

UNFPA Press Release

Embargoed until 1200 GMT, 15 September 2004,

For information:

[Abubakar Dungus](#), +1 (212) 297-5031

[Omar Gharzeddine](#), +1 (212) 297-5028

[William A. Ryan](#), +1 (212) 297-5279, mobile +1 (646) 226 6104

Ten Years on, UNFPA Reports Uneven Progress in Implementing Landmark Population and Development Consensus

Funding Gap Imperils Efforts to Reduce Maternal Deaths, Prevent HIV/AIDS and Ensure Reproductive Rights

LONDON, 15 September 2004—Countries have made impressive progress in carrying out a bold action plan that links poverty alleviation to women's rights and reproductive health, emphasizes *The State of World Population 2004* report by UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund.

But a shortfall of the funds pledged by international donors is undermining critical efforts to provide family planning services, reduce maternal deaths, prevent HIV/AIDS and meet the needs of young people and the poor. These are the key findings of UNFPA's annual flagship report, launched here today by UNFPA Executive Director Thoraya Ahmed Obaid.

In September 1994, some 179 countries adopted a landmark 20-year Programme of Action at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo. It called for universal access to reproductive health care by 2015, as a key measure to empower women, ensure human rights, reduce poverty, protect the environment and foster sustainable development.

This year's report, *The Cairo Consensus at Ten: Population, Reproductive Health and the Global Effort to End Poverty*, examines the progress countries have made and the obstacles they have encountered at the halfway point in implementing the ICPD plan.

SIGNIFICANT GAINS MADE

A global survey by UNFPA indicates that developing countries have taken important steps to carry out the Cairo recommendations. States have enthusiastically renewed their commitment to the Programme of Action at a series of regional review meetings.

Since 1994, most governments have integrated population concerns into their development strategies. Almost all of the 151 developing countries surveyed have adopted laws or other measures to protect the rights of girls and women. Some 131 have changed national policies, laws or institutions to recognize reproductive rights.

Many countries have acted to integrate reproductive health services into primary health care, improve facilities and training, adopt national strategies on HIV/AIDS and address the reproductive health and rights of adolescents. New partnerships have developed between governments and a broad range of civil society organizations to meet reproductive health needs.

The use of modern contraception has increased from 55 per cent of couples in 1994 to 61 per cent today. New attention is being paid to harmful traditional practices, gender-based violence, post-abortion care and women's reproductive health needs among populations affected by armed conflict or natural disaster.

LONG WAY TO GO TO MEET NEEDS OF THE POOR AND YOUTH

Yet, the report points out, progress has been uneven and enormous challenges remain: Glaring gaps between rich and poor in the availability and quality of health care persist throughout the world. Laws ensuring women's rights are not enforced consistently. More than 350 million couples still lack access to a full range of family planning services.

More than 500,000 women die every year from pregnancy-related complications; most deaths could be prevented by expanding access to attended delivery and emergency obstetric care. In 2003, 3 million people died of AIDS and an estimated 5 million were newly infected with HIV, half of them between ages 15 and 24. Yet only one person in five at high risk of infection has access to proven prevention interventions.

Population growth is exacerbating poverty and contributing, along with unsustainable consumption patterns, to increased stress on the global environment. While growth has slowed in many countries, world population is projected to rise from 6.4 billion today to 8.9 billion by 2050, with nearly all the growth in developing countries. The 50 poorest countries will triple in size, to 1.7 billion people. Enabling couples and individuals to determine the number and spacing of their children, and investing in health and education, are essential to reducing poverty at both household and national levels, the report notes.

FUNDS AND SUPPLIES FALL SHORT

"In the face of these challenges, the response of the international community has been inadequate," the report states. Donor countries are providing only about half the amount they pledged to implement the Programme of Action—\$3.1 billion a year rather than the \$6.1 billion a year promised by 2005.

Donor support for contraceptives and condoms for HIV prevention has declined over the past decade. Yet demand is expected to increase by 40 per cent by 2015. Shortages of supplies are expected, with grave consequences for the health and well-being of millions.

“Unless international assistance rises to the level agreed to at the Cairo conference,” said Ms. Obaid, “the numbers of people who need family planning, maternal health care and HIV/AIDS prevention, testing and treatment will continue to grow. Lack of reproductive health care will continue to be the leading cause of death and disability for women in the developing world and the AIDS pandemic will continue to expand and wreak havoc.”

The UN Millennium Development Goals, which include action to halve extreme poverty and hunger by 2015, reduce maternal mortality and stem the HIV/AIDS pandemic, depend on the full implementation of the ICPD plan, the report states. But commitments to provide development assistance must move from declarations of good intentions to active partnerships and investments.

“This year’s report is, above all, a call to mobilize the political will and the resources needed to make the Cairo vision of a better world a reality,” said Ms. Obaid.

UNFPA is the world’s largest multilateral source of assistance to developing countries for reproductive health and population programmes.

UNFPA’s *State of World Population* report has been published annually since 1978. Each year, the report focuses on questions of current interest and concern for the future. The report is available online, in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish, at www.unfpa.org.