

POVERTY, POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Poverty, high fertility, ill-health, gender inequity.
Reproductive health information and services
help break the cycle.



Strong support for reproductive health can reduce poverty. The kind of information and services that UNFPA supports make it possible to avoid unwanted pregnancies, prevent HIV infection, plan and space families, give birth more safely and participate equally in opportunities for education, income and decision-making. The result of universally accessible reproductive health would be slower population growth, which would ease pressure on the environment and enable countries to meet the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable.

The least-developed countries have the highest fertility and population growth, and their populations are expected to triple in the next 50 years. Half the world's population, or more than 3 billion people, live on less than \$2 a day, and 1 billion people live on less than \$1 a day. And, despite strides towards gender equality since the mid 1980s, more women still live in poverty than men.

UNFPA understands that promoting reproductive health and rights is indispensable for economic growth and poverty reduction. Lower birth rates and slower population growth over the last three decades have contributed to faster economic progress in a number of developing countries. This positive "population effect" on the economy was due in large part to investments in health (including reproductive health) and education, and to increases in opportunities for women.

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

All United Nations Member States pledged in 2000 to meet a time-bound set of goals to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, end AIDS and empower women. Only with attention to population and reproductive health issues will the world's people achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Every one of these eight goals is of concern to UNFPA, guided as we are by the Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). With stronger support, especially from international donors that have not lived up to their ICPD promises, UNFPA can respond ever more effectively to requests for assistance from governments in more than 140 developing countries and help them achieve these goals for development.

- Almost two thirds of UNFPA country offices assisted governments in national reporting on the Millennium Development Goals in 2002, ensuring that data on population and reproductive health are given the attention they deserve.

DATA AND POPULATION STRATEGIES

Changes in the structure, distribution and size of populations are interlinked with all facets of sustainable development. UNFPA supports efforts to track these changes and analyse population trends, helping governments and international agencies generate the political will to address current and future needs. In particular, UNFPA promotes a common set of gender-sensitive population-based indicators for use in MDG reports and in the United Nations common country assessments (CCAs) and, through these instruments, in poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs).

- Data that link population with other development concerns can answer policy questions. In 2002, an evaluation of UNFPA efforts to develop national capacity in reproductive health analysed 10 years of interventions in six countries: Brazil, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Nepal, Nigeria and Viet Nam.

- Without good data, effective planning is impossible. In 2002, UNFPA helped Albania complete fieldwork for its first-ever survey of reproductive health and family planning.

- The Pan Arab Project for Family Health completed a survey of five countries that will be used in a regional database on family health and reproductive health in Arab countries. Supported by UNFPA and other partners, the survey applied standardized tools and methods.
- NGOs are able to monitor ICPD follow-up by using a new monitoring system featuring online access to official data. The system covers eight countries and was set up by the Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network, with UNFPA support. Also in 2002, UNFPA helped develop an indicator system to support the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in its regional ICPD monitoring role.
- Creation of a computerized integrated information system in reproductive health centres was part of UNFPA efforts to help Azerbaijan implement its poverty-reduction programme and reform its primary health care system.
- In December 2002, UNFPA and the Brazilian Institute for Geography and Statistics published a report on poverty, *Situation of the Brazilian Population: Levels of Inequalities (2002)*. UNFPA also joined with NGOs in Brazil to develop indicators for reproductive health at the municipal level, holding four workshops in 2002.
- UNFPA has supported sociocultural research in many countries, often to inform advocacy campaigns with culturally appropriate messages. UNFPA support to discourage female genital cutting, for example, has contributed to the development of policies and enactment of laws in 14 countries. In 2002, sociocultural research by the University of Zambia focused on local initiation ceremonies for boys that instil ideas of what it means to be masculine, among other topics of behaviour and tradition.

CENSUS DATA FOR PLANNING

UNFPA contributes to census-taking worldwide. In 2002, the Fund assisted both Guatemala and Rwanda with a population and housing census. In Botswana, UNFPA supported the analysis and dissemination of results from the 2001 census, with an immediate impact on decisions about programme expansion and beneficiaries. Comoros launched a population census, with plans to integrate its results into updated socio-demographic baseline data, disaggregated by sex.

- In Afghanistan, UNFPA began work with the Central Statistics Office on the design of a national population and housing census. The census responds to the urgent need for up-to-date and reliable information to aid the reconstruction process. Afghanistan has never had a complete census of its population.
- A survey in post-war Burundi canvassed 7,500 households in camps for displaced persons, urban centres and rural areas. UNFPA supported the major demographic and health survey, which also received European Union funds, to enhance government decision-making on national development, rehabilitation and reconstruction.
- In Bhutan, UNFPA helped build national capacity in data collection and analysis. Training on the upcoming census was conducted for representatives from all district administrations, and several officers participated in an observation study tour to India.



For the grand prize winner, Sadat Ahmed Dipro, the annual UNFPA international poster contest provided an opportunity to explore the impact of population and poverty from his own perspective, that of a six-year-old from Bangladesh. In 2002, young artists from 73 countries entered the contest, which has been sponsored by UNFPA since 1992.

Photo: UNFPA Bangladesh



Population ageing is an issue with significant demographic impact, especially in developing countries with resources too limited to meet the basic needs of older persons like this elderly woman from Mexico. In April 2002, UNFPA participated in the Second World Assembly on Ageing, held in Madrid, Spain, drawing attention to the basic social and health needs of older persons in developing countries. UNFPA also continued to provide technical guidance and support to the International Institute on Ageing in Malta, where training was conducted on effective ways to address the needs of older poor.

Photo: Planet

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

World leaders at the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD), held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in August 2002, reaffirmed goals linking poverty eradication and environmental protection to health, including reproductive health, and women's empowerment.

- To support policy recommendations at the WSSD, a panel of experts launched a scientific assessment of the role of population in sustainable development. The report was spearheaded by the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis, the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population and the United Nations University, with funding from UNFPA.
- UNFPA launched an internal organizational review and a field inquiry to examine linkages in activities pertaining to water, population, gender, reproductive health and poverty. This is part of its contribution to system-wide approaches to the thematic areas of the WSSD and to its 10-year review of the ICPD Programme of Action.
- Links between population, poverty and development were highlighted by UNFPA at the International Conference on Financing for Development, held in March 2002 in Monterrey, Mexico. UNFPA called for the mainstreaming of reproductive health in health sector reforms as part of primary health care.
- UNFPA's annual *State of World Population* report for 2002 addressed the theme "people, poverty and possibilities". To reduce poverty in developing countries, urgent action is needed to combat poor reproductive health, help women avoid unwanted pregnancies, and eliminate illiteracy and gender discrimination, the report warned.

WORLD POPULATION DAY

For the past 13 years, countries around the world have been observing World Population Day on 11 July to raise public awareness and draw policy makers' attention to population issues such as poverty, reproductive health, education and HIV/AIDS.

- Rallies, processions and discussions marked World Population Day 2002 in Bangladesh, where the President called for greater awareness of population issues and for a social movement to ensure the success of the country's family planning programme.
- In an interview on national television, Afghanistan's Minister of Women's Affairs, Habiba Sarabi, said the health of Afghan families and mothers was often adversely affected by having children too early, too late and too close together. Officials in Kabul said that literacy and health care were necessary for the survival and well-being of Afghan women and their families.
- At one of more than a dozen ceremonies and workshops held across Cuba, experts spoke of the success of sexual education in almost 1,000 Cuban secondary schools. UNFPA has been instrumental in the programme, which aims to reduce unwanted pregnancies and early marriages.
- More than 10,000 people in Yemen watched a film in the city square of Sana'a that highlighted issues on education, empowerment, reproductive health and family planning. UNFPA helped a government committee develop the film, which was also broadcast on national television.