

GUIDELINES ON THE CONCEPTS AND INDICATORS FOR BEST PRACTICES IN POPULATION

1. Background information

The Sustainable Development Division (SDD) of UNECA works in the areas of population, agriculture, environment (the nexus) and science/technology with the goal of improving food security and ensuring sustainable development in Africa. Evidence drawn from the history of African development has shown that these areas undoubtedly constitute an inter-linked and mutually reinforcing paradigm that affects in one way or another the living standards and the food security situation of African people. Managing these inter-linked areas with a holistic approach was felt as a main mandate of SDD at the time of its creation.

Taking into consideration its mandate and comparative advantages, the Division is compiling Best Practices in the management of nexus issues in Africa that deal with population among other issues.

Given the fact that other institutions, e.g. UNFPA, also work in the best practices in population, the intent of the Division is to concentrate on the best practices (or success stories) in the population sector that have tangible impacts in improving food security and ensuring sustainable development.

2. Concepts of best practices

Best practices are model practices whose related activities contribute directly and substantially to the sustainable achievement of a given goal under specified environmental and socio-economic conditions. They are also referred to as success stories. Based on this definition, best practices are expected to be goal-oriented and replicable, to use appropriate resources in a cost-effective manner, and to address not only the bio-physical but also the socio-economic issues in all their development stages so as to ensure long-term sustainability.

The best practices in population for food security and sustainable development are those that have produced tangible results in achieving lower population growth rates and better socio-economic conditions for human beings, and improving food security while conserving the environment.

The purpose of identifying best practices in population in the context of food security and sustainable development is to share among African countries successful policies, strategies and implementation activities aimed

at attaining a far-reaching goal of a transition from high to lower population growth rates in relation to other socio-economic development goals including food security.

The search for the success stories in the area of population is guided by the following principles:

- Any practice associated with smaller family sizes and hence, with the lower population growth rates and having visible impacts on the other interconnected areas (environment protection, improved food security situation, etc.);
 - Practices that meet certain set criteria/indicators for best practices;
 - The best practices of other continents (Asia, Latin America etc.) can be taken when they were found in the similar contexts of African countries;
 - Practices with no clear impact at the present time, but expected to give rise to positive results in the medium to long run;
 - Practices from different levels, such as national, regional or sub-regional, and community levels.

3. Indicators/Criteria for Best Practices in Population

The appropriate use of criteria/indicators is critical when we will have to evaluate, sort out and select some "best practices" from a big basket of practices stemming from various parts of the continent.

Goal-related indicators:

- Low population growth rates
- Reduce fertility rates
- Reduce mortality rates
- Improvement of the socio-economic status of human beings (specifically women)
- Sustainability of the social/economic aspects of the society due to the success in the population field
 - . Harmonizing population growth with natural resource base
 - . Environmentally sound population policies

Policy-related indicators:

- Cross-sectoral concern when a population policy was adopted
- Long-term vision adopted at the time of the formulation of policies
- Government's support for and commitment to the implementation of such a policy
- Institutional arrangements, e.g. establishment of inter-ministerial institution, for follow-up of the implementation of policies

- Priority given to strengthening human capital and women's role

Management-related indicators:

- Holistic and integrated approach to the management of nexus issues
- Priority given to national resources (human, financial, etc.)
- Cost-effectiveness
- Appropriate use of new science and technology as well as traditional practices to attain higher development goals
- Women's participation and their empowerment in the development process
- Community-based initiatives
- Policy dialogue
- Degree of participation of local people in the implementation of projects
- Use of Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) and other media to create and improve awareness on the issues

Capacity building-related indicators:

- Organization of conferences, seminars and meetings at the national level, and scientific findings
- Networking among national and regional planners and scientists
- Networking with stakeholders to reinforce national capacities
- Dissemination and Use of national best practices

Impact-related indicators:

- Degree of attainment of expected results
- Degree of contribution of specific actions to achieving policy goals, e.g. low fertility, food security etc.
- Sustainability of impacts, i.e. short-term impact vs. expected long-term impact
- Expected impacts of best practices if adopted by African countries (for best practices from outside Africa)

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