and reproductive health issues underpin the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and that progress towards these goals is furthered by continued commitment to the Programme of Action established at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development. Our many partners recognize that achieving development goals depends in large part on taking population policies seriously and ensuring that universal access to reproductive health services is attained.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thoraya A. Obaid". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Thoraya" and the last name "Obaid" clearly legible.

Thoraya Ahmed Obaid

Executive Director, UNFPA