



**UNITED NATIONS
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
POPULATION DIVISION**

**THE RELEVANCE OF POPULATION ASPECTS FOR THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE
MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Commission on Population and Development, at its thirty-seventh session, requested a report on the contribution of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), in all its aspects, to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration. In response to this request, the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat organized a Seminar on the Relevance of Population Aspects for the Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which was held at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 17 to 19 November 2004. Invited experts and representatives of agencies, funds, programmes and the regional commissions of the United Nations system participated in the Seminar.

The present report presents the proceedings of the Seminar. The report is intended to provide input to the forthcoming review of the progress made in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at the United Nations Summit in 2005, as well as to the debate on the issue in the Commission on Population and Development.

General conclusions

There was broad agreement at the Seminar that implementing all the aspects of the Programme of Action of the ICPD and the key actions for its further implementation would make a major contribution to the achievement of the MDGs, as well as to the attainment of other internationally agreed development goals.

Because the aim of both the MDGs and the ICPD Programme of Action is to improve human welfare and promote sustainable development, there is a high degree of compatibility and coherence between the two (see table 1). Indeed, some of the goals and objectives included in the ICPD Programme of Action are almost identical to certain MDGs as, for instance, those pertaining to the reduction of child mortality and maternal health or those on increased access to education.

In some cases, the measures recommended in the ICPD Programme of Action provide a more comprehensive, explicit and detailed set of guidelines for the achievement of certain goals than those implied by the MDGs, particularly with regard to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. In addition, key aspects of the ICPD Programme of Action are not part of the MDGs or their associated targets, aspects that have significant bearing on the achievement of the MDGs themselves. Most prominent among these are the ICPD goals in the area of reproductive health, including family planning, and issues relating to migration and development.

The relevance of population aspects in relation to specific MDGs

Poverty and Hunger (MDG 1)

Sustained economic growth is a necessary condition for reducing poverty and hunger, particularly in the least developed countries. In other less developed countries, where average income levels are higher, policies to improve income distribution would also make a key contribution to reducing poverty and hunger.

Recent evidence has shown that changes in the age structure, resulting from significant declines in fertility, may lead to a substantial “demographic dividend” if appropriate economic and fiscal policies are adopted to take advantage of the increase in the proportion of the population in the working ages relative to that of children. Today, the countries with high fertility and high rates of population growth tend to be those with high rates of poverty and hunger and low rates of economic growth. In the least developed countries, nearly 40 per cent of the population is under age 15. Although the desired number of children in these countries remains relatively high, the number of children women have surpasses the number desired, and fertility levels have started to decline in some of the least developed countries. In countries where the transition to low fertility is just starting, implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action, including expanded access to family planning services, is expected to help speed up the demographic transition and give rise to the demographic dividend.

Because the MDGs are mutually reinforcing, achievement of MDGs 2 to 4—pertaining to education, child health and mortality, and gender equality—will facilitate the reduction of poverty and hunger. These MDG goals correspond closely to goals contained in the ICPD Programme of Action. Improvement of educational attainment and child health would increase human capital and thus labour productivity, which would help increase incomes and therefore reduce poverty and hunger. Similarly, the empowerment of women would allow, among other things, to increase their earning potential and their power to negotiate for better distribution of resources within the household.

The ICPD Programme of Action recognizes the impact that international migration can have on development. Since the ICPD was convened in 1994, remittances from international migrants have risen to become the second largest source of foreign exchange for developing countries, following foreign direct investment, and they amount to more than double the current levels of official development assistance. Remittances can play a role in reducing poverty in the countries of origin of migrants.

Universal Primary Education (MDG 2)

Both the ICPD Programme of Action and MDG 2 call for achieving universal primary education. The Programme of Action also stresses that there should be universal access to quality education, with particular priority given to primary and technical education and job training. That is, full implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action would entail the attainment of MDG 2.

Rapid population growth is an obstacle to the achievement of universal primary education in many developing countries, especially the least developed. Although developing countries have often succeeded in increasing enrolment ratios in the face of rapid growth of the school-age population, this achievement has typically meant significant increases in class sizes and student/teacher ratios, effectively reducing the quality of education received. Reductions of population growth brought

about by a reduction of unwanted fertility would facilitate greater investments in education on a per student basis.

Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (MDG 3)

Both the ICPD Programme of Action and MDG 3 are concerned with gender equality and women's empowerment, and hence are fully compatible. However, consistent with the Beijing Platform for Action, the ICPD Programme of Action sets a broader agenda for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women than MDG 3 and its associated targets, and it provides detailed guidance on how to achieve the stated goals.

The MDG target in relation to goal 3 stresses the elimination of gender differences in education. Although ensuring that boys and girls reach similar levels of educational attainment is important, it is not the only policy to empower women. Both the ICPD Programme of Action and 1995 Beijing Platform for Action identify a wide range of actions needed to fully empower women. In particular, measures that enable women to control their reproduction are crucial for achieving gender equality.

Child Mortality (MDG 4)

The ICPD Programme of Action and the key actions for its further implementation include goals for reducing child mortality that closely parallel the target for MDG 4. Several recommendations for action included in the ICPD Programme of Action can contribute to the achievement of MDG 4, including expanding women's access to family planning services so as to increase the interval between births; promoting breast-feeding; improving child nutrition and health care; preventing and treating childhood diseases, particularly through vaccination and oral rehydration therapy, and providing safe drinking water. Although mortality under age 5 declined substantially during the 1980s in many countries, the pace of decline was disappointing during most of the 1990s, partly because of the expanding HIV/AIDS epidemic. Controlling this disease will be necessary if MDG 4 is to be met by most developing countries.

Maternal Mortality (MDG 5)

MDG 5 is largely equivalent to the ICPD Programme of Action's goal of reducing maternal mortality. The Programme of Action calls for a number of actions to achieve this goal. Access to trained birth attendants and emergency obstetric care are crucial for reducing maternal mortality. Other recommendations of the Programme of Action cover both preventive measures and measures related to treatment, including access to family planning to avoid unwanted pregnancy and early adolescent pregnancies and to guarantee adequate birth spacing; micronutrient supplementation to improve pregnant women's nutrition; and referral services for pregnancy, childbirth and abortion complications. The Programme of Action calls for the narrowing of disparities in access to such services within countries and between socio-economic, geographical and ethnic groups.

Although recent data indicate that maternal mortality is declining in many developing countries, the pace of decline appears insufficient to meet the MDG and ICPD goals for reduction in the maternal mortality ratio. Clearly, the implementation of the measures suggested in the Programme of Action would greatly contribute to reaching the target set by MDG 5 and the ICPD.

Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases (MDG 6)

The ICPD Programme of Action emphasizes the need to develop policies for the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, and the key actions for its further implementation urge Governments to ensure that HIV prevalence among persons aged 15-24 is reduced globally both in the short and in the longer run, a goal that is very similar to MDG 6. Achieving this goal would contribute to the achievement of other MDGs, including the reduction of poverty (MDG 1), the reduction of child mortality (MDG 4) and the reduction of maternal mortality (MDG 5). Conversely, as long as the HIV/AIDS epidemic continues to expand, it undermines achievement of other development goals. HIV/AIDS draws both public and private resources away from other development activities and depletes household incomes, thus impairing the achievement of other MDGs, including the reduction of hunger (MDG 1). The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) has identified HIV/AIDS as a major threat to the achievement of food security because the disease is depleting the agricultural labour force in the most affected developing countries.

The ICPD Programme of Action and the key actions for its further implementation identify a range of practical measures to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS. These include providing information and education to raise awareness and emphasize behavioural change; providing sex education and information to both sexes, including adolescents; promoting responsible sexual behaviour, including voluntary sexual abstinence; making widely available affordable condoms and drugs for the prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections; and taking action to control the quality of blood products and to ensure decontamination of equipment. The Programme of Action further recommends making information, education and counselling for responsible sexual behaviour and effective prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV, integral components of all reproductive and sexual-health services and facilitating the distribution of condoms through those services. These measures would contribute significantly to the control of the epidemic.

Ensure Environmental Sustainability (MDG 7)

The objective of ensuring environmental sustainability is emphasized in the ICPD Programme of Action, which urges Governments to ensure that population, environmental and poverty eradication factors are integrated in sustainable development policies, plans and programmes. Consistent with Agenda 21, and referring to it with regard to quantitative goals on the depletion and degradation of natural resources, the Programme of Action recommends the reduction of unsustainable consumption and production patterns. It further urges Governments to implement policies to address the ecological implications of inevitable future increases in population numbers and changes in the concentration and distribution of population, particularly in ecologically vulnerable areas and urban agglomerations. The key actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action further recommend improving the management and delivery of services for the growing urban agglomerations and putting in place enabling legislative and administrative instruments and adequate financial resources to meet the needs of all citizens, especially the urban poor. These recommendations are fully consistent with MDG 7 and underscore the importance of population aspects in the pursuit of sustainable development.

The ICPD Programme of Action also focuses on the needs of both the urban and the rural poor as well as under-served populations. In most developing countries, where urban dwellers have better access to education and health services than rural inhabitants, rural-urban migration is a means of improving the migrants' access to these and other services. However, persons living in slums, whether as long-term urban residents or as in-migrants, often have no better access to such services than rural residents. The Programme of Action recognizes that taking account of the spatial distribution of the population is important in ensuring adequate provision of services. Decentralization of authority in urban management, as recommended in the Programme of Action, has the potential of ensuring better responsiveness to the needs of local populations and is likely to play an important role in improving the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers, as called for by

the MDG 7, target 11.

Develop a Global Partnership for Development (MDG 8)

The ICPD Programme of Action addresses all the issues identified in the targets for MDG 8 but does not provide quantitative goals. The Programme of Action recognizes the importance of international cooperation in the implementation of population and development programmes. It urges the international community to continue to promote a supportive economic environment, particularly for developing countries and countries with economies in transition, in their attempts to achieve sustained economic growth by promoting an open, equitable, secure, non-discriminatory and predictable international trading system, promoting foreign direct investment, reducing the debt burden, providing new and additional financial resources from all available funding sources and mechanisms, and promoting access to technologies (MDG8, targets 12, 15 and 18).

The Programme of Action also urges Governments and the private sector to facilitate job creation in the industrial, agricultural and service sectors. Countries are urged to aim at meeting the needs and aspirations of youth, particularly in the areas of formal and non-formal education, training and employment opportunities (MDG 8, target 16).

Through technology transfer, the Programme of Action calls for assisting developing countries in building their capacity to produce generic drugs for the domestic market and to ensure the wide availability and accessibility of such drugs (MDG 8, target 17). The Programme of Action recognizes the importance of communication technologies such as globally interlinked telephone, television and data transmission networks and new multimedia technologies in helping to bridge the geographical, social and economic gaps that exist in access to information around the world (MDG 8, target 18).

Other issues

The Millennium Declaration and the ICPD Programme of Action share the objective of achieving an inclusive and equitable global development. In this regard, the ICPD Programme of Action provides detailed guidance and measures conducive to the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs. In doing so, the Programme of Action devotes special attention to the more vulnerable and underserved population groups, including the poor in rural and urban areas, the aged and indigenous populations. The Programme of Action also discusses in some detail the differing roles and responsibilities of national Governments, international cooperation, and partnerships with the non-governmental sector in the implementation of its recommendations.

The goals and objectives of the ICPD Programme of Action are not directed exclusively to developing countries. The Programme of Action addresses population issues from an overarching perspective, so that its recommendations for action are relevant in a wide range of contexts, with some measures applying mainly to the least developed countries, others applicable to the rest of the developing countries and yet others to developed countries.

The ICPD Programme of Action also devotes attention to the data and research requirements needed to monitor and evaluate the progress made in attaining its goals and objectives, including those that match or reinforce the MDGs. The Programme of Action recognizes that valid, reliable, timely, culturally relevant and internationally comparable data form the basis for policy and programme development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation and recommends strengthening national capacity to seek new information and meet the need for basic data collection, analysis and dissemination.

TABLE 1. THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND THE TARGETS ASSOCIATED WITH EACH OF THEM

No.	Millennium Development Goals	Target	Target description
1	Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger	1	Halve between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day
		2	Halve between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger
2	Achieve universal primary education (gender)	3	Ensure that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling
3	Promote gender equality and empower women	4	Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and to all levels of education no later than 2015
4	Reduce child mortality	5	Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate
5	Improve maternal health	6	Reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio
6	Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	7	Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS
		8	Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases
7	Ensure environmental sustainability	9	Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources
		10	Halve by 2015 the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation
		11	By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers
8	Develop a global partnership for development	12	Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial systems
		13	Address the special needs of the least developed countries (includes tariff- and quota-free access for exports, enhanced programme of debt relief for HIPC, and cancellation of official bilateral debt, and more generous ODA for countries committed to poverty reduction)
		14	Address the special needs of landlocked countries and small island developing states (through the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and 22nd General Assembly provisions)
		15	Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long run
		16	In cooperation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth
		17	In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries
		18	In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications