

World Population Day 2008: Worldwide Events

Every year, UNFPA offices worldwide and their national partners organize activities to mark World Population Day on 11 July. This year's activities, based on the theme of "Family Planning: It's a Right; Let's Make it Real", raised awareness of the importance of family planning and its benefits in some 140 countries. The following are some examples of the activities that took place on that day:

In **Brazil**, UNFPA organized a debate on the importance of family planning for the well-being of families, communities, and nations. The debate was covered by a wide range of national media organizations including television and radio stations.

World Population Day in **Burkina Faso** was marked by a meeting of the country's chief Islamic organizations at the capital's main mosque. Muslim leaders engaged in a fruitful debate, according to Maiga Aboubakary, Secretary General of the Burkina Faso Islamic Organization in Population and Development. The meeting confirmed that Islam recommends and fully supports family planning. Muslim leaders, who play a pivotal role in their communities, agreed to tour Burkina Faso's 45 provinces and 13 regions in a "vast awareness-raising campaign" for family planning. A crucial provision of this campaign is the demand that every woman be accompanied by her husband for a family planning visit because family planning must be the decision of a *couple*.

On World Population Day in **China**, a radio programme called "People in the Know" covered population growth in China. In addition, the UNFPA Regional Communication Adviser for Asia and the Pacific was interviewed on the challenges humanity will have to face as a result of continued population growth.

Outreach activities in two low income and marginalized communities in **Guyana** were carried out by a number of different organizations. At the City Mall, a "Street Cinema" showed documentaries, public service announcements and films related to reproductive health and HIV/AIDS. Peer educators shared information on HIV/AIDS and adolescent sexual reproductive health via "Satellite Booth", which usually attracts a wide range of viewers.

Indonesia commemorated the day with a seminar on *Indonesia and the Second Baby Boom*, organized by the Indonesia Forum of Parliamentarians for Population and Development. The Speaker of the House of Representatives joined population experts to discuss the urgency of family planning in Indonesia—the world's fourth most populous nation, after China, India and the United States. A speaker from the Padjajaran University also explained that family planning programmes could improve men's and women's reproductive health and provide families with the option of choosing when they wish to get pregnant.

In the **Democratic People's Republic of Korea**, World Population Day was observed during a workshop in Pyongyang by the Population Centre and the Grand People's Study

House. The event engaged participants from the reproductive health field in a number of topics related to the provision of voluntary family planning services and the prevention of HIV.

Myanmar's observance of World Population Day was marked this year by a commemorative ceremony at the City Hall of the capital Nay Pyi Taw. An address by the Minister for Immigration and Population highlighted the significance of this year's theme: "It's a Right; Let's Make it Real". An award ceremony to recognize article, essay, poster and photo contest winners was included in the commemoration as well as a viewing of a documentary exhibit organized by the Ministry of Immigration and Population.

A World Population Day ceremony was held at the City Hall in Kathmandu, **Nepal** to discuss family planning as a human right and to honour winners of the UNFPA-supported song and essay competitions on family planning. Students of the Asian College for Advanced Studies put on a dramatic street performance outside City Hall that told the story of a young wife who, with the help of an army official that deemed family planning an urgency, was able to convince her husband to delay their first pregnancy. In addition, the United Nations Association of Nepal, together with the Russian Centre of Science and Culture in Kathmandu, organized a talk about the importance of population issues.

Media events in **Sri Lanka** reached out to national newspapers, television, and radio stations to publicize World Population Day. Press articles in Sinhalese, Tamil and English focused on the evolution of the country's family planning programme and included a statement from UNFPA's Executive Director. Articles that explained the effects of family planning on maternal health, the environment, young people and poverty reduction were also published in women's weekly magazines. An hour-long viewer call-in discussion programme on national radio was organized by the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation. UNFPA also took part in numerous viewer call-in programmes on four national television channels.

In **Thailand**, World Population Day was observed by the launching of the "Love Care Project"—a programme aimed at encouraging young people to pay more attention to sexual and reproductive health services, and fully utilize these services. As part of the new initiative, ten private clinics and three public clinics around Bangkok intend to provide friendly, comprehensive services including HIV tests, cervical cancer check-ups, and family planning programmes, all free of charge.

--Carla Whyte