



Check Against Delivery

Statement by

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on the

**Report of the Secretary-General on the Monitoring of Population
Programmes, Focusing on Health, Morbidity, Mortality
and Development (E/CN.9/2010/4)**

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Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Delegates,

I am pleased to introduce the Report of the Secretary-General on the *Monitoring of Population Programmes, Focusing on Health, Morbidity, Mortality and Development* (E/CN.9/2010/4). The document has been prepared by the United Nations Population Fund in response to the topic-oriented and prioritized work programme of the Commission on Population and Development.

The Report provides an overview of the programmatic work that UNFPA has been undertaking at global, regional and country levels, together with its partners, to improve maternal health and reduce morbidity and mortality.

The close links between sustainable development, population dynamics, reproductive health and gender equality are at the heart of the Programme of Action of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development. Demographic factors, poor reproductive health, and pervasive gender inequality are interconnected and contribute to poverty and poor development outcomes. At their intersection lies the ability of women to make free and informed childbearing decisions.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to highlight two important challenges that lie on our way to further advance the ICPD agenda: WEAK HEALTH SYSTEMS and GENDER INEQUALITY. And I will provide some notable examples of work that UNFPA undertakes to address these challenges.

Health Systems

The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being. Access for all people to safe, high-quality essential health-care services is vital, and is a key responsibility of governments. Health is a measure of social justice and equity.

There is global consensus that strengthening health systems (human resources, financing, logistics, infrastructure, monitoring and evaluation) and promoting demand is critical to improving health outcomes, including those related to maternal, newborn and child health, sexual and reproductive health services and HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care.

Strengthening health systems calls for a “continuum of care” and a “life cycle” approach, providing services that meet all of the client’s needs in a convenient and affordable way, integrated into an essential Primary Health Care Package. There is international consensus that the guaranteed health package for all citizens should include sexual and reproductive health services for all who need them.

Recognizing health systems strengthening is challenging in funding-constrained environments and, cognizant of the fact that national ownership, leadership and capacity is key to sustainable development, UNFPA is working with partners to align behind national processes and harmonize support to national health systems strengthening efforts. The Health Four (H4) is a

partnership between UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO and the World Bank that is coordinating joint efforts to accelerate progress. The H4 is intensifying in-country work in 25 priority countries, with special attention to those six countries which represent more than half the number of maternal deaths annually (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, DRC, Ethiopia, Nigeria).

In addition, in the area of human resources for health, UNFPA is working with countries to build national capacity to increase skilled attendance at birth and provide emergency obstetric care. UNFPA launched an *Investing in Midwives Programme* in collaboration with the International Confederation of Midwives and organized in 2009, together with its partners, a landmark Conference in Ethiopia on task shifting and the role of non-physician clinicians in providing emergency obstetric care.

Also, UNFPA is addressing weaknesses in procurement systems and the logistics of management and delivery of essential drugs and medicines, utilizing reproductive health commodities as an entry point to address capacity constraints and weak coordination, including in health information systems.

However, strengthening health systems alone does not automatically result in utilization of health services and better health outcomes. Promoting demand at community level is crucial. UNFPA is supporting community development to strengthen the supply of services and to ensure that the health needs of all citizens, including the poor, the young and persons in hard to reach areas are met.

Gender Inequality

Gender-related attitudes and barriers constitute major reasons why poor sexual and reproductive health outcomes persist. The discrimination that women and girls suffer often prevents them from having access to much-needed services. In conflicts and humanitarian emergencies sexual violence is very often exacerbated.

UNFPA utilizes a unique approach by integrating human rights, gender mainstreaming and cultural sensitivity throughout its programmes and policies which allows for a more comprehensive strategy, including by taking into account the socio-cultural realities that populations face. This approach relies on the capabilities of communities to address social dynamics and bring about change in attitudes, norms and behaviors.

UNFPA works to mobilize communities to foster a culture of 'zero tolerance' on violence against women and girls, including working with elders and opinion leaders, and engaging men and boys as agents for change. The Fund is co-chair of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Violence Against Women (VAW) and implements multi-stakeholder VAW programmes at local level.

Through the Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C), UNFPA, in partnership with UNICEF, works in 12 countries to accelerate the abandonment of FGM/C. The Programme promotes a collective abandonment of FGM/C as this is a social norm highly valued in the communities where it is practiced. In 2009 alone, over one thousand public declarations to declare villages FGM/C-free took place in communities.

Mr. Chairman, if we want more prosperous and equitable societies, in which poverty is eradicated, we need to be able to eliminate the causes of high morbidity and mortality of women. Improving reproductive health and empowering women is an essential dimension of this endeavor. Through its programmes, UNFPA promotes viable health systems that are community based, have a focus on sexual and reproductive health, provide a continuum of care and are gender sensitive.

Thank you.

