



Key messages of the Arab Regional Conference on Population and Development: challenges and prospects 10 years after the 2013 Cairo Declaration

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), the United Nations Population Fund's Arab States Regional Office (UNFPA ASRO) and the League of Arab States, in partnership with the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF- Arab region), organized the Arab Regional Conference on Population and Development: challenges and prospects 10 years after the 2013 Cairo Declaration, at the United Nations House in Beirut, on 13 and 14 September 2023. The Conference reviewed the progress made in implementing the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development in the Arab region and resulted in the following recommendations and key messages:

First. Dignity and equality

- Adopt and implement laws, policies and strategies aimed at promoting the proper role of the family, achieving gender equality, and empowering women and girls in line with international and regional standards to ensure their access to equal opportunities and eliminate discrimination and gender-based violence, including domestic violence, sexual violence, harassment in all settings, technology-facilitated violence, and harmful practices such as child early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.
- Mainstream gender equality in poverty reduction efforts, continue to invest in the education of women and girls, and adopt gender-sensitive budgets to implement economic and social policies aimed at integrating women into the labour market, ensuring equal pay, and reducing and redistributing unpaid care and domestic work.
- Prioritize investment in youth by enhancing their participation in public life and their contribution to sustainable development, peace and security, and by developing policies that ensure quality analytical education, capacity-building and life skills, including those responsive to the labour market requirements and the Fourth and Fifth Industrial Revolutions.
- Strengthen programmes and strategies for older persons, reform social protection policies to promote inclusiveness and access to comprehensive life-cycle health services for all older persons, protect older persons from neglect and abuse and provide them with a decent life.
- Maximize efforts to realize the rights of persons with disabilities to access inclusive education and an appropriate curriculum, employment opportunities, an adequate standard of living, quality health services, including sexual and reproductive health services, psychosocial support, social protection and access to a built and digital environment, assistive devices and assistive technology.

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Second. Sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights

- Promote investment in sexual and reproductive health, family planning and reproductive rights at all stages of life, especially for women, girls, youth, persons with disabilities, migrants, refugees and marginalized groups, empowering them to make informed decisions and improving their safe access to family planning services.
- Address challenges to the availability of sexual, reproductive and family planning information and services for youth and adolescents.
- Integrate sexual and reproductive health services into universal health coverage, invest in the workforce in this area, strengthen the role of midwives and build their capacity, and align national efforts with the regional nursing and midwifery strategy to provide high-quality sexual and reproductive health and family planning services, especially in conflict-affected areas.
- Adequately engage different social sectors, address the social determinants of health and include them in relevant policies, strategies and programmes to address the linkages between inequalities in sexual and reproductive health, family planning and natural resources and challenges to achieving the Cairo Declaration goals and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Third. Crises and mobility

- Include migration dynamics and migrants in risk reduction strategies, to protect their rights and anticipate the consequences of external shocks, including political, social, economic and environmental shocks, and their multiplier effect on the most vulnerable groups.
- Integrate risk prevention and crisis response concepts and mechanisms into development planning and build on past experiences in dealing with and preparing to respond to crises at the local level to enhance the resilience of societies to multiple crises, ensuring the continued achievement of population and development goals and building sustainable and resilient societies.

Fourth. Place and environmental sustainability

- Adopt inclusive and participatory urban planning models that seek to achieve city sustainability, and develop and implement gender-sensitive climate action policies that take into account demographics and the rights and needs of all, especially marginalized groups.
- Provide affordable technologies for climate change action to least developed countries (LDCs), small farmers and low-income people.
- Build partnerships with the private sector and expand investment in the green economy in light of the growing demand for green products, and capitalize on this opportunity to create jobs while delivering on climate and sustainability goals.

Fifth. Mechanisms to accelerate implementation

- Intensify efforts to change negative societal attitudes towards different population groups, emphasize the positive contributions of persons with disabilities and older persons to their communities, combat discrimination against them, remove structural barriers that encourage gender discrimination and all forms of violence through school curricula, and promote the role of traditional and electronic media and community leaders in building a positive narrative on different population groups and their issues.



- Adopt inclusive national policies that integrate the different population dimensions in their interaction with each other, while ensuring necessary and effective sustainable institutional frameworks and budgets, mainstreaming rights-based approaches, and strengthening the rule of law, governance institutions and multisectoral coordination.
- Work with multiple stakeholders, including community-based civil society organizations, and women's, youth, persons with disabilities and older persons' organizations, and enhance their potential to contribute to the development, implementation and evaluation of population policies, and national and local planning including prioritization and participatory budgeting.
- Promote regional collaboration and exchange of information, and strengthen cooperation in developing and implementing regional solutions to cross-border challenges, including forced displacement, climate change, water scarcity and food insecurity, ensuring better migration governance, combating human trafficking and improving the developmental returns of migration for both sending and receiving countries.
- Intensify collaboration and joint programming among donors and respective international and regional organizations to avoid redundancy of efforts, increase the efficiency of funding needed to strengthen institutional capacities, and develop and implement population and development programmes in the region, especially in LDCs.
- Ensure that development financing keeps up with the increasing pace of the requirements of the Population and Development Programme of Action and SDGs, while directing national financing towards the implementation of the 2013 Cairo Declaration goals, establishing regional financing funds allocated to specific issues, and ensuring that donor countries implement their commitments to LDCs and to countries facing economic challenges as a result of regional and global crises, rising food and energy prices, and climate change.
- Enhance institutional capacities and leverage modern technology and digital transformation in the collection, analysis and dissemination of disaggregated data and statistics related to population, development, population and housing censuses; develop a framework to monitor the achievement of the 2013 Cairo Declaration goals; link it to the goals and indicators of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to the composite population and development index; and invest in national and regional research to support evidence-based policymaking.

