



**UNITED NATIONS  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL**

45541  
**E**  
Distr.: GENERAL

E/ECA/CM.18/8  
12 February 1992

Original: ENGLISH

**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA**

Thirteenth meeting of the Technical  
Preparatory Committee of the  
Whole

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
10-16 April 1992

**ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR AFRICA**

Twenty-seventh session of the Commission/  
eighteenth meeting of the Conference of  
Ministers

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
20-24 April 1992

**POPULATION ISSUES IN AFRICA:  
RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS  
FOR THE AFRICAN REGIONAL POPULATION PROGRAMME**

## INTRODUCTION

1. The fourth International Population Conference will be held in 1994. It will constitute another step in the United Nations' activities in population and will be preceded by a series of meetings, including the third African Population Conference, in Dakar. It is expected that the upcoming debates will highlight the challenges facing Africa due in part to its population growth and distribution. Priorities of the fourth United Nations Development Decade, which include population, will be reaffirmed, the three others being: eradication of poverty and hunger; human resources and institutional development; environment and food and agriculture.
2. Regarding population policies, it can be noted that the continent has achieved some progress in awareness creation, but still is far from formulating and implementing effective policies to tackle prevailing population and development problems. With this state of affairs, however, the support to the African Regional Population Programme (ARPP) has been reduced and its future questionable. The purpose of this document is to draw attention to recent developments in African population issues and to discuss their implications within the framework of an envisaged new orientation for ARPP.
3. Section I outlines the population issues and the role of ARPP. Section II presents a new orientation of ARPP, while section III presents some conclusions and recommendations.

### I. AFRICAN POPULATION ISSUES: DEVELOPMENTS AND IMPLICATIONS

4. The primary objective of the ARPP, from its inception in 1961, was to create awareness among member States about the importance of population factors in the development process. With the establishment of a Population Division within the ECA secretariat (1976), the specific terms of reference of the regional population programme were to:
  - (a) Identify short- and long-term population problems of the region and to assist governments of member States to develop population policies to address these problems as part of their development strategies;
  - (b) Develop, test and apply demographic research techniques suitable to the data situation in the region focusing on the raison d'être for the rapid growth rates of the regional population; and
  - (c) Offer opportunities in all fields of demographic training and research to nationals with a view to building up national capability needed for sustained population and development planning.
5. These objectives were largely attained by the time of adopting the Kilimanjaro Programme of Action (KPA) on Population in January 1984 at the second African Population Conference, with the exception of effecting some reduction in the regional population growth rate, as acknowledged by a UNFPA Evaluation Mission of the Programme in 1978, which noted that some progress had been made towards creating awareness. This was also confirmed by the outcome of the indepth evaluation of the ECA population activities as part of the entire United Nations population programme, commissioned by the United Nations Secretary-General for the 1978-1983 period.
6. The eighth meeting of the Technical Preparatory Committee of the Whole (TEPCOW) in 1987 expressed satisfaction at the secretariat's work on population dynamics and encouraged it to continue its assistance to member States and research on population and development. The meeting endorsed the increasing number of African countries adopting population policies in the framework of development planning and the universal acceptance of family planning programmes by them, as well as the inclusion of population policies and programmes in the United Nations Programme of Action for Economic Recovery and Development, 1986-1990 (UN-PAAERD) and Africa's Priority Programme for Economic Recovery, 1986-1990 (APPER) in resolving African socio-economic problems.

7. In a background document (E/ECA/CM.16/34) to the twenty-fifth session of the Commission, in Tripoli (May 1990), the secretariat drew attention to some of the population issues that faced the African region in the 1980s and highlighted the role of the ARPP in providing solutions to the identified problems.

8. In reviewing the regional population situation and its dynamics, the high fertility and moderate declines in mortality were identified as the major factors accounting for the prevailing rapid population growth rates in the various countries. The review stressed that these constituted only part of the regional population problems. The shift in the attitude of member States from a kind of laissez-faire position towards recognizing the importance of population factors in development planning was also stressed.

9. The role played by the secretariat in effecting the indicated "shift", particularly in the areas of studies and direct assistance to the member States, was indicated. Five priority areas during the 1990s were suggested:

- (a) Simultaneous implementation of population and development programmes;
- (b) Studies on population dynamics;
- (c) Endogenization of population factors in development plans;
- (d) Improved data collection, training and research; and
- (e) Information dissemination.

10. As a result of their population dynamics and structural adjustment programmes, member States are witnessing an increasing deterioration in the health of their populations, particularly of infants, children and mothers. Broadly speaking, only few African countries seem to be able to combat the occurrence of epidemics. Demographic consequences of AIDS are still to be fully comprehended, especially as the disease affects mainly the active population and the new-born children.

11. Fertility still remains very high, with only a few indications of slow decline in countries which have established strong family planning programmes. However, these few cases seem to be performing below the potential demand for contraception. It is thus likely that a tremendous momentum will be sustained in the coming decades, making it now more imperative to devise strong programmes to influence fertility, as its future consequences will be more striking than today.

12. High rates of fertility and mortality, particularly of infants, children and mothers, are interrelated with the status of women. As long as this does not improve significantly to allow women to play their role in production and reproduction, in better and acceptable conditions, it is likely that Africa will not be able to achieve a breakthrough in the demographic transition.

13. The population pressure induced by the high fertility levels constitutes a potential threat on finite resources, like soil, wood and water. With the existing production techniques that do not sustain the environment, mostly a sequel of an increasing population, these resources are being depleted rather fast. This process will end up affecting more and more people and put in question their survival. They will also render natural calamities less and less manageable, not considering other factors such as pollution and other planetary phenomena like global warming, ozone layer reduction, etc.

14. Besides fertility and mortality, the levels and emerging patterns of population distribution and urbanization are posing increasingly intricate problems. They have become, over time, more difficult and onerous to resolve, as little attention was paid to them in the past, thus compounding attempts to tackle them in the future. The management of African urban cities, including the capital cities, has become so strenuous

and costly that most of the urban plans have to be delayed or simply abandoned. The urban crisis, in the final analysis, may well become a political one with serious consequences. A conservative scenario is that these will have dramatic consequences on the other sectors, like health, sanitation and environment.

15. With the establishment of the African Economic Community, international migration will arouse interest among policy-makers. Very little was written on the subject, in the past, to help document the movements and make pertinent recommendations to policy-makers for them to assess the best way to negotiate the Protocol on Free Movement and Establishment of Persons in Africa.

16. Past recurrent droughts of 1973 and 1984, wars and other calamities and traditional rural/urban flows have drained rural areas of their labour force, thus exacerbating the stagnation of agriculture and much needed food production. Furthermore, rapid urban population growth requires more food import to allow people to survive. This, in turn, prevents the countries from investing enough resources in the productive and social sectors.

17. Aside from the foregoing issues relating to population dynamics, there are some key developments that have repercussions for the future of the ARPP.

18. The first is the apparent ineffectiveness of existing population policies; this is partly a sequel of the magnitude of existing population momentum. It implies that they unlikely to provide lasting solutions to the incidence of regional poverty, unemployment and inequality. One major impediment to the effective design and execution of fertility policies in Africa lies in their formulation and implementation, which often take place without adequate understanding of the underlying socio-economic milieu, namely the family or, more specifically, women. African Governments should ensure that these policies are targeted on women and are based upon an understanding of their role within the family and in the larger framework of society.

19. To further enhance their effectiveness, it is suggested that the funding of educational and health services should be the responsibility of local communities rather than of the central government. This would ensure that parents make the trade-off between quantity and quality of children (i.e., education and health). They would bear the cost of their fertility decisions and thus would be induced to make more optimal decisions about their family size.

20. Presumably, a major factor contributing to the ineffectiveness of the policies is the failure of member States to adhere to the ideal prerequisite of deriving the demographic objectives of their national development plans from established interrelationships between population and development related variables. Available evidence, as reflected in document ECA/POP/SM/MR/91/5, indicates that, instead, most member States derive their population policy measures from some list of political endeavours, in lieu of empirical research within the framework of the "current economic crisis" (as noted in document E/ECA/CM.17/10). This point has been further highlighted in the recently completed ECA "Manual for the integration of population variables into development plans in African countries at the macro level and in the agricultural sector".

21. The second development is related to the first. In terms of curbing the rapid population growth rate, the challenge to African Governments is to identify population intervention strategies other than those used in the 1960s and 1970s. They should rather focus on the ultimate causes of environmental degradation (e.g., polluting technologies, affluence-related wastes, environmental consequences of warfare, land and urban mismanagement policies). For population policies to effect long-term prospects for self-reliant and sustainable development, they have to be implemented simultaneously with measures to tackle these ultimate causes of environmental degradation.

22. The third development refers to the effects of structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) in relation to the implementation of the KPA recommendations. SAPs were aimed at improving efficiency, flexibility of national economies and making them use better the resources. Policy reforms included liberalization of

prices and external trade, budget deficit reduction, privatization, devaluating the local currency. They were designed to put national economies in order so as to achieve long-term development. But the process has proved to be slow and painful.

23. Available evidence shows that the majority of member States that have adopted SAPs are generally worse off. Indeed, "the 1980s have been a lost decade for development. Not only have incomes fallen, but services have deteriorated." African countries could not sustain development based on interest-bearing loans which force a country to open its economy to external shocks. Rural population are among those most affected by SAPs reforms.

24. One obvious fact is that SAPs have had and still have considerable negative "impact" on the ability of the member States to make "satisfactory progress" with population policy development as an integral part of their overall development planning strategy. The idea of integrating population factors in development plans (IPDP) will arise if there is an appropriate perspective development plan (10-20 years' duration). However, in most countries, the latest available plans are of five years' duration, apparently consistent with the prevailing short-term adjustment requirements implicit in SAPs.

25. There is a need to reactivate long-term perspective development planning within the framework of the African Alternative Framework to Structural Adjustment Programmes for Socio-economic Recovery and Transformation (AAF-SAP) consistent with the debate of the seventeenth meeting of the ECA Conference of Ministers. The IPDP, by the very nature of population factors, requires a long-term perspective planning strategy.

26. A fourth development affecting the ARPP is its funding. From the very beginning, the African population programme relied more heavily on extrabudgetary resources, provided by UNFPA, than resources from the regular budget. When the African Population Programme Centre was established in 1970, it was staffed with 9 professionals, all supported by UNFPA. In view of the magnitude of the work programme, it had been proposed to increase the staff position in 1972 to 17 professional posts (14 secretarial and 3 regional advisers). Although UNFPA had agreed in principle to provide additional resources, the expansion did not materialize.

27. The UNFPA Evaluation Mission in 1978 noted also that ECA provided only 1.4 per cent of its regular budget for population. It recommended additional support. But, instead, one professional post was lost in 1979 and further decrease followed later. This, naturally, led to the suspension of a number of planned activities. Since 1978, the Division tried without success to secure regular budget posts for its programme. In 1982, the ECA Conference of Ministers, in its resolution 431 (XVII), requested the General Assembly of the United Nations and the Executive Director of UNFPA to take necessary measures in order to alleviate the reduction in resources for the regional population programme. But UNFPA's reaction was not positive. It was urging ECA to completely take over financing of its infrastructure posts from the regular budget. In 1984, the General Assembly provided only 3 regular professional posts and 1 regular budget general service post. At present, the Division has only 6 professional posts and 4 general service posts, making it the smallest of all ECA Divisions. In 1992-1993, the population programme is likely to receive less than 4 per cent of the total ECA regular budget.

28. However, the Division's projects represent about 15 per cent of ECA-implemented projects. The Division backstops the regional advisory project, two regional training institutes (IFORD and RIPS), one component of a research centre (CERPOD) and the POPIN-Africa project. All projects have been supported entirely by UNFPA. The latter withdrew its support from POPIN-Africa, mostly in June 1991 and completely in December 1991.

29. Starting 1992, UNFPA has introduced changes in its approach to funding of projects and programmes and will now be more directly executing projects which normally fall under the mandate of the

regional commissions. Its financial support to the regional training institutes is also being significantly reduced. These may face a bleak future if member States do not support them financially.

30. With all these changes and against the background of the United Nations, including population as a priority area in its Fourth Development Decade, the ARPP is threatened by drastic reduction and even termination. This development is taking place at a time when the ARPP should be strengthened to respond to increasing demand for population activities and to sustain the momentum generated so far.

## II. A SUGGESTED NEW ORIENTATION FOR THE ARPP

31. Since the adoption of the KPA (1984), the objective of ARPP has been to assist member States with the implementation of the KPA recommendations and to monitor their progress in designing an overall population and development planning strategy.

32. With respect to monitoring their progress in implementing the KPA recommendations, the practice (within the framework of ARPP) has been to assess the efforts made, through direct discussions in the countries themselves. The reviews of the national population programmes (NPPs) during such consultations have highlighted both the strongly attended aspects of the KPA and the neglected ones. By far the MCH/FP is a major instrument in the NPPs to the neglect or rather marginalization of the non-family planning components (e.g., community involvement and children/youth). In this respect, the objective of ARPP is to bank on lessons learnt to evolve some modus operandi for the countries to benefit at the earlier stages of the integration process.

33. Regarding efforts by the secretariat to assist the countries with the implementation of the KPA recommendations, information has been prepared and disseminated throughout the region on the "know-how" for preparing national and sub-national projections required for integrating population factors in the development planning process (IPDP); "Guidelines for integrating population variables in development planning for ECA member States"; "Guidelines on improving delivery and evaluation on population and family planning programmes in African countries"; "Guidelines on evaluating the interrelationships among infant and child mortality, socio-economic factors and fertility"; "Guidelines on the methods of evaluating the socio-economic and demographic consequences of refugees"; and, Manual for the integration of population variables into development plans in African countries at the macro level and in the agricultural sector.

34. Research efforts provided findings that have been widely disseminated. However, little use seems to have been made of them. High fertility and mortality levels, non-declining population growth rates and distribution problems still prevail. Some of the reasons for this outcome have been suggested in the preceding section. The dilemma is whether this situation reflects an insufficient commitment to apply the recommendations emanating from research efforts, or is there a need for the secretariat to reorient the strategy of ARPP?

35. Given other considerations, as discussed, there is a strong need to reorient the ARPP to move its focus away from traditional demographic analysis approach and closer to population and development planning strategies. In this regard, the four main developments relating to the ARPP, discussed earlier together with their implications, are used in this section for suggesting this reorientation.

36. The apparent failure of existing population policies to curb the rapid population growth rates and address distribution issues has been stressed as one of these developments. Among the factors suggested as accounting for the indicated failure is inadequate emphasis on the "family" in formulating and implementing the population policies. Accordingly, in assisting the member States to develop effective population policies, the activities of the secretariat (i.e., the ARPP) should be reoriented to focus on the "family". In this regard, the theme of third session of the African Population Conference (APC3), on "Population, family and

development" could be inspiring. Its report should provide some guidelines for reorienting the ARPP to ensure that future population policy development strategies in the countries are centred around the "family".

37. It is to be recalled that the proposed agenda for APC3 covers:

- (a) Implementation of the KPA;
- (b) Structure and dynamics of family formation in Africa;
- (c) African family in the context of socio-economic development (impact of SAPs on the family, role/status of women in the family in the development process, factors affecting fertility decisions, adolescent fertility, migration and refugees;
- (d) Strategies for sustainable development (economic strategies and policies: constraints and perspectives, strategies for development of human resources, social strategies in support of population programmes);
- (e) Emerging population problems and new orientation and strategies (deterioration of health status: factors and consequences), constant high level of fertility, consequences of population structure, environment degradation, AIDS; and
- (f) Technical/financial assistance to population programmes in African countries.

38. For the population policies to impact on self-reliant and sustainable development, member States should implement them simultaneously with measures to tackle the degradation of their environment. The environment issue has accordingly been included as a new research area within the ARPP for the 1992-1993 biennial work programme and beyond.

39. The effects of SAPs have also been stressed in relation to population policy. Their relevance to a reorientation of the ARPP derive also from the proposal to APC3 to review the KPA. In 1984, at the time of adopting this programme, the effects of SAPs on national economies were not as pronounced as subsequently. This calls for a possible review of the nature, scope and coverage of the KPA recommendations to reflect the changing socio-economic circumstances in Africa.

40. Overall, in reorienting the ARPP during the 1990s to become more focused on population and development, the 1992-1993 and subsequent work programmes would ensure that:

- (a) Population research deals more with development-oriented studies, particularly in the areas of migration, population distribution, refugees, urbanization, women, environment, etc.;
- (b) Member States are provided with technical guidelines and manuals for operationalizing the integration of population factors into development plans at the macro and major sectoral levels;
- (c) Continued training activities focus attention on population and development;
- (d) Assistance to member States in the development of population policies include monitoring and evaluation aspects;
- (e) Member States establish focal points for collating and disseminating population information (including establishing and accessing data bases) in order to foster the IPDP process; and

(f) Research studies on family planning and birth spacing programmes be intensified and broadened to include impact and evaluation aspects.

41. In effect, during the current (1992-1993) and next (1994-1995) biennia, the ARPP will emphasize:

- (a) Concerns in emerging areas of population dynamics;
- (b) Assessment of population policy development in the 1990s;
- (c) Assessment of methodologies from WFS and DHS and their implications for future demographic inquiries;
- (d) Assessment of interrelationships between environment and population factors and their influence on socio-economic development planning;
- (e) Alternatives to traditional approaches in the development of family planning programmes;
- (f) Status/role of women in the development planning process;
- (g) Evaluation of existing infrastructural arrangements for IPDP;
- (h) Contribution of traditional birth attendants in the health delivery system; and
- (i) Manual for IPDP at the educational/health sector levels.

42. These envisaged activities for reorienting the ARPP would obviously have financial implications. Given the importance of regional commissions in promoting regional and subregional cooperation and in providing assistance to national governments, it is necessary to strengthen their activities, especially in Africa - the least developed region. In this regard, it is critical to bear in mind that ECA facilitates policy coordination and guidance and provides a forum for setting priorities as well as suggesting relevant activities to be undertaken to respond to the needs of member States. Any attempts to ensure the continuation of the ARPP calls for a commitment to provide regular budgetary resources to fill the gap created by UNFPA in reducing its support or to call on UNFPA to reverse its position in financial support.

### III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

43. This document has reviewed recent developments on population issues in the ECA region together with their implications. Both of these have been used as a basis for suggesting a new orientation for the ARPP. The strategies suggested would be used to guide future activities of the secretariat in this regard.

44. For the member States, the new orientation is predicated on the likelihood that these developments might considerably disrupt the continuation of ARPP if steps are not taken in time to prevent a further deterioration in the situation. Accordingly, the Ministers may wish to recommend to member States the following actions:

- (a) In order to ensure that national population policies achieve their objectives, member States should assess, adapt and use the recommendations in the various research reports of the international agencies working in the general area of population and development planning. In particular, the policy measures contained in their national population programmes should derive from established interrelationships based on population development related data of the nation, rather than on "a list of national aspirations" or "a list influenced by funding agencies". In this context, use should be made of the manual for IPDP and



guidelines on improving delivery and evaluation on population and family planning programmes, as noted earlier, in deriving these interrelationships;

(b) Additionally, the implementation of the population policy measures so derived should concur with measures aimed at tackling the ultimate causes of environmental degradation (e.g., polluting technologies, affluence-related wastes, warfare, land/urban mismanagement policies, etc.) of their economies;

(c) In order to ensure effective integration of population factors in their development planning process, member States should reactivate long-term development planning within the framework of AAF-SAP. In this regard, the suggestion to organize an international conference on SAPs could provide an opportunity to further discuss these topics; and

(d) Concerning funding, the member States should urge the United Nations General Assembly to provide more regular budget resources for implementing the ARPP than is presently available.

45. They may further wish to address the following recommendations:

(a) Population research studies should continue to be development oriented and include migration, population distribution, urbanization, women and environment, in addition to the traditional fields of population dynamics, fertility, mortality, family planning and projections;

(b) Member States should continue to be provided with needed guidelines, manuals and assistance on the integration of population variables in development planning, covering all sectors;

(c) Training activities should give increasing attention to population and development;

(d) Member States should be assisted in formulating, monitoring and evaluating relevant population policies linked to development;

(e) Member States should benefit more from the analysis of demographic data and information flow to facilitate integration of population variables into development plans as well as formulation of relevant policies;

(f) Member States should be assisted in dissemination and utilization of data and formation of population information mechanisms;

(g) Development of data bases which should be updated continuously and made easily accessible to member States and researchers, among others;

(h) Research studies on family planning and birth spacing programmes should be intensified, broadened and include impact and evaluation.