

Overview

Underlining the centrality of reproductive health to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was a priority throughout 2003. These goals are inseparable from the ICPD Programme of Action, which has been UNFPA's blueprint for development since 1994. The links are now widely recognized. The ICPD goal of universal access to reproductive health services is of fundamental importance to poverty reduction, and progress in population and reproductive health is absolutely indispensable in achieving at least four of the MDGs: promoting gender equality and empowering women, reducing child mortality, improving maternal health, and combating HIV/AIDS.



In 2003, UNFPA supported population and reproductive health activities in 136 countries to reduce poverty and advance human rights.

To promote gender equality and empower women, UNFPA developed a programming guide for health workers on gender-based violence and promoted policy dialogue through the Adolescent Girls Initiative in 11 countries to help girls to stay in school and delay marriage and pregnancy;

To reduce child mortality, UNFPA expanded access to emergency obstetric care through the Averting Maternal Death and Disability programme in India, Morocco, Mozambique and Nicaragua and strengthened family planning services that enable couples to have smaller, healthier families;

To improve maternal health, we worked to prevent and treat obstetric fistula in some 20 countries in sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and the Arab region and dispatched emergency reproductive health kits to 30 countries and territories experiencing crisis situations;

To combat HIV/AIDS, UNFPA supported African Youth Alliance efforts to expand HIV prevention education in four African countries and introduced a prevention programme for youth in six Central American and Caribbean countries.

UNFPA's work in these and other areas is widely recognized for its contribution to a comprehensive approach to development that puts people first. Support for UNFPA was evident in the record number of donors who pledged financial contributions in 2003, and in statements issued by developing and developed countries during preparations for the tenth anniversary of the ICPD Programme of Action in 2004.

With the end of 2003, we conclude the first decade dedicated to implementing the ICPD Programme of Action. Along with the MDGs, it continues to provide a road map forward to a future of development, peace and security. UNFPA remains committed to carrying out our mission to advance reproductive health and rights in culturally sensitive ways that respect the human rights and dignity of all people.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which reads "Thoraya A. Obaid". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Thoraya Ahmed Obaid
Executive Director