

International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), 1994

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) was held in Cairo from 5 to 13 September 1994. The Conference was convened under the auspices of the United Nations and was organized by a secretariat composed of the Population Division of the UN Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis and UNFPA.

It was the largest intergovernmental conference on population and development ever held, with 11,000 registered participants, from governments, UN specialized agencies and organizations, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and the media. More than 180 states took part in negotiations to finalize a Programme of Action in the area of population and development for the next 20 years.

The Programme of Action, adopted by acclamation on 13 September 1994, endorses a new strategy that emphasizes the integral linkages between population and development and focuses on meeting the needs of individual women and men, rather than on achieving demographic targets.

The key to this new approach is empowering women and providing them with more choices through expanded access to education and health services, skill development and employment, and through their full involvement in policy- and decision-making processes at all levels. Indeed, one of the greatest achievements of the Cairo Conference has been the recognition of the need to empower women, both as a highly important end in itself and as a key to improving the quality of life for everyone.

One of the primary goals of the Programme of Action is to make family planning universally available by 2015 as part of a broadened approach to reproductive health and rights. It also includes goals in regard to education, especially for girls, as well as goals to further reduce levels of infant, child and maternal mortality. It addresses issues relating to population, the environment and consumption patterns; the family; internal and international migration; prevention and control of HIV/AIDS; technology, research and development; and partnership with the non-governmental sector. The Programme of Action provides estimates of the levels of national resources and international assistance required and calls on governments to make those resources available.

The ICPD's major emphases were reaffirmed at the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women, both held in 1995.

Countries were urged to include population factors in all development strategies, and to act to eliminate gender-based violence and harmful traditional practices, including female genital mutilation.

The Programme of Action set out the following 20-year goals in four related areas:

- 1 - Universal Education
- 2 - Reduction of Infant and Child Mortality
- 3 - Reduction of Maternal Mortality
- 4 - Access to Reproductive and Sexual Health Services Including Family Planning.

Social Summit, 1995

The World Summit for Social Development, held 6-12 March 1995 in Copenhagen,

Denmark. It was the largest gathering of world leaders, i.e., 117 heads of State or Government. The Social Summit was the ^{particular result or particular end, highest point} culmination of a series of global conferences and summits on social issues sponsored by the UN.

Among the ground-breaking agreements made by the world's leaders in the Declaration are ten commitments to:

- eradicate absolute poverty by a target date to be set by each country;
- support full employment as a basic policy goal;
- promote social integration based on the enhancement and protection of all human rights;
- achieve equality and equity between women and men;
- accelerate the development of Africa and the least developed countries;
- ensure that ^{SAP} structural adjustment programmes include social development goals;
- increase resources allocated to social development;
- create "an economic, political, social, cultural and legal environment that will enable people to achieve social development";
- attain universal and equitable access to education and primary health care; and
- strengthen cooperation for social development through the UN.

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The UN World Summit for Social Development addressed three core themes: poverty, unemployment and social integration.

The development agenda places people and societies at the centre of the policy-making process. About 186 countries adopted the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the ambitious Programme of Action. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) these agreements represent the largest international consensus ever achieved on key social development priorities at such a high political level.

The Social Summit and its Review explicitly places poor and disadvantaged people as actors and contributors to social development. The 1995 Summit showed a clear shift in perspective away from the notion of 'the poor' as 'victims of poverty' into 'people living in poverty' who are 'citizens universally entitled to development who should fully enjoy economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights.'

One of the Programme's 10 commitments called for the promotion of gender equality and improvement in the status of women. The Programme also recognized the burden placed on women by poverty and social disintegration; accepted a broad definition of "family"; called for a quantitative consideration of the value of unremunerated work; and advanced the rights of workers in general, migrant workers, and indigenous people. The capacity of NGOs and other grassroots groups to demand implementation of international agreements and adherence to international human rights standards was also strengthened.

Specifically, such groups may urge governments to 1) meet with women's NGOs to discuss implementation of the Social Summit Declaration and Programme of Action; 2) make a national commitment to implement the Platform of Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women; and 3) commit to the Pledge to Gender Justice, particularly to the implementation of international agreements in local and national laws and policies.

In Sub-Saharan Africa life expectancy is falling dramatically as governments, overwhelmed by rapid population growth have failed to curb the spread of the virus that leads to AIDS. In absence of low cost cure, 23 million Africans began the 21 century with a death sentence imposed by HIV. (State of the World 2000)

Education is one of the UN measures of human development. The availability of educational opportunities at all levels is important to a sustainable society. If there is to be equality of opportunity, and everyone is able to participate actively in decision-making, it is very important that everyone has access to high quality education. Responsibility for implementing the Social Summit agreements lies primarily with national governments. The United Nations Commission on Social Development is the main body for monitoring the process. Behind the scenes, hundreds of non-governmental organizations and groups within civil society have participated in, and helped shape the Copenhagen agreements negotiated by governments.