



International Conference
on Population and Development

ICPD Progress Report Syria



Background

The periodic reviews of the International Conference of Population and Development (ICPD) undertaken in the past 25 years have demonstrated that the agreed goals remain valid despite significant global progress achieved in several areas.

In 2013, a review for the ICPD Plan of Action (POA) in the Arab Region culminated in a regional ministerial conference under the theme “Development Challenges and Population Dynamics in a Changing Arab World”. The Conference resulted with the adoption of the 2013 Cairo Declaration, a statement that renewed the commitment of Arab countries to the PoA as an unfinished agenda on population and development, to guide Arab countries’ efforts beyond 2014.

Given that, the 2013 Cairo Declaration is the government-negotiated roadmap for achieving the ICPD objectives in the Arab region, ESCWA, UNFPA-ASRO, and League of Arab States (LAS) were co-leading its ten-year review, as part of the sixth review and appraisal of the ICPD Programme of Action that was held in Beirut in September 2023. national delegation in the sixth review were combined of government concerned staff Headed by SCFAP along with PICC as member in addition to the participation of five parliamentarians.

Following up on the participation of the Syrian Delegation in the sixth review, represented by the Syrian Commission of Family Affairs and Population (SCFA), significant steps have been undertaken forward in promoting the rights and well-being of its population by launching the 'ICPD 30 Progress Report' at a prominent event. This achievement was made possible through collaborative efforts involving various stakeholders, including line ministries, youth organizations, people with disability, and crucial support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in terms of both financial and technical assistance.



Syria's Involvement The Syrian Commission of Family Affairs and Population (SCFAP) spearheaded the 'ICPD 30 Progress Report' with collaboration from ministries, youth organization, and substantial support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

Event Overview UNFPA supported SCFAP in organizing an event to disseminate the report of the ICPD sixth review held in Beirut. The national ICPD30 Progress Report unveiling in December 2023 gathered senior government officials, development partners, academia, youth organization religious leaders, and UN agencies, highlighting Syria's steadfast commitment to the ICPD goals.

Commitment and Objectives Syria reaffirmed its commitment made during the 2019 Nairobi summit, aiming to create an Action Plan to monitor implementation national commitments related to 1) Reducing the rate of early marriage from 13% to 5%; 2) Achieving women's comprehensive access to and use of family planning methods; 3) Reducing the mortality rates of children under five from 23 per thousand to less than 13 per thousand, 4) Reducing the maternal mortality rate from 58 per 100,000 live births to less than 34 per 100,000 live births; 5) Follow up on updating and enacting relevant legislation and laws. UNFPA and SCFAP, highlighted that meeting these commitments are the responsibilities of all at governmental and private sector level in the realization of national commitments. UNPFA also emphasized strong support to realize the national goals in population, development, reproductive health, and gender equality, and in working with UN agencies towards the implementation of ICPD agenda, supporting data efforts to ensure evidence-based progress monitoring. In particular, ensuring the use of technology for systematic data collection at national and local levels for informed policymaking and planning.



Key Report Highlights and Advocacy Efforts

- Stressing the crucial link between population and development, the report highlighted progress made under the main items of dignity, equality, health, environmental sustainability, and governance. In particular, it highlights achievements in the following:
 - creating an enabling and protective environment for young people.
 - capacity building and supporting effective social participation.
 - legislation amendments included, the age of marriage, (raised to eighteen years of age from 17), divorce, custody and guardianship.
 - adopting an integrated social protection system.
 - promoting and protecting the rights of people with disabilities in all fields.
 - launching the National Strategy for Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health 2022-2025; strengthening the role of premarital health screening clinics in providing advice on reproductive and sexual health.
 - securing relevant Data on population and development issues from various surveys, in addition to administrative data and routine statistics produced by the relevant ministries as records, Civil Status.
- Despite the progress made, the crisis in Syria exacerbated the demographic challenges and problems that existed before the war, which were represented by (high population growth rate, low qualitative characteristics of the labor force, imbalance in geographical distribution due to internal displacement) and further emerged as a result and the outcome of the crisis in Syria and the unilateral coercive measures. The most prominent of which are :
 - anxiety that population displacement will turn into permanent displacement.
 - Shortage of qualified personnel in planning, integration and follow-up of population and development issues, as well as the migration of medical personnel and trained health.
 - Lack of funding and aid allocated to support population and development issues. In particular, database support developmental population.

- Low qualitative characteristics of the population (education: low enrollment in all levels of education.
- Health: high mortality rates of children under one year and under five years.
- Labor force: increasing unemployment rates, especially youth unemployment, Low economic participation rates for females).
- The impact of societal culture that hinders women's work and participation and the environment that generates early marriage as a negative coping strategy.
- The natural population growth rate continues to rise.

Parliamentary Involvement Within the context of ICPD30, SCFAP engaged more than 40 parliamentarians for advocacy against discriminatory laws, resulting in dialogues and the identification of priority laws for potential changes. Priority discriminatory laws identified, for example, "allowing the rapist a mitigated punishment, Discrimination in Social Insurance" and; "Law regarding Pension".

Expectations from UN Agencies During the event, the Head of the Syrian Commission for Family Affairs and Population emphasized the report's significance, reaffirming the government's commitment made during the Nairobi summit in 2019. This commitment involves developing an Action Plan to monitor national commitments supporting the acceleration of ICPD 25 and devising strategies for future interventions.

Impact and way forward These recent events and commitments signify a pivotal moment in the country's journey towards achieving ICPD goals and ensuring inclusivity. Serving as a catalyst for action and advocacy, the report emphasizes the challenges ahead and the indispensable role of partnerships and solidarity in navigating complex population dynamics. In specific, to pursue the commitments, national partners in cooperation with UNFPA, highlighted the need for data to ensure evidence based programming and policy making, as well the role of youth as potential partnership for accelerating the implementation of ICPD30. As such, it was recommended to organize:

A data users and producers workshops towards ensuring availability of needed data

B dialogue workshops among:

- various concerned stakeholders.
- youths.
- youth and parliamentarian, where the voice of youths can contribute to the implementation of ICPD30 and be integrated into the ongoing discussions surrounding the ICPD30 and the Global 2030 agenda.

C Advocacy on establishing an outstanding institution for youth affairs as highlighted by the national concerned partners in the workshop.