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Review of the progress and remaining challenges in the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development in Asia and the Pacific and proposed thematic priorities for the development agenda beyond 2015

Review of the progress and remaining challenges in implementing, in the Asia-Pacific region, the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development

Note by the secretariat

Summary

The Programme of Action adopted by the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in September 1994, placed people at the centre of population and development policies. That Programme has constituted a valuable framework for the formulation and implementation of population policies since the time of its adoption. In 2012, ESCAP and the United Nations Population Fund conducted the regional component of the “International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014 Global Survey” among ESCAP members and associate members to assess implementation of the Programme in the region. The present document contains highlights of the key achievements, challenges and future priorities for action identified by ESCAP members and associate members in implementation of the Programme of Action.

Responses to the survey indicated that, while there has been success in the Asian and Pacific region in terms of increasing the availability of sexual and reproductive health services, including family planning, improving maternal health and promoting gender equality, many challenges still remain: access to sexual and reproductive health services is uneven; too many women still die as a result of childbirth; while unmet need for family planning remains high, some countries are experiencing low fertility and rapidly changing age structures; in many countries the quality of education needs to be significantly enhanced; at higher levels of education, girls tend to be less represented than boys; and young people often lack employment opportunities and relevant skills.

Future policy priorities in Asia and the Pacific, as identified in the survey, include: addressing inequities; ensuring universal access to high-quality sexual and reproductive health services, including by adolescents and youth and marginalized populations; furthering women’s empowerment and gender equality in employment and the political sphere; enhancing support for older persons; formulating and implementing comprehensive policies on international migration; addressing rapid urbanization and internal migration; and taking into account the linkages between population dynamics and sustainable development.

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I. Background

A. Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development

1. The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), which was held in Cairo in 1994, proved to be a turning point in the way in which population and development issues are viewed, as well as in the priority they are given by Governments. A total of 179 Governments represented at that Conference adopted the ICPD Programme of Action,¹ signifying a paradigm shift away from addressing population dynamics through targets and incentives to recognizing the right of women and men to be informed and to have access to safe, effective, affordable and acceptable methods of family planning of their choice in order to freely decide the number, timing and spacing of their children. Through the ICPD Programme of Action a broader mandate has been provided on development issues than in the outcomes of previous population conferences, reflecting the growing awareness at the time that population, poverty, patterns of production and consumption, and the environment are so closely interconnected that none of them can be considered in isolation.

2. Since the time of that Conference in September 1994, remarkable achievements as well as persistent and emerging challenges related to population and development have occurred in the Asian and Pacific region. In terms of demographic trends, the total fertility rate has declined progressively and has reached the population replacement level of 2.1 births per woman. This degree of fertility decline, combined with reductions in mortality leading to longer life expectancy, has led to population ageing, with the proportion of older persons across the region increasing at a globally unprecedented rate. Other trends have been a 50 per cent fall in maternal mortality over the past 20 years and a decrease in HIV infection rates, although HIV prevalence is still increasing, partly due to an expansion of treatment that has increased the survival of persons living with HIV and AIDS. In addition, gender parity exists in primary education in most countries across the Asia-Pacific region.

3. In spite of the success in certain areas, a number of challenges remain. Access to sexual and reproductive health services remains uneven, with adolescents and youth, those of lower socioeconomic status and those living in rural and remote areas being at a considerable disadvantage. Too many women still die during or just after pregnancy; in many countries the quality of education needs to be significantly enhanced; at higher levels of education girls tend to be less represented than boys; and young people often lack employment opportunities and relevant skills. Other concerns are related to the persistence of gender-based violence; the damage caused by natural disasters and environmental degradation; insufficient policy frameworks to deal with rapid population ageing; and the significant number of undocumented migrants, as well as inadequate social protection for most migrants. In this context, a comprehensive survey on the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action was undertaken by ESCAP and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in 2012 to identify the way that Governments and other stakeholders are working to address challenges, as described below.

¹ *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5-13 September 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XIII.18), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

B. ICPD beyond 2014 Global Survey

4. General Assembly resolution 65/234 of 22 December 2010 on the follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014 requested, inter alia, that UNFPA, in consultation with member States and in cooperation with other relevant international organizations, undertake an operational review of the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action.

5. In order to assess achievements in implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action, an inter-agency leadership group developed a questionnaire for undertaking the ICPD beyond 2014 Global Survey. The objectives of that exercise were to assess implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action; identify gaps, barriers and facilitating factors in its implementation; identify emerging priorities; stimulate dialogue among stakeholders and identify opportunities to accelerate progress. The survey contained the following sections, with questions in each section on policies, institutions, progress, achievements, challenges and partnerships in the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action: population, sustained economic growth and sustainable development; population growth and structure (addressing the needs of adolescents and youth, ageing and the needs of older persons, the needs of persons with disabilities and the needs of indigenous people); urbanization and internal migration; international migration and development; family, well-being of individuals and societies; reproductive rights and reproductive health, and health, morbidity and mortality; gender equality, equity and empowerment of women; and population, development and education.

6. In July 2012, the survey questionnaire was sent by the United Nations regional commissions to all their respective member States. Under a framework agreement, the five regional commissions, including ESCAP, collaborated with UNFPA in the preparation of reports on the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action in their respective regions. The survey responses contributed to the preparation of the Asia-Pacific regional report, which will be submitted as an input to the report of the Secretary-General to the Commission on Population and Development at its forty-seventh session, as mandated by General Assembly resolution 65/234.

7. Of the 58 ESCAP members and associate members located in the region, 51 submitted survey responses, giving a response rate of 88 per cent (see table 1). The 51 countries and areas that responded to the survey represent 99 per cent of the population of Asia and the Pacific.

8. The present document contains a report on selected (most representative) responses to each section of the survey questionnaire; that information was supplemented with data from country implementation profiles prepared from United Nations databases and other sources. In the final section, the priority concerns for the near future are described as reported by members and associate members. References to progress or achievements in specific countries are intended to illustrate successful approaches but are not meant to be comprehensive.

Table 1
ICPD beyond 2014 Global Survey questionnaires received, by subregion

Subregion	Number of respondents of the total possible	Country or area
East/North-East Asia	7/7	China; Democratic People's Republic of Korea; Japan; Mongolia; Republic of Korea; Hong Kong, China; and Macao, China
North/Central Asia	8/9	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan
Pacific	16/21	Australia, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, New Zealand, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Cook Islands and Niue
South-East Asia	10/11	Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam
South/South-West Asia	10/10	Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Turkey
Total	51/58 (response rate: 88 per cent)	

Source: ESCAP, ICPD beyond 2014 Global Survey.

II. Analysis of progress in the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action in Asia and the Pacific

A. Sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights

9. Sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights are at the heart of the ICPD Programme of Action. In this section, therefore, consideration is given to the current status of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and reproductive rights, safe motherhood, and HIV and AIDS in the Asia-Pacific region, with the Programme of Action serving as the guiding framework. Ensuring sexual and reproductive health refers not only to the provision of a broad range of services but, in a more fundamental way, to the crucial recognition that couples and individuals have the right to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so.

1. Ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health in Asia and the Pacific

10. In the ICPD Programme of Action and the Millennium Development Goals there are calls for ensuring universal access to reproductive health by 2015. In the Asia-Pacific region, SRH is widely covered in government policies. According to the results of the survey, all responding countries reported having a national policy, programme or strategy addressing sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. The vast majority (80 per cent) of responding countries reported that they had conducted an

assessment on SRH in the previous five years, which could provide the basis for the development of programmes.

11. In the survey, information was requested on 20 different components of SRH, including access to the following: SRH by different target groups; safe motherhood services and contraception; and HIV and AIDS services, among others. Within the ESCAP region, 89 per cent of responding countries reported addressing all 20 issues in their national policy frameworks and, of those, 61 per cent reported that they considered policy, programme and strategy implementation to be on schedule.

12. Despite the reported coverage of SRH in national policies and programmes, approximately 140 million women in the region have an unmet need for family planning. Unmet need is defined as the percentage of women who are fecund and sexually active and who do not want any more children or who want to delay the birth of their next child but are not using any method of contraception. In the survey, 67 per cent of the responding countries and areas in Asia and the Pacific reported that they had conducted a situation analysis of unmet need for family planning. Levels of unmet need and the contraceptive prevalence rate for modern methods for selected countries are presented in table 2.

13. Relatively low percentages of responding countries reported implementing sexual and reproductive health programmes for specific target groups, including for indigenous people (48 per cent), ethnic minorities (54 per cent), documented migrants (57 per cent), undocumented migrants (33 per cent), persons with disabilities (54 per cent) and older persons (53 per cent).

Table 2
Unmet need for family planning and contraceptive prevalence rates for selected countries in recent years

Country	Year	Unmet need for family planning (percentage)	Year	Contraceptive prevalence rate (modern methods) (percentage)
Armenia	2005	19.3	2010	54.9
Bangladesh	2006	16.8	2007	55.8
Cambodia	2011	23.5	2011	34.9
China	2001	2.3	2006	84
India	2007	20.5	2008	54.8
Indonesia	2007	13.1	2008	57.4
Kazakhstan	1999	11.9	2006	50.7
Mongolia	2008	14.4	2008	49
Pakistan	2007	25.2	2008	27
Samoa	2007	47.7	2009	26.6
Timor-Leste	2010	31.5	2010	20.6
Viet Nam	2011	4.3	2011	59.8

Sources: *World Contraceptive Use 2011* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.11.XIII.2); Millennium Development Goals Indicators database: unmet need for family planning. Available from <http://mdgs.un.org/unsd/mdg/SeriesDetail.aspx?srid=778&crd=>.

14. Adolescents and youth were reported to be included in 90 per cent of national policies, programmes or strategies. Of all national policies on increasing access to comprehensive SRH services for adolescents, only 53 per cent were reported to be on track in terms of implementation. Adolescents are considered particularly vulnerable regarding sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR). It has been widely recognized in research and by the international community that adolescent mothers and their children are at higher risk of death and illness than their older counterparts, and that early marriage and childbearing are obstacles to the improvement of women's status and development. The number of unintended pregnancies among adolescents and young women in the region is high, with some Pacific countries having the highest rates in the world. In South and South-East Asia, almost 1 in 10 girls becomes pregnant by age 16, often as a result of early marriage. Unmet need for modern contraception is high among adolescents and youth compared with all other age groups, a situation that contributes to maternal death and unsafe abortion. In reporting on various aspects of comprehensive sexuality education, the majority of countries indicated that they were implementing relevant policies, programmes and strategies, although implementation was not on schedule.

2. Reducing maternal mortality and morbidity

15. Across the region, about 111,000 women died in 2010 from causes related to childbirth, and many were left chronically ill or disabled. The situation is especially pronounced in South and South-West Asia, which accounts for one third of the world's maternal deaths. Common problems that contribute to maternal death include: lack of access to reproductive health services, including family planning; lack of access to emergency obstetric care; and shortage of skilled care at birth. Under Goal 5 of the Millennium Development Goals, that is, "Improve maternal health", Target 5.A calls for a 75 per cent reduction in the maternal mortality ratio (MMR)² between 1990 and 2015. Of the 10 countries worldwide that have already achieved that target, 5 are in the Asian and Pacific region: Bhutan (82 per cent); the Islamic Republic of Iran (81 per cent); Maldives (93 per cent); Nepal (78 per cent); and Viet Nam (76 per cent). Five other countries in the region are considered to be on track to reach the target: Bangladesh; Cambodia; China; Lao People's Democratic Republic; and Timor-Leste.³

16. Based on the results of the survey, antenatal care and referrals to essential and comprehensive emergency obstetric care are widely addressed in existing policies, programmes and strategies within the region. From the existing policies on antenatal care, 79 per cent are considered to be on schedule in terms of implementation. According to the survey, only 61 per cent of the respondents described the distribution of emergency obstetric care facilities as adequate; the highest degree of satisfaction was found in North and Central Asia and the lowest was in the Pacific subregion. The positive impact of skilled birth attendants in reducing maternal mortality is clear — in general, subregions where the proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel is highest, the maternal mortality ratio is lowest.

17. Many countries in the region have made considerable progress with regard to maternal health. Cambodia, for instance, reported a high increase in

² Number of women who die while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of cause of death, per 100,000 live births.

³ *Trends in Maternal Mortality: 1990 to 2010 – WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA and the World Bank Estimates* (Geneva, World Health Organization, 2012). Available from http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2012/9789241503631_eng.pdf.

the number of births attended by skilled personnel (from 44 per cent in 2005 to 70 per cent in 2010) and a decline in home deliveries (89 per cent in 2000 to 45 per cent in 2010) in favour of institutional deliveries, resulting in a reduction in the maternal mortality ratio from 430 in 2005 to 250 in 2010.⁴ In India, the National Rural Health Mission has improved referrals to emergency obstetric care through the Janani Suraksha Yojna and Janani-Shishu Suraksha Karyakram programmes, which have contributed to an increase in the number of institutional deliveries from approximately 12 million in 2009/10 to 16 million in 2010/11.

18. Narrowing disparities in maternal mortality within and between countries is a major challenge to improving maternal health. Disparities in maternal mortality between countries are particularly striking according to stage of economic development, ranging from an MMR of 517 for low-income countries to 10 for high-income countries in the ESCAP region. Within countries in South, South-West and South-East Asia, there is a 40 per cent difference between the poorest and the wealthiest quintiles in the rate of births attended by skilled health personnel.⁵ Meeting the need for family planning also contributes to maternal health through the reduction in the number of unplanned pregnancies. If the unmet need for family planning were eliminated in South, Central and South-East Asia alone, maternal deaths would drop by 75 per cent.⁶

3. Addressing HIV and AIDS and sexually transmitted infections

19. An estimated 6.1 million people in Asia and the Pacific were living with HIV in 2009; of that number, 5.9 million were adults. Whereas HIV prevalence in the region is higher today than in 1990, the number of people newly infected with HIV was estimated to be 360,000 in 2009, which is 20 per cent lower than the 450,000 new infections estimated for 2001.⁷ This indicates that in Asia and the Pacific, as in the rest of the world, the spread of the epidemic is slowing.⁸

20. All survey respondents in the region reported having national policies or strategies to increase access to STI/HIV prevention, treatment and care services for vulnerable population groups and populations at risk, of which policies and strategies 76 per cent were considered to be on schedule. Policies to increase access to voluntary and confidential HIV testing were also reported by all respondents. These figures are slightly lower for policies on eliminating mother-to-child transmission (92 per cent of respondents, with 67 per cent on schedule) and on integrating SRH and HIV services (88 per cent of respondents, with 65 per cent on schedule). As reported by Indonesia in the survey, for instance, voluntary counselling and testing increased

⁴ Cited from *Cambodia Demographic and Health Survey 2010* (Phnom Penh, and Calverton, Maryland, United States, National Institute of Statistics, Directorate General for Health, and ICF Macro, 2011). Available from www.measuredhs.com/pubs/pdf/FR249/FR249.pdf.

⁵ *Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2011* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.11.II.F.1). Available from www.unescap.org/stat/data/syb2011/ESCAP-syb2011.pdf.

⁶ Susheela Singh and Jacqueline E. Darroch, *Adding It Up: Costs and Benefits of Contraceptive Services – Estimates for 2012* (New York, Guttmacher Institute and UNFPA, 2012). Available from www.guttmacher.org/pubs/AIU-2012-estimates.pdf.

⁷ *Statistical Yearbook for Asia and the Pacific 2011*. (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.11.II.F.1). Available from www.unescap.org/stat/data/syb2011/ESCAP-syb2011.pdf.

⁸ *Ibid.*

throughout the country for different at-risk population groups between 2007 and 2011, that is, from 53 per cent to 57 per cent for commercial sex workers; from 64 per cent to 72 per cent for transgender persons; and from 50 per cent to 63 per cent for drug users.⁹

21. HIV and AIDS is a key issue addressed within national SRH policies in the region, although the extent to which they are integrated varies within SRH and family planning services; the rates for such integration are 76 per cent for voluntary counselling and testing, 89 per cent for behaviour change communication on HIV, 87 per cent for mother-to-child transmission, 91 per cent for HIV treatment for people living with HIV and 100 per cent for STI and HIV prevention services.

B. Population dynamics and their socioeconomic impact

22. The region is going through major population changes and dynamics, with many countries experiencing major variations in age structure associated with youth bulges and population ageing, and in some countries a combination of the two. These major population trends along with migration and urbanization present challenges and opportunities for development.

23. In the context of changing population growth and structure, the ICPD Programme of Action highlights the different needs of specific population groups, such as young people and older persons, indigenous people and persons with disabilities. Also emphasized in the Programme of Action is the need for socioeconomic support for the family in its plurality of forms, and an acknowledgement of the links between population, development and education.

1. Youth and the demographic dividend

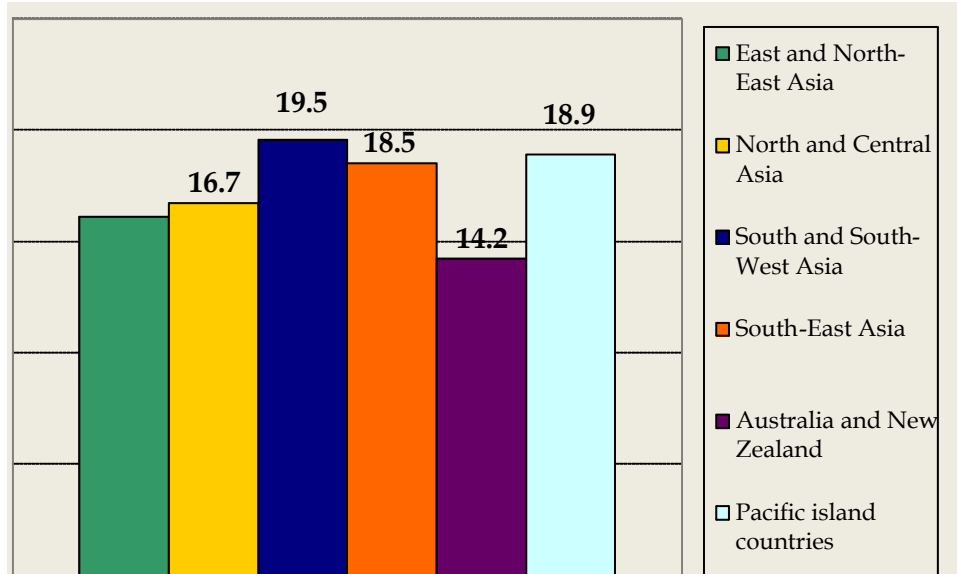
24. Young people in Asia and the Pacific are a valuable resource for the future and many responses to the survey reflect this. All but one country reported having a national policy, programme and/or strategy addressing the needs of adolescents and youth, while all countries reported having established institutional entities addressing issues regarding the needs of adolescents and youth. The three most commonly cited issues, which were each being addressed in 94 per cent of policies, programmes and strategies, were creating employment opportunities for youth; addressing violence, exploitation and abuse; and ensuring equal rights and access to sexual and reproductive health services.

25. Youth, defined by the United Nations as persons aged 15-24 years, comprise 18 per cent of the population of the region (see figure). Over the next 30 years, the total number of youth in the region is projected to decline by about 2.5 million persons a year, and by 2040 youth are likely to make up only about 13 per cent of the population of the region.¹⁰

⁹ Cited in the Global ICPD beyond 2014 Survey; data taken from the *Integrated Biological and Behavioural Surveillance Survey 2011* (Jakarta, Ministry of Health, 2011). Available from www.aidsdatahub.org/en/reference-librarycols2/item/24338-ibbs-2011-integrated-biological-and-behavioral-survey-ministry-of-health-republic-of-indonesia-2011.

¹⁰ <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/index.htm>.

Figure
Youth as a percentage of the total population, Asia-Pacific region, 2010



Source: *World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision* (New York, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2011). Available from <http://esa.un.org/wpp>.

26. Some economies in Asia and the Pacific have benefited greatly in their development processes from the demographic dividend.¹¹ This happened to a significant extent in Hong Kong, China; the Republic of Korea; Singapore; and Thailand. Relatively high employment of youth and women boosted economic growth and development since there were relatively more workers in the population who were spending less of their income on dependents (children and older adults). This in turn led to higher levels of savings and investment, as well as output per capita.

2. Population ageing

27. Currently, Asia and the Pacific is home to just over half of the world's population of older persons, yet by 2050 almost two thirds of the world's elderly will be living in the region. In absolute numbers, there are close to 450 million older persons now but there will be double that number in the next 15 years, with the total of older persons in the region reaching more than 1.2 billion by 2050.

28. Responses to the survey revealed that 92 per cent of responding countries have a national policy, programme and/or strategy addressing ageing and/or the needs of older persons. Many had established institutional entities addressing the needs of older persons and many had undertaken assessments or situation analyses on ageing and the needs of older persons. As would be expected, countries in which older persons constituted a higher proportion of the population were more likely to have developed policies and institutions addressing ageing and to have carried out analysis on the issue. In several countries, employment opportunities for older workers have been promoted, while older persons are being enabled to make full use of their skills and abilities.

¹¹ Defined as the window of opportunity to accelerate economic development that occurs when the proportion of the population in the working-age group is high, when the policy environment is conducive to job creation and when investments are being made.

29. In spite of successes, older persons across the Asia-Pacific region face many barriers related to empowerment and well-being. These barriers often take the form of social isolation, age discrimination, economic vulnerability and dependence, and a lack of opportunities to play a role in decision-making. In Asia and the Pacific, the situation is especially severe with regard to older women and the “oldest old”, namely those older than 80 years of age.

3. Persons with disabilities

30. Responses to the survey concerning disability showed that 94 per cent of responding countries have a national policy, programme and/or strategy addressing the needs of persons with disabilities. All responding countries have established institutional entities to address the needs of persons with disabilities. Only 76 per cent of the countries had carried out assessments or situation analyses on needs of persons with disabilities, and this figure was particularly low in the Pacific subregion. Partnerships with national-level non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were reported by 87 per cent of responding countries, but the figure was only 24 per cent for international NGOs.

4. Indigenous people

31. Responses to the survey questions regarding indigenous people were often relatively limited in scope. In the Pacific subregion, for instance, several countries did not report or stated that the questions were not applicable, while others reported that all persons were considered indigenous or that small minority segments of the population were well represented in both the public and private sectors of the economy and in Government. Overall, only 62 per cent of responding countries reported having national policies, programmes and/or strategies addressing the needs of indigenous people, with wide variations by subregion.

5. Families and their well-being

32. Responses to the survey revealed that all reporting countries have a national policy, programme and/or strategy addressing the needs of the family and the well-being of individuals. Moreover, 92 per cent of countries have established related institutional entities. Of the responding countries 73 per cent had undertaken an assessment or situation analysis on the family, its needs, composition and structure. As for partnerships with civil society, 87 per cent reported such engagement with national NGOs and 29 per cent with international NGOs, while the figures for the private sector were 56 per cent or less for different domains. Survey responses also indicated several steps that had been taken by countries in the Asia-Pacific region to promote family well-being.

6. Education

33. The Asian and Pacific region as a whole is on track to achieve, or has already achieved, most of the Millennium Development Goal targets on education, including universal access to primary schooling. Gender disparities in primary, secondary and tertiary education have all been reduced. Nevertheless, completion of secondary and tertiary education remains a challenge, particularly in South and South-West Asia.

34. Survey responses on education-related achievements revealed a rich array of initiatives. Several countries reported that indices related to achieving gender parity at various education levels had significantly

improved. In Bhutan, the ratio of girls to boys at the primary level increased from 82.0 per cent in 2000 to 99.4 per cent in 2010, and the ratio of girls to boys at the secondary level rose from 78.0 per cent in 2000 to 103.5 per cent in 2010. Indonesia also reported significant gains in recent years, with the ratio of girls to boys in educational enrolment being close to or above parity at all levels. In Vanuatu, an equivalent number of toilets was being made available for all girls and boys in schools across the country. In Afghanistan, the number of girls enrolled at all levels of education had increased from 674,000 in 2002 to about 3.1 million in 2011.

35. In spite of these successes, it can be seen that barriers remain in accessing education across the region. These are largely due to persistent rural-urban disparities, rising socioeconomic inequality and continuing exclusion of children with disabilities, which contributes to a large number of out-of-school youth. The largest absolute numbers of out-of-school children are in South and South-West Asia.

C. Linkages between population and sustainable development

36. In the Bali Declaration on Population and Sustainable Development, adopted at the Fourth Asian and Pacific Population Conference in 1992,¹² ESCAP member States recognized the strong relationship between population and sustainable development. The outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012, acknowledges that with the world's population projected to exceed 9 billion by 2050, with an estimated two thirds living in cities, mankind needs to increase the efforts to achieve sustainable development and in particular, the eradication of poverty and hunger and preventable diseases. Sustainable development strategies are only successful if they take into consideration the size, growth, age structure, spatial distribution of the population and population mobility.

1. Urbanization and internal migration

37. Of the region's total population, 44 per cent currently resides in urban areas. Urban growth in the region is primarily attributable to migration from rural to urban areas and to the reclassification of areas from rural to urban.

38. Almost half (46 per cent) of national respondents indicated that they had a national policy, 29 per cent a programme and 24 per cent a strategy to address urbanization and internal migration, and 32 countries reported the presence of at least one institutional entity addressing urbanization and internal migration.

39. Of the programmes and policies to address urbanization and internal migration, the most prominent were those promoting the growth of small or medium-sized urban centres (82 per cent), promoting rural development strategies to decrease push factors of urbanization (82 per cent) and promoting decentralization (76 per cent), all of which matched the objectives of the ICPD Programme of Action in fostering a more balanced distribution of the population and reducing the push factors that influence outmigration. A total of 71 per cent of these policies and programmes promoted environmental management of urban agglomerations, while 69 per cent made provisions to ensure access to land, housing, services and livelihood of the urban poor, and 65 per cent included measures on proactive planning for urban population growth.

¹² ST/ESCAP/1195.

2. International migration and development

40. The Asia-Pacific region is highly diverse with regard to international migration, although the largest flows of migrants consist of low-skilled labour migrants who, with or without a contract, move for temporary employment and are generally not permitted to bring family members with them. Effective policies on international migration require their integration into national development strategies, an adequate legislative framework and appropriate institutional structures. Of responding countries, 75 per cent reported at least one national policy to address international migration and development. Among strategies, programmes and policies, 79 per cent were drafted and implemented with the intent to strengthen dialogue and cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination. Efforts have also been made in the protection of the rights of migrants, for example 73 per cent of responding countries reported policies or programmes to protect migrants against human rights abuses, racism, ethnocentrism and xenophobia, and 85 per cent indicated measures to combat trafficking and/or the smuggling of migrants.

3. Interrelationships between population and sustainable development

41. Policy frameworks on sustainable development have yet to fully incorporate population growth. Other aspects of demographic dynamics, such as changing age structures, the spatial distribution of the population and human mobility, are barely mentioned. However, responses to the survey indicate that the vast majority (96 per cent) of countries had drafted or implemented at least one national programme, policy or strategy that addressed the interrelationships between population and sustainable development.

42. Those policies, programmes and strategies primarily dealt with fostering sustainable resource use and preventing environmental degradation (reported by 100 per cent of respondents), eradicating poverty with special attention to income generation and employment (98 per cent), promoting environmental resource management (96 per cent), strengthening food security (96 per cent) and improving solid waste management (90 per cent). Food security is a particularly pressing priority in the region — 26 countries in the region have rates of undernourishment that exceed 10 per cent.¹³

D. Gender equality, equity and empowerment of women

43. A strong message was sent to the world regarding gender equality with the adoption of the ICPD Programme of Action. It included a call for all Governments to empower women and eliminate inequalities in all aspects of life, enforce national laws and international conventions to which they are party, take measures to eliminate all forms of violence and exploitation, lessen the burden of domestic activities, ensure equal property rights with men, and eliminate discriminatory practices in employment.

1. Women's educational, economic and political empowerment

44. In the Asia-Pacific region, significant progress has been made since 1994 in terms of increasing educational levels and narrowing the educational gaps between males and females. Most countries in the region have

¹³ *Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security in Asia and the Pacific* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.09.II.F.12). Available from www.unescap.org/65/documents/Theme-Study/st-escap-2535.pdf.

eliminated gender disparities in primary school enrolment; available data show that the gender gap increases as males and females access higher levels of education.

45. Survey responses indicated that countries have accorded those policies for promoting the economic participation of women the highest priority of all gender-related policies for the next 5 to 10 years. Women's economic empowerment encompasses access to decent employment, income, land, credit, other assets and technology.

46. Of all country responses to the survey, 88 per cent reported that laws against gender discrimination at work, including in hiring practices, wages and benefits, had been promulgated. Other forms of economic empowerment were less prominent among the survey results: 84 per cent of countries reported that they had laws to address women's property rights, including the right to own, buy and sell property or other assets; and 86 per cent reported that they had laws on access to financial services, including credit and negotiation of contracts in a woman's own name.

47. Regarding employment gaps, women continue to be overrepresented in positions and sectors of the economy that are poorly paid, such as in agriculture, and less represented in the generally better-paid industrial and service sectors.

48. Gaps between men and women in the Asia-Pacific region are particularly visible in the area of political participation. Whereas the percentage of women in national parliaments has generally increased since 1990, figures are still low compared with those for men, and the pace of growth tends to be slow. Exceptionally rapid increases between 1990 and 2012 have been found in some countries, such as Nepal (6.1 per cent and 33.2 per cent, respectively), Afghanistan (3.7 per cent and 27.7 per cent), Thailand (2.8 per cent and 15.8 per cent), and the Lao People's Democratic Republic (6.3 per cent and 25 per cent).

2. Gender-based violence and discrimination against women

49. A look at existing figures on physical and/or sexual violence ever experienced by women in their lifetime reveals that violence against women is pervasive and alarmingly high in the region, in particular in Bangladesh, Cambodia, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Thailand and Turkey. Unlike other types of disadvantages endured by women, violence cuts right across countries, irrespective of the level of socioeconomic development and the degree of women's empowerment.

50. Countries in the Asia-Pacific region have begun to develop and reform national action plans for the elimination of violence against women and girls. Nevertheless, a disconnect remains in legislation, enforcement and monitoring mechanisms to ensure effective implementation. According to the survey, the existence of monitoring mechanisms to ensure the implementation of programmes promoting gender equality varies from 61 per cent for parliamentary commissions to 67 per cent for national commissions and social accountability mechanisms, and 70 per cent for gender statistics. The most commonly reported monitoring mechanism takes the shape of periodic population-based surveys. Within the region, 86 per cent of respondents reported the promulgation of national laws on the criminalization of violence by an intimate partner, whereas only 79 per cent reported enforcement in the same area.

III. Future policy priorities

51. In each section of the survey, countries were asked to name the issues that were anticipated to receive further public policy priority over the next 5 to 10 years. The issues shown below were highlighted most consistently by the respondents. The information has been supplemented by other data drawn from the review process for ICPD beyond 2014, with a focus on gaps and challenges in implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action.

52. Increased political will and investment is needed to ensure effective implementation of programmes to expand capacity and agency and improve individual welfare. While many specific areas addressed in the Programme of Action have been acted on, reports of programme implementation as “behind schedule” persist in several countries across a wide range of development domains.

A. Sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights

1. Issues: Ensuring universal access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services

Actions: There is a need to increase access to high-quality sexual and reproductive health services, with attention being given to addressing inequities. Special attention should be placed on eliminating barriers to universal access to sexual and reproductive health, including poverty, low educational attainment, geographic residence, age, marital status and social exclusion. Further efforts should be made to strengthen health systems, as an essential component of the development process, and to enhance the quality of service integration, such as nutrition, maternal health, HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health.

2. Issues: Increasing access to sexual and reproductive health information and services for adolescents and youth

Actions: Increase the reach and scope of high-quality comprehensive sexuality education and sexual and reproductive health services for adolescents and youth to enable them to make healthy and informed choices. Remove legal, regulatory and social barriers that prevent adolescents and youth from accessing sexual and reproductive health information and services.

3. Issues: Increasing access to contraception and addressing the unmet need for family planning services

Actions: In order to address the unmet need for family planning, improve availability, affordability and accessibility of a wide range of modern methods of contraception, and remove policy barriers and restrictions to accessing contraceptive information and services.

4. Issues: Strengthening maternal health services, including antenatal care and emergency obstetric care, to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity

Actions: Increase access to high-quality and affordable antenatal care, emergency obstetric care services to address complications from unsafe abortion, and skilled attendance at birth within the context of strengthening primary health care and health systems. Strengthen policies and programmes to ensure a focus on addressing inequities.

5. Issue: Addressing reproductive cancers

Actions: Strengthen provision of services to enable the prevention, early detection, treatment and palliation of reproductive cancers, especially for those of lower socioeconomic status.

B. Adolescents and youth

1. Issues: Involving adolescents and youth as both agents and recipients of development priorities

Actions: Attention to young people is becoming a universal development priority in the region. There is a need to ensure institutionalized youth participation in development efforts to address their interests, such as access to youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health information and services, high-quality education and employment. In this context, it is essential to ensure that comprehensive youth policies are adopted and implemented.

2. Issue: Enhancing access to education and vocational training

Actions: Improving access to high-quality education, including through trained teachers, appropriate facilities and curricula tailored to the needs of those attending schools, vocational training centres and universities, taking into consideration the skills and knowledge needed for a smoother school-to-work transition.

3. Issue: Addressing youth unemployment

Actions: Governments and the private sector must support young people in their efforts to engage in decent work, through various means including training and skills development. Particular attention should be directed to eliminating gender disparities in all sectors and at all levels of the workforce and to addressing discrimination and allowing for equal access to educational, training and employment opportunities, with equal pay.

C. Ageing and older persons

1. Issue: Ensuring access to a continuum of health-care services

Actions: With rapid population ageing in the Asia-Pacific region, more attention needs to be directed to providing older persons with integrated, affordable and gender-sensitive elderly care services. Especially in countries and areas with limited resources, there is a need to emphasize primary care, public health approaches and community support.

2. Issue: Facilitating an enabling environment for healthy and active ageing

Actions: To effectively promote healthy and active ageing, greater emphasis is needed on health promotion and prevention, including through providing training modules, information, education and counselling materials, and the removal of barriers to the employment of older adults. As with disability, there is a need to promote universal design in infrastructure planning. In addition, the development of associations and self-help groups for older persons in both urban and rural communities is needed.

3. Issues: Ensuring a comprehensive ageing policy and increased participation of older persons

Actions: For ageing policies, the many factors that contribute to the well-being of older persons need to be considered. There is a need for effective data collection, sound analysis and assessment of ageing trends. Economic and civil participation, especially by older women, should be allowed for in the formulation of policies and legislation should be enacted that would ensure protection against discrimination.

4. Issue: Ensuring social protection for older persons, including allowances and non-contributory pensions

Actions: Social protection and health care need to be enhanced through the development of policies and laws/legislation targeting the most vulnerable older persons. Moreover, marginalized older persons should be provided with universal non-contributory pensions. Social protection should be enhanced by strengthening the family unit, including through support services for the family. In this context, the specific needs of older family members would be addressed in poverty alleviation policies that target families. Further efforts are required to increase the responsiveness of national development plans to different needs throughout the life cycle.

D. Families and the well-being of individuals

1. Issue: Providing effective assistance to families that are affected by specific challenges

Actions: With the structural changes occurring in families that have been brought about by migration and other demographic and socioeconomic factors, policies aimed at assisting families to achieve greater well-being are needed. In addition, particular account should be taken of low-income families, single-parent families and families having persons with disabilities and older persons.

2. Issue: Facilitating compatibility between labour force participation and caregiving responsibilities

Actions: Develop flexible and supportive employment policies and practices, including for single-parent and female-headed households, to allow for adequate childcare and to enable working caregivers to play an active role in the development of their children, as well as attend to the responsibilities of caring for older adults in the family.

E. Education

1. Issues: Strengthening national education policies and ensuring the right to education

Actions: National education policies need to be inclusive of all groups, including girls, children with disabilities and indigenous children.

2. Issue: Ensuring equal access of girls and marginalized groups to education at all levels

Actions: Interventions are needed to address the lack of access faced by marginalized groups and reduce gender gaps in tertiary education. There is a

need to ensure access of all to continuing education in order to address low completion rates and to enhance socioeconomic development.

F. Urbanization and internal migration

1. Issues: Improving urban planning and governance

Actions: The growth in urban areas in the region is set to outpace the capacity of Governments to provide sufficient infrastructure and public service for all urban residents. Efforts to ensure effective and sustainable urban planning need to be increased.

2. Issues: Ensuring access to land, housing, services and livelihood for the urban poor

Actions: In the context of rapid urbanization, there is a need to better manage cities, particularly in terms of the provision of public services, and housing, basic infrastructure and sanitary and waste management services among the urban poor.

3. Issues: Promoting rural socioeconomic infrastructure development and rural employment opportunities

Actions: It is critical to enhance infrastructure development and employment opportunities in rural areas in order to increase the quality of life in rural areas, decrease push factors on urbanization and thereby promote more balanced geographical growth.

4. Issues: Promoting the growth of small or medium-sized urban centres and decentralization

Actions: Large-scale urbanization demands effective planning to ensure balanced rural-urban development. The geographical inequalities between rural and urban areas need to be addressed in policies, as do policies to ensure equitable distribution of the benefits of economic growth, human resources and services within countries. The growth of small or medium-sized urban centres needs to be promoted, while regional economies within countries need to be stimulated through investments that allow for sustainable socioeconomic development.

G. International migration and development

1. Issues: Ensuring comprehensive international migration policies and strengthening legal systems

Actions: There is a need to afford greater protection and promotion of the rights of migrants so that migration is informed and safe. Legal systems should be strengthened to address abuses and discrimination so that migrants can better contribute to socioeconomic development.

2. Issues: Protecting rights of migrants — safe, informed migration, preventing human rights abuses and discrimination

Actions: Countries of origin and of destination should work together to respect and protect the rights of all migrants by promoting legal and orderly labour migration through international cooperation, sharing information, ensuring the documentation of migrant workers, informing both potential migrant workers and employers about regular migration channels, including

applicable conditions and responsibilities, engaging in social dialogue and addressing irregular migration.

3. Issues: Strengthening dialogue and cooperation between countries of origin, transit and destination

Actions: Bilateral cooperation needs to be extended and strengthened to protect migrants' rights and ensure greater mutual benefit from migration. Cooperation can also increase the number of channels for legal migration and help to harmonize migration policies, labour market needs and development assistance priorities.

4. Issues: Improving data collection and monitoring

Actions: Data on international migration are often scarce and unreliable, resulting in a limited understanding of the scope of migration and the needs of migrants. Data collection, dissemination and analysis need to be strengthened.

H. Population and sustainable development

1. Issues: Improving the capacity of human resources and reducing poverty, with attention being paid to income generation and employment strategies

Actions: Policies and interventions should be responsive to the series of demographic changes being faced by countries in the Asia-Pacific region, including population ageing. They also need to be dynamic and inclusive in the light of environmental changes and growing socioeconomic disparities. Unemployment and underemployment need to be addressed by creating more decent work opportunities and expanding social protection schemes.

2. Issues: Addressing climate change and ensuring sustainable environment and natural resource management

Actions: Prudent natural resource management is becoming increasingly important, given population growth, production and consumption patterns, climate change and natural disasters. While it is necessary for policies to address the impact of environmental degradation, climate change and deforestation, there is also a need to build resilience to climate change, especially among Pacific communities; this would additionally facilitate disaster preparedness and management. For policies to be effective, population dynamics need to be incorporated into policymaking on environmental and resource management issues.

3. Issues: Policy responses to demographic change

Actions: The potential for a demographic dividend remains strong in most countries that have not attained extended rates of below-replacement fertility. When demographic change is rapid, effective implementation of policies becomes necessary in order to address new population demands. Creating sustainable pension systems to support ageing populations, generating decent employment opportunities for youth, addressing the impacts of negative population growth and managing the impacts of international migration, all are critical actions for policymaking.

4. Issue: Ensuring food and energy security

Actions: Recent volatility in food and energy prices show how vulnerable are countries in the region, in particular the more marginalized segments of their societies. There is a need for policies aimed at increasing access to food, as well as providing more equitable access to energy, through interventions, including pricing and subsidies that encourage greater productivity and efficiency, and investments in clean and renewable energy sources.

I. Gender equality, equity and empowerment of women

1. Issues: Increasing women's participation in the formal and informal economy, and in political processes

Actions: While progress has been made in Asia and the Pacific, greater investments are needed to bolster women's economic participation and empowerment through, among other things, enhancing their access to decent employment, income, land, credit, other assets and technologies. Action is needed to increase women's and girls' educational levels. Women's representation in political processes and public life also needs to be increased.

2. Issues: Addressing gender-based violence and strengthening sociolegal protection for women

Actions: It is essential to strengthen legal, regulatory and policy environments as well as corresponding programmes and national budgets in order to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls and enhance women's inheritance and land rights. There is a need to fully engage men and boys, as well as community leaders, as agents of change in preventing violence against women and girls and in changing gender perceptions.

3. Issue: Enhancing women's access to health-care services

Actions: All women should have access to health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health services, with due consideration of their rights as well as sensitivity to gender concerns, cultural and other traditional issues. Women's role in caring for other family and community members should be recognized.

4. Issues: Improving the collection, analysis, dissemination and use of sex- and age-disaggregated data

Actions: Sound data collection and analysis is fundamental to inform policies and put in place effective strategies to benefit women. Collection of some data, as on maternal health and gender-based violence, may require additional capacity-building. Disaggregation of data by age, sex and other factors is vital in order to obtain an indication of socioeconomic disparities and the needs of women and different age groups. To ensure quality, regular and timely reporting and monitoring of programmatic processes and outcomes is also essential and would require, among other things, strengthening civil registration, censuses, periodic representative surveys, qualitative research and service-related management information systems. The information that is processed should be disseminated in a way that it is easily accessed and can be a useful tool for raising awareness.

J. Regional and international cooperation

53. Based on analysis of the challenges and future priorities identified in the survey by country respondents, it is clear that greater regional and

international cooperation on population and development would serve to advance progress in the Asian and Pacific region. Such cooperation could be fostered by the following means:

- (a) Ensuring the establishment and promotion of effective accountability mechanisms, including through national and regional reviews;
- (b) Ensuring adequate financing to fully implement the ICPD Programme of Action, with a focus on domestic resource mobilization, public and private financing and ensuring the fulfilment of official development assistance commitments made by international donors;
- (c) Ensuring that sex- and age-disaggregated data collection methods reflect a rights-based approach to document gaps in SRHR, with full respect for privacy and confidentiality;
- (d) Creating partnerships for development, an enabling environment for the participation of civil society organizations and increased space for critical dialogue;
- (e) Promoting South-South cooperation;
- (f) Strengthening partnerships and engagement with philanthropic foundations and the private sector.

IV. Conclusion

54. The ICPD Programme of Action has served as a valuable framework for the formulation and implementation of population policies since 1994. ESCAP members and associate members have recorded achievements in the area of population, including the expansion of sexual and reproductive health services, reductions in fertility and mortality levels and progress towards gender equity.

55. The ICPD beyond 2014 Global Survey contains information on policy measures that have contributed to those achievements as well as on the remaining challenges that countries have identified as their policy priorities for the next 5 to 10 years. These priorities, as elaborated in the previous chapter, include reducing unmet need for contraceptive services, including among adolescents, improving maternal health services, addressing the issues of ageing and older persons, further promotion of gender equality and the inclusion of population dynamics into policies for sustainable development.

56. Addressing these priorities through comprehensive policies and programmes which are adequately funded and monitored is essential for the successful implementation in the Asian and Pacific region of the ICPD Programme of Action beyond 2014.