

## POPULATION, ENVIRONMENT AND POVERTY LINKAGES OPERATIONAL CHALLENGES

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POPULATION AND  
DEVELOPMENT  
STRATEGIES

NUMBER **1**



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Population Fund

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## FOREWORD

In the Millennium Declaration, adopted by 147 Heads of State in September 2000, world leaders pledged to *spare no effort to free all of humanity, and above all our children and grandchildren, from the threat of living on a planet irredeemably spoilt by human activities, and whose resources would no longer be sufficient for their needs*. The Declaration also marked a strong commitment to the right to development, to gender equality, to the eradication of the many dimensions of poverty and to sustainable human development.

The largest population increases and most fragile environmental conditions are occurring among poor countries. These countries also usually have limited financial resource margins and the least adequate political and managerial resources. At the same time they are subjected to pressures of globalization and challenging market conditions that tend to be oblivious to their existing domestic inequities. The world's growing consumption of scarce resources, including support of the high living standards of a small proportion of the world, is unprecedented in human history. Contemporaneously there are the growing gaps in consumption, and increasing consumption needs to meet the basic living standards of the poorest.

Many current patterns of consumption and production - both over-consumption among the wealthy, and under-consumption among the poor - are unsustainable. Access by all on a sustainable basis to unpolluted air, uncontaminated food, safe water, clean energy and other basic necessities of life, is a continuing challenge.



Continued growth of populations and economies threatens food and water security, forest resources and biodiversity, and increases pressure on limited natural resources. Without the realization of the goals of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), especially universal access to quality reproductive health services, stabilization of global population and more sustainable patterns of production and consumption will remain elusive. And further, countries will find increasing difficulty in resolving issues of poverty and environmental degradation.

This report provides an overview of the complex interrelations between population and the environment, and underscores the importance of considering mediating factors, such as the policy context, institutional constraints, technological impacts, and cultural norms and values.

The report documents the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) support for a number of programme initiatives in the area of population, the environment and sustainable development, with information sourced from its country and inter-country programmes. UNFPA undertakes this role in its capacity as the lead agency for the implementation of the Programme of Action of the ICPD and as Task Manager for Chapter 5 of Agenda 21 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED).

For example, in India, where water scarcity is already acute in many parts of the country, the Fund is supporting a research project that is looking into the effects of population growth on village water supply for agricultural and domestic use, as well as its consequences for land use, housing, sanitation and common property resources. In South Africa, the Fund is supporting an environmental project on water resources that has created jobs for the poor, especially women, whose reproductive health needs are being addressed simultaneously through a community-based reproductive health programme.

As the report illustrates, in Azerbaijan UNFPA is supporting local efforts to strengthen national capacities to plan, implement and monitor effective policies that take into account, and mainstream, population and gender concerns in environmental planning and management. The Fund also helps build local capacities by promoting policy dialogue and undertaking policy analysis and research on issues related to popula-

tion and environmental linkages. It supports regional policy dialogue among parliamentarians from developed and developing countries on cross-border issues covering *inter alia* population, environment and sustainable development.

The report also draws attention to the many capacity constraints facing developing countries in identifying environment, population and poverty linkages, and in framing policies and programmes to promote sustainable human development. These include the lack of data and adequate models, existing administrative arrangements that often are not conducive to policy coordination, and limited human and financial resources. The report calls for the need to reinvigorate the spirit of the Rio and Cairo conferences through, among others, renewed national commitments and broader partnerships involving governments, civil society and the private sector, with support from the international community.

I would like to sincerely thank UNFPA Country Office Representatives, as well as the other Divisions within UNFPA headquarters, for helping to supply the source material on which a significant part of this report is based. I would also like to thank the Population and Development Branch of the Technical Support Division, especially the small team listed below, for the hard work and commitment in preparing this report. I sincerely hope that this paper will prove to be useful in the context of the ongoing dialogue on population, environment and poverty.

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Director  
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