



**Governing Council  
of the  
United Nations  
Development Programme**

Distr.  
GENERAL

DP/1987/37

24 March 1987

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Thirty-fourth session  
26 May - 19 June 1987  
Item 6 of the provision agenda  
UNFPA

UNITED NATIONS FUND FOR POPULATION ACTIVITIES

THE STRATEGY FOR UNFPA ASSISTANCE  
IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

This document is a response to Governing Council decision 86/34/I, paragraph 1, requesting the Executive Director to present a strategy for UNFPA assistance to sub-Saharan Africa. The report begins by providing background information on the African countries' growing concern with population issues, noting in particular the major obstacles constraining progress of population programmes in the region and the efforts to date to overcome them. It then offers a comprehensive strategy for ensuring expedient and effective UNFPA population assistance to the region, the objectives of which are (a) to improve knowledge and understanding of population issues in order to stimulate the adoption and development of population policies and programmes and (b) to enhance Governments' ability to implement such policies and programmes effectively. The report suggests that the best way to attain these objectives, given limited UNFPA resources, is to concentrate on four priority areas of assistance: (a) strengthening of information, education and communication programmes; (b) integration of population factors into development planning and formulation and implementation of population policies; (c) support of birth-spacing and family planning programmes; and (d) support for policies contributing to the improvement of the status of women. The report concludes with the operational implications of pursuing such a strategy, focusing on such issues as programme support, programme formulation and implementation, human resources development, programme management and co-ordination, and the role of UNFPA field offices.

## CONTENTS

	<u>Paragraphs</u>	<u>Page</u>
INTRODUCTION .....	1-5	3
I. BACKGROUND .....	6-15	5
II. A STRATEGY FOR ENSURING EXPEDIENT AND EFFECTIVE UNFPA POPULATION ASSISTANCE TO THE COUNTRIES OF SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA .....	16-48	10
A. Intensifying population information, education and communication programmes to encourage attitudinal change .....	22-28	13
B. Encouraging the integration of population into development planning and the formulation and implementation of population policies .....	29-34	19
C. Supporting birth-spacing/family planning information and service programmes .....	35-42	27
D. Contributing to the Improvement of the status of women .....	43-48	34
III. OPERATIONAL IMPLICATIONS .....	49-66	36
A. Programme support .....	50	37
B. Improving programme formulation and implementation .....	51-53	37
C. Human resources development .....	54-56	39
D. Improving management and co-ordination of multi-bilateral assistance .....	57-61	40
E. Relationship with the United Nations Agencies .....	62-64	42
F. Monitoring of the strategy .....	65	43
G. Strengthening of UNFPA field offices .....	66	44

## INTRODUCTION

1. This report of the Executive Director has been prepared in response to decision 86/34 I, paragraph 1, adopted by the Governing Council at its thirty-third session, which requested the Executive Director, inter alia, to increase the attention given to countries of the sub-Saharan Africa region in light of the 1986 special session of the General Assembly on the critical economic situation in Africa and to submit to the Governing Council at its thirty-fourth session a strategy for UNFPA assistance to sub-Saharan Africa, taking into account the particular needs of those countries, the activities of other organizations of the United Nations systems and the specific catalytic role that UNFPA can play in addressing those needs.
2. Since UNFPA became operational in 1969 the countries of the African continent have been a focus of special attention. Currently 32 of the 45 independent African countries that, according to the UNFPA classification, make up the region known as sub-Saharan Africa are designated as priority countries for UNFPA assistance, which ensures that special attention is given to those countries with the most serious population problems.
3. Concern about population growth and related issues on the African continent has been expressed in several recent meetings, some of which have been partly or wholly funded by UNFPA. For example, the Second African Population Conference, held in January 1984 at Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, and attended by representatives of 44 African governments, resulted in the Kilimanjaro Programme of Action for African Population and Self-Reliant Development. The Kilimanjaro Programme of Action urged that population should

be seen as a central component in formulating and implementing policies and programmes for accelerated socio-economic development and thus should receive appropriate resources in socio-economic development plans. It also noted with great concern the rapid rate of population growth in recent years and the stresses and strains that such growth increasingly imposes on African Governments' development efforts and on the meagre resources at their disposal. The African Conference of Parliamentarians on Population and Development held at Harare, Zimbabwe, in May 1986 pledged to support Governments' efforts to formulate and implement national population policies and programmes that will reduce high rates of population growth in Africa in an effort to attain a balance between resources and the needs and opportunities of the people.

4. Similar concerns have also been expressed at intergovernmental meetings such as the International Conference on Population held in 1984 at Mexico City. A large number of representatives from African countries, in addressing the Conference, noted their special population problems and pointed out that rapid population growth continued to be an obstacle to their national development goals. In May 1986 the special session of the General Assembly adopted a Programme of Action for African Recovery and Development which noted that:

Special importance will need to be accorded by each African country to a population policy that, on the basis of the Kilimanjaro Programme of Action on Population..., will inter alia address issues of high fertility and mortality, rapid urbanization, rural-urban and rural-rural migration, the problems of children and youth, the protection of the environment, in a manner that would ensure compatibility between demographic trends, appropriate land utilization and settlement patterns and the desired pace of economic growth and development.

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5. The strategy of UNFPA assistance proposed in this document is the result of an extensive analysis of UNFPA assistance to the countries of sub-Saharan Africa over the past 15 years, as well as discussions with UNFPA field staff located in various African countries, executing agency personnel, other multilateral and bilateral donors with programmes of assistance to countries of sub-Saharan Africa and UNFPA headquarters staff. The recommendations contained in this report, in turn, have been incorporated to a considerable extent in the large-scale sub-Saharan country programmes submitted to the Governing Council at its thirty-fourth session.

## I. BACKGROUND

6. Sub-Saharan Africa has the fastest growing population in the world. According to United Nations population estimates and projections, its population has grown rapidly from about 224 million in 1950 to an estimated 555 million in 1985 and is increasing at an annual rate of approximately 3 per cent. Accordingly, the population is projected to reach 696 million by the end of the century and 1.4 billion by the year 2025. During the next 40 years, population in the countries of sub-Saharan Africa is expected to treble while that of other developing countries will not quite double. Low levels of socio-economic development have combined with cultural, religious and political inhibitions about population issues and a limited institutional capability to deal with such issues to produce the highest fertility and mortality rates in the world. The average number of children per woman is 6.3 compared to 4.1 for the developing world as a whole, infant mortality is 112 per 1,000 live births compared to 85 per 1,000 and life expectancy at birth 49 years compared to 57 years.

7. As a result of moderately declining mortality and persistent high fertility rates, the annual growth rate for the region as a whole is expected to continue accelerating to 3.3 per cent by the end of the century before declining to just over 2 per cent by the year 2020. The total fertility rate for the region as a whole is expected to decline to 5.4 only by 2000-2005. Many countries will maintain a stable high fertility level and, in some, the fertility level will actually increase. Countries now suffering the effects of sub-fecundity are expected to experience a surge in fertility owing to an improvement in general health conditions. As a result, the proportion of young people will increase, carrying with it the built-in potential for further demographic growth. Although population densities per se are not high in most parts of the region, a combination of natural growth and internal and international migration have produced pressure at vulnerable points, particularly in the largest cities, which are reported to be growing several times faster than the population as a whole.

8. Over the past 15 years, the deterioration of the international economic environment, high population growth and poor economic performance in many countries have combined to produce lower per capita incomes. About half of the African labour force is unemployed or under-employed and the number of people living below subsistence level has increased sharply. The delicately balanced ecology of much of the region is threatened by this rapid growth and by heavy concentrations of population, particularly refugees, which also exacerbate, and retard recovery from, such climatic vagaries as the drought of the 1980s. Even though marginal lands are being exploited, forests denuded in search of fuel, and new lands cleared of vegetation by land-starved farmers, per capita grain

production is down by roughly one third since 1970, and famine, drought and flood have increased accordingly.

9. If present trends continue, sub-Saharan Africa in the next century will be more crowded, less stable ecologically and more vulnerable to social, economic, political, perhaps even cultural disruptions. Serious stresses involving population, resources and the environment are clearly visible ahead. According to World Bank projections, African people will be poorer in many ways than they are today. For millions of the desperately poor, the outlook for food and other necessities of life will be no better. For many it will be worse. Life for most people will be more precarious in the next century unless African countries, with the help of the international community, act decisively now to alter current trends.

10. Awareness of the implications of population growth and movement has increased dramatically over the past 15 years. According to the United Nations, in 1983 approximately half of the population of Africa lived in countries that viewed their population growth rates as too high; by 1986 the proportion had increased to nearly three-quarters. Hence, more and more African countries have begun to express a desire to reduce their growth rates in terms of demographic targets or reproductive behaviour. All countries of the region have national data-gathering systems to monitor demographic trends, most of them as a result of assistance provided by UNFPA through the African Census Programme (ACP) or directly through country programmes and projects.

11. While relatively few countries have explicit policies advocating slower population growth, family planning programmes, where they exist, have to some extent been expanded and accelerated. Many countries once opposed or lukewarm to family planning or birth-spacing have accepted these practices in the past decade. Nearly all have made the reduction of maternal and infant mortality a priority in their general health programmes, and most recognize the value of birth-spacing for this purpose.

12. Most countries have adopted policies concerned with certain aspects of population, although these have not always been specifically formulated as part of a formal population policy. They include, among others, laws on migration, abortion and the sale of contraceptives; regional development policies which attempt explicitly to stem internal migration; and urban policies and development strategies with implications for population growth and distribution. Whereas all countries have policies to reduce mortality, only a few have adopted policies to relieve the acute pressure of population growth on economic and social development.

13. UNFPA support of national efforts has been substantial and varied. Once a grant of a few thousand dollars to enable government officials to attend regional or international meetings, it is now the largest source of assistance with a multi-million dollar programme in sub-Saharan Africa concerned with all sectors of population programmes in all countries. The past few years have witnessed a dramatic shift in UNFPA's annual allocation of resources to sub-Saharan Africa from a preponderance of assistance to conduct population data collection projects to a greater focus on family planning/child-spacing activities integrated with maternal and child health (MCH) services.



14. Cumulative expenditure since the inception of UNFPA's assistance programme to sub-Saharan Africa in 1970 through 1985 amounted to \$187.3 million, constituting 15.7 per cent of the total programme expenditure and of which 75.4 per cent or about \$141.2 million was for country activities and 24.6 per cent or \$46.1 million for intercountry activities. Of total programme expenditures in the region, 36 per cent was for advisory services; 18 per cent for local personnel; 13 per cent for training; 25 per cent for equipment; and 8 per cent for miscellaneous. Resources were directed to the following programme sectors -

30 per cent to data collection and analysis, much of it during the 1970s to improve the quality of basic population data which was very poor in most countries; about the same amount to birth-spacing and family planning to improve the health of mothers and children and to moderate high levels of fertility; 14 per cent for the improvement of knowledge and understanding of population dynamics through training and research; 12 per cent for population information, education and communication to support programme activities; 10 per cent for multisectoral activities; 3 per cent for population policies; and 1 per cent for special programmes related mainly to women. The number of supported project activities at the end of 1985 totalled 971 with 801 country projects benefitting the 45 countries constituting sub-Saharan Africa and 170 intercountry projects for regional and subregional activities. Most of these projects were executed in collaboration with various agencies of the United Nations system including the United Nations (UN), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the World Health Organization Regional Bureau for Africa (WHO/AFRO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), as

well as with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNFPA, Governments and some international non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

15. Despite increasing involvement on the part of many Governments, several obstacles constrain progress. The prevailing high fertility level in most parts of the region is due to many factors - an intrinsic traditional desire for large families, especially for male children; early and near-universal marriage; low levels of female education; occupations for women that do not conflict with child-rearing; and the expected and needed economic contribution of children. Fewer than 20 per cent of married African women, according to the World Fertility Survey (WFS), do not want additional children as contrasted with average levels of 40 to 50 per cent of women in other parts of the world. Moreover, up to 10 per cent of these women have an unmet need for contraception.

## II. A STRATEGY FOR ENSURING EXPEDIENT AND EFFECTIVE UNFPA POPULATION ASSISTANCE TO THE COUNTRIES OF SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

16. Although creditable progress has been made in the population field in the last 15 years by numerous sub-Saharan African countries - and it should be remembered that 15 years ago, practically no sub-Saharan African country had a population policy or was concerned about population as a factor in development planning - much remains to be done in this area.

17. Major problems facing most of these countries continue to be the lack of qualified personnel, shortcomings in managerial and organizational capacity, difficulties in delivery of supplies and equipment, lack of communication

facilities, the distances involved for transport of personnel and supplies and equipment, the lack of health infrastructure and limited domestic resources. Moreover, persistent debates within Governments and in public on how or whether to address population issues have added another dimension to the above problems. Very few countries have achieved a national consensus on population and fewer still have formulated and adopted explicit national population policies.

18. Sub-Saharan Africa, therefore, has a testing time ahead before effective population policies and programmes are firmly in place. To match the achievements of other developing regions and to compensate for the ground already lost, African countries must attempt quantum leaps in population activities. Under these circumstances, solutions to African population problems, which by themselves are complex and long-term, will require extensive concentration and co-ordination of efforts by UNFPA and other multilateral and bilateral donors if major progress is to be achieved by the year 2000. At the same time, the Fund will encourage co-operation between African countries themselves and also with other developing countries in the spirit of technical co-operation among developing countries (TCDC) so that they can share their experiences to a greater extent and assist each other in promoting population activities through joint efforts, exchange of personnel and other means of collaboration. An important advantage for the Fund and other donors is that lessons learned during the past 15 years of population assistance and the solid relationships thereby established can now be utilized for a new and concentrated stage of assistance.

19. The overall objective of UNFPA in developing a strategy for ensuring expedient and effective UNFPA assistance to the countries of sub-Saharan Africa is the institutionalization of population within the overall development strategies of each Government. The specific objectives are:

(a) To improve knowledge and understanding of population issues and encourage Governments to develop population policies and plan and initiate effective programmes;

(b) To strengthen the capacity of countries to undertake and manage population programmes and policies and to integrate them into overall economic and social development programmes.

20. Given the expressions of interest by various donors in the population programme of sub-Saharan Africa and the Fund's own limited resources, UNFPA has established priority areas, selecting activities and goals that are the most necessary, cost-effective and affordable.

Four major goals have been selected:

(a) Intensifying public information, education and communication (IEC) programmes to encourage attitudinal change;

(b) Encouraging the integration of population into development planning and the formulation and implementation of population policies;

(c) Supporting birth-spacing/family planning information and service programmes;

(d) Contributing to the improvement of the status of women.

21. The selection of these four programme sectors does not in any way indicate that the remaining sectors of UNFPA's core programme will be neglected.

Assistance for population data collection and analysis and population dynamics will continue to be accorded recognition as circumstances warrant. In data collection, for example, the aim will be to assist countries to develop durable statistical and research infrastructure that will ensure the provision of reliable population data on a continuing basis for the formulation and implementation of development plans, population policies and programmes, particularly in the priority programme sectors. In population dynamics, on the other hand, the aim will be to assist countries in building up the research capability particularly through training of the personnel required to take population and development considerations fully into account. Efforts will be made to solicit resources from other donors through joint-financing to enable continued and expanded work in these two sectors.

A. Intensifying population information, education and communication programmes to encourage attitudinal change

22. In this area, UNFPA assistance will be directed to:

(a) Intensifying public information activities for opinion leaders and those in position of public responsibility;

(b) Improving knowledge and understanding as well as responsible attitudes among youth and adolescents towards human reproduction and fertility behaviour;

(c) Encouraging greater public participation in population programme activities through better information.

1. Programmes for opinion leaders

23. Public opinion leaders at all levels -- from elected officials to senior civil servants to line managers and local government officials, teachers, village elders, community leaders, religious groups and parliamentarians -- can have an enormous influence on the success or failure of development and population programmes.

24. Attitudinal changes on the part of these public opinion leaders can influence Governments to adopt more coherent policies, better services and more effective public information programmes. Achieving this goal will demand a considerable investment of resources in information and training programmes for a wide range of officials and others, some of whom will at the outset have only a marginal connection with population programmes.

25. Activities to be funded by UNFPA that are well-adapted to the needs of these target audiences might include national and regional conferences, meetings, seminars, workshops and printed materials on population issues and development. These efforts must be supported by accurate data, analysis, interpretations and research work on population trends and their implications

for quality of life. Short in-service training courses will be provided for senior policy-makers to broaden their perception of population issues.

National and regional institutions will be strengthened to train journalists and broadcasters to report on population and development issues and to encourage them to produce information specially designed for opinion leaders, scholars and the public at large in order to keep them informed of current and emerging population issues. UNFPA will also, whenever possible, support the activities of national groups on population as recommended by the African Conference of Parliamentarians on Population and Development.

2. Programmes for improving knowledge and understanding  
among youth and adolescents

26. Creating and maintaining awareness among a rapidly expanding population of young people should be a continuous and integral part of the educational curriculum. For instance, two problems that need to be addressed are those of pregnancy and illegal abortion among girls of school age, both of which not only affect educational development and job opportunities, but are frequently life-threatening. Furthermore, adolescent pregnancies and frequent childbearing are increasingly serious problems as African societies change and cease to observe traditional customs such as those that forbid sexual activity before a certain age or childbirth without a socially-recognized father -- especially given the general lack of education in fertility behaviour in most countries.

27. Emphasis needs to be placed on population education in both formal and non-formal sectors in order to reach present and future parents and leaders, to

broaden their understanding and to improve their decision-making abilities regarding human reproduction and population issues in general. To this end, efforts will be directed to:

(a) Awareness creation of the needs of the young people through collection and analysis of data regarding sexual activity, pregnancy, abortion and fertility among adolescents in order to convince national decision-makers that action programmes especially arranged for youth are needed;

(b) Population education in schools. Close working relationships will be established with the Ministry of Education and the National Education Commission of each country to introduce or extend population education in post-primary schools, including teacher training institutions, and make it a permanent feature of pre-service and in-service teacher training programmes. UNFPA will also encourage countries to institutionalize population education through the establishment or strengthening of curriculum development units in appropriate government and non-governmental agencies. Given the scarcity of specialists in this field, assistance will be provided to develop human resources and institution-building to enable countries to carry out population education activities in school and out-of-school through strengthening of the training capacity of appropriate national, subregional and regional institutions. Activities will also be supported both to conduct action research in the area of curriculum development and educational reform to determine the type of population education most suitable for each country as well as to collect and disseminate curriculum materials and information on population education activities;



(c) Population education in non-formal sectors. The Fund will continue to encourage United Nations specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations to introduce population education through national networks to reach adolescents, as well as adult men and women outside the formal school system. Such a network could include adult literacy programmes, rural development programmes, labour and trade unions' activities and home economics, health education and agricultural extension programmes. Greater inter-agency collaboration will continue to be encouraged through a team approach that focuses on the planning development and implementation of education programmes. A multi-disciplinary approach will be used where appropriate to facilitate the integration of population issues with broader concerns of development. A comprehensive approach employing these various channels should also facilitate a greater involvement of male adolescents and adults in all areas of family responsibility including family planning and child-rearing.

3. Programme for securing greater participation by the public in policy-making and programme implementation

28. A major objective will be the securing of greater participation by the public in policy-making and programme implementation. Experience indicates that motivational efforts may not always have concentrated on the right or suitable message and information and may have failed to take into account low level of awareness and a number of other factors which characterize the various segments of the African population. Effective and suitable delivery of messages or information related to population issues and services will be a keystone in the UNFPA-supported African programme. Assistance will be directed to:

(a) Identifying and exploiting in each country any and/or all media that are useful for transmitting messages on population;

(b) Developing motivational programmes which recognize cultural, ethnic, religious and other differences in communities;

(c) Encouraging socio-cultural research activities in order to assess the effectiveness of various approaches to communication with a view to strengthening communication components in the various national programmes. In this respect, the Fund will establish relationships, whenever possible, with local communication and health education institutions as well as with national universities to conduct and improve research and evaluation, and to develop useful information, education and communication materials;

(d) Promoting the establishment or improvement of critically needed national and regional training institutions that specialize in teaching IEC, particularly for trainers;

(e) Incorporating as a systematic practice a built-in two-way communications system within UNFPA-supported service programmes such as MCH/FP and child-spacing to ensure that the services are designed or operating with adequate user outreach and feedback to secure public support. In such cases, UNFPA will seek to ensure that an increasing number and variety of medical and non-medical service providers will be thoroughly trained not only in the contraceptive methods but also in effective communication techniques pertaining to the rationale of family planning service provision.

**B. Encouraging the integration of population into development planning and the formulation and implementation of population policies**

29. In most sub-Saharan African countries, changes in population structures have hindered economic and social development. As mortality rates have decreased, the proportion of youth and the elderly (65 and older) as a percentage of the total population has increased enormously. In many countries, young people below the age of 15 constitute close to 50 per cent of the total population. Such changes have forced most countries to recognize that considerable current and future financial resources will have to be utilized for building social infrastructure, rather than for expanding the productive sector, in order to meet increasing needs for educational facilities, health services, housing, etc.

30. Although almost all Governments in the region are now aware of the role of population as an issue of crucial importance for the success of their development plans, there is still a need to translate this into a practical commitment and action in many countries. For this reason, more attention must be paid to the integration of population factors into development planning.

31. By the end of 1985, 13 countries had included demographic factors in their national development plans, and some 7 Governments, finding that trends in population have not been in harmony with their development policies and goals, have felt it necessary to formulate and implement an explicit population policy to modify these trends. Many of these countries have set up national population units within their administrative structures to undertake research on the integration of population factors into development planning and on the

formulation of a population policy. Some have established a national population commission or council to assist in defining population policies in the context of social and economic development and to co-ordinate the implementation of these policies with population-related activities.

32. Despite these countries' initiatives, however, the pace of progress has been rather slow. In many cases the inclusion of population variables in development planning remains to be accomplished. Where some sort of integration has occurred, demographic factors often have been integrated not into overall development planning, but rather into sectoral policies in government health, education or manpower planning programmes. Population policies, in some cases, have been formulated and implemented in isolation without reference to development policies or overall development strategy. At the same time, ill-equipped, poorly trained and inadequately staffed population planning units and commissions have not performed adequately in their functions of integration, co-ordination and policy-making.

33. In the remaining countries of the region, although the role of population as a factor in development has been generally recognized and although some countries have improved their knowledge of the interaction between population change and development, the integration of population factors into the development process and the formulation of a population policy remain at the drawing-board stage. In these countries, research in population and development has been either lacking or insufficiently focused on formulating a policy. Exclusive concentration on collection and analysis of demographic data, lack of interest on the part of planners and a shortage of local

expertise are among the major constraints. In some cases, planners and policy-makers have not appreciated the importance of establishing clear policies and guidelines, and low priority has been assigned to the formulation of either a population policy or institutional and financial arrangements. The commonly held view that population policy is the same as family planning has also led to confusion and delayed the passage of legislation necessary to adopt national population policies.

34. UNFPA's goal in the coming years will be to encourage all countries in the sub-Saharan region to integrate population into the national development process and to adopt effective national population policies. In this regard UNFPA's approach will have three main elements: development of national skills in population and development; promotion and strengthening of the institutional base for integration of population and development and for the formulation and implementation of population policy; and support of other Government action programmes to influence population trends.

(a) The Fund intends to continue to support the strengthening of human resource skills needed to analyse population and development so that population can be integrated into development programmes and effective population policies can be adopted. To this end, the Fund intends to launch an expanded programme of assistance for (a) long-term training fellowships in the field of population and development at highly specialized institutions for the staff of population units and other relevant bodies; (b) short-term specialized training courses on population for planning and policy staff to broaden their technical perspectives to include population changes and their effects on socio-economic

development; and (c) short-term specialized training courses in the basic aspects of development planning for national population personnel to broaden their understanding of the planning process and to help them to collaborate with development planners. The African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP), which is currently offering a short-term course on human resources for African planners, should be strengthened; other national institutes with regional or subregional outreach should be encouraged to teach population and development issues at the national and family level. The capacity of the two existing regional demographic centres, the Institut de Formation et de Recherches Demographiques (IFORD) and Regional Institute for Population Studies (RIPS), which train demographers and potential professionals in population and development, should be increased and their potential for interdisciplinary approaches to population issues enhanced. In the interim, international training facilities supported by UNFPA, such as the Catholic University of Louvain (UCL), the Centre for Development Studies (CDS), Triandrum, Kerala State, India, and the Institute of Social Studies (ISS), The Hague, Netherlands, will be used to train population and development specialists;

(b) The Fund will assist in promoting and strengthening the institutional base needed for the development of a population policy and the integration of population into development planning. Integrating population into development planning depends to a great extent on studies of the interaction between population change and social and economic factors as well as the results of specific research activities for population policy. Given the situation in the region, an integrated approach to population and development planning in

sub-Saharan Africa requires a long-term effort. Recognizing that countries in the region are at different stages of policy development and that needs for specific types of assistance will vary from one country to another, the Fund will initiate a two-stage strategy.

- (i) Stage 1. Where national population policies are not yet in place, UNFPA will continue to support their development. UNFPA assistance will focus on the process of policy development, particularly the key components of the knowledge base on which policy decisions are made: gathering data; analysing policy-relevant data; presenting analyses to decision-makers; and applying analyses to assessments of alternative population policies and programmes. To this end, countries will be encouraged to establish high-level central population planning units in their national planning bodies. Emphasis will be placed on training and equipping these population units to:
  - a. Develop systems for gathering data through surveys for information on priority issues, for facilitating preparation of country-specific and policy-relevant research and for providing an accurate basis for detailed planning and evaluation;
  - b. Develop research programmes aimed at integrating population into the development process as well as providing information on the nature, causes and consequences of demographic change (particularly fertility and population growth) and their implications for socio-economic development and for the

formulation of population policies and programmes. These relationships will be investigated in each setting to provide policy-makers with a better understanding of population/development issues in their own country;

- c. Disseminate research findings promptly and clearly, particularly to policy-makers. Such forms of dissemination as microcomputer presentations, seminars, conferences, workshops and publications can help greatly in raising awareness among national leaders. Policy analysis results will also be presented to planners in a form appropriate for incorporation into sectoral and development planning and decision-making;
- d. Undertake policy planning, enabling policy-makers during discussions in the national population commissions or councils to make effective use of research findings in their consideration of options in formulating policies, thus ensuring that various government ministries and national non-governmental organizations arrive at informed and coherent decisions on population policy issues;
- e. Formulate a national population policy that includes defining policies and specific activities for achieving objectives directly or indirectly.



As the information base improves and population policies are established, UNFPA's support will increasingly turn to activities that will strengthen the capability for policy implementation and evaluation.

- (ii) Stage 2. Where national policies already exist, UNFPA support will focus on resource allocation and programme implementation and evaluation. Emphasis will be placed on assisting Governments to:
- a. Organize the financial, human and institutional resources necessary to achieve policy objectives, for example, through emphasis on programme efforts, allocation of resources and responsibilities, and mobilization of external resources;
  - b. Undertake continuous evaluation drawing upon additional data collection, research, analysis and planning work to determine if a particular policy is achieving the intended results and, if necessary, to make adjustments in the light of fresh information, thereby reorienting programmes and reallocating resources;
  - c. Strengthen existing population units with well-trained staff and equipment to continue improving their data systems through periodic surveys; develop, commission and co-ordinate policy research activities; and utilize the results in policy and programme implementation with special attention to activities to improve the conceptual and methodological aspects of formal integration of population and development at both the policy and the planning levels.
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(c) The Fund will support other actions which can have an impact upon demographic factors by:

- (i) Paying more attention not only to policies affecting rates of population growth, fertility and mortality, but also to migration as well as spatial distribution and redistribution of the population. Efforts will be made by UNFPA to promote the integration of population distribution considerations into national development strategies, particularly by strengthening the national capability to plan, monitor and evaluate the various aspects of comprehensive population redistribution programmes and to assess the implications of other development programmes on population distribution and vice versa. Support will be given to studies on such issues as determinants of the success or failure of the various policy instruments in population redistribution in many countries; processes of migration with a view to identifying causal relationships by types of migration; and social, economic and demographic consequences of rural-urban imbalances;
- (ii) Encouraging the compilation and analysis of existing laws and policies in each country in order to draw Governments' attention to the negative consequences, both intended and unintended, that certain ones may have on the effective implementation of population policies and programmes;

- (iii) Encouraging Governments to promote/legalize access to contraceptives and to eliminate restrictions and duties on their importation; raise the legal age of marriage; adopt social welfare measures and improve living conditions that can have an important impact on fertility and demographic factors; provide economic and legal incentives to birth-spacing or family planning; and offer incentives to pave the way for voluntary resettlement.

C. Supporting birth-spacing/family planning information and service programmes

35. Sub-Saharan Africa's life expectancy at birth of 49 years is by far the lowest of any region in the world. The low figure is the result of a high mortality rate among children five years old and under. Infant mortality rates between 100 and 200 per 1,000 live births contrast strikingly with rates of 15 or less in developed countries. Maternal mortality rates of 150 to 1,000 per 100,000 live births compare equally unfavourably with figures as low as 6 or less in developed countries. The most important causes of these very high rates are malnutrition, poor sanitation, low levels of education, lack of drinking water and the consequences of uncontrolled fertility, illegal abortions and partial or total absence of health care during pregnancy and childbirth. Indeed, according to WHO, in some areas of Africa, 5 per cent of pregnant adolescent girls die because of lack of pre-natal care.

36. The introduction of birth-spacing and family planning information and service programmes as a major component of maternal care could rapidly improve the health situation in most sub-Saharan African countries by reducing high

parity and frequency of pregnancies, especially among immature girls and older women who are most at risk. By spacing births at least two or three years apart, deaths of new-born babies and infants will be reduced and the health and well-being of infants and mothers improved. All Governments in the region recognize this and, in collaboration with UNFPA, support family planning and child-spacing activities integrated with MCH services either as an instrument of an anti-natalist policy or as a health measure to improve the welfare of mothers and children. Yet Governments' support for such programmes is often half-hearted and all too frequently ineffective. There is no extensive demand for family planning services, nor are they widely available. According to WFS, in 1982 only about 10 per cent of all married women of reproductive age were using a modern method of contraception.

37. Government efforts are hampered, however, by a number of factors: widespread ignorance of modern methods of family planning/birth-spacing and their health benefits, deep-rooted traditional religious beliefs, ethnic diversity, collapse of traditional methods of birth-spacing and high infant mortality level. Other factors include inadequate health networks and infrastructures, shortage of trained personnel, shortage of drugs, vaccines and contraceptives, poor management of services, insufficient financial resources, and low priority for family planning as opposed to curative and MCH services.

38. UNFPA's objectives in this area over the next few years will be to help countries to provide their populations with better access to information on birth-spacing and family planning and to improve and expand the quality of health services in order to reduce infant mortality, maternal morbidity and high fertility levels.

39. UNFPA will continue to supplement the efforts of other donors and African Governments to improve knowledge and practice of birth-spacing and family planning. Better information and communication about family planning at all levels, from government decision-makers down to service delivery points at the community or village level, will contribute greatly to better services and promote wider appreciation of the place of health, birth-spacing and family planning in individual family welfare and in national development. UNFPA will support motivational programmes which recognize cultural, ethnic, religious and other differences and involve opinion leaders both formally and informally. Seminars for regional planners and decision-makers, parliamentarians and political party members will be organized. Educational materials for the rural population - 80 per cent of the total in most countries - will be developed, supplemented by motivational activities in villages within range of health services. Studies of existing norms and behaviour regarding parenthood, marriage and kinship will guide the preparation of motivational and communication programmes, which will be systematically integrated into family planning and birth-spacing services.

40. As far as services are concerned, their expansion will continue to be encouraged, wherever possible, through health service programmes, primary health care approaches, community-based delivery systems, and all other means of reaching the population-at-large, involving them in developing measures to meet their needs. Presently, many Governments are concerned that rapid expansion of family planning/birth-spacing services could overwhelm an already fragile infrastructure. As a result, many countries wish to proceed gradually in expanding such services. Accordingly, UNFPA intends to consolidate its

project activities in this area and lay the foundation for future expansion of services, making sure that such actions will be part of Governments' responsibility rather than solely those of a donor agency.

41. To this end and in co-operation with national efforts, UNFPA assistance will concentrate on the following components of MCH family planning and birth-spacing programmes:

(a) The development of health personnel. UNFPA will support training to improve the skills of all categories of MCH/FP staff - traditional birth attendants and midwives, MCH/family planning trainers and MCH/FP tutors, among others - and extension workers at the appropriate level in family planning, population and family life education. Family planning will need to be included in basic training curricula for home economists, social workers, community development officers, agricultural extension workers and others working with community, women's and youth groups. Short-term in-service courses will need to be offered at selected national medical teaching centres to serve a sub-region. Existing regional training centres will need to be strengthened to meet the requirements of human resource development and national institution-building. In addition, regional, subregional and national workshops and seminars will need to offer instruction in supervision, logistics, management information systems, manpower planning, and cost recovery activities as a means of overcoming financial problems.

(b) The development of statistical systems for MCH/FP services. UNFPA assistance will help to improve collection and analysis of MCH/FP statistics in

order to strengthen management of all service programmes and to diagnose weaknesses in the service programme, with appropriate mechanisms to ensure feedback. Furthermore, in line with the strategy to provide or enhance baseline data and also to measure behavioural changes, a follow-up fertility survey, much like the Demographic and Health Surveys Project by Westinghouse Institute for Resource Development, will need to be conducted to provide updated information in, among others, the 10 African countries which participated in the World Fertility Survey. WFS developed a comprehensive set of survey instruments such as various questionnaires, training manuals, software for data processing and guidelines for analysis of research which could be utilized in planning the proposed second round of the African fertility survey.

(c) Operational research. UNFPA will undertake a systematic assessment of the lessons learned from the family planning/birth-spacing activities to which it has provided support in each country, focusing on problems, policies and resources in the health sector. In addition,

- (i) Studies will be funded on family systems in different cultural and socio-economic settings. These will help to assess critical changes in domestic patterns and in customs affecting mortality and reproduction, indicating the constraints on family planning programmes and opportunities for innovation. The design of effective family planning and family health programmes will also be helped by limited and carefully selected studies documenting access to current household resources, factors affecting reproductive values and goals, causes of strain and crisis as well as causes of

morbidity and mortality. Such studies will be important in developing ways and means of bringing the benefits of family planning and understanding of its health rationale to the attention of the highest-risk population groups (teenagers and older women) as well as helping to find acceptable substitutes for traditional systems of birth-spacing. Studies will also be funded to determine the conditions for successful family health and birth-spacing programmes and to examine the available means for improving the delivery of services.

- (ii) Assistance will be provided to regional and national population research organizations to strengthen their capabilities to conduct operational research and to enable them to assist Governments and national non-governmental organizations to carry out their own research and to provide training in research techniques. This will improve the quality of research, going beyond the traditional demographic survey towards an approach which helps to improve understanding of the potential and processes of demographic change in different communities. Such an understanding will in turn help to design the means of bridging gaps in knowledge and communication.

42. In supporting the above programme components, emphasis will be given to meeting the family planning/birth-spacing needs of the rural population. Therefore, in addition to the support for traditional basic health services, more attention will be given to developing non-clinical approaches for providing the public-at-large with family planning/birth-spacing services. As



a step in this direction, UNFPA will systematically encourage and support the introduction or improvement of family planning/birth-spacing in the existing primary health care services that are community-based, people- and family-oriented, and multisectoral in approach. In this respect:

(a) Increased attention should be devoted to making use of women's organizations at the community level to deliver information and services on birth-spacing or family planning. This could be particularly important in areas where government-supported MCH care is not available or is not reaching the majority of the population. Because of the traditional female practice of abstinence during breast-feeding, breast-feeding as an important factor contributing to infant and child health and to birth-spacing should be given more attention in UNFPA-supported activities in close collaboration with UNICEF. Support will be provided for all types of family planning methods and approaches that are acceptable and suitable in the society concerned, including indigenous and natural methods. Correspondingly, assistance should be provided to help reduce infertility and sub-fecundity, particularly in affected areas of Central Africa, in order to enable intersted couples to attain desired family size. Care should also be taken to explore the feasibility of producing contraceptives locally. Other innovative strategic approaches should be supported, including: the Integrated Project on Family Planning, Nutrition and Parasite Control (IP), which has won the support of people in several Asian countries; and experimental activities conducted with WHO in integrating family planning with preventive measures against sexually-transmitted diseases such as acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) emphasizing sex education and the use of condoms and syringes.

(b) The greater involvement of the community will obviously require improving management. Therefore, high priority should be given to the strengthening of management skills through training of personnel at all levels, as mentioned in earlier.

**D. Contributing to the improvement of the status of women**

43. It is generally acknowledged that enhancing the status of women in the family and in society and recognizing their current and potential economic and social contributions are of vital importance. Several projects in sub-Saharan Africa have demonstrated that meeting some of the needs of women can reduce infant mortality and encourage the practice of family planning which, in turn, contributes to the health and welfare of women, permitting them a more active role in the community and in the economy.

44. Improving the health and social well-being of women and increasing their economic opportunities has been and will continue to be a priority of the Fund. UNFPA efforts in this area have already included the holding of an International Forum of African Women Leaders on Population and Development in May 1984. UNFPA assistance in sub-Saharan Africa will take into account and be co-ordinated with the recommendations adopted at the above meeting and with the new UNFPA implementation strategy to strengthen the capacity of the Fund to deal with issues concerning women, population and development, contained in document DP/1987/38.

45. Since educating women has a direct impact on reducing infant mortality and planning the size of the family, greater efforts will be made to ensure that

family planning and family life education are recognized and supported at all levels among the key components of women's development programmes. While UNFPA will not directly support activities such as employment-creation for women on a large scale, it may, within the context of a national population policy and in view of the indirect impact of such demographic factors as fertility, provide assistance for small-scale pilot projects and the planning of programmes aimed at increasing access to opportunities for self-development.

46. At the same time, UNFPA will continue to encourage Governments to permit women to participate in population programmes; to involve women in the decision-making process so that they may participate in formulating policy and in designing and implementing programmes; to give increasing attention to activities that can improve the status of women politically, socially and economically and thereby facilitate meeting population objectives.

47. Furthermore, the needs and concerns of women will also be taken into account in all UNFPA-supported population projects and programmes, including the collection and analysis of basic data; special research studies, including social anthropological studies related, for instance, to the identification of the changing social, economic and demographic situation of women; the promotion of information and education programmes, including family life and sex education, aimed at enhancing women's awareness; training programmes and other activities to help in finding ways to meet the population-related needs of women in all aspects of management and evaluation of programmes and as trainers.

48. In partnership with other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, the Fund will also support programmes that increase the capacity and skills of women in planning and managing effective self-help and income-generating projects, particularly those in non-traditional fields. Because such activities cut across all substantive sectors, the Fund will encourage African Governments and multilateral and bilateral donor development agencies to adopt explicit sectoral strategies to integrate women into the mainstream of economic development. This will require additional financial and administrative support of local and national women's organizations which can then work to help to establish national machinery for the advancement of women; establish co-operatives to help to meet the needs of women as producers; adopt policies designed to open access to employment; and develop skills useful in maintaining the household or in earning an income and improving women's access to energy resources and water.

### III. OPERATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

49. The development of a national population policy and corresponding institutional framework in each country is crucial; but such an undertaking cannot be fully effective unless it is supported by appropriate assistance, quality programme and project activities that make optimal use of human resource development and better co-ordination of multilateral and bilateral donors. In this regard and to ensure effective implementation of the strategy outlined above, UNFPA intends to concentrate its attention on the following areas.

#### A. Programme support

50. Setting up a national population programme is a complex activity that involves establishing policy objectives, strategies and mechanisms, including administrative structures, collection and dissemination information networks and effective delivery systems. The economic stringency of the 1980s forced cutbacks in social expenditures in most countries, resulting in a weakening of national population programmes. Unless countries can expand their activities during the years ahead, many initiatives already under way in population will be curtailed. To operate their programmes effectively, and thus move towards achieving their goals, countries will need equipment, vehicles, spare parts, motor fuel, and other necessities; they will also need considerable support in the form of subsidization of local costs. UNFPA recognizes that it will be necessary to finance a proportion of these costs over a period of time in view of the long-term returns which can be expected from these programme expenditures.

#### B. Improving programme formulation and implementation

51. In numerous evaluations and other review reports, poor project design has been consistently singled out as a major shortcoming. The reports usually cite overambitious or ill-defined aims and vaguely described expected outputs; failure to include baseline data for measuring and evaluating results; faulty estimates of time, money and human resources needed to achieve objectives; unrealistic assessment of the Government's infrastructural capacity and ability to meet its commitment to the project or to sustain activities after its completion.

52. Most of the above problems can be minimized by more careful work in project identification, formulation and implementation. Today many African countries have reached the stage where attention needs to be directed equally towards an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of established projects and programmes to ensure that objectives and targets are reasonable and attainable. New projects can then be planned in detail before UNFPA assistance is committed in order to minimize problems of implementation. Frequent and systematic independent evaluations and internal reviews of programmes and projects will be conducted during their lifetime to overcome implementation difficulties and make any adjustments that may be necessary. It is also suggested that UNFPA institute a procedure to monitor or evaluate completed projects through a pattern of short visits to ensure that the institutionalization of relevant activities has taken place or, if it has not, to identify the additional inputs needed to ensure the realization of the objectives. It is further suggested that UNFPA initiate a comparative review of several project evaluations within the same programme sector with a view to formulating broad guidelines identifying the elements of success and pitfalls to be avoided. The Fund will impress upon recipient Governments the need for both timely and adequate budgetary provision of their counterpart and their prompt implementation of recommendations arising from project tripartite review meetings. In addition, the executing agencies will be urged to improve their financial management practices insofar as UNFPA-assisted projects are concerned, particularly as regards project expenditure forecasting and budget control. Also, they will be requested to review the quality of the technical backstopping and administrative support provided by their regional offices and advisory services to UNFPA-assisted projects. Furthermore, UNFPA will hold

regular consultations with executing agencies to review implementation problems and possible improvements in assistance delivery. Also greater involvement by UNFPA technical staff after the project or programme has been approved will be encouraged.

53. Further steps by the Fund to improve implementation will also be taken. Long delays in the recruitment of advisers and the purchase and delivery of equipment and supplies are well-known causes of frustration. Greater reliance will be placed on local rather than foreign expertise, particularly in the relatively more advanced countries where such expertise is often more readily available, more suitable and considerably less expensive. United Nations agencies providing equipment and supplies, such as UNICEF, will be asked to explore the possibility of establishing stockpiles to avoid delays in delivery or of calling upon other donors' stockpiles. UNFPA will encourage the utilization of local non-governmental organizations by assisting them to expand effectively so as to overcome constraints of these countries' capacity to administer programmes, especially given the highly centralized nature of Government activities.

### C. Human resources development

54. To ensure optimum use of available human resources and the full participation of nationals at all stages of assisted population programmes, UNFPA views building up the capability of African Governments and national non-governmental bodies to design, manage and evaluate their countries' population programmes as a priority for self-reliance.

55. A comprehensive programme for human resources development and utilization will be set up within the framework of the UNFPA programme during the next 10 years. The aim is to produce a "critical mass" of trained staff relevant to the needs in each country in the design, administration and evaluation of population programmes.

56. In implementing the proposed training programme, maximum use, whenever possible, will be made of existing facilities in the countries as well as at the subregional, regional and global levels. African institutions should participate in preparing training programmes and in providing trainers. Efforts will be made in each case to improve the training capabilities of these institutions even at additional initial cost. Particular attention will be given to reducing dependence on foreign experts. Participation of women and youth in the proposed human resource development programme will be encouraged.

**D. Improving management and co-ordination of multi-bilateral assistance**

57. Much of the attention of the international assistance community is now focused on sub-Saharan Africa. More than 20 multilateral and bilateral population donor agencies are at work in the region. Several countries, for example, must deal with seven or more donor agencies simultaneously. Effective government co-ordination is crucial to reduce to a minimum the demands which a multiplicity of donors makes on already stretched national manpower, administrative and financial resources. At present, none of the African countries is organized to assume this role centrally, and donor agencies must negotiate ministry by ministry. This has led to a loss of focus on countries'



needs for national multisectoral population programmes; instead aid has often reflected donor priorities.

58. Only two countries have so far set up a central co-ordinating machinery for population assistance, but their work is primarily administrative rather than substantive. If sub-Saharan African countries are to make effective use of population assistance, a primary objective should be the development of a national capability to co-ordinate the interests of both national ministries and donor agencies.

59. Because of its international character, its multisectoral programming in all countries and its field network, UNFPA is an appropriate agency to assist in developing this capacity. Accordingly the Fund intends to encourage recipient countries in which several donor agencies are active to build up central co-ordinating units within their administrative structures. These units would oversee the population assistance process, strike a balance among sectoral activities and ensure that negotiation, implementation and monitoring of aid are functionally integrated with sectoral ministries and central authorities.

60. Assistance for this purpose will include funding for additional national staff and appropriate training to plan, design, contract, manage and evaluate different population programme sectors. Where a Government feels unable to devote staff resources to co-ordination, the UNFPA field representative, within existing co-ordinating mechanisms and in co-operation with the Government, will promote ad hoc meetings at which donors and national officials may exchange

information on programme needs and funding prospects and, when required, assist Governments with the managerial implementation of UNFPA-funded programmes.

61. UNFPA will also promote a process at the headquarters level to encourage donors to relate their assistance collectively to countries' programme needs. The process may include periodic donor meetings, one of which might be held during the annual session of the Governing Council; circulation of UNFPA country population needs assessment reports and compendia of identified projects to all donors to give them an opportunity to make informed judgements on aid level and type of aid; sharing of information on the experience of UNFPA in individual countries including achievements and failures; and promotion of joint programming, evaluation and review exercises and similar ventures.

**E. Relationship with the United Nations agencies**

62. Systematic consultation and collaboration with the United Nations bodies will be an integral part of the UNFPA assistance strategy in sub-Saharan Africa. The Fund's assistance programme is expected to be executed largely in co-operation with the United Nations agencies. Therefore, UNFPA will discuss and plan with each agency how the strategy for Africa could be implemented more efficiently, taking into account the comparative advantage of the agencies in certain fields, their capacity for technical backstopping as well as the potential for incorporating population components into their regular activities.

63. Furthermore, the Fund will seek to use all its resources, wherever possible, to complement the efforts of other United Nations major funding

development agencies, most of which are reorienting and refocusing their assistance programme to Africa in light of the economic crisis in the region.

To this end, UNFPA will seek ways to integrate population activities into development programmes through more active involvement in UNDP country programming exercises. At the same time, the Fund will encourage agencies such as the World Bank and UNDP to support development programmes in such areas as expansion of basic health services, female education, population redistribution and other development programmes needed for the promotion and effective implementation of population policies and programmes, and to include population components whenever possible in their development programmes.

64. Increased attention will be given to monitoring international discussions on follow-up to the United Nations Programme of Action for African Recovery and Development adopted by the special session of the General Assembly in May 1986. UNFPA is already participating in the Steering Committee set up by the United Nations Secretary-General on the implementation of that Programme of Action.

**F. Monitoring of the strategy**

65. The Fund intends to:

(a) Encourage regular consultations at the country level between UNFPA and government staff to review and evaluate progress in the implementation of UNFPA-assisted country programmes;

(b) Establish an internal committee at headquarters to monitor and stimulate national and regional action in conformity with the strategy;

(c) Report to the Governing Council on a biannual basis the progress of the UNFPA assistance strategy in Africa, beginning in 1989.

**G. Strengthening UNFPA field offices**

66. An important element in the UNFPA strategy for sub-Saharan Africa is the strengthening of UNFPA field offices to monitor programme activities and to help to co-ordinate population assistance. If national programmes in sub-Saharan Africa are substantially expanded in the coming years, field activities will increase accordingly. Under these circumstances:

(a) UNFPA envisages, depending upon resources, increasing its field staff and technical advisory services to assist countries in their expanding tasks;

(b) UNFPA headquarters staff will work with field offices to review existing field monitoring mechanisms, upgrade the managerial capability of the staff and implement a tighter and improved system for resource and programme management;

(c) UNFPA will, in collaboration with its executing agencies, take steps to introduce an improved project delivery reporting system from regional agencies to field offices;

(d) UNFPA will, through computerization of field offices, facilitate the preparation and processing of project budget revisions, reporting to headquarters, and the continuous monitoring of donor activities in each country.

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