

As written

ESCAP Population Activities: 1998-I 999

Since the 1998 meeting of this Commission, the ESCAP secretariat accomplished a variety of population and development activities. Early in 1998, it organized at Bangkok the High-level Meeting to Review the Implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the Bali Declaration on Population and Sustainable Development and to Make Recommendations for Further Action. That Meeting identified key future actions that need to be undertaken by member countries in order to meet the recommendations contained in the Bali Declaration and the ICPD Programme of Action. Ninety-four senior-level officials, including the members of the Steering Committee, officials from Governments and representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) attended the Meeting. ESCAP became the first regional commission to organize such an event which served as a model for the other regional commissions to follow in convening similar meetings in preparation for the ICPD+ 5 session to be held in June-July 1999. The deliberations of the High-level Meeting and the recommendations and key future actions emanating from it will comprise the input from the Asia-Pacific region to that global-level ICPD+ 5 meeting. It should be mentioned that the report and papers from the High-level Meeting have been mounted on the ICPD+ 5 home page on the Internet and the printed report was distributed at The Hague Forum in February 1999.

Also during 1998, with financial support from UNFPA, the work programme of the ESCAP secretariat was focused on the conduct of collaborative research, provision of technical assistance including various human resources development activities, organization of training courses, workshops and seminars, and dissemination of population data and information to developing countries in the region. In addition, the ESCAP secretariat implemented various activities in line with the recommendations of the Bali Declaration and the ICPD Programme of Action.

In the area of population research, ESCAP's work was focused on the following topics: strengthening monitoring and evaluation systems for measuring progress in reproductive health and family planning programmes; strengthening policy analysis and research on female migration, employment, family formation and poverty; and implications of ageing for Asian families and the

elderly. The aim of the secretariat's population research programme is to help developing countries in the region to evolve adequate strategies, policies and measures so that they will be able to work towards solving their own population and development problems.

Similarly, for the purpose of national capacity-building, ESCAP has also developed other approaches for improving the technical skills and knowledge of government officials and other professionals working in the field of population. The secretariat's professionals provide technical assistance to countries in the region on such matters as the analysis of demographic and survey data, review and assessment of the implementation of the Bali Declaration, the integration of population concerns into development planning, and in helping developing countries to establish and strengthen their population information centres and improve their information products and services. These services are provided in three ways: through cooperation with the UNFPA TSS system, including the Country Support Teams; regular budget activities; and UNFPA- and/or other donor-funded project activities executed by the secretariat.

Under its programme of work, ESCAP also assisted the developing countries in the region by organizing training courses, seminars and workshops, among others, for selected managerial and technical staff of Governments in order to promote self-reliance among member countries through the sharing of experience, and pooling and utilization of their technical resources. For example, in 1998 it organized two training workshops on information technology for population information professionals in the POPIN network; a policy seminar on gender dimensions of population and development in South-East Asia; a regional seminar on the family and the elderly; a regional seminar on approaches to enhanced Government-NGO cooperation for poverty alleviation; and a training workshop on improving national capacity for monitoring reproductive health programmes. Also during 1998, it fostered TCDC through exchange programmes for Chinese officials to visit their counterparts in the Statistical Centre of Iran.

During May 1999, ESCAP will conduct a regional training workshop on improving national capacity in the integration and analysis of data for key indicators for monitoring and evaluating reproductive health and family planning programmes. It will also conduct another training workshop on information that month exclusively

for Pacific island countries and territories. In July, ESCAP will hold a regional seminar on strengthening monitoring and evaluation systems for measuring the programme of reproductive health and family planning programmes. In August, it will hold a training workshop on the repackaging of population data and information in electronic form. In September, the secretariat will also conduct a training workshop on the interpretation and analysis of population data for assessing the gender dimensions of population and development. ESCAP will also hold a training workshop towards the end of the year for developing human resources for improved population information services, products and communications.

As can be seen from the above-mentioned work, data and information aspects are strongly promoted because various types of population data and information constitute the foundation on which the entire edifice of socio-economic planning is based. With data and information being essential to the formulation of effective population policies and the implementation of achievable programmes, ESCAP continues to promote new and better techniques and technologies for handling, sharing and disseminating population data and information.

During 1998, ESCAP continued to support population information centres in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Viet Nam as well as through the University of the South Pacific in Fiji, which acts as a subregional focal point for population information dissemination in Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. Lao People's Democratic Republic and Mongolia are taking steps that would enable them to become active members of the Asia-Pacific Population Information Network (Asia-Pacific POPIN). The aim of its work in this area is to enable these developing countries eventually to become self-reliant in their information gathering, analysing, processing and disseminating capabilities. To further this aim, small grants were also provided to countries to: (a) translate population information materials into national languages, (b) prepare directories and databases on certain topics, and (c) organize in-country training workshops on population information. In order to bring about a greater devolution of authority, responsibility and resources from the regional POPIN secretariat at ESCAP, since July 1997 some functions were transferred to the China Population Information and Research Centre (CPIRC) at Beijing in its role as the secretariat for the East and South-East Asia POPIN subregional network. Similarly, the International Institute for Population Sciences

(IIPS) at Mumbai, India, acts as the secretariat for the South Asia POPIN subregional network. The University of Fiji at Suva is acting in a similar capacity for the countries and territories comprising the Pacific POPIN subregional network.

The ESCAP secretariat uses two major means for disseminating population information: publications, both printed and electronic, and meetings. Among its recurrent publications are the quarterly *Asia-Pacific Population Journal*, which brings out the implications of research for policy and programme purposes; *Population Headliners*, a bimonthly newsletter for general readers; *Asia-Pacific POPIN Bulletin*, a thrice-yearly newsletter for information personnel; and the annual *ESCAP Population Data Sheet*, which is a monitoring instrument reflecting population and development indicators of countries in the region. ESCAP also produces non-recurrent publications under the *Asian Population Studies Series* and in the form of issue papers and reports for meetings.

Among the ESCAP meetings held in 1998 at which population issues were discussed and population information disseminated were the annual session of the ESCAP Commission and various thematic Committees. Population was among the major issues emphasized during the first session of the Committee on Socio-economic Measures to Alleviate Poverty in Rural and Urban Areas held at Bangkok in September. Other meetings held during this time-frame were an ad hoc expert group meeting on appropriate information technology for accessing population information; and two consultative meetings: one for East and South-East Asia POPIN and the other for South Asia POPIN, both of which were held in November. In March 1998, ESCAP organized the fourth session of the Inter-organizational Subcommittee on Population and Development in Asia and the Pacific; the fifth session will be held later this year.

During 1999, ESCAP will continue to implement a number of projects on strengthening monitoring and evaluation systems for measuring progress in reproductive health/family planning programmes; strengthening policy analysis and research on female migration, employment, family formation and poverty; building knowledge bases and advocating change through the dissemination of population data and information; use of information technology to improve the quality of population information services and products as well as continuing activities of Asia-Pacific POPIN.

Additional support from bilateral resources include a project on the impact of globalization on population change and poverty in rural areas, under which a policy seminar on the impact of globalization on population will be organized at the end of this month.