

ICPD+15 REVIEW REPORT: KEY MESSAGES

1- General Introduction

A rights-based approach remains the reference framework for achieving the ICPD Programme of Action and the MDGs.

- At its special session in Maputo, Mozambique from 18-22 September 2006, the African Union Conference of Ministers of Health adopted the Maputo Plan of Action for Operationalising the Continental Policy Framework for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.
- The Plan of Action seeks to attain the goal of universal access to comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services by 2015.
- MDGs and the ICPD-PoA share the common goal of ending Africa's most pressing problems: poverty, HIV/AIDS and the disease burden.
- They aim to unleash Africa's potential through gender inclusive educational and development programmes while ensuring environmental sustainability.

2. Gender and Development: Action Needed to Reduce Differences between Women and Men.

- Since 1994, Africa has increasingly elected women to high political and administrative offices. Today Africa has a woman Head of State, several vice presidents and members of parliaments. This progress has been achieved partly due to the effective advocacy of women's movements across the continent that led to national gender policies, legislative measures and affirmative action. **HOWEVER,**
- Gender gaps persist in education in many African countries despite the general rise in the level of education. The gap is particularly wide in secondary and tertiary education.
- Traditional and socio-cultural norms and practices mean women are not the decision-makers in households. This contributes to their vulnerability to sexually transmitted diseases, maternal morbidity and mortality.
- Gender differentials still exist in the economy, with a majority of women working mainly in low-paying jobs such as rural agriculture and the informal sector.
- Women's role in environmental management is critical to sustainable development, but this role is not fully recognized.
- Gender-based violence (GBV) has a highly negative impact on the empowerment and advancement of women. GBV is still rampant in Africa due to the unequal power relations between women and men.

3. Poor Reproductive Health Hinders Development

- Africa has the highest records of maternal mortality in the world, yet most of these deaths are preventable.
- Most countries recognize that in order to improve maternal and newborn health, adequate provision of antenatal and postnatal care, quality family planning services, ensuring skilled attendance at birth, providing post-abortion care and improving access to basic and comprehensive emergency obstetrics is needed.

- Fertility transition, which is critical to the realization of the demographic dividend, will be very difficult to achieve without a widespread adoption of modern methods of family planning in Africa.

4. HIV/AIDS and other diseases: Africa is increasingly vulnerable

- More women than men in Africa are infected with HIV / AIDS. Women are more vulnerable to the illness due their lack of power in households and in society.
- In order to curb the spread of HIV and mitigate its effects, countries need to promote actions to achieve behavioural change in favour of practicing safe sex and empower women to make decisions that affect their reproductive health, and train various categories of health workers in counselling, testing and post-test services.
- Malaria remains the number one cause of morbidity and mortality in most African countries. However, efforts to prevent or cure the disease are not matched by its magnitude and severity.

5. Population and Poverty: The Compounded Trap of High Fertility and Bad Governance

- Increased attention to **integrated population and development planning** would compliment efforts at achieving significant reduction in poverty, given the demographic profile of most of the countries in the continent.
- Key causes of poverty include the disease burden, inadequate access to quality education and health services, governance issues and unsustainable utilization of environmental resources.
- Progress made so far at poverty reduction in most African countries tends to be diluted by continued high fertility rates. High population sizes and high dependency ratios in the face of weak economic performance means widespread poverty.
- **Better management** of human, material and financial resources, combined with accountable and transparent government will lead to a reduction in poverty.

6. Population and Environment: An Improved Present to Secure a Better Future

- The ICPD PoA strives to ensure that population, environmental issues and poverty eradication are integrated into sustainable development; and to reduce unsustainable production and consumption patterns.
- Due to inadequate investment, especially in the social sector, the growing size of Africa's population has serious implications on the use of natural resource and improvement in the quality of life now and for future generations.

7. Young people: Africa's Hope for the 'Demographic Dividend'

- More than 70 percent of Africa's population is below 30 years of age.
- Projections show that there will be a larger workforce and declining youth dependency burden in future. This will create a window of opportunity (or Demographic Dividend) for increased production and socio-economic development.

- This scenario calls for sustained efforts to address the needs of young people, including reproductive health, sound education that is relevant to the labour market and the provision of gainful employment.

8. Urbanization of the population: A Threat or an Asset?

- The urban population in Africa will grow from 294 million to 742 million between 2000 and 2030.
- The process of urbanization in Africa is inevitable and irreversible, although urban centres are notorious for high concentration of poverty, slum growth and considerable measure of social disruption.
- Rapidly growing cities in Africa provide challenges and opportunities for socio-cultural change and development. Continuous interaction between urban and rural dwellers could contribute to a diffusion of **social change agents**.
- African policy makers must give due attention to urban planning and the expansion of social and economic services and infrastructure in urban centres and satellite towns.
- Due attention should also be given to promoting investment in rural areas to create employment opportunities for the rural dwellers, which can help reduce rural to urban migration.

9. International Migration: A Multifaceted and Complicated Issue

- Governments should introduce effective sanctions against those who organize and exploit undocumented migration, and those who engage in human trafficking. Action is also required to address the plight of refugees, asylum-seekers and internally displaced persons.
- Migration away from Africa – mainly to the USA, Europe and the Gulf States – has created a brain drain especially in the education and health sectors.
- Governments should implement policies and programmes to encourage Diaspora communities to invest and support development programmes in their countries of origin.
- International migration in Africa has led to exploitation among migrants and xenophobia among host countries. Therefore, governments are also urged to implement programmes to uphold the rights of internal and international migrants and to implement comprehensive civic education programmes on the rights and responsibilities of both migrants and their host communities.

10. Resource Mobilisation: Need to Boost Coordination between All Stakeholders

In order to make significant progress in implementing the ICPD PoA and MDGs, governments are urged to:

- Mobilize domestic and foreign resources in order to increase technical and financial commitment for the implementation of the MDGs and ICPD Programme of Action;
- Encourage the private sector to provide support for population and reproductive health programmes; build institutional and human capacities for enhanced resource mobilization and **contract negotiation skills within government agencies**; and

- Put in place national strategies, including partnership and coordination mechanisms, for better interaction between governments and all stakeholders, including NGOs and civil society for internal and external resource mobilisation and monitoring of resource use in support of population and reproductive health issues.

11. Population Policies and Programmes: Questioning Implementation

- So far, much has been done in African countries to achieve the objectives of ICPD PoA and MDGs in terms of policy formulation. However, there is a wide gap in most countries between population-related policies and actual implementation, due to poor commitment and weak implementation capacity and
- Implementation remains crucial. So far, the focus has been on development outcomes, to the neglect of monitoring the implementation process. The trend needs to be reversed and more attention should be paid to good governance in order to accelerate the achievement of the objectives of ICPD PoA and MDGs.

12. The Financial Crisis: A Threat to Africa's Capacity to Cater for the Needy

- Africa is clearly vulnerable to the current financial crisis. This vulnerability is due to deceleration of economic growth, deterioration of finances and high levels of poverty.
- Achieving the goals of the ICPD PoA and indeed the MDGs is affected by indebtedness; forgoing schooling in light of economic hardship, particularly girls; and, limited access to health services.
- Countries grappling with chronic food insecurity, HIV/AIDS, and lack of access to basic social services are also expected to be rendered even more vulnerable.