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ICPD NEWS No. 3

A Newsletter of the UNFPA Task Force on ICPD Implementation

FEBRUARY 1996

EGYPTIAN SYMPOSIUM ASSESSES PROGRESS SINCE ICPD The First Annual Egyptian Post-ICPD Symposium, organized by the NGO Commission for Population and Development (NCPD), 8-10 January 1996, served as the occasion to review activities under way in Egypt and worldwide to implement the Programme of Action. The Symposium brought together representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), government officials, academics and journalists to assess what has taken place over the past year and to identify priority issues for action.

In welcoming participants, His Excellency, the Honourable Dr. Ismail Sallam, the recently appointed Minister of Health and Population, emphasized the importance of reproductive health care and signalled his intention to seek the assistance of NGOs in improving the quality of reproductive health initiatives and to increase their participation in monitoring programme implementation.

In her keynote address, Dr. Nafis Sadik, UNFPA Executive Director, paid special tribute to the commitment of the Government of Egypt and NGOs as essential to the success of the Conference. She remarked that she was especially pleased to take part in this NGO Symposium, considering the critical role of NGOs in bringing about a consensus at the ICPD. Dr Sadik observed, "Together, we made history in September 1994 The ICPD

decisively changed the way countries view population and development issues and mapped out a bold, new course of action. . . ."

The three-day meeting heard representatives of bilateral donors, parliamentary groups and international NGOs discuss the range of activities being implemented worldwide as well as the local initiatives of a broad spectrum of Egyptian NGOs.

Dr. Maher Mahran, Secretary-General of the National Population Council, who chaired the session, called attention to the positive response of the international donor community to the directives of the Programme of Action and underscored the dynamic partnership evolving between Governments and NGOs. While in Cairo for the Symposium, Dr. Sadik took the opportunity to visit project sites, including an NGO-run family planning clinic and an integrated community development project supported by UNFPA.

COMMISSION ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT REVIEWS STATUS OF ICPD IMPLEMENTATION

The Commission on Population and Development (CPD), at its 29th session, 26 February-1 March 1996, will consider five reports dealing with implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action, in line with the CPD theme for 1996 _ reproductive rights and reproductive health, including population information, education and communication (IEC).

The Report of the Secretary-General on world population monitoring,

focusing on reproductive rights and reproductive health, including population information, education and communication summarizes recent information on issues, trends and programmes. Highlights of its findings include the following:

- * Throughout the world, the average number of children per woman declined from 3.6 in 1980-1985 to 3.1 in 1990-1995;

- * In 1991, an estimated 53 per cent of couples in developing countries used contraception; and

- * The level of unmet need for contraception remains high. About 20-25 per cent of couples in developing countries (excluding China) were at risk of an unwanted or mistimed pregnancy but were not using contraceptives.

The Report also covers trends in maternal mortality and morbidity, and reproductive rights as part of population policy, including strategies to promote awareness of those rights.

The Report of the Secretary-General on the monitoring of population programmes indicates that ICPD and its Programme of Action have acted as a catalyst. Nearly two thirds of the 78 countries responding to a UNFPA inquiry have undertaken initiatives since the ICPD to broaden traditional family planning (FP) information and services and to include other reproductive health (RH) elements in their programmes. The ICPD has helped to highlight previously neglected matters, including adolescents' special needs and perspectives; men's responsibility and role in family life and gender equality; the quality of care in RH/FP programmes; and the important role of civil society in the implementation of RH programmes.

The Report of the Inter-Agency Task Force for the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development reviews efforts to ensure system-wide collaboration in the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action with respect to reproductive rights and reproductive health. Based on the responses of 12 of the 14 member organizations of the Task Force to an inquiry concerning implementation activities, the Report indicates that the ICPD provided a new impetus to advocacy and programming in reproductive rights and reproductive health and population IEC, and UN agencies and organizations are adjusting their programmes and activities in line with the Programme of Action. All ICPD IATF member organizations are emphasizing collaboration and coordination with other UN organizations and agencies as well as with other development partners, particularly NGOs.

The Report also examines the critical issues to be addressed if all countries are to make RH information and services available, through the primary health-care system, to all individuals of appropriate ages as soon as possible and no later than the year 2015. A multisectoral and multidisciplinary approach is essential to meet this ICPD goal. The Report notes that the process of identifying and meeting national needs in reproductive health as well as other areas will be considerably strengthened by enhanced collaboration within the United Nations system, particularly through greater information-sharing, coordinated planning and the harmonization of programming cycles.

The Report of the Secretary-General on activities of intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations for the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development summarizes the responses of 38 national and international NGOs and inter-governmental organizations (IGOs) to an inquiry about

their activities since the ICPD. The most frequently mentioned new programmatic component was the provision of information and services to prevent and treat reproductive tract infections and sexually transmitted diseases. NGOs are helping to ensure access to RH services among the rural and urban poor as well as groups with special needs, such as adolescents.

The Report of the Secretary-General on the flow of financial resources for assisting in the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development indicates that several donors, both bilateral and multilateral, have pledged to increase their support to population programmes. In addition, several developing countries have increased or intend to increase domestic resources for population. Although the Report cautions against overoptimism, these expressions of increased international commitment to the goals of the ICPD Programme of Action are encouraging signs.

ACC Task Force Meets

The first meeting of the ACC Task Force on Basic Social Services for All (BSSA) will be held in late February at UNFPA Headquarters. This Task Force, with UNFPA as the initial chair, will encompass the work of the ICPD/Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF). It is one of three task forces established by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) to ensure coordinated follow-up to the recent global UN conferences. The other two are the ACC Task Force on Employment and Sustainable Livelihoods, with the International Labour Organization (ILO) as the initial chair; and the ACC Task Force on the Enabling Environment for People-Centred Sustainable Development, with The World Bank as the initial chair.

Key issues to be addressed by the BSSA Task Force include: population (with an emphasis on reproductive health and family planning services), basic education, primary health care, drinking water and sanitation, shelter, and social services in post-crisis situations.

The unifying theme of the follow-up to recent global conferences, including the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), is the provision of assistance to countries in a concerted attack on poverty. The Task Forces will focus on supporting comprehensive and effective national follow-up. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali stated that "it is important to reach international agreement as we have at these conferences, but it is even more important to implement those agreements. We have secured the commitment of all the agencies of the United Nations to put the full weight of the United Nations system behind helping countries achieve the goals agreed to in these conferences."

Message from Dr. Sadik:

SUSTAINING THE MOMENTUM

Over the past year, continuing progress has taken place in the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). The ICPD has been a catalyst for action on many fronts. As articles in this issue of ICPD News show, several countries have already adopted policies and plans of action designed to achieve ICPD goals. Many have hosted conferences and seminars to enhance understanding at all levels of society of the new thinking about population issues that has emerged from the Conference. A

notable feature of the post-Conference period has been the concerted effort of the United Nations system to intensify collaboration at the country level. The Guidelines for the United Nations Resident Coordinator System, issued by the ICPD Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF), will greatly facilitate such cooperation and will also promote effective interaction among various groups engaged in the implementation of the Programme of Action _ Governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the United Nations system and all development partners.

Inquiries conducted over the last half year reveal that a large proportion of developing countries are already reorienting their family planning programmes to correspond with the broader vision of reproductive health and reproductive rights embodied in the ICPD Programme of Action. New aspects of reproductive health have been introduced in a number of programmes. It is most encouraging to see that NGOs and intergovernmental organizations are playing expanded roles in these endeavours.

It is important now to consider how we can sustain the momentum that the ICPD produced. As this issue of ICPD News reports, several bilateral donors have pledged greater assistance to population. Perhaps most heartening, many developing-country Governments themselves, although hard-pressed for resources, have already invested more, or intend to invest more, in population-related activities.

There is much to do and much to look forward to in the year ahead. Two major United Nations conferences _ the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), to be held in Istanbul in June, and the World Food Summit, to be held in Rome in November _ will focus the world's attention on critical social concerns of our time. No issue could be more closely intertwined with these concerns than population. The recent

creation of an ACC Task Force on Basic Social Services for All, which has merged with the ICPD/IATF, is another reflection of the concern within the UN system for helping bring about greater well-being for the world's peoples.

The year 1996 thus presents both challenge and opportunity. We need to constitute a true global community working in concert to turn the ICPD Programme of Action into specific programmes at local levels to improve the lives of all women, men, their children and their communities.

Nafis Sadik Executive Director
United Nations Population Fund

SRI LANKA FOCUSES ON REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH IN POST-ICPD ERA

Sri Lanka, with its strong family planning programme and a history of investing in health and education, is a population "success story". The country boasts low infant and maternal mortality rates (19.3 and 0.4 deaths per 1,000 live births, respectively), a 66.1 per cent contraceptive usage rate, an 83.1 per cent female literacy rate and a 1.3 per cent population growth rate.

The nation is now examining its accomplishments in the light of the ICPD's broader perspective on reproductive health (RH) rather than solely on maternal and child health (MCH). Programmes and projects are being developed to address such issues as child prostitution, the lack of access to family planning information and services among the one million female workers in the Free Trade Zones (FTZs) and the reproductive health needs

of the nation's 340,000 tea estate workers.

Among other activities, Sri Lanka, through its National Coordinating Council on Population, is proposing to develop a national action plan on reproductive health.

To help Sri Lanka chart its path in the post-ICPD era, a Programme Review and Strategy Development (PRSD) exercise was undertaken in 1995 under the leadership of the National Coordinating Council on Population. The highlight of the PRSD mission, fielded from 9 to 20 October, was a national workshop to examine sectoral reviews and to plan strategies accordingly. The workshop was attended by policy makers, programme implementors, NGO representatives, academicians, grass-roots health workers such as midwives, and health officers from areas of civil strife. After the workshop and during the PRSD mission, a presentation was made to familiarize bilateral and multilateral donors about the new strategies being developed.

One important finding of the PRSD mission was that Sri Lanka's contraceptive "mix" is unbalanced. Although the contraceptive prevalence rate is 66 per cent, the use of modern birth-spacing methods is relatively low (16.5 per cent), while the use of traditional methods is high (23 per cent), as is the use of permanent methods (27 per cent have been sterilized).

Mission members also examined the implications of an estimated one million adolescent females' entering the reproductive age group within the next 20 years. Addressing their RH needs means not only providing contraception but also paying attention to threats to their health from malignancies of the reproductive tract and sexually transmitted diseases, including human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency

syndrome (HIV/AIDS). Mission members also recommended that the RH needs of persons displaced from the conflict areas be given high priority.

The mission found that the Government is continuing to battle child prostitution and is collaborating with UNFPA and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on projects aimed at educating and resettling abused youngsters. UNFPA also assisted the Government in establishing, for FTZ garment-industry workers, a residential welfare centre, which, the Government hopes, will serve as a model for similar facilities in other industries.

The PRSD mission also recommended the following:

- * Recognizing the need to involve NGOs, the private sector and community members in implementing population programmes;

- * Retraining teachers of family life education so they can present subject matter in culturally sensitive ways;

- * Undertaking advocacy efforts for publicizing the links between population and the environment, for addressing widespread nutritional problems and for providing services for the elderly; and

- * Revising the nation's population policy to reflect the global consensus on population issues forged at Cairo.

_ From Suneeta Mukherjee

UNFPA Country Director Sri Lanka

MALAWI BUILDS SUPPORT FOR NATIONAL POPULATION POLICY, ICPD GOALS

In recent months, the Government of Malawi has intensified its efforts to heighten awareness of implications of the ICPD Programme of Action. In July 1995, the Ministry of Health and Population issued a draft strategic plan on reproductive health aimed at strengthening family planning services, antenatal care, safe delivery and obstetrics care.

At an October 1995 meeting, "Reproductive Health and Family Planning", more than 200 health practitioners from all levels of the nation's health-care system discussed, among other issues, goals of the ICPD Programme of Action, including empowering women to take charge of their reproductive health, providing high-quality family planning services, enhancing the contraceptive knowledge of community-based distribution agents, and educating communities on population issues. The meeting, organized by the Medical Association of Malawi, was held in Blantyre, the country's largest city.

Another ICPD-related initiative was timed to coincide with the UN's Fiftieth Anniversary celebrations in Malawi. On 19 October, UNFPA made a detailed presentation on the ICPD Programme of Action to Members of Parliament (MPs). Among the subjects discussed were the ICPD's quantitative goals, the role of the non-governmental sector in implementing the ICPD Programme of Action and the need to integrate population factors into sustainable development plans.

The Malawian delegation to the Southern African Reproductive Health Network meeting from 29 October to 2 November in Kwazulu/Natal, South Africa, committed itself to initiating an advocacy campaign aimed at increasing awareness of the comprehensive reproductive health care

approach advocated in Cairo. Towards this end, the delegation agreed to revive the Reproductive Health Task Force on Youth and to expand its mandate to include all components of reproductive health, including family planning and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Perhaps the most important _ and certainly the most highly publicized _ of the ICPD follow-up activities was a two-day workshop for parliamentarians, "Population and Sustainable Development", held in Lilongwe on 23-24 November. Attended by some 142 MPs _ out of a total of 175 _ the workshop covered such topics as gender relations, the impact of Malawi's rapid population growth on the nation's economic development and the current status of Malawian reproductive health.

The workshop's goal was to enhance the parliamentarians' awareness of pressing population and development issues, thereby strengthening their support for the population programme.

In his keynote address to the workshop, the Honourable Justin Malewezi, First Vice President, noted that the ICPD Programme of Action calls on Governments to strengthen political commitment to the integration of population and development strategies by undertaking public education and information programmes and by increasing resources for the implementation of these programmes.

Stressing the link between the Government's poverty alleviation programme and the national population programme, the Vice President urged participants to address such pressing issues as the political and economic empowerment of women; the reproductive health needs of young people; the interrelationships between gender, population and development; and the need to increase men's involvement in population and reproductive health programmes.

The Honourable Sam Mpasu, Minister of Health and Population and host of the workshop, stressed the key role that parliamentarians can play in implementing the ICPD Programme of Action and the national population policy.

Mr. Terence Jones, UN Resident Coordinator, reviewed the main aspects of the agreements reached in Cairo, including their emphasis on human rights, gender equality and equity, and reproductive health. He stressed the urgency of making effective and sustainable interventions aimed at improving Malawi's "very discouraging" human development indicators and emphasized the crucial role of parliamentarians in mobilizing public support for the goals of the ICPD and the national population policy. Parliamentarians, he noted, had the power to enact necessary legislation, to increase budgetary and human resource allocations for population programmes and related social-sector investments and to monitor activities in these areas.

At the conclusion of their deliberations, the parliamentarians pledged to allocate more resources to the population programme. They also called for the establishment of a subgroup on population and development, within the Parliament Health and Population Committee, to advise parliamentarians on population issues.

_ From Lalan Mubiala

UNFPA Country Director Malawi

FROM CAIRO TO ISTANBUL

Preparations are under way for the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), to be held in Istanbul, Turkey, from 3 to 14 June 1996 under the auspices of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat).

As part of the preparations for Habitat II, UNFPA is working to ensure that the consensus on population and development issues that emerged during the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) is carried forward to Istanbul. As the ICPD made clear, the worldwide trend towards urbanization, the close links between rural development and urban growth, and the underlying determinants of migration must be factored into policies addressing urban problems and the quality of human settlements.

To bring the issues of population, internal migration and urbanization into focus for the Habitat process, UNFPA organized a scientific gathering, "Symposium on Internal Migration and Urbanization in Developing Countries: Implications for Habitat II", which was held 24-26 January 1996 in New York. UNFPA is co-sponsoring, with Habitat, another symposium on urbanization to be held in March 1996. Organized by the International Institute for Human Resources Development of San Diego State University, this symposium will develop recommendations to be presented in Istanbul.

PERUVIAN PRESIDENT PROCLAIMS NEW POPULATION DECADE

Speaking at the Inaugural Ceremony of the meeting "The New Population Decade, 1994-2004", a follow-up to the International Conference on

Population and Development (ICPD), Peruvian President Alberto K. Fujimori addressed parliamentarians from Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Japan, Paraguay, Peru, Sweden, and Venezuela, noting the following: "As the International Conference on Population and Development shows, there is an ever greater consciousness that population, poverty, the models of production and consumption, and the threats to the environment are interconnected and no one of them can be considered in isolation from the others."

COUNTRY TEAMS PROVIDE TECHNICAL SUPPORT FOR ICPD FOLLOW-UP

Since the ICPD, Governments in every corner of the globe have been fashioning policies and programmes to reflect the expansive vision of population issues that emerged from the Cairo Conference. UNFPA's Country Support Teams (CSTs) have played a singular role in helping Governments, upon their request, translate the vision of the ICPD Programme of Action into concrete actions. This issue of ICPD News highlights the efforts of the CSTs.

UNFPA's eight Country Support Teams (CSTs) are using the ICPD Programme of Action as a blueprint for technical support services. The CST, consisting of experts from various population and development disciplines, provides services to Governments, upon their request.

CSTs are based in the following locations:

* In Africa, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; Dakar, Senegal; and Harare,

Zimbabwe;

* In the Arab States and Europe, Amman, Jordan;

* In Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, Thailand; Kathmandu, Nepal; and Suva, Fiji; and

* In Latin America and the Caribbean, Santiago, Chile, with a sub-office in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago.

Africa

"The ICPD has acted as a catalyst for change in the region," declares Bintou Sanogoh, Director of the CST for West and Central Africa. "Many of the changes were in the air for years," she notes, "but the consensus on population issues forged at the Conference provided the impetus that allowed the ideas to be translated into action."

Throughout the Africa Region, CSTs are playing an important role in implementing and adapting the ICPD Programme of Action to meet national needs and priorities. CST workshops have focused on reproductive health, including adolescent reproductive health, and on sociocultural considerations and research issues within the context of the ICPD Programme of Action. The ICPD's focus on the unmet needs of young people has increased the demand for the services of the Region's CST advisers, who have been called upon to assist in the formulation of adolescent health programmes.

In Ghana, CST members assisted in formulating the Third Country Programme, the first UNFPA-assisted programme elaborated in the post-

ICPD period. The CST Director of the Addis Ababa team, Dr. Miriam K. Were, noted that "participation in the preparation of the new [third] Country Programme for Ghana gave the CST an opportunity to put in practice some of the post-ICPD thinking and leaves the CST in a good state for participation in the new programme to be formulated in 1996." Twenty-two new country programmes for African countries are being formulated in 1996.

In Southern Africa as well, many countries are implementing recommendations of the ICPD Programme of Action, with CST assistance. In Botswana, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe, national leaders have been made fully aware of ICPD goals. Lesotho and Zambia have decided to revise their national population policies to reflect more closely the ICPD recommendations. Botswana and Namibia are basing their draft population policies on the Programme of Action. Malawi has liberalized its guidelines for the provision of contraceptives. South Africa has initiated national debate to determine strategies for implementing the Programme of Action. Responding to the Programme of Action's call for gender equality and equity, the CST for the Southern Africa subregion has been systematically promoting advocacy on gender concerns and strengthening institutional structures for mainstreaming gender issues in development programmes and projects, including those in Malawi, Namibia and Zambia.

CST advisers have also clarified the Programme of Action for participants of regional workshops and meetings. At a June 1995 workshop in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, two CST advisers presented a paper on the Implementation of the Dakar/Ngor Declaration and the ICPD Programme of Action. The workshop was jointly sponsored by the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the Organization for African Unity (OAU) and the African Development Bank.

Asia and the Pacific

The Asia and the Pacific Region's CSTs have concentrated on introducing ICPD principles into projects, programmes and work plans.

Responding to the ICPD's call to reposition family planning within the broader context of reproductive health, members of the CST based in Kathmandu, Nepal, helped programme staff in the Central Asian Republics and Nepal identify missing links in existing programmes and design suitable packages of interventions.

The team also helped align educational activities with the priorities of the ICPD Programme of Action. In Pakistan, for example, school primers and other educational materials will be revised to address ICPD concerns. CST-assisted projects will also help to improve information, education and communication (IEC) and management capabilities within Pakistan's Ministry of Population Welfare.

The team's contribution to sector reviews, Programme Review and Strategy Development (PRSD) exercises and related technical inputs in Bangladesh, Maldives and Sri Lanka helped to introduce ICPD priorities into country programmes.

In the post-ICPD period, the CST based in Suva, Fiji, has shown how the ICPD Programme of Action can provide the framework for integrated population and development strategies aimed at addressing the region's particular needs. The team has focused on both national and regional efforts. Recognizing that South Pacific NGOs have a tradition of involvement in social development initiatives, the CST has been promoting their potential as partners in national population and development efforts.

In the Cook Islands, for example, the CST participated in a National NGO Women's Forum that focused on the empowerment of women _ a key ICPD goal. The CST also joined leaders of youth-related NGOs for a National Forum on Youth, Population and Development, which placed special emphasis on the reproductive health needs of adolescents.

To help clarify key concepts of the ICPD Programme of Action and to build a unified understanding of how best to respond to subregional and country-level challenges, the CST based in Bangkok, Thailand, organized a week-long internal workshop for its advisers in early 1995. In addition, for all training activities under country projects, the CST has sought to include at least one session on ICPD concepts and strategies.

The CST Bangkok has assisted Myanmar and Malaysia in developing National Plans of Action as follow-ups to ICPD. In June 1995, Mr. Ghazi Farooq, the CST's Director, visited Viet Nam, where he consulted with top-level planners charged with developing a national population policy. He also led a seminar at the University of Economics on ICPD follow-up and Viet Nam's research training needs.

Arab States and Europe

The comprehensive approach adopted by the ICPD Programme of Action lends support to CST activities aimed at enhancing the implementation of programmes in UNFPA's three core areas at both regional and country levels. Several countries in the Arab States and Europe Region have held high-level post-ICPD meetings. With the CST's active participation, such activities are directed towards maintaining the ICPD momentum, strengthening partnership between Governments and NGOs, and establishing mechanisms for following up implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action.

In addition to their country-level work, CST advisers have assisted ICPD implementation efforts through regional bodies, such as the UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). Team members recently helped ESCWA's Population Section formulate a project aimed at promoting networking among national population councils in the Arab Region.

In another cooperative endeavour, the team is working with the Population Unit of the League of Arab States on the development of a regional project on post- ICPD strategies.

The CST also collaborated with the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) in providing training for Multiple Indicator Surveys, which will be used, inter alia, to monitor progress in implementing the Programme of Action. The CST has assisted in the development of a reproductive health module, which is being incorporated into UNFPA/Arab regional surveys as part of the Pan Arab Project for Child Development of the League of Arab States (PAPCHILD).

Latin America and the Caribbean

Promoting the ICPD's development-centred approach to population, the CST for Latin America and the Caribbean has helped integrate population concerns, policies and programmes into high-priority development strategies in Belize, Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica and Panama. The team has also enhanced understanding of the ICPD's broad-based concept of reproductive health (RH) among health and related professionals, political and community leaders, students, NGOs and the public. New audiences, such as trade unions, cooperatives and

informal-sector organizations, are being incorporated in population and RH activities. Through interdisciplinary work in Mexico, the CST helped develop an IEC component for RH programmes. Throughout the region, the team is emphasizing the links between reproductive health and the environment, food security, the status of women, employment, education and the standard of living.

Sociocultural research _ a prerequisite to the development of effective policies and programmes, as noted at the ICPD _ was the theme of a subregional seminar jointly organized by the CST/LAC, the Ford Foundation and the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences-Chile (FLACSO-Chile) in Santiago in November 1995. The seminar, which focused on research related to gender and sexuality, included discussions of HIV/AIDS prevention; adolescent sexuality and education; and unwanted pregnancies.

_ From Africa: Ms. Bintou Sanogoh, Ms. Kirsten Trone and Dr. Miriam Were; from Asia and the Pacific, Mr. Stephen Chee, Mr. Ghazi Farooq and Mr. Raheem Sheikh; from the Arab States and Europe, Mr. Atef Khalifa; and from Latin America and the Caribbean, Mr. Joop Alberts, Team Leaders

SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC STEPS UP POPULATION POLICY EFFORTS

The Syrian Arab Republic is intensifying its efforts to formulate a new population policy using the ICPD Programme of Action as a guide.

Increasingly, policy makers and planners have recognized the importance of formulating a national population policy and of integrating population variables into development planning. The Government has struggled to maintain its traditionally high levels of social services and economic

achievements for a fast-growing population; between 1960 and 1994, the population tripled, from 4.6 million to 13.8 million.

Leading the policy formulation efforts is the State Planning Commission and its Permanent Population Committee (PPC), created in 1986.

The PPC, headed by the Minister of State for Planning Affairs, includes representatives from government ministries, popular organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

A UNFPA-supported Policy Formulation and Implementation project helped lay the groundwork for the policy process, which gained additional momentum in 1993, as the country geared up for its participation in the ICPD.

Multidisciplinary task forces were drawn up, composed of national experts from various governmental, non-governmental and academic institutions. The task forces examined, among other topics: the sociocultural determinants of reproductive behaviour; reproductive health and family planning; requirements in food, water, energy and housing; education and manpower development; population distribution; and economic infrastructures and development strategies.

Further, the Syrian Arab Republic has carried out sociocultural research to obtain an accurate picture of the nation's population situation. Culturally relevant information, as noted in the Programme of Action, is a vital component of policy and programme development. Such research is helping the Government understand how strong cultural forces, at the family and societal levels, affect women's abilities to exercise their reproductive rights. An in-depth analysis of reproductive health rights has already been

discussed at national and regional levels, and policy recommendations have been proposed.

The Government is increasing its focus on such concerns as the reproductive health rights of women, the roles of youth and men in population and in supporting women in the realization of their reproductive health rights, and the participation of women in the development process.

As part of the process of developing the population policy, village, town and governorate officials, community leaders and representatives from NGOs and popular organizations are examining policy-related research findings in local workshops. Public hearings on the proposed policy are planned for the first quarter of 1996. After debate and discussion at various levels, the official approval process will take place. The Syrian Arab Republic has, thus, encouraged wide participation from many elements of civil society in this and its other population and development initiatives.

_ From Abdul Muniem

Abu-Nuwar Country Director

Syrian Arab Republic and Lebanon

VIET NAM'S POST-ICPD COUNTRY PROGRAMME

Immediately following the ICPD, Viet Nam began to formulate a new country programme charting future directions in its cooperation with UNFPA.

The participation of high-level government officials in the ICPD and the considerable national press coverage set the stage for launching new initiatives. The Government translated the Programme of Action and other materials into Vietnamese and disseminated them widely.

The Government organized several workshops addressing the ICPD follow-up. One dealt with the ICPD's comprehensive concept of reproductive health and another addressed the new priorities of the post-ICPD era. Senior Ministers and officials from the population, health, and economic coordinating and planning ministries as well as representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) concerned with women's health and reproductive health attended. Such activities helped to reorient Viet Nam's approach towards a more comprehensive view of the interlinkages between population and development.

A Programme Review and Strategy Development (PRSD) exercise greatly facilitated the delineation of the Viet Nam country programme. By the time of the PRSD mission, in October 1995, the Government had already issued updated directions for cooperation between its national agencies and UNFPA, stressing such key ICPD themes as reproductive health/family planning; population and development policy; advocacy; and capacity-building.

UNFPA's Fifth Programme of Assistance for Viet Nam (1996- 2000) addresses these thematic areas, which are at the heart of the ICPD Programme of Action.

Government commitment to implementing the ICPD Programme of Action is also evident in the programmes being developed by numerous donors in the population field. These include the Australian Agency for

International Development (AusAID), Deutsche Gesellschaften für
Technische Zusammenarbeit (German Agency for Technical Cooperation
_GTZ), Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW) and the World Bank.

In the light of the ICPD, national and international NGOs have intensified
their attention to gender and reproductive health, adolescent health,
women's empowerment and the integration of programmes promoting
family planning and combatting sexually transmitted diseases.

_ From Linda Demers UNFPA Country Director

Viet Nam

CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE PROMOTE SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION

A UNFPA-sponsored meeting in Bangkok, held in November 1995, focused
on South-South cooperation _ technical cooperation between developing
countries. Within the ICPD framework, the meeting analysed reproductive
health (RH) programmes in Indonesia, Mexico, Thailand and Tunisia. UNFPA
had designated these four countries "Centres of Excellence" because of
their outstanding potential to transmit to other developing countries their
expertise in reproductive health and family planning (RH/FP).

Working groups carried out thematic analyses of four priority areas: the
concept of RH, quality of care, programmes for adolescents and training
methodologies. The meeting, which produced recommendations for
improving and standardizing curricular quality and impact in South-South
training, noted that meetings of the Board of Partners in Population and
Development should carry out the substantive work entailed. The Partners

are 10 developing countries (Bangladesh, Colombia, Egypt, Indonesia, Kenya, Mexico, Morocco, Thailand, Tunisia and Zimbabwe) that announced during ICPD their intention to cooperate in training, research and information exchanges.

Members of the UNFPA Country Support Team (CST) for the East and South-East Asia Region and representatives of the International Council on Management of Population Programmes also participated in the meeting.

ICPD NEWS

ICPD News, a quarterly newsletter of the UNFPA Task Force on ICPD Implementation, is designed to keep the international community, government representatives, donors, non-governmental organizations and others informed about follow-up activities to the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), held in Cairo, Egypt, 5-13 September 1994.

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Please let us know if you have information, ideas for articles or suggestions for this newsletter.

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