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**REVIEW OF THE PROJECT ON POPULATION, DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY:
EMERGING CHALLENGES**

Note by the secretariat

SUMMARY

The present document contains a report on the evaluation of a project implemented by the secretariat entitled "Population, development and poverty: emerging challenges". This is a regional project implemented by the ESCAP secretariat with financial support from the United Nations Population Fund, which responds to the emerging needs in the area of population and development of countries in the Asian and Pacific region. Spanning four years (2004-2007), the project includes intercountry analysis and research, knowledge sharing, advocacy and policy support, and capacity-building activities in the field of population and development. The present document assesses the progress achieved in meeting the objectives of the project and examines the project's impact in strengthening the capacity of member countries to achieve the goals of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference Plan of Action on Population and Poverty.

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
I. PURPOSE OF EVALUATION	1
II. BACKGROUND	1
A. The challenge.....	2
B. The response of ESCAP	2
III. FINDINGS AND RESULTS	11
A. Relevance.....	11
B. Effectiveness and impact	11
C. Sustainability and conclusion	16
IV. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION	17

I. PURPOSE OF EVALUATION

1. In line with the enhanced monitoring and evaluation of the programme activities of ESCAP, the present document constitutes a qualitative assessment of a regional population programme implemented by the ESCAP secretariat, with financial support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which responds to the emerging needs of countries in the Asian and Pacific region.
2. The report considers the secretariat's experience to date in implementing the project "Population, development and poverty: emerging challenges", during the cycle 2004-2007, as carried out by the Population and Social Integration Section, Emerging Social Issues Division. The report describes the scope of the project, assesses the progress made in meeting the project's objectives and examines its impact in strengthening the capacity of member and associate member countries to achieve the goals of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development¹ and the Plan of Action on Population and Poverty² adopted at the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference, held in Bangkok in December 2002. Finally, the report reviews lessons learned from the project implementation.
3. The Committee is invited to review the project implementation and provide further guidance to the secretariat for the implementation of this project in its final year, as well as for future project planning and implementation in the area of population and development.

II. BACKGROUND

4. ESCAP, in close cooperation with UNFPA, has played a pivotal role in promoting the awareness of population issues and advocating population policies and programmes that contribute to the general wellbeing of people in the Asian and Pacific region. Together, the two organizations have contributed to the improved capacity of countries in the region to monitor population trends and their impact on development.
5. While UNFPA is the largest multilateral agency supporting population programmes at the country level, ESCAP continues to play an active role in creating an enabling environment for the development and implementation of policies -- including population policies -- that contribute to sustainable development and the alleviation of poverty. The significant progress that has been made by the countries and areas of the ESCAP region in improving the welfare of people is partly a reflection of these efforts.
6. Joint ESCAP/UNFPA programmes have focused on intercountry analysis and research, dissemination of information and capacity-building activities.

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.

² E/ESCAP/1271, annex I.

7. The regional population project implemented by ESCAP from 2004 to 2007 responds to the emerging needs of countries in the fast changing Asian and Pacific region. It includes intercountry activities that identify and/or seek to improve understanding of these emerging population-related issues as they impact on development, and enhance both the institutional and human resource capacities of the Governments of members and associate members as well as civil society organizations.

A. The challenge

8. A number of countries in the Asian and Pacific region have undergone significant economic, social and demographic changes during the past few decades and many more are poised to follow suit. In the wake of those changes, new population issues (such as age structure changes, population ageing, international migration, HIV/AIDS) have emerged, and economies and societies have to adapt to changing economic, social, demographic, political and planning paradigms. The Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference was convened in December 2002, at a critical juncture in the transition period experienced by countries in the region. At the Conference, several important recommendations were made in order to address the manifold challenges faced by countries in the Asian and Pacific region.

9. Those strategic recommendations span 12 areas pertaining to poverty reduction: population, sustainable development and poverty; international migration; internal migration and urbanization; population ageing; gender equality, equity and empowerment of women; reproductive rights and reproductive health; adolescent reproductive health; HIV/AIDS; behaviour change communication and information communication technology; data, research and training; partnerships; and resources.

B. The response of ESCAP

10. The project stems from the long-term commitment of ESCAP to provide for the analysis of the region's population challenges and for the application of the most effective means of tackling them through regional and national efforts.

11. As the regional arm of the United Nations Secretariat in the Asian and Pacific region, the ESCAP secretariat assists countries in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed goals and recommendations, such as those contained in the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.

12. The three-pronged strategy of ESCAP is to reduce poverty, manage globalization and address emerging and persistent social issues. More specifically, the Emerging Social Issues Division of ESCAP works to identify emerging social issues, especially those that directly affect the poor, women and other vulnerable and disadvantaged groups of people in the region. It increases awareness and understanding of the ways in which various issues, such as lowered fertility and mortality rates, population ageing and international migration, affect each country and the region as a whole. The project under review is an integral part of this effort.

13. The project was developed in response to a number of recommendations contained in the Plan of Action on Population and Poverty adopted at the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference. In particular, the project addresses those recommendations dealing with international migration, gender, capacity-building, improving data collection, knowledge sharing and strengthening partnerships.

14. It is to be noted that the project has been adapted in accordance with the recommendations of external evaluations, such as that conducted by UNFPA in July 2003 regarding the previous project, entitled "Compilation, packaging and regular dissemination of population information for advocacy purposes", which had been implemented from 2000 to 2003. The recommendations were carefully reviewed and followed in the ensuing years.

15. In addition, the project also responds to specific content direction from UNFPA, in particular its multi-year funding framework³ and its intercountry programme. The project responds, for example, to the following goals and related outcomes of the framework:

- (a) Countries address interaction between population dynamics, sustainable development and poverty, including the impact of HIV/AIDS;
- (b) Gender equality and empowerment of women are achieved;
- (c) National, subnational and sectoral policies, plans and strategies take into account population and development linkages;
- (d) Institutional mechanisms and sociocultural practices promote and protect the rights of women and girls and advance gender equity.

1. Project objective

16. The ESCAP/UNFPA regional programme (2004-2007) aims to contribute to the overarching goal of enhancing national and sectoral development plans that respond to emerging population issues/trends in ways that reduce poverty, improve reproductive health and empower women and older persons in countries of the Asian and Pacific region in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.

2. Project outputs and activities

17. The outputs described below are aimed at helping bring about a conducive environment for population policies and programmes that contribute to sustainable development, poverty alleviation, empowerment of women, improved access to information and services and promotion of informed choice.

³ DP/FPA/2004/4 (endorsed by the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board in its decision 2004/7 of 30 January 2004).

Output 1: Research findings and intercountry analyses on emerging and persistent issues of population and development are available.

18. The ESCAP secretariat, with technical inputs from UNFPA country technical services teams (CSTs), organizes and conducts intercountry research and analyses, the results of which are useful for participating countries as well as for other countries in the region. From 2004 to 2007, the following topics are being intensively studied and tackled: health and mortality, international migration, fertility transition and population ageing.

19. Fertility has declined in most Asian countries. In some, it is below replacement and declining, causing serious concerns about its causes and consequences. Population ageing is an inevitable result of declining fertility and mortality, and will be a major issue in the coming decades. Movements of people across national borders are on the rise and have serious economic and social implications.

20. ESCAP and UNFPA are taking a lead role in understanding these changes and the challenges they pose through the intercountry analyses that have been prepared, in particular for the various regional seminars implemented under this project (see para. 26 below for more details on activities).

21. The analyses are based on secondary data and are carried out using national institutions and/or experts. Technical supervision is provided by ESCAP and UNFPA/CSTs. In cooperation with UNFPA, several regional workshops (see para. 26 below) are organized throughout the project cycle to disseminate findings and promote the incorporation of these findings in the planning and policy process. Key results and policy conclusions are published and disseminated widely through the various information dissemination vehicles under the project (including the *Asia-Pacific Population Journal* and *Population Headliners*, as well as online).

Output 2: Policymakers have improved knowledge and capacity to formulate, implement, monitor and evaluate population and reproductive health policies and programmes in accordance with national goals and priorities related to poverty reduction and have the capacity to incorporate the results of the research from output 1 into national policies and programmes.

22. One of the recommendations of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development as well as the Plan of Action on Population and Poverty adopted at the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference is to strengthen the integration of population factors in planning. With the rapid changes that are occurring in the planning regimen of Asian countries, it is imperative that senior and middle-level planners become aware of the emerging as well as persistent issues related to population, reproductive health and gender, drawing on the results of the intercountry analyses carried out as part of the project, but also from the findings of other studies. Moreover, it is also necessary to develop the requisite tools and impart knowledge and skills for proper consideration of these issues in the policy and planning process. The regional training workshops in particular will contribute to this output.

Output 3: Policymakers have better access to information on emerging and persistent issues related to population and development as well as lessons learned.

23. The International Conference on Population and Development marked a paradigm shift – away from traditional population control measures and demographic targets, towards social development based on individual needs and aspirations within a human rights framework, placing human lives in the forefront of the development agenda. It articulated new visions on the close links between sustainable development and reproductive health and gender equality.

24. ESCAP is committed to continuing its role in advocacy and capacity-building. While part of the project's activities is geared to better understanding the emerging and persistent population issues faced by countries in the region, its knowledge sharing and information management component (a) effectively delivers messages through a number of channels targeting senior planners and policymakers and (b) assists countries in building capacity for information management and dissemination.

25. Furthermore, in its efforts to strengthen knowledge sharing and act as a knowledge hub in the field of population and development in the region, ESCAP, in cooperation with UNFPA, brings to its target audience – policymakers and planners – key findings from its intercountry research and analyses as well as lessons learned and best practices from country-level initiatives through the highly respected *Asia-Pacific Population Journal*, *Population Headliners* (both in print and electronic forms), newspaper articles, e-mail alerts and an evolving online knowledge base on population-related issues.

26. Below are the various activities proposed under this project from January 2004 to December 2007, which contribute to the outputs described above:⁴

(a) Regional seminars:

- (i) Regional Seminar on Emerging Issues of Health and Mortality, 2004
- (ii) Regional Seminar on Social Implications of International Migration, 2005
- (iii) Regional Seminar on Fertility Transition in Asia: Opportunities and Challenges, 2006
- (iv) Regional Seminar on Social, Health and Economic Consequences of Population Ageing, 2007

(b) Training workshops:

- (i) Training Workshop on Population and Development Planning in Central Asia, Almaty, Kazakhstan, 2004

⁴ For more details on activities, see section III, B (paras. 41-61).

- (ii) Training Workshop on Population, Poverty and Gender, Bangkok, 2005
 - (iii) Training Workshop on Population, Poverty and Development, Mumbai, India, 2006
 - (iv) Training Workshop on Population, Poverty and Development, Suva, Fiji, 2007
- (c) Theme studies of the project:

- (i) Under this project, a theme study addressing the issue of health and the Millennium Development Goals was prepared in 2005. As two of the eight Millennium Development Goals are directly linked with health, in particular maternal and child health, the outcome of the study was of great significance to several countries in the region, in finding ways of improving maternal health and reducing child mortality;
- (ii) The second theme study "Twenty years of progress in the field of population and development: 1986-2006" published as the special commemorative issue of the *Asia-Pacific Population Journal*, marking the twentieth anniversary of the publication, is being prepared in 2006 and is expected to be launched in November 2006, in conjunction with the 2006 International Parliamentarians' Conference on the Implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action.

Since the launch of the *Asia-Pacific Population Journal* in March 1986, the landscape of the Asian and Pacific region has changed drastically, with countries making progress on both the social and economic fronts, although wide disparities and stark contrasts remain. Spurred by the International Conference on Population and Development and the Fourth and Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conferences, population policies and programmes have gathered momentum in most countries. Increasing emphasis has been placed on ensuring universal access to reproductive health as a way to improve family and community well-being, boost economic gains, save women's and children's lives and curb the spread of HIV/AIDS, benefits that contribute greatly to achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

- (iii) Social implications of international migration (2007)

The third theme study on the social implications of international migration, proposed for 2007, aims to explore the social dimension of migration, which often receives marginal focus in the migration debate and in existing policy frameworks. The theme study will discuss the trend towards the feminization of migration and the increasing importance of the role played by migrant labour

recruiters. The theme study will also examine measures taken to address the social consequences of migration, including those for the protection of rights of migrants and the provision of access to basic social services, paying due attention to gender aspects;

(d) Knowledge sharing and information management in the field of population:

(i) *Asia-Pacific Population Journal*

In print since 1986, the *Asia-Pacific Population Journal* is a highly respected publication in which leading population experts share their opinion and action-oriented research findings and provide clear policy recommendations regarding population and development issues in the region. Totally revamped in 2005, this peer-reviewed *Journal* reaches a broad audience of decision- and policymakers, programme planners and programme administrators, as well as researchers in over 75 countries worldwide. Its web-based version also attracts a remarkably large audience, with about 180,000 hits a month on average in 2006 and a list of e-subscribers growing by the day. Numerous requests for translation and reprints of articles published in the *Journal* are received every year, while several online libraries and databases are indexing its articles.

The overall policy and content direction of the *Asia-Pacific Population Journal* is guided by the *Journal's* Editorial Advisory Board, which meets on an annual basis and is composed of eminent experts in the field of population and development. Published by ESCAP, the printing and dissemination costs of the *Journal* are borne jointly by ESCAP and UNFPA.

(ii) *Population Headliners*

Issued bimonthly since 1975, *Population Headliners* is a well-regarded publication and a recognized tool for advocacy and knowledge sharing on emerging issues of population, gender and reproductive health. Disseminating non-technical population information for general audiences, it contributes to enhanced and sustained awareness of population and development issues and their likely consequences. The newsletter highlights important aspects of national population programmes and notable population-related events and activities. It is published in both print and electronic format six times a year (3,000 copies per issue) and targets key readers and selected personnel and organizations in the field. Enjoying a fresh and colourful look since January 2004, *Population Headliners* is of great value to its readers in the region as shown by recent readership surveys (see para. 54 below);

(iii) *ESCAP Population Data Sheet*

Published annually, the *Data Sheet* provides demographic and selected socio-economic development indicators for the Asian and Pacific region. It provides the most up-to-date indicators and utilizes the most recent national data collected from censuses, surveys, estimates and projections prepared by the Population Division of the United Nations and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community. The *Data Sheet* is instrumental in profiling demographic trends, such as fertility and mortality, population size, growth and distribution of the population of the region and its socio-economic development;

(iv) Web-based publications and information dissemination

All the above-cited publications are available in both electronic and print format. The *ESCAP Population Data Sheet's* web-based version is particularly user-friendly and interactive, making it easy for readers/viewers to access the desired information and to display and make use of the data.

For the various publications, a system of electronic alerts notifies the targeted audience of their respective release and further fosters awareness of persistent and emerging population issues. The publications are also disseminated effectively and in a timely fashion to their respective mailing lists, which include about 1,200 entries for the *Journal* in 75 countries worldwide and about 2,200 entries for *Population Headliners* in over 100 countries. The mailing lists are updated on a continuing basis, by addition upon specific request, correction or deletion (following undelivered mail). Readership surveys of the various publications are also conducted on a regular basis to ensure that the publications reach the intended target audience.

(v) Population information and resources databases

One of the most visited websites of ESCAP, attracting over 300,000 hits a month on average in 2006, the population website⁵ is attracting an increasing number of visitors, as it becomes an invaluable source of useful and timely information on population and development issues in Asia and the Pacific.

Regarded as a major pillar of the knowledge sharing and information management component of the project, the website contributes to the creation of an evolving knowledge base that can be used by partners to strengthen knowledge and skills in support of the Programme of Action of the International Conference

⁵ www.unescap.org/esid/psis/population/index.asp

on Population and Development and other internationally agreed development goals, as well as to scale up successful interventions.

This dynamic knowledge base employs up-to-date technology to present indicators, thematic databases and the entire, searchable and user-friendly collection of the *Asia-Pacific Population Journal*.

In late 2006, the task will be undertaken to digitize and make accessible online some parts of the past collection of the *Asian Population Studies Series*, which are occasional publications of a technical nature, aimed at bridging knowledge gaps, solving problems and removing technical obstacles for the advancement of regional and national population programmes. Requests are regularly received for old copies of the Series, which was first launched in 1966 and represents a valuable source of information on the evolution of population thinking.

The online directory of Asia-Pacific population professionals was totally revamped in 2005 and received inputs from nine countries in the region. Aimed at better assessing population expertise in the region and facilitating networking among experts, the directory is being further expanded. Inputs are being sought in particular from countries in South and East Asia.

In addition, the online database on family planning laws and regulations will be expanded and Governments in the region will be approached by the end of the project cycle with enquiries about possible new laws enacted in the field of population and family planning, or possible amendments to existing laws.

3. Monitoring the implementation of the project

27. Quarterly progress reports and year-end reports on the project prepared by ESCAP are submitted to UNFPA through established channels. Such reports include an assessment of the progress towards the achievement of results and are not limited to reporting on the completion of activities. In addition, there are periodical evaluations of the project, assessing its outcomes. For example, as part of a mid-term review evaluation, ESCAP responded to a set of 22 questions in late 2005 submitted by a consultant from UNFPA.

28. Although the project was approved in principle for the 2004-2007 cycle, UNFPA, together with ESCAP, reviews the programme on an annual basis to make necessary adjustments to the work plan for the subsequent year. An end-of-project evaluation is also envisaged and will be undertaken by independent consultant(s) in mid-2007.

29. It is also to be noted that the various activities under the project have some types of built-in mechanisms -- questionnaires, evaluations or readership surveys -- that ensure the activities

implemented respond to the needs of the target audiences and add value to the national population and development programmes in the region.

4. Partners and target beneficiaries

30. This project is implemented by ESCAP with funding from UNFPA, which is expected to contribute a total amount of US\$ 1,570,938 by the end of the four-year project cycle (subject to final budget revisions after completion and budget approval for 2007). For the implementation of various activities under the project, the UNFPA Country Technical Services Team (UNFPA/CST) for East and South-East Asia based in Bangkok and the UNFPA CST for South and West Asia based in Kathmandu are consulted as and when necessary.

31. The various UNFPA/CST advisors based in Bangkok play active roles in activities such as meetings, workshops and seminars, as resource persons or facilitators. Some project activities mentioned earlier are conducted in joint collaboration with UNFPA/CST, Bangkok and Kathmandu.

32. For example, the training workshop on population and development planning (Central Asia, 2004) was organized in collaboration with UNFPA Kazakhstan. A similar training workshop in the Pacific will be organized in collaboration with UNFPA/CST, Fiji in 2007. In addition, a renowned research institution, the International Institute for Population Sciences (Mumbai, India), is involved as a partner in the organization of the training workshop on population, development and poverty in South Asia (Mumbai, October 2006). ESCAP also involved other organizations, such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Asian Forum for Parliamentarians in Population and Development (AFPPD) in the organization of the Regional Seminar on Social Implications of International Migration (Bangkok, 2005).

33. Key beneficiaries of the project are senior-level policymakers from Governments and NGOs in the ESCAP region. They are invited to participate in discussions on the policy and programme-relevant findings of intercountry comparative analysis undertaken as part of the project.

34. Many more influential and interested persons receive publications and syntheses of findings of the ESCAP/UNFPA regional population programme through the information dissemination programme of ESCAP via print (*Asia-Pacific Population Journal* and *Population Headliners*) and electronic media. This results in an enabling environment to address emerging and continuing challenges as knowledge and understanding of them improve among the key stakeholders.

35. Other beneficiaries are the planners and programme managers who provide scientific inputs into policy development and programme planning and translate them into action. While only selected representatives from participating countries (based on importance and commonality of issues) will take an active part in the intercountry analysis, many more will benefit from the regional and in-country workshops and training programmes organized as part of the ESCAP/UNFPA regional

population project. The result leads to improved national capacity to develop policies and to design, implement and monitor programmes.

III. FINDINGS AND RESULTS

A. Relevance

36. UNFPA support to the ESCAP regional population project has been very effective, as various evaluation reports of the project conducted in the recent past have shown. The unique position of ESCAP in the region, together with its multidisciplinary orientation for development assistance to member and associate member countries, adds value to UNFPA initiatives at the country level for a number of reasons.

37. First, comparative advantage of ESCAP in the region is useful to advance internationally agreed goals and recommendations. Second, its multidisciplinary character is effective in presenting population issues in the broader developmental context. Third, it can provide an effective forum for exchanging information and promoting cooperation among member countries.

38. In view of these complementarities, the ESCAP regional programme provides synergy to UNFPA initiatives in the region. This project is designed to address population concerns, including the relationships between population, poverty and reproductive health; emerging issues related to fertility and mortality; population ageing; and international labour migration as these issues are becoming extremely important in the ESCAP region.

39. As described above, the project also includes the preparation and dissemination of the *Asia-Pacific Population Journal* and the newsletter *Population Headliners*, both of which have been very useful for disseminating information related to population and development, including reproductive health and gender-related issues.

40. In today's fast-changing environment, where massive volumes of information can be a challenge to its validity and reliability, the project helps create a knowledge hub on population and development, and thus become an invaluable source of reliable, useful and timely information on population and development in Asia and the Pacific, helping partners strengthen knowledge and skills in support of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and other internationally agreed development goals.

B. Effectiveness and impact

41. The overall impact of the joint ESCAP/UNFPA project is to be measured only in the long run, as the ultimate outcome of the various activities described above. In the short term, however, the impact of the project contributes broadly to two results: enhanced knowledge and advocacy skills, and policy support in the field of population; and improved capacity of policymakers in integrating population and development planning. The effectiveness and impact of the project's activities are described as follows:

1. Regional seminars

42. During the first biennium of the project, the Regional Seminar on Emerging Issues of Health and Mortality, held in Bangkok in September 2004, was attended by researchers, planners and policymakers representing 14 countries and several United Nations agencies in the region. Based on the papers presented and the discussions emanating from the Seminar, several recommendations were issued, which provided guidelines for the formulation of policies and programmes in order to improve health and reduce mortality in the region and support the objective of achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

43. Recommendations were issued in the areas of maternal and child health, health of older persons, causes of death and direction of research. Evaluation of the Seminar by participants revealed that the rating scores for overall evaluation, documentation, in-session services and impact were very high. An important outcome of the Seminar was the publication of the study entitled “Emerging issues of health and mortality in the Asian and Pacific region”, which consisted of a selection of high-quality papers presented at the Seminar.⁶

44. In August 2005, the Regional Seminar on Social Implications of International Migration held in Bangkok was organized jointly by ESCAP, UNFPA, IOM and AFPPD. The Seminar was attended by high-level government officials from the region who were involved in planning and policymaking, including a minister. The Seminar reviewed recent trends in international labour migration in major areas of destination in the ESCAP region and by country of origin with a view to assisting areas of both origin and destination to incorporate such trends into national policymaking and planning. This is in line with the recommendations of the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference, which urged Governments, in cooperation with civil society organizations and the international community, to address the issue of international migration and maximize its benefits while mitigating its adverse impacts. The result of the Seminar was used as an input to the High-level Dialogue on International Migration, held in New York in September 2006. High quality, evidence-based, policy-oriented papers prepared by renowned researchers were also published as a special issue of the *Asia-Pacific Population Journal* in December 2005.

2. Training workshops

45. During the period of project implementation, ESCAP organized three training workshops, each with one week duration. The first training workshop, on population and development planning in Central Asia, was organized jointly with UNFPA Kazakhstan and held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in 2004. A total of 17 participants from six Central Asian countries received training on basic demographic concepts and measures, sex-age distribution, marital and household composition, socio-economic characteristics, sources of population data, use of population variables in development planning, and population policy in Central Asia. The workshop made use of SPECTRUM software to

⁶ *Asian Population Studies Series, No. 163* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.05.II.F.14).

teach participants methods in population and sectoral projections in areas such as health, education, economy and urbanization (using actual data from respective countries). All participants rated the Workshop as very useful. Several participants highly recommended the organization of similar workshops at the country level so that a larger number of government officials from various ministries and departments could take part. As a result of the Workshop, the Government of Uzbekistan requested ESCAP, with financial support from UNFPA, to facilitate a similar workshop in its capital. Such a workshop was held in December 2005, for two groups of 20 participants each week representing government officials from various ministries and regions of Uzbekistan.

46. The second training workshop, on population, poverty and gender for South-West and South-East Asia, was organized jointly with UNFPA/CST for East and South-East Asia. It was held in Bangkok in 2005 and attended by 17 participants. Besides providing knowledge on various demographic issues, interlinkages of population variables with development planning and population and sectoral projections, the training imparted knowledge on various other topics, including the relevance of population and reproductive health in achieving the Millennium Development Goals; HIV/AIDS and development; and gender equality and reproductive health: pathways to poverty reduction.

47. The third training workshop, on population, development and poverty, was organized in collaboration with the International Institute for Population Sciences, Mumbai, India. It was held recently in Mumbai and was attended by 17 participants from South Asia. The fourth training workshop is planned for the Pacific and is to be held in Fiji in 2007 in collaboration with UNFPA/CST, Fiji.

48. Overall, the training workshops have attained their objective of imparting to national planners and policymakers the significance of the linkages between population issues and poverty and development, and the importance of integrating population concerns into poverty reduction and development policies and strategies. Moreover, participants have been given techniques and tools to link population issues with socio-economic sectors for policy analysis and national development planning. The workshops garnered positive evaluations and feedback from the participants. Several participants highly recommended that similar workshops be conducted by ESCAP and UNFPA at the country level so as to benefit a larger number of national planners and policymakers, thereby strengthening capacity and promoting an enabling environment for the integration of population issues into socio-economic development efforts.

3. Print publications

49. During the course of the four-year project, the various publications implemented as part of the project have been prepared, published and disseminated in a timely fashion to recipients on consolidated and up-to-date mailing lists, making available to an expanding audience useful and timely information on population and development issues in the region. As explained below, both of

the project's regular publications (*Asia-Pacific Population Journal* and *Population Headliners*) have marked milestones in their history (20 years and 30 years of continuous publication, respectively), have totally revamped their image, have gathered strong backing from readership surveys and greatly expanded their audience as well as their online presence. Salient points on the effectiveness and impact of the various components are highlighted below.

50. The *Asia-Pacific Population Journal* is of immense value to its readers, who hold the publication in high esteem for, among others, its coverage of subject matter, overall quality and usefulness of information. This was demonstrated by the 2004 year-end readership survey, which drew a remarkably high response rate of over 41 per cent and was corroborated to a great extent by the preliminary results of the 2006 readership survey, now in progress. In the 2004 survey, over 91 per cent of respondents rated the usefulness of the information as either excellent (46.1 per cent) or good (46.2 per cent). More specifically, the usefulness of recommendations was rated by 77 per cent of respondents as either excellent (20.5 per cent) or good (56.5 per cent). As regards the use of articles, 80 per cent of respondents stated using them for further research, over 62 per cent as references for teaching, over 35 per cent to formulate policies and about 30 per cent for advocacy (multiple responses allowed).

51. The high quality, evidence-based, policy-oriented research findings published in the *Journal* (15-20 articles appear in the *Journal* every year) are greatly valued by the members of the *Journal's* Editorial Advisory Board as well, who, for the past three years, have provided strong backing to the publication. Describing it as "an example of best possible form of evidence-based advocacy" (First meeting of Editorial Advisory Board, June 2004), the prominent members of the Board also highlighted the "considerable potential" of the publication and the fact that it was "undeniably meeting a need in the population sphere" (Board meeting, July 2005). At its third meeting, (August 2006) the Editorial Board stated that the publication had gone from strength to strength and "had filled an important gap in the international exchange of knowledge, experience, ideas, information and data on all aspects of population and development in the region".

52. Special thematic issues of the *Journal*, published at least once a year, help to enhance awareness and understanding of emerging issues in the field, also elaborating the crucial linkages between population, development and poverty. The *Journal's* new column, Viewpoint (introduced in 2004), publishes articles from prominent and outspoken experts, and focuses on hotly debated issues.

53. To mark the twentieth anniversary of the publication in 2006, among other initiatives, a special issue was prepared, which received contributions from world-class and award-winning population experts and which is expected to be instrumental in taking stock of the progress made and highlighting the challenges that lie ahead.

54. With regard to the *Population Headliners*, apart from backing received from evaluations conducted during the project cycle, a recent readership survey conducted in late 2004 highlighted,

among other key findings that over 90 per cent of respondents rated the information contained in the newsletter as either very useful (52 per cent) or quite useful (41 per cent). Nearly 40 per cent of them stated using *Headliners* for the purpose of information sharing and advocacy, about 42 for keeping updated on current events in the field, and nearly 30 per cent for networking (multiple responses allowed).

4. Web-based publications and website

55. The surge in popularity of the population website over the past few years (a fivefold increase from 2004 to 2006 in the number of hits) attests to the relevance of and growing interest in the information provided. The *Asia-Pacific Population Journal's* website itself (with a complete searchable archive and full-text articles) attracted about 30,000 hits per month in 2004 and in 2006 reached a record level of over 180,000 hits per month. The *Journal* is also being uploaded in an increasing number of widely used online academic libraries and databases (Bibliography of Asian Studies, POPLINE, Journal Server.Org, Project MUSE, etc.), attesting to the value and usefulness of the publication to academia.

56. In addition, uploading of information on the Web regarding project workshops and seminars draws attention and often attracts additional participants as observers.

5. Online population information and resources databases

57. Updating of various online databases, including the Directory of Population Experts and the Directory of Population Research, and the updating of the database on Population and Family Planning Laws, Policies and Regulations, are ongoing.

58. With a view to expanding and improving the Directory of Population Professionals, new software was created and disseminated in 2004; several countries decided to participate and gather information.

59. In 2005, with input from eight countries in the region, a new version of the Directory of Population Professionals in Asia and the Pacific was uploaded. Uploading of inputs from the various countries is almost completed. In 2006, several individuals/institutes in South and East Asia will be approached to expand the reach of the Directory.

60. In addition, the various activities under the project often generate media coverage, attesting to the value and innovative character of research findings. This contributes to further public awareness of population and development issues. For example, the Seminar on Social Implications of International Migration conducted in August 2005 attracted ample media attention. The opinion editorial signed by the Executive Secretary of ESCAP on this issue was picked up in five newspapers and websites across the region, while news stories on the meeting and related report launch were carried in about eight newspapers and websites.

61. As a whole, the role of ESCAP in helping to increase awareness of the importance of population and building a consensus on population issues is also reflected in the number of countries adopting effective population goals and policies closely matching those promoted by ESCAP in collaboration with UNFPA. Governments of countries in the region indeed increasingly recognize that sustainable economic development depends on their ability to deal with many interactive forces, such as population size and growth rates, distribution patterns and age structure, migration and urbanization, gender issues and poverty.

C. Sustainability and conclusion

62. ESCAP projects have evolved over time to respond to the changing reality of the Asian and Pacific region, a region in transition, where new population issues emerge and economies and societies have to adapt to changing economic, social, demographic, political and planning paradigms. As ESCAP members and associate members build up and enhance their capacity to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed goals and recommendations, become able to formulate holistic plans towards achieving those goals in an equitable manner, and ensure coverage of all vulnerable groups, the secretariat will continue to adapt in order to best fill in the gaps and offer relevant and value-added projects. In this perspective, some training activities under the project might, in the long run, gradually be tapered off, for example, as countries and national agencies enhance their capacity to formulate adequate population goals and policies. However, other activities, such as regional seminars and information management and dissemination, are likely to remain relevant, as they contribute to a dynamic forum for advocacy and exchange of innovative ideas and findings. The very topics of those seminars and publications would continue to reflect the changing realities and emerging issues in the region.

63. As the project is ongoing, it is premature to discuss its impact, which will be known only in the long term. However, the immediate results of the partial implementation of the project can be assessed from the activities described above.

64. The various regional seminars undertaken on pertinent issues of population, such as emerging issues of health and mortality, social implications of international migration and fertility transition in Asia provided important forums for eminent researchers, planners and policymakers to discuss and disseminate inter-country research findings. As an outcome, important recommendations were also issued which can help formulate policies and develop programmes on population and development at national and sectoral levels aimed at achieving the Millennium Development Goals and other goals such as those contained in the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.

65. The series of training workshops conducted in different subregions have attained their immediate objectives of imparting knowledge and skills to national planners and policymakers with

regard to integrating population variables with poverty reduction and development policies and strategies. Towards the end of the project cycle, it is proposed that the long-term impact of the workshops be assessed, for example, through follow-up questionnaires submitted to participants, inquiring about the extent to which they have utilized or are planning to utilize the knowledge and skills gained during the training they attended, with a view to integrating population issues into socio-economic development plans.

66. As recommended by several participants in different occurrences, such training workshops should also be organized at the national level in order to benefit a large number of national planners and policymakers and further strengthen their capacity.

IV. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

67. In view of the successful implementation of the current project, its importance and its relevance for countries in the region and the long-standing, fruitful collaboration between ESCAP and UNFPA, it is proposed that a follow-up project be developed and submitted to UNFPA for funding for the 2008-2011 cycle.

68. While the knowledge sharing and information management components of the project, including the *Asia-Pacific Population Journal* and *Population Headliners*, should be pursued in view of their popularity and uniqueness, intercountry analyses and training workshops should be refocused to address the emerging population issues in line with the recommendations of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Plan of Action on Population and Poverty of the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference.

69. In designing the next project cycle, due consideration will also be given to the outcome of the current project, such as evaluations of regional seminars and training workshops and the general evaluation expected to be conducted towards mid 2007.

70. In addition, the follow-up project cycle could address the following points:

(a) Develop and support the implementation of effective mechanisms and instruments to track the progress of implementation of the Plan of Action on Population and Poverty of the Fifth Asian and Pacific Population Conference;

(b) Develop knowledge sharing tools/repositories for sharing regional experiences on emerging population dynamics, including the dissemination of “best practices” on population, development and poverty;

(c) Provide support in order to strengthen national capacity to pursue human capital development approach while integrating population concerns into the broader development agenda, particularly into strategies for poverty reduction and the achievement of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals;

(d) Conduct research on rapid fertility decline and its implications for the family and population ageing, with specific emphasis on policy and programme development and improvement of services;

(e) Conduct and support research that would examine the impact of age-related structural changes on individual, household and societal well-being;

(f) Conduct a systematic study and research on international migration and development in Asia and the Pacific, reflecting the state of knowledge of the levels and trends in such migration. Such a study would be helpful for national Governments and international organizations in order to incorporate migration issues in policy and programme formulation.

71. The Committee may wish to provide the secretariat with guidance regarding the implementation of the present project and future project planning and implementation in general.

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