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New York, 6 and 7 September 2022

(Virtual meeting)

Report of the meeting

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EXPLANATORY NOTES

Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of capital letters combined with figures.

The following abbreviations are used in the report:

CADR	Cognitively adjusted dependency ratio
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
CPD	Commission on Population and Development
CSE	Comprehensive sexuality education
GDP	Gross domestic product
HADR	Health adjusted dependency ratio
HAS	Healthy ageing score
IIASA	International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis
ILO	International Labour Organization
LLL	Lifelong learning
LMICs	Low and middle-income countries
NEET	Not in employment, education or training
OADR	Old age dependency ratio
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PISA	Program for International Student Assessment
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund

1. BACKGROUND AND SCOPE OF THE MEETING

The special theme of the fifty-sixth session of the Commission on Population and Development, taking place in April 2023, is “Population, education and sustainable development”. The theme is closely related to chapter XI of the Programme of Action adopted by Governments at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo, Egypt, and to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all.

Since the founding of the United Nations, education has been recognized as one of the essential underpinnings of human development and societal progress. For example, the rights to education and to participation in cultural life are proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). The Transforming Education Summit, which was convened in September 2022, was aimed at mobilizing action, ambition, solidarity and solutions with a view to transforming education between now and 2030.

The Cairo Programme of Action calls for providing universal access to primary education and closing the gender gap in primary and secondary education. It requests Governments to expand policies and programmes to support youth and adult education and lifelong learning, with particular attention to migrants, indigenous people and people with disabilities. The Programme of Action also calls upon Governments to provide formal and informal education about population and health issues, including sexual and reproductive health issues, in order to promote the well-being of adolescents. The document acknowledged that education on such topics helps to enhance gender equality and equity, promotes responsible sexual behaviour and helps to protect adolescents from early and unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and sexual violence and abuse. The Programme of Action also recognized the need to ensure access to and use of modern communication technology as a means of addressing the barriers to education in developing countries, especially in the least developed countries, with assistance from the international community.

As part of the substantive preparations for the fifty-sixth session of the Commission on Population and Development, the Population Division of UN DESA convened an expert group meeting on 6 and 7 September to discuss the theme of “Population, education and sustainable development”. The meeting reviewed the latest evidence and analyses in relation to the theme, drawing from the experience of countries in all regions. The presentations and deliberations during the expert meeting provided inputs for the Secretary-General’s report on the theme of the fifty-sixth session of the Commission.

The expert group meeting, which was held virtually, convened more 100 experts from government, the United Nations system, universities, research institutions and non-governmental organizations, including 35 representatives of Member States and 23 invited speakers and moderators. The meeting comprised seven sessions covering major education topics, including trends in the school-age population and enrolment, impact of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), lifelong learning and digital inclusion, and relationships of education with fertility, family formation, health, mortality and migration. More information about the meeting can be found at: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/events/cpd56-egm>.

2. SUMMARY OF SESSIONS

A. OPENING OF THE MEETING

John Wilmoth, Director of the Population Division of UN DESA, opened the meeting, welcoming participants and providing an overview of the work of the Population Division and its role in supporting the Commission on Population and Development (CPD), the intergovernmental body of the United Nations that is charged with the follow-up and review of the Cairo Programme of Action, adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo, Egypt in 1994.

At its fifty-sixth session in 2023, the Commission would address the theme of “Population, education and sustainable development.” To support the Commission's deliberations, the Population Division would prepare a report of the Secretary General to provide a broad overview of those topics, highlighting major trends and key challenges. One of the goals of this year's CPD session was to support progress towards the achievement of SDG 4, which called for ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. The theme was timely because the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic had disrupted education systems worldwide and caused about 147 million children to miss more than half of their in-person instruction and to experience learning loss over the past two years. One week after this expert group meeting, the Secretary-General would convene the Transforming Education Summit to elevate education on the global political agenda and to support recovery from pandemic-related learning losses. In adopting the Programme of Action in Cairo in 1994, Governments had recognized that education was a key element of sustainable development that influenced individual well-being through its impact on social, economic, and demographic processes. Lower levels of fertility and mortality, the empowerment of women and increases in worker productivity had all been assisted, if not driven, by expanded access to basic and higher levels of education. The Programme of Action called for providing universal access to primary education and closing the gender gap in education at the primary and secondary levels, expanding policies and programmes to support youth and adult education and lifelong learning, and providing formal and informal education about population and health issues, including sexual and reproductive health, to promote the well-being of adolescents.

The opening session also featured statements from representatives of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Economic, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Rachel Snow of UNFPA recalled that when the SDGs had succeeded the Millennium Development Goals, there had been a shift in emphasis from primary to secondary school enrolment and a complementary shift from education coverage to quality education. The diversity in secondary school coverage was enormous. Gains in secondary school enrolment for girls had been achieved, but their enrolment still lagged boys in many locations. In Africa, secondary school infrastructure was not keeping pace with an expanding population. Africa also stood out as having a low quality of educational levels in countries that had data for international comparisons. There were wide disparities in Internet access in schools. Evidence on learning losses due to COVID-19 was needed, as well as strategies for addressing years of learning loss and psychological support needs for students in countries with protracted humanitarian emergencies. UNFPA had studied approaches to lifelong learning, particularly for women whose education had been interrupted by childbearing at young ages and found that successful trials had not been taken to scale. Lastly, she raised the topic of gender education and its impact on attitudes toward gender equality. She welcomed the examination of evidence on emerging lessons and practice in comprehensive sexuality education (CSE).

Christopher Castle of UNESCO stressed that education was a right in and of itself and at the same time contributed to the achievement of a wide range of other development goals. With over 90 per cent of children of primary school age and over 80 per cent of children of lower secondary school age enrolled in schools around the world, schools were a unique setting to establish healthy behaviours for a lifetime.

Education today, which was much more than just the transmission of knowledge, included the development of skills, values and attitudes that enabled citizens to lead healthy and fulfilling lives and make informed decisions. The achievement of SDG 4 on education was found to be dependent on SDG 3 on health and wellbeing and vice-versa. The speaker believed that quality education was a foundation for health, wellbeing, life, and love. Equally, learners who were healthy inevitably had better learning outcomes and could fully realize their right to education. Schools could promote health and well-being through everyday practices such as providing nutritious meals and school health services, improving water and sanitation services, delivering comprehensive sexuality education to address issues such as early pregnancy and HIV, and creating safe and non-violent learning environments.

B. OVERVIEW OF POPULATION, EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Setting the stage for the expert group meeting, the first session, moderated by Cheryl Sawyer, Population Division of UN DESA, included two presentations providing an overview of linkages between population, education and sustainable development as well as their programmatic implications.

Nicole Mun Sim Lai, Population Division of UN DESA noted that the present expert group meeting would welcome fresh topics, data, and empirical findings, given that the Commission's had last reviewed the topic of education at its thirty-sixth session in 2003. A first and direct link between population and education was the need to forecast school-age populations. Second, increasing longevity would increase demand for life-long learning, accelerated by new digital technologies. Third, demographic change presented challenges of for investments in human capital, which at the aggregate level, ranged between 3 and 7 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in countries with high and low proportions of youth. However, at per capita level, the percentage of the GDP invested per person from birth to age 21 exhibited large differences across countries and regions that were correlated with levels of fertility or the population age structure.

The presenter stressed the important impact of education on fertility, marriage and family formation, mortality, morbidity and health, and migration. Correlations between educational attainment and total fertility rates and life expectancy at birth across countries had persisted over time. The population-education nexus was important for the achievement of multiple SDGs due to its impacts on inclusion and on macro-economic trends. In particular, economic growth and the fiscal sustainability of public sector programmes were influenced by demographic, education and gender dividends and by me. Education also impacted individual well-being, including autonomy, access to health and economic opportunity. The interlinkages between population and education were also integral to the call from the Secretary General in "Our Common Agenda" to place long-term, intergenerational thinking at the heart of national governance and the multilateral system.¹

Sandile Simelane, UNFPA, presented an overview of programmes pertinent to the theme. Different levels of interventions were needed to improve access to education and learning outcomes. Child-centred interventions included feeding programmes, school-based health programmes and merit-based scholarships. Household-level interventions included measures such as unconditional and conditional cash transfers to remove financial burdens from families and interventions to stimulate parental involvement and investment in children's education. School-level interventions aimed to improve students' access to quality teaching as well as to appropriate classroom materials and equipment. Lastly, system-level interventions could include school-based management interventions, community-based monitoring interventions, public-private partnerships and private provision of schooling. A systematic review of studies conducted in 52 low- and middle-income countries had found that cash transfer programmes had the most substantial and consistent beneficial effects on school participation, whereas community-based monitoring, low-cost private schools, new infrastructure and school feeding had promising effects. To improve learning outcomes, structured pedagogy programmes had the largest and most consistent positive effects, with promising

¹ https://www.un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/assets/pdf/Common_Agenda_Report_English.pdf

effects for merit-based scholarships, school feeding, extra time in school and remedial education. Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) was highlighted as a key component of UNFPA's strategy for empowering young people. CSE was most effective when taught over several years by integrating age-appropriate information based on the developing capacities of young people. Finally, the presentation stressed the need to focus on education quality at all levels and in all settings, including broad and flexible adult education and lifelong learning to complement and supplement to formal schooling.

During the discussion, a government representative called for a focus on SDG 4, including lifelong learning and access to quality education, in the forthcoming report of the Secretary-General on the special theme of the fifty-sixth session of the CPD, as well as an emphasis on Africa, school feeding and gender parity in education. Even though age-appropriate education in sexual and reproductive health was a part of the ICPD Programme of Action, the speaker stressed that it would be important to acknowledge that the concept of CSE was not included in the Programme of Action and suggested that reports prepared for the CPD should abide by internationally agreed terminology.

C. GLOBAL AND REGIONAL TRENDS IN THE SCHOOL-AGE POPULATION AND ENROLMENT

Session II, moderated by Patrick Gerland, Population Division of UN DESA, examined trends in the school-age population (SAP) and in school enrolment and completion, as well as use of spatialized data for education planning.

Danan Gu, Population Division of UN DESA, presented an overview of global and regional estimates and projections in the SAP, defined as the population aged 6 to 18. The global SAP had reached nearly 1.7 billion in 2022 and slight additional growth was projected with a peak around 2025. The share of the SAP in the total population globally had been declining since the early 1970s. Sub-Saharan Africa had the highest share of population in school ages at 51 per cent in 2021 compared to 21 per cent in Europe and Northern America. Sub-Saharan Africa, Northern Africa and Western Asia and Oceania were expected to experience an increase in their SAP between 2021 and 2050, whereas a decline in SAP was projected for all other regions. Between 2050 and 2100, only sub-Saharan Africa was projected to record continued growth in the SAP. There was a negative association between completion of upper secondary school and growth rate of the SAP, underlining the challenge that most sub-Saharan African countries faced in achieving SDG 4.

Amélie Gagnon, International Institute for Educational Planning, UNESCO, described a method for producing spatial school-age population estimates that could be used for planning and managing education systems. Planning educational services required population estimates at the micro-level, by single years of age, because education statistics were generally calculated for specific ages and groups. It was also noted that boundaries of school districts and administrative subdivisions often differed, requiring spatially disaggregated data. To date, population data had been available by single years of age only at an aggregate level, whereas population data spatially disaggregated at 100sq meter level was only available in five-year age intervals. The new method estimated school-age populations by applying Sprague multipliers to raster data. The results were illustrated with several maps projecting various categories of school age population for Togo. Other applications of the method included estimates of travel time to school and exposure of the SAP to natural hazards. Policy benefits of the approach included the increased capacity to plan, manage and monitor education delivery and the possibility to have more targeted interventions and responses, as well as a more efficient allocation of resources and better monitoring of the progress toward the achievement of the SDGs at the sub-national level.

Bilal Barakat, independent consultant, presented trends in the number of out-of-school children and in education enrolment and completion rates and discussed the implications of these trends for the achievement of SDG 4. Since the adoption of the World Declaration on Education for All at the World Conference on Education for All, held in March 1990, the number of out-of-school school children had decreased worldwide and there had been a reduction of the gender gap in school enrolment in most countries. Between 1990 and 2020, absolute enrolment figures had significantly increased globally, especially in sub-

Saharan Africa. Although the global growth in absolute enrolment in primary education had recently slowed down, secondary school enrolment continued to rise. However, school enrolment growth patterns differed when the data were disaggregated by region and gender. Aligned with the global trend, Central and Southern Asia had experienced a sharp decline in the number of out-of-school children between 2000 and 2010, and a more moderate decline since then. By contrast, the number of out-of-school children in sub-Saharan Africa had increased during the same period. Approximately 30 per cent of girls of secondary school age in low-income countries were not enrolled in education. With the continuation of current trends, universal lower secondary school enrolment would not be achieved by 2030. Even though school completion rates in sub-Saharan Africa and in a number of low-income countries continued to increase, this growth was projected to stagnate in coming years. Governments would need to invest much more to reach the most marginalized populations in order to achieve further gains in school completion. Low-income countries had only recently passed the 50 per cent threshold for primary completion, far behind the rate for other countries. Girls' chances of completing school had improved faster than boys', even though in some countries girls continued to face challenges accessing education and were falling further behind in education due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the discussion, panelists responded to inquiries regarding the new spatial methodology and the availability of data used to estimate school-age populations, and on issues related to equal educational opportunity for all children. Togo had been used as an illustration for the potential of the new methodology as data from other countries were not available yet. To improve opportunities for education access and completion, it was recommended to invest more in teacher recruitment, school infrastructure and public transportation.

D. IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON MAJOR EDUCATIONAL LEVELS AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Session III, moderated by Astra Bonini, Division for Sustainable Development Goals of UN DESA, assessed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education and also addressed lifelong learning and digital skills.

Daniela Trucco, United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, presented research on children's and youth education, digital access and inclusion in Latin America during the COVID-19 pandemic. With the longest interruption of face-to-face education of any region, on average about 70 weeks of total or partial interruption, schoolchildren in Latin America and the Caribbean were behind in the development of cognitive skills, had lost learning opportunities and were vulnerable to dropping out. For almost 20 years, the region had experienced significant progress in the proportion of youth completing some form of education, despite a considerable gap of 46 percentage points in the secondary school completion between the richest and the poorest quintiles in 2018 and only a 4 per cent tertiary completion rate among the lower-income youth population. Prior to the pandemic, learning deficits in Latin America were already large. Half of sixth grade students performed at the lowest level in mathematics and, nearly half of 15-year-old students did not meet reading literacy basic levels in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), compared to 24 per cent of students in OECD countries. The region was not prepared for the abrupt shift from onsite to online learning solutions. Unequal distribution of Internet access and digital skills had widened educational inequalities during the pandemic. Lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic included maintaining face-to-face school attendance, adapting to learning recovery, re-engaging disconnected students to recover from learning losses, and embracing digital education to address inequalities in education.

Prachi Srivastava, Western University of Canada, presented trends in education during the COVID-19 pandemic and on rebuilding education systems for recovery. Education systems around the world had been affected by school closures and abrupt changes due to COVID-19. The extent of the interruption varied between and within regions because federal and decentralized education systems responded to the COVID-19 crisis differently. Abating existing inequities, which had been accentuated by the pandemic, required

detailed and disaggregated data for people in vulnerable situations. Such data was needed to support planning and to provide in-depth analysis in order to elucidate differences among countries, within countries and between communities and households. A crisis-sensitive approach to educational policy planning and recovery involved four key considerations: i) managing a crisis and instituting first responses, ii) planning for reopening with appropriate measures, including to account for potential further interruptions, iii) sustained crisis-sensitive planning that included assessing risks for the most vulnerable, and iv) adjusting existing policies and strengthening policy dialogue.

Arne Carlsen, independent researcher, formerly associated with the UNESCO Institute of Lifelong Learning, discussed the concept of lifelong learning (LLL), which combined all learning pertaining to formal, non-formal and informal learning. International organizations had emphasized LLL, adult learning and continuing education in their recent policy recommendations, encouraging Governments transform education systems into LLL systems, in line with the call in SDG 4 for quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all. The economic and social basis for LLL at national, regional and global levels had been the rapid changes in skills needed to meet new demands concerning the greening of economies, automation, climate change, artificial intelligence and ageing societies. These skills had been termed transversal skills or 21st century skills. In 2016, the World Economic Forum had characterized these changes as the fourth Industrial Revolution and had analyzed how artificial intelligence, robotics, automation and big data had led to disruption in all industries, necessitating reskilling and upskilling at all levels. The International Labour Organization (ILO) in its report *Work for a Brighter Future* had emphasized that LLL skills should be integrated into all curricula at all levels.

Jane Munga, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, addressed the issues of education, digital technologies and the future of work in Africa. By 2035, this region would contribute more new entrants to the global workforce each year than the rest of the world combined and would have a working-age population of 1.3 billion by 2050. Studies from international financial institutions² suggest that if digital technology and skills were harnessed correctly by Governments and businesses, sub-Saharan African countries could benefit from adopting digital technology by developing the “gig economy” which has the potential to create 230 million digital jobs in the region by 2030. To unleash the promise of digital technologies for job creation, Governments needed to make basic physical and digital infrastructure available and affordable, support the development of tools and programmes to upskill the stock of low-skilled workers, upgrade the skills of workers in the informal sector, in particular farming, to enhance productivity, and expand the coverage of social protection for all workers to spur entrepreneurial risk-taking and the willingness of workers to take digital jobs. A case study in Kenya, the Ajira Digital Program, had provided nearly 2 million young digital workers with dignified work, training and mentorship, access to infrastructure, and had developed trust and confidence in digital work. Governments could support a business environment supporting the gig economy through policies, laws and regulation. Partnerships between Governments, the private sector, academic institutions and local communities were important to promote innovation in the gig economy space.

In the discussion, panelists emphasized the importance of regular school attendance and traditional face-to-face education. The COVID-19 pandemic had spurred increased government spending on social welfare and some services, but not necessarily on education systems. Up to 2019, one-third of countries had not met the key finance benchmarks for Governments outlined in the Education 2030 Framework for Action, adopted by UNESCO Member States in 2015, a situation exacerbated by the pandemic. The pandemic had made it more difficult for countries to mobilize the resources needed for the achievement of SDGs. Africa had received funding for digital programmes from development partners and momentum would need to be maintained to reduce digital inequality and widen employment opportunities for all.

² World Economic Forum, 2018, *The Future of Jobs Report*; IFC, 2019, *Digital Skills in Sub-Saharan Africa Spotlight on Ghana*; World Bank, 2019, *World Development Report 2019: The Changing Nature of Work*

E. EDUCATION, FERTILITY AND FAMILY FORMATION

Suguru Mizunoya, Data and Analytics Section, UNICEF, moderated Session IV, which focused on relationships between education, fertility and family formation, including the issues of child marriage and early childbearing.

Anne Goujon, Population and Just Societies, IIASA, reported that research findings generally confirmed the well-established link between increased education and lower fertility in most countries and across time. In sub-Saharan Africa, some countries had experienced stalls or even reversals of their fertility declines that could be attributed to stalls in education progress. Moreover, expansion of the quantity of education at the expense of quality could interfere with the association between women's education and lower fertility. High priority should be placed on going beyond increases in enrolment and completion of education to ensure the full implementation of SDG 4 on quality education. Evidence showed that women's education and family planning programmes reduced both wanted and unwanted fertility. Although women with higher education bore fewer children on average than less educated women in low- and middle-income countries, educational differentials became smaller as fertility reached a lower level. In some low-fertility countries educational attainment was positively associated with fertility level. Education was expected to play a role in future fertility decline in high fertility countries.

Michael Boakye Yiadom, University of Cape Coast, discussed fertility, demographic change and education planning and financing in Africa. The population in Africa was projected to increase rapidly from about 1.3 billion to about 2.5 billion people by 2050 with one-third of the world population living in Africa by the end of the century. Based on these demographic changes, Africa was poised to become the center of global affairs within a generation. However, equitable access to education was crucial to capitalize on this future potential. Achieving the goals set in the African Union's Agenda 2063, "The Africa We Want", would require political leadership, commitment and data-driven policies, for example for fertility, migration and children out of school. Today, many education interventions were externally financed with no planning for sustainability. Gaps in delivery, which had been identified at school, local, national and regional levels, should be addressed with effective accountability measures. In addition to issues of inclusivity, equity and access, curricula at all levels should be reviewed to ensure continuing relevance. Policies should encourage educated Africans to remain in the region and contribute to its development, rather than migrate abroad. Countries were facing serious economic issues in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. The speaker highlighted themes from the Transforming Education Summit that should be prioritized, including inclusive, equitable, safe and healthy schools; learning and skills; teachers; digital learning and transformation; and education financing.

Thoai Ngô, Population Council, made a presentation on education, child marriage and early childbearing. He reviewed trends in educational enrolment of adolescents as well as in child marriage in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Over 250 million children, adolescents and youth of primary and secondary school age were currently out of school. In addition, 12 million girls were married before the age of 18 each year. Each year, 21 million girls aged 15-19 years became pregnant and 12 million girls aged 15-19 years gave birth. About one-third of girls had been married before age 18 in 44 countries that had conducted a Demographic and Health Survey during the last decade and more than 20 per cent of girls had begun childbearing by age 18. Identifying ties between marriage, childbearing and education—for example, whether pregnancy precipitated marriage and school dropout, or whether girls who left school for other reasons were more likely to marry or to get pregnant—was important to inform more effective policies and investment decisions. The speaker formulated four key recommendations, that is, i) to expand opportunities for adolescent girls and young women through investment in multi-sector empowerment interventions that include life-skills training, livelihoods training, gender-rights awareness training, exposure to future careers, and sexual and reproductive health training; ii) to utilize both global and national data and to identify gaps for geographic hotspots or marginalized populations; iii) to understand the drivers, such as local norms or poverty, for school dropout, child marriage and other events affecting adolescents

and to identify pathways to implement change; and iv) to consider the negative impacts from the climate crisis, pandemic and global recession in exacerbating barriers to education and livelihood opportunities.

During the discussion, one participant highlighted the importance of cross-sector interventions to prevent child marriage and early childbearing, by pointing to the experience from a campaign in Sierra Leone.

F. EDUCATION, HEALTH AND MORTALITY

Session V, moderated by Nicole Mun Sim Lai, Population Division of UN DESA, addressed inequalities in health and mortality indicators by educational level and also examined gender-related barriers to education.

Nicole Haberland, Population Council, presented research on gender-related barriers to schooling. On the one hand, girls' school enrolment had dramatically increased, reaching gender parity globally at primary and secondary levels. On the other hand, gender disparities in enrolment and learning outcomes remained in some settings, with girls from the poorest households having the lowest attainment and worst learning outcomes and experiencing the biggest gender gaps. Challenges to improving education access and outcomes for these girls included conflicts between schooling and adult roles such as marriage or parenthood, and extended learning disruptions due to factors such as epidemics, environmental disasters or armed conflict. Whereas some barriers to education were shared by girls and boys, others were often more pronounced, or specific, for girls. These barriers could exist at the community, school or household level. A systematic review by the Population Council had identified effective interventions, with strong evidence, to address certain barriers to school. The inability to afford tuition and fees could be remedied by conditional cash transfers, scholarships or tuition and fee waivers; the lack of adequate food could be addressed by providing food in school or as take-home rations; and insufficient academic support could be solved through tutoring, remedial education or integrating technology into curriculum. Promising interventions, albeit with somewhat weaker evidence, also existed for addressing the inability to afford school materials by providing materials such as uniforms and textbooks free of charge. Further, it was found that school access could be improved by constructing new schools, building community schools and improving school transportation. Providing clean water and constructing or improving toilets at school could address lack of water and adequate sanitation in school settings. For other barriers, evidence on effectiveness of interventions was heterogeneous or lacking, and further research was needed. Additional evidence was also needed on implementation and effectiveness of life skills and sexuality education, although studies showed potential of these programmes for 21st century skills, gender attitudes and child marriage, sexual and reproductive health behaviour and outcomes, prevention of violence, and economic and educational outcomes.

Viju Raghupathi, Brooklyn College of the City University of New York, presented research findings on the influence of education on health in OECD countries. Using country-level data from OECD and World Bank (1995-2015), the analysis looked at associations of education variables such as adult education level, enrolment rates, rate of persons not in employment, education or training (NEET) and expected years of tertiary school education with health variables such as compulsory health expenditure, infant mortality, child vaccination rates, deaths from cancer, life expectancy, potential years of life lost and smoking rates. Among the education variables, tertiary education had the strongest association with health indicators including infant mortality, life expectancy and child vaccination rates. The NEET rate was associated with unfavorable child health outcomes. Potential years life lost was highlighted as a useful measure of health quality. The findings suggested that to improve health outcomes, Governments should focus on improving access to tertiary education and on preventing school dropout and unemployment among youth.

Yu-Tzu Wu, Population Health Sciences Institute, Newcastle University, presented evidence on relationships between education, health and mortality from ATHLOS (Aging Trajectories of Health: Longitudinal Opportunities and Synergies), a harmonized dataset combining surveys from 17 cohort studies on ageing across the world. The study examined trajectories of healthy ageing and the risk factors that may

influence healthy ageing. A healthy ageing score (HAS) was developed consisting of 41 items related to functional ability, cognitive function, physical function, sensory impairment and sleep problems. To improve comparability across contexts, educational attainment was harmonized across countries into four levels (less than primary, primary, secondary and tertiary). A multi-level model was used to explore the relationship between educational level and HAS, while controlling for other factors. The analysis found that educational attainment was positively associated with HAS among those aged 70 or above, indicating that individuals with higher levels of education had better health. Clear differences were found in the overall level of health at the time of the baseline survey (age 70), but no differences were uncovered in the rate of change in health over time. This result implied that education did not seem to influence the rate of health decline later in the life course, but rather set individuals at different levels of health earlier in life. Individuals who attained a secondary or tertiary degree had about 30 per cent lower risk of dying at any given time than those who had completed primary education or less.

The discussion further explored gender-related barriers. It was noted that the relative importance of different barriers was context specific. In some contexts, such as South Asia, child marriage was a greater issue than in others. It was observed that if the diffusion of education continued and increasing numbers of individuals completed tertiary education, the average level of health in populations would improve. To increase tertiary education attendance Governments had to first focus on ensuring primary and secondary enrolment and completion in order for students to enter and complete tertiary education.

G. POPULATION, EDUCATION AND MIGRATION

Pär Liljert, International Organization for Migration (IOM), moderated Session VI.

Jose Fabio Jimenez, IOM, emphasized the importance of education as a fundamental right, and as essential for migrants to be able to participate in equal conditions in countries of destination. Access to education and livelihood opportunities could ensure that migrants had opportunities to participate in the labour market, allowing them to contribute to both countries of destination and countries of origin. The linkages between education and migration had been identified in the context of the SDGs, particularly target 4.b on promoting student mobility, and in several objectives of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. However, in a study of 84 countries with data on migration governance frameworks, migrants with a regular status had the same access to government-funded education and vocational training as citizens in only 54 per cent of countries, and all migrants regardless of status had this access in only 39 per cent of countries.³ As a result, a large number of school-aged migrant children, most notably those in an irregular situation or refugees and asylum seekers, were denied the right to education. In most of the top migrant-hosting countries, foreign-born youth aged 15 to 24 were more likely to be neither in education nor employment or training (NEET) than the native-born. Educating migrant children was essential to meet SDG 4, and more broadly to achieve economic and social benefits such as improved livelihoods, better health outcomes, reductions to gender inequalities and enhanced political participation. Labour migration policies needed to recognize the conditions that labour markets impose on migrant workers and recognize their skills and competencies. Approximately 50 per cent of countries participated in common qualification frameworks to recognize the skills and qualifications of migrants. IOM promoted partnerships to facilitate recognition of skills and benefit both migrants and host countries. Access to education and lifelong learning opportunities could help to ensure that migrants had needed skills to be successful in the labour market and adapt to the changing nature of employment opportunities.

Soledad Coloma, independent researcher and consultant, presented three major trends regarding high skilled migration. First, high-skilled migration was occurring at unprecedented rates. Latin America and the Caribbean had experienced the largest outflow of highly skilled workers to OECD countries between 1990 and 2007, with a growth of 155 per cent, followed by Africa (152 per cent) and Asia (145 per cent).

³ International Organization for Migration (IOM), 2022. *Migration Governance Indicators Data and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration: A Baseline Report*. IOM, Geneva.

Second, the global competition for highly skilled migrants had increased substantially, resulting in a more rapid growth of high-skilled migration as compared to medium and low-skilled migration. Third, highly skilled women now made up a sizable portion of the world's mobility of talent. This trend was partly due to a rapid increase of the number of high-skilled migrant women from Africa and Latin America, although the absolute number of highly-skilled women migrating from Europe was much higher. Brain waste, defined as the under-utilization of migrant talent in the host nation, resulted in missed opportunities for countries of origin and destination, as well as difficulties for migrants in their careers and for their families, while brain drain reduced the stock of human capital of countries of origin.

Ayman Zohry, American University in Cairo, presented on migration and education in the Arab region, laying out the complexity of migration in the region. The region was both a source of migrants, who migrated primarily to Europe and North America, and a place of destination with 30 million migrants residing in the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council and 40 million in the region in total. Moreover, the Arab region was also a region of origin and destination of forced migration, as half of the world's refugees (Palestinians, Syrians, Sudanese and Somalis) originated from or resided in the region. It was also a transit region, where millions were waiting to depart to other countries, especially from Northern Africa and Eastern Mediterranean to Europe. With such a heterogeneous group of migrants the relationship between migration and education was complex, depending on the type of migrants involved. Whereas labour migrants typically arrived in the host country with some level of education that qualified them for employment, refugees, on the other hand, needed access to quality education. Nationals leaving to study abroad sought educational opportunity in the host country. Brain drain and head hunting represented significant losses of skilled labour and professionals in countries of origin.

The ensuing discussion further explored the issues of brain drain and waste. Panelists stressed that the Governments in countries of origin could not halt mobility but could make labour markets more attractive for qualified professionals to stay. IOM supported the skills development of migrant workers and worked to match prospective migrant workers with employment opportunities in countries of destination with a view to obtaining better outcomes for migrants and countries of destination. Participants suggested that the Commission on Population and Development could play an important role in the global discussion of population and education as it intersected with the topic of migration.

H. INTERACTIVE DISCUSSION: POLICY CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Jorge Bravo, Population Division of UN DESA, moderated the last session, which included three presentations followed by an interactive discussion.

Olanrewaju Olaniyan, University of Ibadan, Nigeria, noted that the rapid population growth of sub-Saharan Africa, from 1.15 billion inhabitants in 2022 to more than 2 billion by 2050, prompted the need to recruit an additional 17 million teachers by 2030 in order to achieve universal enrolment. Of this number, 8.7 million teachers would be needed to fill additional posts to keep up with growing enrolment and 6.3 million to replace teachers leaving the profession. Some African countries such as Central African Republic, Chad, Malawi, Mozambique and Niger would need to increase the number of secondary teachers by at least 15 per cent each year in order to keep up with increasing student numbers. Major challenges in sub-Saharan Africa included the lack of harmonization of teacher qualifications, the lack of teachers teaching subjects they were qualified to teach, the male-dominated teacher workforce and the ratio of students to teaching staff, which was twice as high as the global average. Strategies to attract and retain qualified and motivated teachers included stable contracts, attractive remuneration packages, a structured pathway for academic career progression, and professional development opportunities. Significant spending would be required to address the shortage of trained teachers and should specifically target teacher inequalities related to region, gender, disability and poverty. An estimated of \$5.2 billion would be needed to fund the salaries of additional teachers required in sub-Saharan Africa in the next five years. Efforts to close this funding gap

needed to begin with increased domestic spending, but many countries were unable or unwilling to allocate the recommended 20 per cent of government spending to education.

Joanna Herat, UNESCO, addressed education in relation to population issues, including comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) in developed and developing countries. She observed that brain maturation and cognitive, emotional and social development continued through childhood and adolescence into early adulthood. Today, adolescents received much conflicting information about sex, relationships and related issues. The lack of universal, good quality CSE had serious consequences. For example, each year, 10 million unintended teenage pregnancies occurred and 3 million girls aged 15 to 19 risked their lives by undergoing unsafe abortions. Complications from pregnancy and childbirth were the leading cause of death for girls aged 15 to 19. Further, teenage sexual relationships were not always consensual or safe as one in four ever-married/partnered adolescent girls aged 15 to 19 were estimated to have been subjected to physical or sexual violence from an intimate partner at least once in their lifetime. In addition, HIV affected adolescent girls and young women disproportionately. The presenter observed that effective CSE was found to contribute to delayed initiation of sexual intercourse, reduced sexual risk taking, increased use of condoms and contraception and more egalitarian attitudes about gender roles. Even though around 80 per cent of all countries had laws mandating sexuality education and had incorporated sexuality education into formal national curricula, these programmes were often limited to biological aspects, while ignoring social or relationship aspects. To be effective and successful, CSE—or a contextually named programme on education for health, including sexual and reproductive health, and well-being—needed to be clearly mandated in policy and legal frameworks backed by budgets and robust implementation. Investments in teacher training and support were also required. CSE should be delivered in participatory, learner-centered and culturally relevant ways, within a whole school approach to safety and health. Coverage should be increased both in and out of school as well as in times of crisis. Young people should be fully involved in discussions about curricular content and delivery channels.

Vegard Skirbekk, Columbia Ageing Center, Columbia University, stated that education had been shown to improve old age health and cognition. Therefore, countries should invest in education, health and promoting healthy lifestyles. The most common metric of aging was the “old age dependency ratio” (OADR), defined as the ratio of older people (aged 65 years and above) to working-aged people (aged 20-64 years). An alternative metric, called the “cognitively adjusted dependency ratio” (CADR), showed that demographically “older” countries were effectively younger when accounting for cognitive function. A new metric, the “health adjusted dependency ratio” (HADR), which depended on health rather than age (the ratio of those in bad health to those in good health) had been proposed. The HADR showed a lower burden than the OADR for many countries in Western Europe, the Americas, Asia and Africa with the reverse being the case in Eastern Europe. The OADR probably overestimated the burden of population ageing in many demographically older countries and underestimated the ageing burden in many demographically younger countries. The challenges associated with ageing were more universal than previously thought, and the world could not easily be divided into younger and older groups of nations.

In the interactive discussion, one delegate raised concerns about the terminology and content of sexuality education, noting that cultural norms around sexuality and age-appropriate content could vary by country and suggesting that recent international guidelines were considered controversial in some countries. Another delegate expressed support for the process of developing international guidelines and proposed that in order to address contentious issues, the Commission could discuss what had and hadn’t worked in different settings around the world. Other points raised by participants included the centrality of dignity and the link between education and health sectors, particularly for adolescent-friendly health services. In response, Joanna Herat stressed the value of feedback provided by Member States as well as conversations with young people, noted that guidelines were updated as new evidence became available and called for a joint approach between health and education providers to ensure that young people had the information they needed. Schools were generally considered as a more effective site for sexuality education than out-of-school settings because of the continuity of learning over many years.

I. CLOSING OF THE MEETING

John Wilmoth thanked the participants for their contributions, which would be valuable in preparing reports of the Secretary-General as well as in organizing the fifty-sixth session of the CPD more broadly. The meeting had underscored the slow progress in meeting the aspirations of SDG 4. It had highlighted new evidence on the influence of education on people's life chances and on population trends, and intersections of education with key priorities of the Cairo Programme of Action, including gender equality, opportunities for girls, adolescents and youth, and the prevention of early marriage and childbearing. It had also featured emerging topics such as incorporating holistic "21st-century skills" in lifelong learning, ensuring access to digital technologies and skills, and providing inclusive and resilient education systems for all. The importance of timely availability of data on education and population across countries and regions and at all geographical levels was highlighted by many participants. In particular, data disaggregated by age, sex, educational attainment, geographic level and other key characteristics was critical to provide the evidence base for building inclusive societies. Education and population processes were similar in that they were long-term processes that unfolded relatively slowly over years and decades. Short-term thinking caused these processes to be undervalued in public budgets and decision making. Putting long-term, intergenerational thinking at the heart of national governance and the multinational system was important for giving proper attention to population and education processes.

ANNEX 1: ORGANIZATION OF WORK

6 and 7 September 2022

UNITED NATIONS EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON POPULATION, EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Day 1: Tuesday 6 September 2022

EDT

12:00 – 12:15 noon	15 mins	Opening remarks <ul style="list-style-type: none">• John Wilmoth, Director, Population Division, UN DESA• Rachel Snow, Chief, Population and Development Branch, UNFPA• Christopher Castle, Director a.i., Division of Peace and Sustainable Development, UNESCO
12:15 – 12:45 am		Session I. Overview of Population, Education and Sustainable Development
	20 mins	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Moderator: Cheryl Sawyer, Senior Population Affairs Officer, Population Division, UN DESA• Mun Sim Lai, Population Affairs Officer, Population Division, UN DESA. <i>An overview of population, education and sustainable development</i>• Sandile Simelane, Technical Specialist, Population and Development Branch, UNFPA. <i>Population, education and sustainable development: A review of pertinent programmes</i>
	10 mins	Q&A
12:45 – 1:00 pm	15 mins	Break

1:00 – 1:45 pm

Session II. Global and regional trends in the school-age population and enrolment

- Trends in the school-age population by level, gender and geographical location
- Trends in enrolment & completion rates in different regions and countries, and implications for progress/gaps in achieving SDG 4

30 mins

- **Moderator:** Patrick Gerland, Chief, Population Estimates and Projections, Population Division, UN DESA
- Danan Gu, Population Affairs Officer, Population Division, UN DESA. *New estimates and projections of global and regional trends in the school-age population*
- Amélie Gagnon, Senior Programme Specialist, International Institute for Educational Planning, UNESCO. *New spatialized school-age populations: estimates for planning enrolment, teaching staff and other resources*
- Bilal Barakat, independent researcher and consultant. *Trends in educational enrolment and completion rates, and their implications for the achievement of SDG 4*

15 mins

Q&A

1:45 – 2:00 pm

15 mins

Break

2:00 – 3:00 pm

Session III. Impact of COVID-19 on major educational levels and lifelong learning

- Impact of COVID-19 on school attendance, learning and nutrition
- Access to digital technologies, lifelong learning and the future of work in developed and developing countries

40 mins

- **Moderator:** Astra Bonini, Senior Sustainable Development Officer, Division for Sustainable Development Goals, UN DESA
- Arne Carlsen, Former Director of the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, Denmark. *A global perspective of lifelong learning*
- Daniela Trucco, Senior Social Affairs Officer, UN ECLAC. *Children's and youth education, digital access and inclusion in Latin America*
- Prachi Srivastava, Associate Professor, Western University. *Trends in education and COVID-19: Rebuilding education systems for recovery*

- Jane Munga, Fellow, Africa Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. *Education, digital technologies and the future of work in Africa*

20 mins

Q&A

Day 2: Wednesday, 7 September

EDT

9:00 – 9:45 am

Session IV. Education, fertility and family formation

- Fertility trends by educational level: the international experience
- Education and family formation: age at marriage, age at first birth and completed fertility
- **Moderator:** Suguru Mizunoya, Senior Adviser on Education, UNICEF
- Anne Goujon, Director, Population and Just Societies, IIASA. *Educational attainment and fertility declines*
- Michael Boakye-Yiadom, Director General, Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (IEPA), University of Cape Coast. *Fertility, demographic change and education planning and financing in Africa*
- Thoai Ngô, Vice President of Social and Behavioral Science Research, Population Council. *Education, child marriage and early childbearing*

30 mins

15 mins

Q&A

9:45 – 10:00 am

15 mins

Break

10:00 – 10:45 am

Session V. Education, health and mortality

- Mortality by educational level within and across countries
- Education access to sexual and reproductive health care services
- Comprehensive sexuality education
- **Moderator:** Nicole Mun Sim Lai, Population Affairs Officer, Population Division, UN DESA
- Nicole Haberland, Senior Associate, The Population Council. *Gender-related barriers to schooling: What do we know about the effects of sexuality and life skills education?*
- Viju Raghupathi, Professor, Koppelman School of Business, Brooklyn College of the City University of New York. *The influence of education on health in OECD countries*

30 mins

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yu-Tzu Wu, Academic Track Fellow, Population Health Sciences Institute, Newcastle University. <i>Education, health and mortality across the world: evidence from the ATHLOS project</i>
	15 mins	Q&A
10:45 – 11:00 am	15 mins	Break
11:00 – 11:45 am		Session VI. Population, education and migration
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High and low-skilled migration and their effects on origin and destination countries • Access of migrants to education and other basic services • Moderator: Pär Liljert, Director of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Office to the United Nations in New York
	30 mins	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soledad Coloma, independent researcher and consultant. <i>Brain drain and human capital formation in developing countries</i> • Jose Fabio Jiménez, Head of Labour Mobility and Markets Unit, International Organization for Migration (IOM). <i>Migration policies related to education: skilled vs. unskilled migrant workers, access to education by migrants and their families</i> • Ayman Zohry, Visiting Professor, Department of Sociology, American University in Cairo. <i>Migration and Education in the Arab region</i>
	15 mins	Q&A
11:45 – 12:00 noon	15 mins	Break
12:00 – 1:00 pm		Session VII. Interactive discussion: Policy challenges and recommendations
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National and regional experiences in the integration of population in education planning and strategies • Education on population and sustainable development, comprehensive sexuality education: good practices and new directions • Other key topics for the Secretary-General’s report to effectively support the Commission’s mandate to review and assess the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and its contribution to achieving the SDGs

- **Moderator:** Jorge Bravo, Chief, Population Policies and Development Branch, Population Division, UN DESA

Introductory remarks:

30 mins

- Olanrewaju Olaniyan, Professor, University of Ibadan. *Improving the conditions of teachers and quality of teaching in schools across African countries*
- Joanna Herat, Senior Programme Specialist, Sexuality Education, SRH and Gender, UNESCO. *Education in population matters, including comprehensive sexuality education in developed and developing countries*
- Vegard Skirbekk, Professor of Population and Family Health, Columbia University. *Ageing, health and investments in education over the lifecycle: an international perspective*

Q&A

30 mins

1:00 – 1:10 pm

10 mins

Closing remarks

- John Wilmoth, Director, Population Division, UN DESA

ANNEX 2: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

6 and 7 September 2022

UNITED NATIONS EXPERT GROUP MEETING ON POPULATION, EDUCATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Population Division
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