

Commission on Population and Development

Introduction

The United Nations (UN) Commission on Population and Development (CPD) has not met in formal session in recent months; however, CPD will be meeting 13-17 April 2015 to discuss how to integrate considerations for population topics into the post-2015 development agenda and other sustainable development efforts. Additionally, there are many conferences and subsidiary bodies who have met recently and discussed topics important to CPD. Such bodies include the General Assembly (GA) and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). A review of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) was considered at the Special Session called by the GA last September during its 69th session. In this update, the outcomes of meetings and activities resulting from recent sessions will be discussed. The implementation of CPD outcomes, along with its powers and functions as a Commission, will also be reviewed.

Recent Activities

Recent meetings and conferences related to population topics and the work of CPD include the 29th GA Special Session on ICPD Beyond 2014, which discussed the goals of ICPD as its twenty-year anniversary arrived.¹ This meeting, “Follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development,” was called to further expand on resolution 2014/1 by CPD at the 69th GA session and to elaborate on the work by CPD since ICPD, including on the topics of sexual and reproductive rights and the ageing population.² The International Day of Older Persons was commemorated on 1 October 2014.³ In promoting a sustainable society for all, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon declared the theme for 2014 to be “Leaving No one Behind: Promoting a Society for All,” which emphasized the importance of considering the ageing population when discussing development goals, as the elderly population over 60 which will reach 1.4 billion in 2030.⁴ On 11 October, the international community also continued in its recognition of empowering girls through the International Day of the Girl Child theme of “Empowering Adolescent Girls: Ending the Cycle of Violence.”⁵ In addition, the ‘Time for Global Action’ Youth Forum was held by ECOSOC on 2-3 February 2015.⁶ This event allowed youth representatives to voice their opinions on issues affecting youth as a part of the transition from the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the post-2015 development agenda.⁷ These themes are important, as they will carry over into the post-2015 development agenda discussion in CPD’s upcoming session.

The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) Population Division also recently produced a two-volume report on the work of CPD and the current progress on ICPD, including CPD resolutions and scientific data observed within the past twenty years.⁸ The Compendium of Recommendations on Population and Development Volume I reports on CPD sessions over the past twenty years.⁹ Some topics discussed include “Population, development and education” at the 2003 CPD session and “Follow-up to the Conference” at several CPD sessions.¹⁰ In its second volume, the CPD compendium includes regional conferences and their discussion on ICPD topics.¹¹ Such conferences include the UN Economic Commission for Europe High-level Regional Conference in Geneva,

¹ NGOs Beyond 2014, 29th Special Session of the UN General Assembly on ICPD Beyond 2014, 2014.

² UN DESA Population Division, *Compendium of Recommendations on Population and Development: Commission on Population and Development 1994-2014, Volume I (ST/ESA/SER.A/357)*, 2014.

³ UN International Day of Older Persons, 2014 Theme: *Leaving No one Behind: Promoting a Society for all*, 2014.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ UN International Day of the Girl Child, 2014 Theme: *Empowering Adolescent Girls: Ending the Cycle of Violence*, 2014.

⁶ UN ECOSOC, *Transitioning from MDGs to SDGs: Engaging Youth*, 2014.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ UN DESA Population Division, *Compendium of Recommendations on Population and Development: Commission on Population and Development 1994-2014, Volume I (ST/ESA/SER.A/357)*, 2014.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ UN DESA Population Division. *Compendium of Recommendations on Population and Development: Regional Conferences on Population and Development Held in Preparation for the Review of the Programme for Actions of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014, Volume II (ST/ESA/SER.A/358)*, 2014.

Switzerland, in July 2013, and the Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean in Montevideo, Uruguay, in August 2013.¹²

On 4 December 2014, the Secretary-General released a synthesis report on the post-2015 development agenda, entitled “The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet” (A/69/700).¹³ In the report, the Secretary-General addressed the progress made in helping to alleviate poverty, as well as promoting education around the globe.¹⁴ The Secretary-General also discussed the post-2015 development agenda and the sustainable development goals (SDGs) and continuing progress on the environment, education and eradicating poverty as should be considered in relation to the establishment of upcoming development goals following the retirement of the MDGs in 2015.¹⁵ CPD’s upcoming meeting in April 2015 will focus on similar elements as discussed in this report as it considers ICPD and the post-2015 development agenda and holds important conversations on related population issues.¹⁶

Recent Policy Outcomes

While CPD has not had direct policy outcomes in recent months, the work of other UN bodies has contributed to the overall topics of population and development. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), along with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) Social Policy and Development Division, met with civil society organizations (CSOs) and others to discuss a major theme for CPD and ICPD Beyond 2014: the ageing population.¹⁷ This resulted in a continuation of the discussion from GA resolutions 65/182 and 67/139 on the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) which was established by GA to focus on the ageing population and protecting their rights, as well as the sharing of information on regional practices with other Member States to promote the rights of the elderly.¹⁸ The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) also met from 17 November 2014 to 20 November 2014 to recognize the 1995 *Beijing Platform for Action* and to discuss Beijing +20, focusing specifically on gaps on achieving gender equality.¹⁹ These recent outcomes review the major themes discussed in ICPD and the post-2015 development agenda, such as the rights of the older persons and gender equality, which are themes reviewed by CPD in previous sessions, as well as in its upcoming session.²⁰

As the 29th GA Special Session opened, the UN Secretary-General, along with other UN leaders, addressed and identified the most important issues still present in 2014 in relation to the 1994 ICPD.²¹ The UN Population Fund’s (UNFPA) Executive Director stated that “every human being has rights.”²² Documents were provided to the GA from the Secretary-General’s Report (A/69/122) from the CPD’s 47th session; this document established that the progress made from CPD research and observations should be strongly regarded and taken into consideration at the Special Session.²³ Using the Cairo *Platform for Action* as a guide, the GA discussed post-2015 development, as well as the issues of population on national, regional and international levels.²⁴ Going forward, it will be important to continue to develop ideas and strategies to help promote education and gender equality, while discouraging and formulating solutions for sexual violence and poverty.²⁵

¹² UN DESA Population Division. *Compendium of Recommendations on Population and Development: Regional Conferences on Population and Development Held in Preparation for the Review of the Programme for Actions of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014, Volume II (ST/ESA/SER.A/358)*, 2014, p. 9.

¹³ UN General Assembly, *The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet: Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 development agenda (A/69/700)*, 2014.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ UN DESA, *Commission on Population and Development forty-eighth session*, 2014.

¹⁷ UN ESCAP, *Workshop on the Social Integration and the Rights of the Older Persons in the Asia-Pacific Region*, 2014.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ UN ESCAP, *Asian and Pacific Conference on Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Beijing +20 Review*, 2014.

²⁰ UN ESCAP, *Workshop on the Social Integration and the Rights of the Older Persons in the Asia-Pacific Region*, 2014.

²¹ UN Meetings Coverage and Press Releases, *Speakers Call for Greater Global Efforts in Implementing Goals of 1994 Conference on Population and Development, as General Assembly Reviews Progress*, 2014.

²² UNFPA, *ICPD +20*, 2014.

²³ UN General Assembly, *Recurrent themes and key elements identified during the sessions of the Commission on Population and Development: Report of the Secretary-General (A/69/122)*, 2014.

²⁴ NGOs Beyond 2014, *29th Special Session of the UN General Assembly on ICPD Beyond 2014*, 2014.

²⁵ Ibid.

Implementation of Commission on Population and Development Outcomes

As a subsidiary body of ECOSOC, CPD serves as a functional commission focusing primarily on ICPD and its progress.²⁶ Accordingly, ECOSOC has the power to elect Member States to open seats in subsidiary committees, including CPD.²⁷ This occurred recently at ECOSOC's November 2014 Coordination and Management Meeting, where Israel was elected to CPD.²⁸ CPD advises ECOSOC on population or development issues through its resolutions, which are given to the Council to be voted upon.²⁹

Conclusion

A main function of CPD is to research the progression of ICPD's Programme of Action in order to assess and direct attention to the gaps in ICPD goals.³⁰ CPD assesses this progress on national, regional, and international levels in order to provide important observations for each level. The Commission is also a part of key conversations on post-2015 development agenda and population and development issues beyond 2014, as is seen with recent and upcoming meetings. CPD provides a broad overview of significant topics within ICPD and its *Programme of Action*, and will continue to contribute to the international community in relation to population and development.

²⁶ UN Commission on Population and Development, *Commission on Population and Development*, 2014.

²⁷ UN Meetings Coverage and Press Releases, *Opening Coordination and Management Meeting, Economic and Social Council Adopts Three Draft Resolutions, Including Texts on Conferences in Asia, Latin America*, 2014.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ UN Commission on Population and Development, *Commission on Population and Development*, 2014.

³⁰ UN General Assembly, *Recurrent themes and key elements identified during the sessions of the Commission on Population and Development: Report of the Secretary-General (A/69/122)*, 2014.

Annotated Bibliography

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. (2014). *Compendium of Recommendations on Population and Development: Commission on Population and Development 1994-2014, Volume I (ST/ESA/SER.A/357)*. Retrieved 30 December 2014 from:

<http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/policy/Compendium/Volume%20I/Vol.%20I%20Full%20report.pdf>

Volume I of this Compendium, compiled by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) Population Division, includes CPD resolutions from the past twenty years. The resolutions are provided in their entirety to show the progression of goals and ideas from Member States since the 1994 ICPD conference. This resource is an effective and vital tool for delegates to see what has already been accomplished and what has yet to be accomplished in CPD, as well as what CPD has done before in its history, to help provide new ideas for the upcoming session.

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. (2014). *Compendium of Recommendations on Population and Development: Regional Conferences on Population and Development Held in Preparation for the Review of the Programme for Actions of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014, Volume II (ST/ESA/SER.A/358)*. Retrieved 30 December 2014 from:

<http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/policy/Compendium/Volume%20II/Vol.%20II%20Full%20report.pdf>

In Volume II of the Compendium on CPD, reports from important meetings and conferences, such as the Sixth Asian and Pacific Population Conference in Bangkok, Thailand, are included, as well as what was agreed upon. These recent outcome documents discuss the goals from regional conferences, which also provide important information on CPD's influence on a regional level. Delegates will find this Compendium useful for further research into what other organizations and groups have done to promote ICPD Beyond 2014.

United Nations, General Assembly, Sixty-ninth session. (2014). *Recurrent themes and key elements identified during the sessions of the Commission on Population and Development: Report of the Secretary-General (A/69/122)*. Retrieved 3 January 2015 from: <http://undocs.org/A/69/122>

The Secretary-General's Report at the General Assembly's 69th session provides a report by the Secretary-General on the review of the Programme of Action for ICPD. Accordingly, it gives an overview of what actions CPD has taken since 1994 in its observations and recommendations in further achieving the goals laid out by ICPD. Delegates will find this a useful tool to further discover what CPD does in its committee sessions and the ideas it has promoted. The structure of the report lists the review of ICPD, recurring themes, and developments of topics in ICPD.

United Nations, Meetings Coverage and Press Releases. (2014, November 17). *Opening Coordination and Management Meeting, Economic and Social Council Adopts Three Draft Resolutions, Including Texts on Conferences in Asia, Latin America* [Meetings Coverage]. Retrieved 2 January 2015 from:

<http://www.un.org/press/en/2014/ecosoc6651.doc.htm>

This source discusses the recent elections decided by the Economic and Social Council for all of its subcommittees including CPD. The relationship and structure between other subsidiary bodies and ECOSOC is also discussed. In this document, delegates will find the structure and relationship of ECOSOC and CPD useful.

United Nations, Meetings Coverage and Press Releases. (2014, September 22). *Speakers Call for Greater Global Efforts in Implementing Goals of 1994 Conference on Population and Development, as General Assembly Reviews Progress* [Meetings Coverage]. Retrieved 2 January 2015 from: <http://www.un.org/press/en/2014/ga11556.doc.htm>

In this article written on the recent Special Session of the General Assembly, the statements provided from UN leaders, such as the Secretary-General, provide an insight as to what still needs to be addressed for ICPD Beyond 2014. This article also provides a brief overview of what CPD does in regards to ICPD and its Programme for Action. It will be a useful tool in researching recent developments on ICPD and the post-2015 development agenda.

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<http://www.unfpa.org/events/icpd-20>

I. Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights

Introduction

Since October 2014, the international community has continued to discuss, research, and develop programs related to sexual and reproductive health rights. This topic covers a wide variety of themes, including maternal health and mortality, prenatal and newborn care, sexually transmitted infections such as human immune virus and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS), reproductive and sexual health, and sexual health education. Although the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) did not meet within the past few months, the United Nations (UN), its agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and Member States have been working actively on these issues.

In the past few months, multiple UN bodies have discussed topics related to sexual and reproductive health rights. On 4 December 2014, the Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, released a synthesis report, entitled “The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet” (A/69/700), which articulated priorities for the post-2015 development agenda.³¹ Included was the priority to “realize women’s reproductive health and rights,” the elimination of AIDS, and ending preventable maternal, newborn and child deaths.³² However, a variety of NGOs were critical of the report for its lack of focus on broader sexual and reproductive health rights.³³ The International Planned Parenthood Federation and the Gates Institute, both NGOs focused on reproductive health around the globe, jointly composed a letter to express their disappointment that the report did not mention family planning or sexual health and rights as worded and discussed in earlier negotiations, including in the follow-up to the International Conference of Population and Development (ICPD) in the 47th Session of the CPD in April 2014.³⁴ Additionally, the Global Health Council, an international coalition of NGOs, companies, and individuals related to health, published a response that expressed dismay that the report “doesn’t address the critical importance of realizing sexual rights, in particular for adolescents and young people and sexual minorities.”³⁵

The General Assembly (GA) considered resolutions at their 69th session in December 2014, and included a consideration of two topics related to sexual and reproductive health: obstetric fistula and female genital mutilation (FGM).³⁶ In resolution 69/148 on “Intensification of efforts to end obstetric fistula,” the GA called on increased action to prevent and treat fistula, as well as assist women from overcoming related problems from fistula, such as finding employment and overcoming social stigmatization.³⁷ Meanwhile, resolution 69/150 on “Intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilation” connected women’s right to health with FGM, and encouraged States to raise awareness to encourage individuals to end this practice.³⁸

In addition to this work, UN agencies have discussed these topics in the past few months. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) published topical research related to an array of sexual and reproductive health issues, including the family planning report entitled “Adding It Up: The Cost and Benefits of Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health 2014.”³⁹ Jointly published with the Guttmacher Institute on 4 December 2014, the report discusses the impact of increasing access to family planning and details what different measures would cost, estimating that \$25 per woman aged 15 to 49 would suffice for complete access to sexual and reproductive healthcare and safe pregnancy and childbirth.⁴⁰ Increased access to sexual and reproductive health services was

³¹ UN General Assembly, *The road to dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all lives and protecting the planet* (A/69/700), 2014.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 21.

³³ Global Health Council, *The Health in Post-2015 Coalition's Response to the UN Secretary General's Synthesis Report on Post-2015*, 2014; International Planned Parenthood Federation, *IPPF & Gates: UN's omission of sexual & reproductive health rights is disappointing*, 2014; International HIV/AIDS Alliance, *The Road to Dignity - our response*, 2014.

³⁴ International Planned Parenthood Federation, *IPPF & Gates: UN's omission of sexual & reproductive health rights is disappointing*, 2014.

³⁵ Global Health Council, *The Health in Post-2015 Coalition's Response to the UN Secretary General's Synthesis Report on Post-2015*, 2014.

³⁶ UN, *Adopting 68 Texts Recommended by Third Committee, General Assembly Sends Strong Message towards Ending Impunity, Renewing Efforts to Protect Human Rights*, 2014.

³⁷ UN General Assembly, *Resolutions: 69th Session*, 2015.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Singh et al., *Adding it Up 2014: The Costs and Benefits of Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 2014.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

deemed critical, as the increase in contraceptive use in past years has barely surpassed population growth, leaving 225 million women globally without contraception, although they wish to avoid pregnancy.⁴¹ They determined that increased access saves not only lives, but also money in the long term, with addition health, social, and environmental benefits.⁴² Focusing on another aspect of reproductive health, WHO also released new guidelines in early December for the prevention and treatment of cervical cancer, which is the most easily preventable form of cancer through a vaccine against Human papillomavirus (HPV) typically administered to girls ages nine to thirteen.⁴³ The new guidelines highlight the importance of outreach to those who need the HPV vaccine the most, as well as men and other stakeholders who can influence the way the community views and understands the vaccine and cervical cancer, while also emphasizing the need for culturally appropriate health education and services that protect the confidentiality of women.⁴⁴

Additionally, in November 2014, an international meeting entitled the “Every Woman Every Child Stakeholder Consultation” took place in Geneva, Switzerland, co-sponsored by WHO and the governments of Canada and Norway.⁴⁵ The meeting was attended by almost 100 representatives from governments, civil society, and international organizations, and had the goal of determining specific targets for the post-2015 development agenda that include women’s and children’s health.⁴⁶ Among various new goals and a continuation of the unfinished agenda of the Millennium Development Goals, the group included sexual and reproductive health rights as a critical priority.⁴⁷

Multiple documents continue to serve as a foundation for the international discussion of these topics, including the *Programme of Action* of the 1994 ICPD, which was unprecedented in its discussion of sexual and reproductive health rights focused on the individual.⁴⁸ The CPD resolution 2014/1 on the “Assessment of the status of implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development” reinforced the needs for these priorities and unmet goals to be included in the post-2015 development agenda.⁴⁹

Recent Developments

Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights

The international community, has further discussed the HIV/AIDS pandemic most notably on World AIDS Day, which takes place annually on 1 December.⁵⁰ This year, in anticipation of the global observation of this day, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) published a new report entitled “Fast Track: Ending the AIDS Epidemic by 2030,” which reviewed progress made on HIV/AIDS, while articulating ambitious new goals to end AIDS as a global health threat by 2030.⁵¹ Namely, they encouraged frontloading investments to reduce later treatment-related costs and prevent deaths, and set forward “fast-tracked” 5 years goals referred to as 90-90-90.⁵² This would entail 90% of those affected knowing their HIV status, 90% of those living with HIV having access to treatment, and 90% of people receiving treatment successfully achieving viral suppression; the goal would to have these ratios each at 95% by 2030, which can only be achieved if the short-term goals are met.⁵³ The report states that ending the AIDS epidemic in the next 15 years is possible, but only if governments and the international community intensely scale up efforts.⁵⁴ The importance of targeting pregnant women to prevent further inventions is highlighted, and they demonstrated the high economic returns of investing in AIDS prevention and treatment in low- and middle-income states.⁵⁵ UN-Women responded to this report with a statement in support of the new actions

⁴¹ Singh et al., *Adding it Up 2014: The Costs and Benefits of Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 2014, p. 4.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 38.

⁴³ United Nations New Centre, *UN health agency issues new guidelines on treating, preventing cervical cancer*, 2014.

⁴⁴ WHO, *Comprehensive Cervical Cancer Control: A Guide to Essential Practice*, 2014, p. 4.

⁴⁵ WHO, *Setting the foundation for post-2015: partners call for sustained effort and accountability*, 2014.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ UNFPA, *International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action*, 1994.

⁴⁹ UN CPD, *Assessment of the status of implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (Resolution 2014/1)*, 2014.

⁵⁰ UN, *Close the Gap: World AIDS Day 2014*.

⁵¹ UNAIDS, *Fast Track: Ending the AIDS Epidemic by 2030*, 2014.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

taken, but by additionally pointing out that these goals are unachievable without also addressing gender inequality, a broader goal in the post-2015 development framework.⁵⁶

Individual Member States have also been making progress on reproductive health, notably by improving maternal health. Pakistan serves as an example of progress in realizing maternal health rights; through a program sponsored by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) in conjunction with the Punjab Department of Public Health, more women have been trained as skilled birth attendants (SBA).⁵⁷ In comparison to traditional midwives, these health workers are able to provide hygienic and safe births, lowering the risk of complications during childbirth and maternal and child mortality.⁵⁸ Because of the success of the program, started in 2005, the Pakistani government is expanding this program to train more women as SBAs, hoping to especially increase access in remote regions of the country.⁵⁹ Meanwhile, UNFPA has worked alongside Afghanistan’s health ministry to improve access to maternal health services, particularly through training midwives.⁶⁰ In 2002, Afghanistan had one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world, with 1,600 women dying per 100,000 live births, and had only 467 midwives in the country; today, the rate, while still high, has decreased to 400 deaths per 100,000 live births, with around 4,600 midwives practicing in the state.⁶¹ The country has made much progress and is intensifying efforts to train more women as midwives, including by starting a 4-year degree-level midwifery program at Kabul University, and serves as a good example of improving access to maternal health care post-conflict.⁶²

Sexual Health Education and Access to Reproductive Health Services

New challenges to providing access to reproductive health services and maternal health care began to arise when West Africa saw an Ebola outbreak starting in the fall of 2014.⁶³ Pregnant women have been facing increased difficulties gaining access to health services for prenatal care and childbirth as health systems in affected states are already under added stress to deal with the public health crisis; this leaves women vulnerable to an increased risk of complications and death.⁶⁴ Accordingly, WHO collaborated with UNICEF and the NGO Save the Children to publish the document “A Guide to the Provision of Safe Delivery and Immediate Newborn Care in the Context of an Ebola Outbreak” in October 2014.⁶⁵ This guide serves to inform policymakers and health practitioners about strategies to protect mothers and newborns from Ebola, as well as health care providers.⁶⁶ Moreover, UNFPA has been working with local governments to provide health supplies and recruit midwives to enable safe births for health providers and women.⁶⁷

Conclusion

Sexual and reproductive health rights are currently important issues for the UN and Member States, as seen in the many examples of debates, programs, and action being taken. This topic includes many aspects of sexual and reproductive health, but in the past few months, HIV/AIDS, maternal and newborn health, and access to reproductive and sexual health services have been some of the main subtopics discussed by the international community. Various UN agencies and NGOs have published recommendations for action that should be considered moving forward in the post-2015 development agenda.

⁵⁶ UN Women, *Message from UN Women’s Executive Director for World AIDS Day, 1 December 2014*, 2014.

⁵⁷ UNICEF, *In Pakistan, a skilled birth attendant delivers health and safety for mothers and children*, 2014.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ UNFPA, *Midwives help lower Afghanistan’s towering maternal death rate*, 2015.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ UNFPA, *Pregnant in the shadow of Ebola: Deteriorating health systems endanger women*, 2014.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ WHO et al., *A guide to the provision of safe delivery and immediate newborn care in the context of an Ebola Outbreak*, 2014.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ UNFPA, *Pregnant in the shadow of Ebola: Deteriorating health systems endanger women*, 2014.

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This website includes a summary and copy of the letter written jointly by the International Planned Parenthood Federation and the Gates Institute in response to the Secretary-General's report on development and ending poverty by 2030. They expressed their disappointment that references to family planning, sexual health, or sexual rights were lacking in the report, in contrast the discussions at the 13th session of the Open Working Group for Sustainable Development. This document serves as a good example of the intersection between NGOs and the UN, and the many perspectives and efforts that must be considered by the UN. It also showcases a topical debate surrounding sexual and reproductive health.

Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS. (2014) *Fast Track: Ending the AIDS Epidemic by 2030*. Retrieved 5 January 2015 from: http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/JC2686_WAD2014report_en.pdf

This report by UNAIDS is critical to understanding the role of the UN in ending AIDS as a global epidemic. The report details exactly what must be done, according to UNAIDS, to greatly reduce HIV infections and related deaths. The report explains their desired strategy to invest resources in the next five years to see a long-term impact. It also provides useful information on the scope of HIV/AIDS today.

Malik, A. (2014). In Pakistan, a skilled birth attendant delivers health and safety for mothers and children. *UNICEF*. Retrieved 7 January 2015 from: http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/pakistan_78038.html

UNICEF published this article, which is a good example of actions taken by Member States with support by the UN to address issues in their countries. The article provides information about a program in Pakistan to train women to provide childbirth health services. It includes information for how the program has been successful, a training program whose model could perhaps be adapted in other countries.

Singh, S., J. Darroch & L. Ashford. (2014). *Adding it Up 2014: The Costs and Benefits of Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health*. Retrieved 5 January 2015 from: <http://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/Adding%20It%20Up-Final-11.18.14.pdf>

This report published by the UN Population Fund is an excellent source for learning more about the finances of global efforts to improve sexual and reproductive health. It highlights where there are currently gaps in providing access to such health services, in addition to the progress that has already been made. It provides estimates for what would happen if the international community increased resources given towards sexual and reproductive health, and how much a holistic effort reaching every woman would cost.

World Health Organization, Save the Children & United Nations Children's Fund. (2014). *A guide to the provision of safe delivery and immediate newborn care in the context of an Ebola Outbreak*. Retrieved 6 January 2015 from: http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/topics/maternal_perinatal/ebola/en/

In the aftermath of the Ebola outbreak in Western Africa, WHO, Save the Children, and UNICEF worked together to publish a guide for health care providers to focus on maternal health and newborn care as long as the virus continues to pose a risk. They highlighted the pitfalls women face in seeking maternal health care in systems that are already strained by responding to Ebola, while also providing concrete guidance on how to maintain hygiene and reduce the risk of transmitting the disease. This document also serves as an example of how UN agencies and NGOs can work in collaboration on issues that intersect in their work.

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II. Ageing Populations' Health and Participation in Society

Introduction

Over the course of the past several months multiple international events, conferences, and reports have been published to continue to tackle issues concerning ageing populations. Among the most important updates includes the Secretary-General's report of July 2014, entitled "Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing" (A/69/180).⁶⁸ This report summarized discussions held on age discrimination and includes details of policy developments and recent action taken by Member States to address discrimination and neglect of the elderly.⁶⁹ The report further details actions taken by Member States to enact policy to specifically combat issues around age discrimination and the abuse and neglect of older persons.⁷⁰ In the synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 development agenda, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon made remarks highlighting the ageing population of the world and the need to prioritize action to address the needs of elderly.⁷¹ Further collective action was taken through a report from the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolving to seek opinions from Member States on key issues surrounding the upcoming review of the 2002 *Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing*, (MIPAA) scheduled for 2017.⁷²

Recent Developments

Ageing Populations and Development

Within the past several months, the International Labor Organization (ILO) published a paper documenting the pension systems of over 178 different countries; they specifically placed emphasis given on their coverage and benefits afforded, as well as documenting coverage given to the elderly in lower and middle-income economies.⁷³ The document relays statistics and facts gathered from the pension systems studied on securing financial independence for the elderly and most importantly, it calls for the expansion of social services and provides key examples of ways in which states may provide these.⁷⁴ Middle- and low-income countries have made strides towards strengthening their contributory pension schemes and establishing non-contributory schemes to guarantee fiscal stability for ageing populations. Higher-income states have continued to reform their current systems to save costs by namely raising the age of retirement, increasing contributory scheme rates, and cutting benefits.⁷⁵

Promoting Healthcare

On 1 October 2014 the United Nations (UN) celebrated the 24th International Day of Older Persons.⁷⁶ The theme of the 2014 celebration was "Leaving No One Behind: Promoting a Society for All."⁷⁷ In commemoration, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and the Division of Social Policy and Development (DSP) gathered to discuss the many areas in which Member States can work to provide a better quality of life for the elderly.⁷⁸ On 9 October 2014, DESA, DSP, and the NGO Committee on Ageing gathered to host speakers, who noted developments towards increased research and policy to improve the lives of the elderly.⁷⁹ In celebration of this event, several new tools have been created in cooperation with UN bodies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other organizations to better track the rise of the elderly population.

HelpAge International, an organization dedicated to improving and advocating for the rights of the elderly, celebrated this event by launching the Global Age Watch Index in collaboration with the DESA, the World Bank, the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Labor Organization (ILO), the UN Economic and Social

⁶⁸ UN General Assembly, *Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing: Report of the Secretary-General (A/69/180)*, 2014.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ UN General Assembly, *The road to dignity by 2030: ending poverty, transforming all live and protecting the planet: Synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda (A/RES/69/700)*, 2014, p. 9.

⁷² UN ECOSOC, *Further implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002 (E/RES/2014/7)*, 2014, p. 5

⁷³ ILO, *Social protection for older persons: Key policy trends and statistics*, 2014.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ UN DESA, *International Day of Older Persons 2014*, 2014.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

Council (ECOSOC) and the Gallup World Poll.⁸⁰ This online tool works as a database, which makes a substantial amount of data regarding the wellbeing of the elderly population in many countries easily accessible.⁸¹ Among the information provided in the collection of data from general populations of 96 states, it is possible to access figures regarding information on health status, employment, education levels, income statuses, and many other aspects in the hopes of providing policy makers and individuals the ability to assess the overall health status of their ageing population.⁸² This effort was in direct response to the UN Secretary-General's call for greater data collection to ensure that no one is left out of the equation when attempting to create legislation which benefits the elderly.⁸³ Dr. Ties Boerma, Director of the Department of Health Statistics and Informatics at WHO, added to this sentiment in the fall of 2014 by stating that “while some interventions will be universally applicable, it will be important that countries monitor the health and functioning of their ageing populations to understand health trends and design programs that meet the specific needs identified.”⁸⁴

One of the largest factors in hindering a healthy lifestyle for older persons is the issue of chronic illness.⁸⁵ The new series by *The Lancet*, an international medical journal which publishes work by medical professionals, highlights these very issues in their in-depth look at health and ageing.⁸⁶ They conclude that the growing number of those with chronic illness and lack of true wellbeing will continue to become a large burden on many states.⁸⁷ The authors of the series stress that the health sector is not the only actor responsible for improving these conditions amongst the elderly.⁸⁸ They assert that actions can be taken such as promoting preventive care, including the elderly in the workforce for longer, and utilizing better use of technology, and they ought to be considered when creating policies which benefit the health of our current ageing population.⁸⁹

In early September 2014, HelpAge Asia's regional conference discussed this issue, among others.⁹⁰ Preventive primary care was highlighted as a policy to pursue in mitigating the effects of chronic and serious illness.⁹¹ Japan, in particular, was noted for their efforts in this regard by providing universal health coverage, which has lowered high blood pressure health risks by allowing greater access to preventive care.⁹² Their universal health care program, which began in 1961, was revised in 2000 as the ageing population grew exponentially.⁹³ The early establishment of universal health care and revisions made has subsequently led to an overall improvement to the quality of life for the elderly in Japan.⁹⁴

On 9-10 December 2014, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) gathered to conduct a consultation on addressing the needs of their older populations.⁹⁵ The Member States paid specific attention to issues that included looking at alternative policies for family dynamics in which many elderly remained at home as well as looked at viable solutions to strengthen and expand pension plans.⁹⁶ This created a platform from which regional Member States with specific issues could seek to more distinctively handle the most acute problems facing their own populations.⁹⁷

Promoting Integration and Participation

Additionally, Europe has seen the occurrence of the International Healthy Cities Conference on 23 October, 2014, during which the issue of supporting “age-friendly” environments which included a master class given that discusses

⁸⁰ HelpAge, *About Global Age Watch*, 2014.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ WHO, “Ageing well” must be a global priority, 2014.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ryan, *Ageing population doesn't have to be a 'time bomb,' say experts*, 2014.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Web Japan, *Health Care: Aiming for high-quality and sustainable health and medical services*, 2014.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ UN ESCAP, *Regional Expert Consultation on Long-Term Care of Older Persons*, 2014.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

ways in which cities can be made more accessible to the elderly.⁹⁸ Within the same vein, Hong Kong hosted the 6th Global Conference on the Alliance of Healthy Cities.⁹⁹ The hope was to discuss ways in which cities could be continually designed to further integrate the elderly in social spaces while maintaining independent mobility.¹⁰⁰ The outcomes of this event are yet to be disseminated.

Conclusion

Ageing populations are a concern to both highly industrialized economies and emerging ones, though in varying ways. The largest issues facing the world's ageing populations continue to remain; chronic illness, the high cost of care for a generation no longer in the work place, and the integration of the elderly into a changing society are all at the forefront of issues concerning the elderly. These challenges have been addressed by recent global events, including international conferences, days honoring the elderly, and through regional cooperation. In effect, small steps have been taken towards tackling some of these issues and many specific agreements have furthered the conversation on improving the life of our growing ageing populations.

⁹⁸ WHO European Healthy Cities Network, *International Healthy Cities Conference*, 2014.

⁹⁹ Global Conference of the Alliance of Healthy Cities, *Main Theme and Sub-Themes*, 2014.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

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This document, published by the ILO, discusses recommendations for policies which countries can adopt to enhance the quality of life for their elderly population. The document was presented as part of the 24th Annual International Day of Older Persons and provides specific practices that lower, middle, and higher income economies can take to enhance the lives of their senior citizens as well as provide a good overview of the various pension plans in operation in various parts of the world. It discusses some successes found in expanding and reforming pension schemes to ensure financial independence for the elderly.

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2014) *Social Integration and the Rights of Older Persons* [Website]. Retrieved 11 January 2015 from:

<http://undesadspd.org/Ageing/MeetingsandWorkshops/SocialIntegrationandtheRightsofOlderPersons.aspx>

This website details the various discussions held at the Social Integration and the Rights of Older Persons held in Bangkok between 30 September and 2 October 2014. The site includes links to key UN documents referenced during the meeting as bedrocks of information, as well as links to recent agreements made to work towards a healthier, ageing population that is more manageable for the Asian-Pacific region. Delegates can further explore specifics on the conversations and outcomes of the workshop from links provided herein.

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2014) *Ensuring Income Security for Older Persons*. Retrieved 12 January 2015 from:

<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/ageing/workshop/GuidanceNoteIncomeSecurity>

This document was produced during the workshops held in Bangkok between 30 September and 2 October 2014. The document is a joint statement declaring issues that the Member States agreed upon in the matters of providing financial security for the elderly. The call for increased pension security is made, however, it is also noted that none of the current Member States is able to provide complete pension coverage for their ageing populations and so calls upon the implementation of contributory pension schemes, among other solutions to this issue.

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2014). *Long-term Care of Older Persons*. Retrieved 12 January 2015 from: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/documents/ageing/workshop/GuidanceNoteLongTermCare>

This document was created during workshops held in Bangkok between 30 September - 2 October 2014, it is a joint statement declaring issues and discussing possible solutions to long-term care within the Asia-Pacific region. Ideas on providing a life for the elderly which include the right of "ageing in place," or, the ability to age where and with whom the elderly choose to do so. This freedom is not, according to this document, adequately addressed. The document sites the differences between Asian-Pacific traditions of family dynamics and the rest of the world, where many times the elderly are highly functioning care givers to grandchildren within the home. Their value in this regard is not acknowledged adequately which leaves gaps in policy to help continue these traditions among their elderly population.

United Nations General Assembly. (2014). *Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing: Report of the Secretary-General (A/69/180)*. Retrieved 1 February 2015 from:

http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=a/69/180

This report is a direct response to General Assembly resolution 68/134 entitled "Follow-up to the Second World Assembly on Ageing." It focuses mainly on reporting on two key issues that have been highlighted as major contributors to the well being of older persons including matters concerning age discrimination and abuse. The report includes a review of policies and efforts put forth by states to combat these issues. It also includes major developments found in recent key publications and civil society initiatives. Recommendations by the report are included in section five.

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III. Strengthening National Health Systems

Introduction

Strong national health systems are necessary for a prosperous society.¹⁰¹ Thus it is evident why efforts should be made to strengthen health systems that are potentially weak or could be disturbed by shocks or crises, as the World Health Organization (WHO) has pointed to as one of the lessons of the current Ebola epidemic in Western Africa.¹⁰² National health systems are also necessary in achieving sustainable development, and efforts to strengthen systems in the past have been made in the context of the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD).¹⁰³ Accordingly, a significant effort that the international community and the Commission on Population and Development (CPD) have recently undertaken is the promotion of universal health coverage in order to strengthen national health systems.¹⁰⁴

In September 2014, the United Nations (UN) General Assembly (GA) held a Special Session (UNGASS) on the follow-up of the *Programme of Action* on the ICPD Beyond 2014.¹⁰⁵ On 22 September, the opening statement given by the President of the GA, former Ugandan Minister for Foreign Affairs Sam Kahamba Kutesa, focused on reproductive health and strengthening national health systems as necessities for the setting of the new agenda for ICPD Beyond 2014 and the post-2015 development agenda.¹⁰⁶ In addition, a recent document that has cross-sectional importance within the UN system is the recently-published Secretary-General's synthesis report, "The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet."¹⁰⁷ The report, looking at how to approach the upcoming post-2015 development agenda, identifies health as one of the six essential elements to a successful sustainable development agenda.¹⁰⁸ Universal healthcare coverage and methods to make health-care affordable and accessible for everyone are also identified as aspects that should be of priority within the post-2015 development effort.¹⁰⁹ The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) also published a report in January 2015 on the "World Economic Situation and Prospects 2015," which mentions the vulnerability of weak health systems faced with a crisis, as is the case in regions affected by the Ebola outbreak.¹¹⁰ On a regional level, WHO's Regional Committee for Africa adopted a report during its 64th session from 3 to 7 November 2014, establishing that progress that has been made towards achieving health-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), while identifying challenges that still persist.¹¹¹ Those challenges are often related to health systems, arising from, amongst others, neglecting to focus on quality and coverage, lack of qualified health workers, and non-sufficient stocking of medicines.¹¹² Discussions on health, ICPD beyond 2014, and the post-2015 agenda will be further continued at CPD's 48th session on "Realizing the Future We Want: Integrating Population Issues Into Sustainable Development in the Post-2015 Development Agenda."¹¹³

The pressing nature of this topic was noted in recent months with the establishment of a Universal Health Coverage Day on 12 December 2014, organized by the Rockefeller Foundation and endorsed by, among others, WHO and World Bank Group, uniting a coalition of 500 health and development organizations.¹¹⁴ Universal Health Coverage Day took place exactly two years after the adoption of GA resolution 68/98 on Global Health and Foreign Policy,

¹⁰¹ WHO, *One Year into the Ebola Epidemic: a Deadly, Tenacious and Unforgiving Virus*, 2015.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ UNFPA, *International Conference on Population and Development: Programme of Action*, 1994, p. 255.

¹⁰⁴ WHO, *World Health Report 2013: Research for Universal Health Coverage*, 2013, p. 5.

¹⁰⁵ UN General Assembly, *Statement by H.E. Sam Kahamba Kutesa, President of the 69th Session, at 29th Special Session of the General Assembly on Follow-Up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development Beyond 2014*, 2014, p. 4.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ UN General Assembly, *The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet: Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General on the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda (A/69/700)*, 2014.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹¹⁰ UN DESA, *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2015*, 2015, p. 9.

¹¹¹ WHO Regional Committee for Africa, *Progress Towards the Achievement of the Health-Related Millennium Development Goals in the African Region: Report of the Secretariat*, 2014.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹¹³ UNEP, *UNEP Post-2015 Note # 3: Human Health and the Environment*, 2014, p. 1; UN CPD, *Forty-eighth Session*, 2014.

¹¹⁴ Universal Health Coverage Day, *Universal Health Coverage Day*, 2014.

and the commemoration of the Day reiterated the issues addressed in that resolution.¹¹⁵ Also important was the workshop held by the Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research in December 2014, which promoted successful health program implementation through embedded research.¹¹⁶ The ICPD *Programme of Action* remains the main framework for the work that is being done on the global and regional efforts in relation to population and development issues, which is shown by the efforts of internal and external groups in order to shape an ICPD Beyond 2014 follow-up program.¹¹⁷

Recent Developments

Challenges to Strengthening National Health Systems

The challenge that pandemics and epidemics pose to national health systems has been illustrated in the past months by the Ebola outbreak in West Africa.¹¹⁸ The affected health systems, especially in Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia, have become more efficient over the years, but they exhibited severe limitations when confronted with the severity of Ebola, thus impeding effective responses needed to control the situation.¹¹⁹ In order to assess the current situation, WHO analyzed the health systems in the affected countries pre-Ebola, which pointed out that even before the outbreak, all three countries had a lack of professional health workers, great disparities between urban and rural areas, and weak drug supply systems.¹²⁰ WHO emphasized that the strengthening of national health systems should not be done in a vertical way to address only epidemics immediately occurring, but investments should be made to build national systems that focus on primary healthcare and universal health coverage.¹²¹ Recently, WHO released a report summarizing the Ebola outbreak and identifying national health systems as “a bedrock of social stability, resilience and economic health” and an important emphasis for 2015.¹²² ECOSOC President Martin Sajdik has reiterated this point, stating the importance of investing directly in the strengthening of the public sector, including in national institutions providing healthcare.¹²³ He also underlined that although outbreaks call for quick responses, long-term strategies to strengthen national health systems in general are crucial as well.¹²⁴

Addressing Affordability

In the sustainable development goals (SDGs) proposed by the Open Working Group (OWG) on SDGs of the GA, the OWG listed goal 3 as to “Ensure Healthy Lives and Promote Well-Being for All at All Ages.”¹²⁵ Goal 3.8 enumerated access to universal healthcare through access to affordable medicines and more, thus making affordability one of the key aspects of strengthening national health systems.¹²⁶ WHO’s 2014 Flagship Report on Medicines in Health Systems also suggests this idea.¹²⁷ In this context, WHO has also highlighted the importance of information-sharing in order to assess the usefulness of different medicines for different demographic groups.¹²⁸ Furthermore, WHO identifies affordability as an element bridging different elements of health systems, as it encompasses concerns about infrastructure, health workers, medicines and health system financing.¹²⁹

Women’s Health

The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) published a report in 2014, entitled “Adding it up: The Costs and Benefits of Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health,” offering comprehensive data on how investing in reproductive health

¹¹⁵ UN General Assembly, *Global Health and Foreign Policy (A/RES/68/98)*, 2012.

¹¹⁶ AHPSR, *AHPSR-PAHO iPIER Protocol Development Workshop*, 2014.

¹¹⁷ UN General Assembly, *UN General Assembly Special Session on the Follow-Up of the Program of Action on the ICPD beyond 2014*, 2014.

¹¹⁸ WHO, *High Level Meeting on Building Resilient Systems for Health in Ebola-Affected Countries: Background Document*, 2014, par. 5.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, par. 6.

¹²⁰ WHO, *High Level Meeting on Building Resilient Systems for Health in Ebola-Affected Countries: Meeting Report*, 2014, p. 2.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹²² WHO, *One Year into the Ebola Epidemic: a Deadly, Tenacious and Unforgiving Virus*, 2015.

¹²³ UN News Centre, *Ebola Response Must Include Efforts to Bolster Health Systems – UN Economic, Social Council Chief*, 2014.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ UN General Assembly, *Report of the Open Working Group of the General Assembly on Sustainable Development Goals (A/68/970)*, 2014, p. 12.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ WHO, *Medicines in Health Systems: Advancing Access, Affordability, and Appropriate Use*, 2014, p. 43.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

¹²⁹ WHO, *Health Systems Governance for Universal Health Coverage: Action Plan*, 2014, p. 7.

will have direct benefits in the prevention of unintended pregnancies, in prenatal and postnatal care, and in the reduction of HIV transmission.¹³⁰ The report addresses issues both important for the ICPD beyond 2014 and the post-2015 development agenda, as, for example, investing in prenatal and postnatal care to prevent newborn deaths and reduce the risk of disability.¹³¹ In this context, the report also mentions the benefits of making antiretroviral treatment available to pregnant women in need of such drugs, which would cut new HIV infections among infants by 70%.¹³² The report also connects these issues to the idea that by strengthening national health systems, barriers to antiretroviral treatments can be broken down and needs can be accommodated more easily.¹³³ Furthermore, most women do not receive the antenatal care that they need; according to WHO standards, women need at least 4 antenatal medical visits in order to ensure a safe pregnancy.¹³⁴ The report points out that to provide women with healthcare services that are recommended would double the current costs of maternal and newborn healthcare, thus calling for more effective health systems to approach increased costs.¹³⁵

Conclusion

The issues of health and strengthening national health systems are at the center of the ICPD Beyond 2014 and post-2015 development dialogue, as a healthy society is the basis for sustainable development.¹³⁶ As the promotion of universal health coverage grows in importance, the question of affordability becomes more pressing as well, as it is intrinsically linked to the question of human rights.¹³⁷ Furthermore, the special health needs of women should not be neglected in a comprehensive and inclusive health systems approach.¹³⁸ Thus, the strengthening of national health systems can be addressed from a wide range of different angles, and must continue to be discussed by the international community and CPD.

¹³⁰ UNFPA, *Adding It Up: The Costs and Benefits of Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 2014, p. 7.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

¹³² *Ibid.*, p. 26.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

¹³⁴ WHO, *Standards for Maternal and Neonatal Care*, 2006, p. 1.

¹³⁵ UNFPA, *Adding It Up: The Costs and Benefits of Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 2014, p. 21.

¹³⁶ UN General Assembly, *The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming All Lives and Protecting the Planet: Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General on the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda (A/69/700)*, 2014, p. 17.

¹³⁷ UNFPA, *Adding It Up: The Costs and Benefits of Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health*, 2014, p. 13.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

Annotated Bibliography

United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs. (2015). *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2015*. Retrieved 8 January 2015 from:

http://www.un.org/en/development/desa/policy/wesp/wesp_archive/2015wesp_chap1.pdf

The first chapter of this publication is currently available. It offers a very broad evaluation of the economic situation in the world in 2015. As the economic standing of people has a great impact on their health, delegates will be able to make the connection of economics and its repercussions on health systems. Special attention is given in this source to the situation in Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and the problems their public health systems face when confronted with crises.

United Nations, General Assembly, Sixty-ninth session. (2014). *The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming all Lives and Protecting the Planet: Synthesis Report of the Secretary-General on the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda (A/69/700)*. Retrieved 8 January 2015 from: <http://www.undocs.org/A/69/700>

The Secretary-General's Synthesis Report on the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda, published in December 2014, is an important resource for delegates to learn about the connection between the topic at hand and sustainable development in the post-2015 context. In particular, Part Three should be considered as it analyzes how health needs can be included in policymaking to guarantee a sustainable future. Although the specific issue of strengthening health systems is only mentioned explicitly at times, this source fits into the concept of making health accessible for everyone.

United Nations Population Fund. (2014). *Adding It Up: The Costs and Benefits of Investing in Sexual and Reproductive Health*. Retrieved 8 January 2015 from: <http://www.unfpa.org/adding-it-up>

This report, prepared in cooperation with the Guttmacher Institute and UN Population Fund (UNFPA), focuses on sexual and reproductive health and the benefits investment in these areas can hold for whole communities. It is divided up in different areas within sexual and reproductive health, starting with access to contraceptive services, covering prenatal and postnatal care, as well as services for HIV. Besides from presenting the challenges of women in need of sexual or reproductive healthcare, the report is also a great resource for delegates as it offers solutions, such as with funding, to the problems health systems are facing.

World Health Organization. (2014). *Medicines in Health Systems: Advancing Access, Affordability, and Appropriate Use*. Retrieved 8 January 2015 from: <http://www.who.int/alliance-hpsr/resources/flagshipreports/en/index1.html>

This report published by WHO, in cooperation with the Alliance for Health Policy and Systems Research, concentrates on the important role accessible and appropriately used medicines can have to alleviate the burden of universal health coverage on public health systems. It focuses on medical needs in Low and Middle Income Countries (LMICs), first explaining what an approach based on health systems should look like in order to focus on how access to medicines can achieve universal health coverage. Although this report is very technical, it can be useful for delegates wishing to further go into depth to find practical solutions to real problems.

World Health Organization, Regional Committee for Africa. (2014). *Progress Towards the Achievement of the Health-Related Millennium Development Goals in the African Region: Report of the Secretariat*. Retrieved 8 January 2015 from: <http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/143108/1/AFR-RC64-4e.pdf?ua=1>

This Report of the Secretariat to WHO's Regional Committee for Africa highlights the progress that the African region has made towards achieving the health-related MDGs. It points out that Member States in this region have made special efforts to strengthen their national health systems in order to get closer to achieving the targets of the MDGs. It classifies countries of the region in three groups depending on the progress they made in achieving the MDGs: countries that are on track to achieving them, countries having made insufficient progress, and countries having made no progress. This report is a useful resource as it highlights what challenges health systems in this region are still facing, and this can be especially of interest when considering the current health crisis in West Africa.

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