



صندوق الأمم المتحدة للسكان



( )

## **News: Expert Group Meeting on Formulating a Regional Framework for Integrating Demographic Transition in Development Plans and Programmes, Amman 3-4 April 2007**

---

The Population and Social Policy Team of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), with financial support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and in collaboration with the Higher Population Council in Jordan, organized an Expert Group Meeting to discuss a regional framework for integrating demographic transition in development plans and programmes in the Arab countries. The meeting was held in Amman on 3 and 4 April 2007 under the patronage of H.E. Ms. Suhair El Ali, Minister of Planning and International Cooperation.

The meeting was inaugurated with opening statements in which the organizers have emphasized the importance of the interlinkages between population and development. In her opening speech, H.E. Ms. Suhair El Ali stressed that development-related goals should not be narrowed down to merely accumulating physical capital and achieving economic growth, but should be seen in a wider framework where human beings are placed at the center of all development strategies

The meeting was conducted in line with ESCWA's continuous efforts in the area of integrating population issues with development, in particular, integrating the changing age structure of population in the process of social and economic development. The importance of this issue draws upon a number of facts: the first is the expected changes in the age composition of population to which Arab countries must take preemptive measures in order to cope with its challenges and benefit from the opportunities it provides. The second fact is that improving the quality of life of citizens irrespective of their numbers guarantees commitment to human rights principles. Thirdly, integrating both quantitative and qualitative population issues in the process of social and economic development ensures the fulfilment of the fundamental development goals of poverty reduction, equity, empowerment of women and men, as well as gender equality.

The meeting aimed at adopting a pilot framework, which comprises the major steps required for integrating demographic transition in the development process. The framework should ensure a systematic entry point that assists researchers in determining the timing of the demographic window and in analyzing the conditions and requirements needed to maximize the ~~social and~~ economic and social return of this opportunity. In addition, the framework is intended to be a reference tool that guides policy-makers in formulating responsive integrated economic and social policies.

The meeting comprised an introductory session by ESCWA Social Development Division that summarized the main issues pertaining to the relationship between the demographic transition and development. The PowerPoint presentations underscored the pioneering role of ESCWA in adopting an agenda for monitoring the demographic changes ensued by the different development stages in the Arab region. The current course of ESCWA work is marked by focusing on emerging issues resulting from the dynamic relationship between population and development in member countries. Such an approach depends on ESCWA's capability to preconceive the multidimensional aspects of population and development dynamisms, to create awareness on the challenges and opportunities imposed by these dynamisms, and to implement capacity-building and training programmes.



صندوق الأمم المتحدة للسكان



( )

ESCWA presentations also emphasized the need to move beyond linking human numbers to the limited available resources, to a wider approach where formulating, implementing, and monitoring policies and programmes related to sustainable development and social equity are driven by consideration of both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of population. Also highlighted was the fact that strategies of integration are no longer confined to demographic transition inputs such as fertility, mortality and migration, but are now expanded to include the consequences of the demographic transition represented by the changing age-structure of the population and its implications on development.

In addition to ESCWA experts, the meeting gathered 30 eminent regional experts in the fields of population, economy, sociology, and demography, among which were government officials, researchers and academia. These experts were invited to share their experiences, as well as their scientific and practical consultations regarding the meeting's main working document entitled "Demographic Transition and Methods of Integration in Development Plans and Programmes in the Arab Region." In preparing this document, ESCWA conducted an in-depth review and analysis of available theoretical and application models that are used in planning and preparing integrated development programmes. A section of the study was devoted to discuss some success stories in this area, the most important of which was the experience of East Asian countries. Participants were then clustered into four working groups by area of expertise to discuss the major components of the study and provide their recommendations as regards the theoretical aspects, the models, the practicality/applicability of the proposed framework and its ability to formulate integrated social, economic and population policies in the Arab region.

Participants in the first working group discussed the theoretical background of the demographic transition process, the outcomes of this process and its correlation with the human life cycle and economic behaviour in terms of savings and investment. The group emphasized the importance of such elaboration of the theoretical aspects especially those related to the Asian countries' experience, which succeeded to utilize the demographic transition in strengthening the gross domestic product and in using the returns of this transition for developing human resources and creating human capital. The second group recommended the review of additional models that have the capacity to accommodate a greater number of variables and permit different economic projections in light of the expected demographic changes. In conformity with new models proposed by international scientific centres, the group emphasized that due consideration should be given to the current generation of Production Functions, in which physical and human variables such as population growth, size of labour force, level of education and training requirements can be accommodated and analysed in accordance with various scenarios on productions, technology and employment.

The third working group underscored the need to test the proposed model on the national level and explore the option of linking the general framework of the model with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) given the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of the demographic transition associated with the realization of these goals. The fourth working group commended on the recommendations of the working document and presented constructive recommendations regarding the requirements and conditions needed for ESCWA to translate these recommendations into an action plan that accelerates the integration process, provides training and enhances national capacity in the area of demographic analysis.



صندوق الأمم المتحدة للسكان



( )

In its concluding session, participants summoned ESCWA to maintain its pioneering role in perceiving and analysing the implications of the demographic transition and in providing supporting conditions to ensure that the outcome of the demographic transition would not be a forgone opportunity, but would be an opportunity to achieve the MDGs. In that, participants recommended that ESCWA should peruse its role in disseminating a wide range demographic knowledge, and in enhancing national capacity to take advantage of this emerging regional opportunity.