



ACHIEVING THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

POPULATION AND REPRODUCTIVE
HEALTH AS CRITICAL DETERMINANTS

POPULATION AND
DEVELOPMENT
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FOREWORD

“The Millennium Development Goals, particularly the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, cannot be achieved if questions of population and reproductive health are not squarely addressed. And that means stronger efforts to promote women’s rights, and greater investment in education and health, including reproductive health and family planning.”

United Nations Secretary-General, Kofi A. Annan, Bangkok, December 2002

According to the United Nations *World Population Prospects, The 2002 Revision*, global population will reach 8.9 billion persons in 2050, compared with 6.3 billion in 2003. Growth rates are slowing and the 2050 figure is 0.4 billion lower than projected in *The 2000 Revision*. Part of the slowing of population growth has been due to the effects of the continued ravages of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which is markedly increasing mortality levels in some countries, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. But an important part of the lower growth rates is due to the success of population programmes, coupled with the empowerment of women.

Yet, even in the shorter time span to 2015, there will be almost 1 billion more people added to the world’s less developed countries – from 5.1 billion in 2003 to 6.0 billion in 2015. In many of these countries, the number of people living in poverty is rising and inequalities are widening. And many people are still unable to enjoy basic human rights and human security.

The Millennium Declaration, arising from the Millennium Summit held in September 2000 and building on the outcomes of the international conferences of the 1990s, especially the International Conference on

Population and Development (ICPD), marked a strong recommitment to the right to development, to the eradication of the many dimensions of poverty, and to gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Declaration mainstreams into the global development agenda eight mutually reinforcing goals, to be achieved by 2015, that are driving national development and international cooperation.

The ICPD goal of universal access to quality reproductive health services by 2015 is not one of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Yet, as this publication demonstrates, the attainment of reproductive health and reproductive rights are fundamental for development, for fighting poverty, and for meeting the MDG targets. Conversely, reproductive ill-health undermines development by, *inter alia*, diminishing the quality of women's lives, weakening and, in extreme cases, killing poor women of prime ages, and placing heavy burdens on families and communities.

Women who can plan their families and who are educated are better able to seek health care for themselves and their families - thereby helping to break the cycle of poverty and to enter a virtuous cycle. We will not reduce poverty, child and maternal mortality and the spread of HIV/AIDS unless couples and individuals can plan their families, receive health care during pregnancy and birth, and have the information and services they need to protect their health and prevent HIV infection. Reproductive health is thus crucial, not only to poverty reduction, but to sustainable human development.

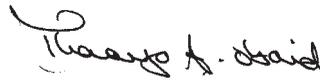
Sustainable economic growth is important for increasing revenues for social sector investments. But it does not guarantee better reproductive health status of the poor. This is especially so for those living in extreme poverty in remote areas with limited access to basic health and basic education, and where there is a large unmet need for reproductive health services, including family planning.

UNFPA, working in multiple partnerships, supports gender sensitive policies and programmes to achieve the MDGs. These should be customised to national and local circumstances, take into account cultural diversity, and the voices of the poor. Civil society organisations have a key role to play to complement government efforts, in meeting the reproductive health needs of the poor, especially of adolescents, and in preventing abortions and HIV/AIDS.

But we cannot accomplish the MDGs and ICPD goals without the financial means to do so. Under the Global Partnership for Development, as agreed in MDG 8, developed countries have committed to the transfer of the necessary resources to ensure meeting these and other development goals. Yet, despite the Monterrey Consensus, external assistance, including that for population and development programmes, has not improved significantly in recent years. While programme countries must make stronger commitments to population programmes, these commitments must be fully supported by increased donor ODA flows and technical assistance. And there should be less politicisation of population issues. Financing and investing in reproductive health and women's empowerment is cost effective and fully supports progress towards the achievement of the MDGs.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank the members of the Technical Team who prepared this publication (page vi), with the encouragement of Ms. Mari Simonen, Director, Technical Support Division of UNFPA, for their professionalism and creativity. I sincerely hope that it serves to heighten awareness of the critical importance of addressing population and reproductive health issues for achieving the MDGs.

Thoraya Ahmed Obaid



Executive Director
September 2003

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