United Nations Expert Group Meeting on the Post-2015 Era: Implications for the Global Research Agenda on Population and Development

New York, 10 April 2015

Report of the Meeting

United Nations

Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Population Division

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DESA

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat is a vital interface between global policies in the economic, social and environmental spheres and national action. The Department works in three main interlinked areas: (i) it compiles, generates and analyses a wide range of economic, social and environmental data and information on which Member States of the United Nations draw to review common problems and take stock of policy options; (ii) it facilitates the negotiations of Member States in many intergovernmental bodies on joint courses of action to address ongoing or emerging global challenges; and (iii) it advises interested Governments on the ways and means of translating policy frameworks developed in United Nations conferences and summits into programmes at the country level and, through technical assistance, helps build national capacities.

Note

PREFACE

The Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) of the United Nations Secretariat serves the Commission on Population and Development of the Economic and Social Council, which meets every year to consider a special theme based on the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). The Commission's theme for 2015 is "Realizing the future we want: integrating population issues into sustainable development, including in the post-2015 development agenda" and the theme for 2016 is "Strengthening the demographic evidence base for the post-2015 development agenda".

To contribute to the preparations and deliberations on these themes, the Population Division convened an expert group meeting on "The post-2015 era: Implications for the global research agenda on population and development" at the United Nations in New York on 10 April 2015. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss research priorities on population and development that merit global attention over the next 15 years. In identifying key knowledge gaps in future demographic trends and their implications for global sustainable development, the results of the meeting were intended to assist the international community in identifying a global, policy-relevant research agenda on population and development. The main points and cross-cutting themes and recommendations from the meeting are reflected in this report.

This report as well as other population information can be accessed via the Internet on the official website of the Population Division, www.unpopulation.org. For further information concerning this publication, please contact the Director of the Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations, New York, NY 10017, USA; telephone number +1 212-963-3179; fax number +1 212-963-2147; email: population@un.org.

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1. BACKGROUND AND SCOPE OF MEETING

During the next 15 years, the period covered by the post-2015 United Nations development agenda, demographic trends will have varied and profound implications on our ability to achieve sustainable development, suggesting the potential for large returns to investment in dedicated research on population and development aimed at informing innovative and evidence-based policies.

In order to review gaps and future priorities in demographic research to support the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda, the Population Division convened an expert group meeting on "The post-2015 era: Implications for the global research agenda on population and development" at the United Nations in New York on 10 April 2015. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss research priorities on population and development that merit global attention over the next 15 years. In identifying key knowledge gaps in future demographic trends and their implications for global sustainable development, the results of the meeting were intended to assist the international community in identifying a global, policy-relevant research agenda on population and development.

The meeting featured a keynote address on overarching population and development research priorities, six substantive sessions on changing age structures and their implications for development (one session each on youth and ageing), population and health (one session on global health and one on reproductive health), sustainable urbanization, and international migration and development; and a concluding session. Researchers and academics, experts from Governments and international organizations, and representatives from donors and civil society reflected on the following three discussion questions in each session:

- What are the key knowledge gaps in this area?
- What steps should be taken to address these gaps?
- What are the ways and means to implement research priorities?

Each substantive session consisted of a short overview of key demographic trends by the Population Division followed by a panel discussion led by a moderator. The panels consisted of three experts representing a wide range of stakeholders who were invited to respond to the three general discussion questions, which was followed by an interactive discussion among all participants. During the closing session, a short summary of each thematic session was presented by the moderator or a rapporteur.

This report summarizes the main points from each session and highlights cross-cutting themes and recommendations. Materials from the expert group meeting can be accessed at the website of the Population Division, www.unpopulation.org.

2. SUMMARY OF SESSIONS

A. OPENING OF THE MEETING AND KEYNOTE ADDRESS

The meeting was opened by the Director of the Population Division, Mr. John Wilmoth. After welcoming all participants, Mr. Wilmoth highlighted the importance of population-related issues in the post-2015 development agenda. He then explained how the expert group meeting would contribute to this agenda as well as to the forthcoming session of the Commission on Population and Development, which would be held the following week.

Mr. Jeffrey Sachs (Columbia University) gave the keynote address. He highlighted six demographic challenges for achieving the sustainable development goals (SDGs), namely (1) rapid population growth in sub-Saharan Africa, with questions about the pace of fertility decline and its implications; (2) population ageing in high- and middle-income countries and the implications for fiscal policy; (3) large-scale environmental disruptions and the possibility of increased conflict and environmentally-induced migration; (4) rapid urbanization and the need for urban trend analyses to identify urban "hotspots"; (5) technology and large-scale labour market disruption and the future of work and leisure, including the effect of artificial intelligence; and (6) international migration and its impact on both individuals and countries.

During the discussion, participants raised the need for better data. Mr. Sachs suggested that countries should develop additional data sources, given that large household surveys were unable to provide sufficient or frequent enough data for monitoring the proposed targets and goals of the SDGs. The lack of data on international migration flows between developing countries was highlighted. On a different point, Mr. Sachs emphasised that the demographic dividend could only be reaped with a relative increase in the working-age population, not just a large youth population, implying that, in some countries, a faster fertility decline would be needed to achieve this demographic bonus.

B. CHANGING AGE STRUCTURES AND THEIR IMPACT: YOUTH

The Population Division provided an overview of key youth-related demographic trends and highlighted that: (1) most countries have already experienced a "youth bulge"; (2) while many countries experienced considerable growth in the youth population in the past, further growth is only expected in Africa as a region (although there are significant differences by country); (3) a "youth bulge" is associated with a potential demographic dividend that presents both opportunities and challenges for development; and (4) there is considerable uncertainty surrounding long-term projections of the size of the youth population.

In identifying key knowledge gaps, participants emphasised the paucity of data as a key gap, including on young adolescents aged 10 to 14 years, youth and labour markets (especially in sub-Saharan Africa), adolescent boys, and rural youth. Information was also lacking in regard to the impact of religion and culture on choices and norms that shape sociodemographic outcomes. In addition, the influence of social norms on youth and the critical policy levers required to disrupt the intergenerational transmission of poverty were identified as knowledge gaps. Participants expressed the view that more work is needed to develop and implement effective programmes to foster social inclusion among youth and to combat gender-based violence as well as more generally in the areas of sexual and reproductive health and education.

Participants observed that while innovation is important to produce more and better data, traditional data sources also need strengthening. Priorities for data collection include youth aged 10 to 14 (recognizing that there are ethical concerns surrounding data collection on minors), labour force surveys, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, and longitudinal data. Further, it is necessary to strengthen the capacity for research in developing countries as well as the capacity for the collection, use, coordination and dissemination of data. Better utilisation of existing data was also identified as a priority. Special efforts are needed to ensure that disaggregated information is also available at the level at which decisions are taken.

C. CHANGING AGE STRUCTURES AND THEIR IMPACT: AGEING

In the introductory presentation made by the Population Division, the following five key trends were highlighted: (1) population ageing is one of the most important demographic trends of our time; (2) the cohort of older people is growing faster than any other age group; (3) low- and middle-income countries will experience the most rapid and dramatic demographic change in the proportion of their populations over the age of 60; (4) the older population itself is ageing; and (5) population ageing raises a number of issues, including the economic security of older people, the allocation of health and social care spending within a society, and the changing nature and direction of intergenerational support over the course of development.

Participants identified as a key knowledge gap the determinants of current and future levels and trends in disability and health, especially dementia, at older ages. Such information is essential to understand changing patterns of formal and informal care arrangements and to plan for other possible interventions at the local, regional and national level. Information is also needed on older people with regard to their living arrangements and social participation, their income security and distribution, and their changing roles and responsibilities within society including through changing patterns of labour force participation. In addition, topics on which evidence should be expanded include intergenerational public and private transfers, models for sustainable public pension and health care systems, and the situation of older people in Africa and emergency situations. The heterogeneity and diversity of the older population was also pointed out.

In order to address these gaps, participants prioritized the continued collection of internationally comparable data on the social, economic and health circumstances of older people that could be disaggregated within countries. Harmonized, longitudinal data on the incidence and prevalence of disability is also a priority. Such an effort requires increased cooperation between countries and coordination from international organizations. The collaboration of policymakers and academic institutions should also be reinforced, such as through the Commission on Population and Development at the United Nations and networks of population researchers such as the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population. Further, it was suggested that an entity within the United Nations system that is focused on older people could give ageing issues more priority on international and national agendas. A specific recommendation to the Population Division was to establish a compendium or dataset of policies on ageing.

D. POPULATION AND GLOBAL HEALTH

The Population Division began the session by making a brief presentation that highlighted the following key trends in the area of population and global health: (1) mortality has declined globally since the 1990s, though Africa and Europe experienced slower initial declines; (2) the pace of decline in under-five mortality has accelerated since the 1990s, especially in Africa where child mortality is still high for

many countries; (3) slow progress has been reported in the decline in adult mortality since the 1990s; (4) the drop in maternal mortality has not been sufficient in order to meet internationally-agreed targets; and (5) survival at older ages has improved over the last two decades.

Participants observed that important knowledge gaps exist with regard to adult mortality levels and overall trends and for cause of death for both children and adults. They highlighted the need for improved measurement of programme impact as well as for better information on programmes and interventions, including service delivery and the quality of services, and especially in fragile and post-conflict countries and in emergency situations. Participants also noted knowledge gaps on how to deliver services through integrated, rather than vertical, health systems; how to target programmes and understand how programmes are addressing inequalities and creating demand; and on financing of decentralized health delivery systems. Other priority areas for research are the social determinants of morbidity and mortality and improved metrics of nutritional status (such as dietary intake), areas that are relevant for programme design, disease prevention and health interventions. To address inequities within and between regions, participants called for more detailed information on target groups and small areas, including through better data linking of geospatial information, service statistics, and population and health data. Reaching a balance between structural models of health outcomes versus monitoring and tracking health status indicators was also discussed.

In terms of addressing the knowledge gaps, partnerships such as Gavi, a global health partnership that brings together public and private sectors to finance and provide immunization in developing countries,[1] could play an important role. In addition, existing coordination mechanisms such as the Child Health Epidemiology Reference Group,[2] the United Nations Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation[3] and the Maternal Mortality Estimation Inter-agency Group[4] serve as models of inter-disciplinary collaboration leading to improved measurement of mortality and causes of death. The need to build the capacity of national statistics offices in general, and civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) in particular, especially for recording deaths and the causes of death, was highlighted repeatedly. Participants also identified the need for more "real-time" information, although questions remain about the validity of the data provided and the time lag involved. More information is also needed about programme implementation, that is, how services are being delivered, to whom, and the quality of service delivery. Lastly, participants suggested improving the use of existing data, especially by policymakers, to drive accountability (including at the local level), support the institutionalization of data collection systems in countries and facilitate data transparency and access. The United Nations system and civil society organizations, as well as building on South-South exchanges, would be helpful mechanisms in this regard.

E. POPULATION AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

In an opening presentation by the Population Division, the following were some of the key trends on reproductive health highlighted: (1) total fertility has been declining overall and while fertility has reached very low levels in parts of Europe and Eastern Asia it is still high in much of Africa where the decline has been slow; (2) adolescent fertility levels remain high in Africa and in parts of Latin America and the Caribbean; (3) maternal mortality has not declined fast enough to meet the relevant Millennium Development Goal target; (4) despite decades-long efforts, access to family planning is far from

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[1] http://www.gavi.org/
[2] http://cherg.org/main.html
[3] http://www.childmortality.org/
[4] http://www.maternalmortalitydata.org/mmeig_tag.html

universal; and (5) continued population growth poses a challenge to achieving full coverage of reproductive health services.

Participants observed that the relationship between normative change and reproductive health is not well understood. The need for a framework for understanding sexual and reproductive decisions and behaviours across the life course was highlighted, including a wider array of factors than has traditionally been the case, such as self-efficacy or mental health. Other priorities for research were on the implementation and impact of family planning programmes, health interventions and health systems on reproductive health outcomes and normative change. To inform strategic decision-making, information is also needed at the health service delivery point or community level on how the access, type of services made available, and quality of service delivery influences the use of reproductive health services. Participants also noted a priority for evidence at the macro-level, including improvements in population well-being and economic returns as a result of investments in reproductive health. They also discussed effective responses to reduce adolescent and unintended fertility as well as those to increase fertility (where actual fertility is lower than wanted fertility).

In order to tackle these knowledge gaps, strategic investments should be made to improve data collection and analysis, including large-scale longitudinal surveys, randomized control trials, carefully-designed impact evaluations, disaggregated data, and rapid, low-cost systems of data collection. It is also necessary to engage more with policymakers, including those from substantive areas apart from health, and to ensure that Governments have a greater understanding and ownership of the relevant issues. Participants provided examples of ways that research priorities could be implemented, including South-South cooperation, capacity building, improved training in demography, better ways of sharing information, collaborating across disciplines, and working collectively, including through virtual communities. The research community was advised to increase its engagement with advocates, civil society and programme managers. Countries should also be encouraged to make relevant research data available.

F. INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT

The presentation by the Population Division highlighted a number of key trends in international migration: (1) the number of international migrants has increased worldwide; (2) while Asia and Europe host the largest number of international migrants, Asia has added more international migrants than any other region since 2000; (3) most international migration occurs within regions although these patterns are changing; (4) migration has become an important component of population change in some regions; and (5) women account for about half of all international migrants in the world.

Participants drew attention to a number of knowledge gaps, including on international migration inflows and outflows, return migration, and—to inform evidence on inequalities and discrimination—the causes and consequences of migrant integration and the so-called second generation, that is, children born to at least one parent who was an international migrant. Additional areas identified as requiring more research were the causes and consequences of migration, the relationship between migration and gender dynamics, the linkages between urbanization and international migration, and the economic and social impacts of forced migration. Further evidence on perceptions of migrants and migration would be valuable as they affect the treatment of migrants as well as the willingness of policymakers to take leadership and implement responsible policies. The scarcity of data on international migration in the global South, especially in Africa, was raised as a particular concern.

To address existing knowledge gaps, participants called for harmonizing relevant terminology and methods as well as implementing existing United Nations recommendations on international

migration data, for redoubling efforts to collect, disseminate and analyse reliable, comparable and timely data and for strengthening the policy relevance of existing quantitative and qualitative information. Additional suggestions included promoting greater cooperation among various stakeholders, including national statistical offices, line ministries, civil society, academia and the private sector, strengthening academic networks, especially in the global South, and establishing a dedicated fund for training, surveys and technical cooperation.

G. SUSTAINABLE URBANIZATION

The Population Division highlighted a number of key trends including: (1) the urban population is projected to increase by 1.1 billion people by 2030; (2) most of this increase will be concentrated in a few countries; (3) the fastest growing cities are located in Africa and Asia; (4) although the share of the urban population residing in megacities is increasing fast, most people continue to live in smaller cities; (5) in many fast-growing cities in developing countries, a significant proportion of people live in slums; and (6) many cities are at a high risk of at least one type of natural hazard.

One of the key knowledge gaps in sustainable urbanization is the lack of a basic understanding of the demography of urbanization, including its spatial dimension. Participants also observed a need to combine spatial and demographic data and highlighted that there is limited understanding of urban populations at risk of climate-related and other hazards. Access to data is too often restricted, with data users frequently unable to access necessary data, in particular spatial data files. Knowledge gaps were also identified with regard to populations living in slums, urban food security, scalability of good practices and sustainable finance for cities.

In order to address these gaps, data standards and data management practices need to be improved, access to data needs to be enhanced, in particular at the level of small enumeration area units, and the international comparability of data needs to be strengthened. Participants noted the need to facilitate data integration, data sharing, and greater public use and open access to geospatial population data, including through the provision of products in different forms such as polygon layers, centroid, or grid cells at different spatial resolutions, without compromising confidentiality.

To implement priorities, participants discussed the role of nationally and internationally coordinated efforts between research centres, academia and Governments. The United Nations could play a useful role in this regard. New ways to use existing data and to rethink investments in data infrastructure were also discussed. Participants recommended including in the Population Division's *World Urbanization Prospects* cities with fewer than 300,000 inhabitants and attaching geospatial administrative boundary files to population data for urban settlements. They also recommended that national statistical offices, through the Statistical Commission, should be strengthened so as to be able to supply a minimum set of geographically referenced indicators at the level of enumeration areas or census tracts or blocks.

3. HIGHLIGHTS OF THE DISCUSSIONS: CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

A. KEY GAPS

I. Research on the social determinants of outcomes and effecting change

Many participants raised the need for more research on understanding the social determinants of demographic outcomes and on the determinants of behaviour and normative change. For example, gaps were identified over how family planning programmes can support normative change or how popular cultures and technologies affect youth values and behaviours. Questions about the malleability of social norms more generally also arose. Participants raised a key gap in understanding social determinants and inequalities, especially around the social determinants of mortality and understanding how programmes are addressing inequality. The need to identify effective ways to end the intergenerational transmission of poverty was identified, as well as a deeper understanding of approaches to social inclusion among youth, especially in fragile and conflict-afflicted countries. The lack of understanding of the transformative nature of migration, such as the impact on gender structures, financial inclusion and individual lives, was also discussed. Lastly, participants identified the need for improved structural models of fertility in order to project scenarios of fertility change that could result from policy interventions.

II. Make research and data policy-relevant

In many sessions a priority was placed on research and data to assess and evaluate policies and programmes, especially with regard to their effectiveness. For example, participants called for better measurement of the impact of health systems and interventions and for further evidence to identify effective policies to reduce unintended pregnancies. The need for implementation research, especially in fragile and post-conflict environments, and methods to promote the systematic uptake of research findings and other scientific evidence into policies and programmes was also discussed. Participants identified a wide range of research topics that reflected this emphasis on making research and data policy-relevant, including policy models of public pensions and health care; the implications of population density on growth, well-being and the environment; and better evidence on the scope, nature and impact of labour migration. Lastly, participants called for greater inclusion of data and research findings in policies and programmes and for policymakers to develop policies that are informed by evidence and address the key challenges.

III. Produce timely, frequent and relevant data of high quality

Data were identified as a knowledge gap in all sessions. Even in monitoring progress in implementing the Millennium Development Goals, data are often outdated or lacking altogether for many countries. Participants provided many examples of areas or population subgroups for which specific data are lacking including adult and old-age mortality, causes of death for children and adults, nutritional status, prevalence of disability at older ages, adolescent boys and rural youth, international migration flows between developing countries, and international migrants. Some large, international household survey programmes that collect detailed information on health, such as the Demographic and Health Surveys, are not collected frequently enough for monitoring purposes and have age limits on who is eligible to be interviewed (e.g., women of reproductive age) which means these survey data either do not directly address questions about mortality and health at older ages or they only have limited, retrospective data on the health of younger adolescents (e.g., ages 10 to 14 years old). In some cases, such data may exist but are not made available. Participants also provided several examples of poor data quality, including in the area of international migration, estimates of adult mortality, and causes of death data among both children and adults.

IV. The need for disaggregated data

Many participants pointed to the need to disaggregate data by age and sex as well as at the sub-national level. For example, there was limited understanding of the gender dimensions of migration. In particular, data need to be disaggregated to the level at which policies are made and programmes implemented. Disaggregated data also enable identification of social, economic and other kinds of inequalities among people, aligning with a focus of the post-2015 development agenda to reduce inequalities within and among countries. Information also needs to be disaggregated in order to understand who is at risk. Data are often insufficiently disaggregated for analytical purposes, or are not sufficiently disaggregated spatially in order to be geo-referenced and of further use for other kinds of population and development research (e.g., the effects of climate change or environmental disasters on urban populations). For example, data disaggregated into urban and rural areas do not necessarily allow for an analysis of the needs of children living in urban slum areas or populations at risk of climate-related and other hazards, and the composition of populations at risk.

V. The need for more research and data in Africa

Nearly all sessions highlighted the need for more research and data on Africa, in particular, to understand better the issues of special concern to that region. For example, the unanswered question over why fertility is still high in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa and is not declining faster, and has even stalled, was highlighted as a key knowledge gap. The need to improve the evidence base on labour migration in Africa—where it is often informal and irregular in nature—was identified as another example. Participants also noted priorities for data on youth and labour markets, to understand better both the demand side and supply side of youth employment dynamics, and population subgroups about whom there is relatively limited information (e.g., rural youth and older people). Urbanization in Africa was considered a particularly critical issue, with urbanization rates very high and cities potentially not able to cope with such high rates of growth.

B. Addressing Gaps and Implementing Priorities

I. Make greater use of existing data sources

Participants emphasized that data collection and research are costly and should therefore be fully exploited. To achieve a more effective use of data and evidence in policymaking, greater engagement of the research community with policymakers is essential. Strong calls were made to greatly expand data accessibility, especially in regard to census and other data at disaggregated levels and to integrate such data with digital maps where possible, although other participants felt that the focus should be on improved incentives for countries to report data as well as improved data linkages. Effective dissemination and use of existing data from population censuses and administrative sources was considered a priority.

Participants called for removing barriers to data sharing and for improving access to microdata for public use, while maintaining data protection and confidentiality. In some cases, limited accessibility, transparency and accountability contributed to the lack of demand for empirical evidence. International organizations and civil society could play a key role in promoting data accessibility, transparency and accountability.

II. Promote greater strategic thinking in data collection

In all sessions, improved data collection was mentioned as a means to address key data gaps. While acknowledging that large household-based surveys were crucial to address these gaps, participants called for more "real-time" use of administrative sources and service delivery data. There was widespread support for strengthening capacity for producing data from administrative sources. Examples of administrative sources include CRVS as a source for mortality rates and cause of death and immigration registers that could be useful for measuring international migration. Further, the need for longitudinal data collection and retrospective event history data to understand youth life trajectories was highlighted. Some participants emphasized the need for surveys dedicated to international migration.

Participants stressed the advantages of data that are both comparable over time and across countries to enable researchers to understand better how certain phenomena are both changing temporally and under different economic and social contexts. Examples where such information could be particularly insightful include understanding changes in youth well-being over time; understanding how the social, economic and health circumstances of older people are changing over time and in different country contexts, especially in Africa; and providing a more holistic understanding of international migration. Participants also noted that more resources are needed for survey implementation and analysis and to increase the frequency of existing surveys. In some cases, existing survey programmes, such as labour force surveys, could be leveraged to include modules or sub-samples to obtain needed data without mounting a separate effort. Further, there was a call for more data collection to support policy and programme implementation and evaluation, with more "real-time" measurement and disaggregation of data at the district level and small enumeration area. Lower priority was placed on modelling approaches to address data gaps, although their utility was acknowledged.

III. Incorporate innovations in data sources and collection

Innovative ideas for addressing data challenges were raised in different sessions, especially regarding big data, that is data generated from GPS devices, mobile phones, social media, internet use and remote sensing. While big data and other new sources of information could provide useful information, some participants doubted whether these new sources would be able to address current major data gaps with regard to availability, timeliness, and disaggregation. Confidentiality, proprietary ownership, representativeness, and the capacity to analyse and use large amounts of data were some of the challenges identified in using new data sources.

Additionally, while the opportunities offered by big data were thought to be promising, they do not eliminate the need for traditional data sources where innovation in data collection could also be useful. Several examples of new approaches to data collection from traditional sources were provided. The Performance, Monitoring and Accountability 2020 project uses innovative mobile technology in carrying out low-cost, nationally representative surveys to collect information on key indicators for family planning.[5] Furthermore, the use of mobile registration and biometrics in civil registration not only reduces the time between data collection and availability but also provides greater detail and possibilities for linking the information with other basic demographic and geospatial statistics. Another example of innovative data collection methods is India's million death study, which has been collecting cause of death data annually using verbal autopsies since 2001 for a nationally representative sample of 1.3 million households that experienced a recent death.[6]

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[5] http://pma2020.org
[6] http://www.cghr.org/projects/million-death-study-project/

Other innovative suggestions were to establish a human mobility index for the systematic collection of internal migration data, using mobile technology, high resolution satellite imagery, and crowd sourcing to elicit civil society participation and inputs.

IV. Improve data coordination and harmonization

In order to facilitate data comparability, especially between countries, participants stressed the need for improved coordination as well as for improved international standards to harmonize data collection, terminology and methods. International organizations could enhance their role in supporting coordination among national statistical offices, further developing international standards, and promoting international cooperation and collaboration. In this regard, it was suggested to establish a United Nations interagency group for estimating adult mortality. The importance of strengthening coordination between national statistical offices and various line ministries to strengthen data collection and dissemination, to improve access to existing data and to promote linkages between geospatial information and census data was also highlighted.

V. Build and strengthen networks and partnerships

The establishment of networks and partnerships was discussed in many sessions. The potential role of the United Nations in convening these networks was highlighted. In this regard, participants stressed the need for greater collaboration between the Commission on Population and Development and the Statistical Commission. Partnerships with a broader range of stakeholders, including research subjects (e.g., migrants or youth) and the private sector, were recommended.

Examples of successful partnerships such as Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, were noted and offered as a possible model. The need for South-South exchanges of experience and knowledge was also highlighted. Participants pointed out that new means of communication offered effective ways to share information, to work collaboratively, to be more strategic with investments and to set priorities as a community, engaging with people from different fields. For example, cities could work directly with each other and would benefit from large economies of scale through open-access information of common interest.

VI. Increase national ownership

National ownership and resources were deemed essential to address the key information gaps and to ensure that data and research are produced that are relevant to country needs. Some participants stated that Governments often lack ownership of the research priorities, with donors driving the agenda. Yet, ultimately, it is up to Governments to identify research priorities and find the necessary resources. To address some of these challenges, it was proposed, for example, with respect to the implementation of CRVS systems, that the emphasis should be on strengthening national priorities. It was also recommended that investments should be made in monitoring programmes and outcomes, rather than modelling, to make the evidence more relevant to country needs.

VII. Mobilise resources

In order to mobilise resources for research and data, it was suggested that funding for statistics and research from donors should be classified as overseas development assistance (ODA) rather than as expenditures for research. Other proposals for mobilising resources were to ensure inclusion of key issues in the SDGs and to be selective in setting priorities. Prioritisation of research and evidence was also needed at the country level in low- and middle-income countries in order to secure domestic resources.

VIII. Strengthen capacity and training for research and data generation and use

There was a call for strengthening capacity to collect, tabulate, analyse and disseminate data, with a suggestion to establish a dedicated fund for engaging in training and technical cooperation with national statistical offices and for strengthening local universities and national and regional research and training institutes. Young researchers and scientists could be supported by awarding small grants. Participants also proposed strengthening the capacity of academics to produce and disseminate research findings in a way that is useful for policymakers, focusing on South-South collaboration, capacity building and training of relevant stakeholders, which could include policymakers at various levels of government.

The current momentum within the United Nations and the donor community to strengthen statistical systems needs to be exploited, especially by supporting CRVS capacity building in low-income countries. In this respect, it was suggested that the response could be similar to that of the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, United Nations and regional organizations to encourage actively the standardized collection and reporting of national accounts data, where the production of such data was supported in countries and long-term technical assistance was provided.

IX. Improve the dialogue between researchers and policymakers

One key question was how to increase the demand for data and research products. It was suggested that researchers should increase their engagement with relevant policymakers. For instance, finance ministers should be briefed on the financial benefits of data collection and research. Participants also noted that the research community should strengthen their engagement with civil society and programme managers. Furthermore, including particular topics in national development plans as well as in the proposed SDGs was expected to increase demand for relevant research and evidence. It was also observed that in order to increase demand, misperceptions regarding data quality need to be addressed. Finally, researchers, practitioners and policymakers need to work closely together, including at the local level.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

During the closing session, the Director of the Division highlighted common themes from the discussions, specifically: (1) the paucity of data that is undermining efforts to conduct policy-relevant research and is required to inform the post-2015 development agenda; (2) the need for capacity building and training, including on dissemination and use of research and evidence; and (3) the suggestions to improve the process of data collection, data sharing and collaboration with all stakeholders.

The concluding discussion highlighted the need to work across substantive topics and to take an integrated approach to setting research priorities. Links between policy and research must also be relevant at the national and regional level, informing policies to achieve the development agenda that speak to distinct country and regional needs. Participants requested that the report of the meeting reflect the commonalities across topics under population and development research and specify realistic next-steps emerging from the findings of the meeting. With this request in mind, the recommendations on research priorities from the expert group meeting have been divided into substantive and organizational recommendations. The substantive recommendations have been further subdivided into those that address particular thematic research areas and those that cut across different fields of research. The priorities presented are those that were emphasized in the meeting's discussions and should not be interpreted as a comprehensive list.

I. THEMATIC RESEARCH AREAS

1. Changing age structures and their impact: youth

   a) Improve understanding of the complexities, challenges and opportunities of the demographic dividend.

   b) Strengthen research on the youth aged 10-14 in order to give this age group greater "visibility" and to address their specific needs.

   c) Improve understanding of effective youth programme implementation and how the intergenerational transmission of poverty can be interrupted.

2. Changing age structures and their impact: ageing

   a) Close or reduce knowledge gaps on the economic and social conditions of older persons, in particular their health and disability status and living conditions.

   b) Identify public policies to address the fiscal implications of population ageing (e.g., in the areas of public finance, retirement, pensions, transfers and health care).

   c) Improve understanding of the changing living arrangements and social support networks of the older population.

3. Population and global health

   a) Improve the measurement of adult mortality levels and causes of death across the age spectrum.

   b) Improve understanding of the determinants of maternal and child health in low- and lower-middle income countries, including inequities within countries.

   c) Assess the coverage, quality and effectiveness of health interventions.

4. Population and reproductive health

   a) Improve the understanding of contraceptive and reproductive decision-making and behaviour over the life course, including their health and development consequences.

   b) Identify policies to reduce childbearing among adolescents.

   c) Identify policy options to address very low fertility.

5. Sustainable urbanization

   a) Improve evidence for policies and planning to manage demographic change and rapid urbanisation, especially in sub-Saharan Africa.

   b) Increase access to spatially-disaggregated data to support sustainable city planning.

   c) Identify policy options for managing natural hazards in urban areas, environmental sustainability and resilience.

6. International migration and development

  a) Improve the knowledge base on international migration, including levels, trends and impacts as well as forced displacement.

  b) Improve the modelling of migration flows by taking into account economic and demographic differentials, environmental disruption and policies.

  c) Increase and better disseminate evidence on the transformative nature of migration for societies and economies.

II. CROSS-CUTTING RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Improve data collection, including through household surveys and administrative data, and particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, through:

  a) Identifying the areas in which a global initiative to improve capacity for data collection for population and development at the country level would be most effective, such as providing tools and setting guidelines and standards in collaboration with partners.[7]

  b) Supporting ownership by individual countries and aligning any activities to their priorities, institutions or procedures even when operating at the global level.

2. Ensure that guidelines, standards and tools for data collection are consistent with guidance provided by the United Nations Statistical Commission and other international and regional organisations and networks.

3. Develop research capacity in the global South, in particular with regard to research needs at the national level, by promoting collaborative research, supporting South-South cooperation and advocating for increased resources.

4. Increase dissemination and use of evidence to ensure that policies and programmes are based on the latest research findings, including by making findings easily accessible to senior government officials and policymakers at all levels of government.

5. Create subnational datasets for programme planning and implementation and improving service delivery.

6. Exploit the potential of big data and other innovative data sources, while addressing the challenges of data confidentiality, access and sharing, and harmonizing standards, classifications and methods of data collection.

7. Link small area administrative boundary files with publicly available datasets, such as census population data, in order to facilitate data integration and overlays and to improve service delivery.

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[7]Such tools include, for example, indirect estimation templates, demographic estimation and projection software or open source packages and National Transfer Accounts workbooks.

III. COORDINATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

1. Establish inter-agency and expert groups for population-related topics in the post-2015 development agenda to develop indicators, share data, harmonize estimates, improve estimation methods, report progress, and enhance national capacities.

2. Draw on the annual sessions of the Commission on Population and Development to strengthen international networks, partnerships and information sharing on priorities for policy-relevant population research and data, and to review existing priorities and identify new ones.

3. Strengthen collaboration with the Statistical Commission to ensure that data collection systems that are vital for population research, including civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) and geographically-referenced data, are integrated in capacity-building activities and mainstreamed in national strategies for the development of statistics, and to facilitate improved accessibility to data from those systems.

**EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON
THE POST-2015 ERA: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE GLOBAL RESEARCH AGENDA ON
POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT**
Population Division
Department of Economic and Social Affairs
United Nations Secretariat
New York
10 April 2015

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

08:45 – 09:00   Registration Conference Room 5

09:00 – 10:00   **1. Opening of the meeting** Conference Room 5
- Introductions and objective of meeting: *John Wilmoth, Population Division, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)*
- Keynote address: "A new population and development research agenda for the post-2015 era" *Jeffrey Sachs, The Earth Institute, Columbia University*
- Discussion

10:15 – 11:30   Concurrent interactive discussions
               2. Changing age structures and their impact: youth Conference Room 5
- Key trends: *Population Division, UN DESA*
- Moderator: *Noella Richard, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)*
Expert: *Jean-François Kobiané, Université de Ouagadougou*
Expert: *Steven Kapsos, International Labour Organization (ILO)*
Expert: *Kemi Williams, UK Department for International Development (DFID)*

               3. Population and global health Conference Room E
- Key trends: *Population Division, UN DESA*
- Moderator: *Somnath Chatterji, World Health Organization (WHO)*
Expert: *Prabhat Jha, University of Toronto*
Expert: *Daniel Kress, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation*
Expert: *Robert Black, Johns Hopkins University*

11:30 – 11:45   Break

11:45 – 13:00   Concurrent interactive discussions

       4. Changing age structures and their impact: ageing Conference Room E
- Key trends: *Population Division, UN DESA*
- Moderator: *Jorge Bravo, Population Division, UN DESA*
 Expert: *Ronald Lee, University of California, Berkeley*
 Expert: *John Haaga, National Institute on Ageing*
 Expert: *Reiko Hayashi, National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, Japan*

       5. Population and reproductive health Conference Room 5
- Key trends: *Population Division, UN DESA*
- Moderator: *Bruce Campbell, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)*
 Expert: *Amy Tsui, Johns Hopkins University*
 Expert: *John Bongaarts, Population Council*
 Expert: *Shawn Malarcher, United States Agency for International Development (USAID)*

13:00 – 14:30   Lunch

14:30 – 16:00   Concurrent interactive discussions

       6. Sustainable urbanization Conference Room E
- Key trends: *Population Division, UN DESA*
- Moderator: *Deborah Balk, City University of New York*
 Expert: *Shlomo Angel, New York University*
 Expert: *Jose Miguel Guzman, ICF International*
 Expert: *Lauren Sorkin, Rockefeller Foundation*

       7. International migration and development Conference Room 5
- Key trends: *Population Division, UN DESA*
- Moderator: *Clare Menozzi, Population Division, UN DESA*
 Expert: *Pietro Mona, Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation*
 Expert: *Takiywaa Manuh, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)*
 Expert: *Cris Beauchemin, Institut National d'Etudes Démographiques*

16:00 – 16:15   Break

16:15 – 18:00   **8. Summary and conclusions** Conference Room 5
- Summary of key points from each session *(Rapporteurs)*
- Discussion
- Concluding remarks: *John Wilmoth, Population Division, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)*

Annex 2

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

**INVITED EXPERTS, MODERATORS
AND RAPPORTEURS**

Shlomo Angel
Senior research scholar
Stern School of Business
New York University
New York, New York

Chris Beauchemin
Researcher
Institut National d'Etudes Démographiques
Paris, France

Robert Black
Professor and Director
Institute for International Programs
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public
Health
Baltimore, Maryland

John Bongaarts
Vice President and Distinguished Scholar
Population Council
New York, New York

Jorge Bravo
Chief, Population and Development Section
Population Division
United Nations Department of Economic and
Social Affairs
New York, New York

Bruce Campbell
Global Coordinator
Data for Development Platform
UNFPA
New York, New York

Somnath Chatterji
Team Leader
Surveys, Measurement and Analysis Programme
Department of Health Statistics and Information
Systems
WHO
Geneva, Switzerland

Jose Miguel Guzman
Regional Coordinator
DHS Program for Francophone Africa and Latin
America
ICF International
Bethesda, Maryland

John Haaga
Deputy Director
Division of Behavioral and Social Research
National Institute on Aging
Bethesda, Maryland

Reiko Hayashi
Director
Department of International Research and
Cooperation
National Institute of Population and Social
Security Research
Tokyo, Japan

Prabhat Jha
Director
Centre for Global Health Research
University of Toronto
Toronto, Canada

Steven Kapsos
Head
Data Production and Analysis Unit
International Labour Organization
Geneva, Switzerland

Jean-François Kobiané
Research Professor and Director
Institut Supérieur des Sciences de la Population
Université de Ougadougou
Ougadougou, Burkina Faso

Daniel Kress
Deputy Director
Integrated Delivery
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
Seattle, Washington

Ronald Lee
Director
Center on Economics and Demography of Aging
University of California, Berkeley
Berkeley, California

Justin MacDermott
Adviser
Special Representative of the Secretary General
for International Migration
United Nations Department of Economic and
Social Affairs
New York, New York

Shawn Malarcher
Senior Advisor
Utilization of Best Practices
United States Agency for International
Development
Washington DC

Takiywaa Manuh
Director
Social Development Policy Division
United Nations Economic Commission for
Africa
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Clare Menozzi
Population Affairs Officer
Population Division
United Nations Department of Economic and
Social Affairs
New York, New York

Pietro Mona
Deputy Head
Global Programme on Migration and
Development
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
Bern, Switzerland

Noella Richard
Youth Policy Specialist
Bureau for Policy and Programme Support
UNDP
New York, New York

Jeffrey Sachs
Director
The Earth Institute
Columbia University
New York, New York

Lauren Sorkin
Platform Director
100 Resilient Cities
Rockefeller Foundation
New York, New York

Amy Tsui
Professor
Bill & Melinda Gates Institute for Population and Reproductive Health
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
Baltimore, Maryland

Kemi Williams
Head
Human Development Team
UK Department for International Development, Nigeria
Abuja, Nigeria

John Wilmoth
Director, Population Division
United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
New York, New York

UNITED NATIONS SECRETARIAT

Population Division/United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, New York

Kirill Andreev
Population Affairs Officer
Population Estimates and Projections Section

Lina Bassarsky
Population Affairs Officer
Population Estimates and Projections Section

Ann Biddlecom
Chief, Fertility and Family Planning Section

Barney Cohen
Chief, Population Studies Branch

Victor Gaigbe-Togbe
Population Affairs Officer
Mortality Section

Patrick Gerland
Chief, Mortality Section

Danan Gu
Population Affairs Officer
Population Estimates and Projections Section

Sara Hertog
Population Affairs Officer
Population and Development Section

Bela Hovy
Chief, Migration Section

Yumiko Kamiya
Population Affairs Officer, Policy Section

Kyaw Kyaw Lay
Information Systems Assistant
Fertility and Family Planning Section

Petra Nahmias
Population Affairs Officer
Fertility and Family Planning Section

François Pelletier
Chief, Population Estimates and Projections Section

Hantamalala Rafalimanana
Population Affairs Officer
Fertility and Family Planning Section

Marilou Vicente
Information Systems Assistant
Migration Section

Social Policy and Development Division/ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, New York

Pauline Leonard
Social Affairs Officer
Youth Unit

United Nations Economic Commission for Western Asia, Beirut

Karima El-Korri
Chief, Population and Social Development Section

Regional Commissions New York Office, New York

Daniela Simioni
Social Affairs Officer

Other

Frederic Bijou
International Consultant

German Bravo-Casas
Retiree

UNITED NATIONS SPECIALIZED AGENCIES

UNICEF

Turgay Unalan
Statistics Specialist

Danzhen You
Statistics and Monitoring Specialist

UNFPA

Edilberto Loaiza
Senior Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor

Liang Mengija
Technical Analyst

Ann Pawliczko
Senior Technical Adviser

World Bank

Michele Gragnolati
Global Lead on Population and Development

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Berlin Institute for Population and Development

Ruth Mueller
Research Associate

City University of New York

Holly Reed
Professor

Columbia University

Susana Beatriz Adamo
Associate Research Scientist

Daniel Naujoks
Adjunct Assistant Professor

EngenderHealth

Paul Perchal
Vice President of Program Management

German Foundation for World Population (DSW)

Irina Saal
Advisor to the Executive Director

International Federation of University Women

Polly Woodward
UN Representative

IPAS

Beatriz Galli
Senior Regional Policy Advisor

NGO Committee on Migration

Maria Pia Belloni
UN Representative

Partners in Population and Development

Alam Mohammad
Permanent Observer

Population Action International

Sarah Friedmann
Research Associate

Population Council

Ann Blanc
Vice President

*Royal Academy of Science
International Trust (RASIT)*

Richard Jordan
Chief of Operations at UN

*The Society for the Psychological Study of
Social Issues*

Rachel Ravich
UN/NGO Representative

Stony Brook University

Gallya Lahav
Associate Professor

MEMBER STATES

South Africa

Cheryl Fillis
Deputy Director for Population and
Development Programme
Department of Social Development

Jacques Van Zuydam
Chief Director
National Population Unit

Switzerland

Chantal Oltramere
Programme Manager
Department of Foreign Affairs

Thailand

Kittipong Saejeng
Director
Bureau of Reproductive Health

Bunyari Sukrat
Assistant Director
Bureau of Reproductive Health