

# Global Survey: ICPD Beyond 2014

## Brief Analysis

### Introduction .....

From 2 September to 2 November 2012, with the support from the UN Population Fund and in close cooperation with the RoA Government the *International Center for Human Development* completed the *International Conference on Population and Development Beyond 2014* survey questionnaire. Within the framework of that undertaking, consultative and focus group meetings with competent State bodies, civil society organizations and private companies were held and a desk review was conducted.

The questionnaire was filled out with a view to evaluating the progress in implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, in line with the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 54/234 of 10 December 2010 and within the framework of the Term of Reference approved by the UNFPA Armenia Office. The national and regional reports on the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development will lay the groundwork for preparation of the UN General Secretary's global report to the 47th session of the Commission on Population and Development.

Consultative meetings with staff members of the following entities were held in order to secure correct answers to the questionnaire:

- Public administration bodies:
  - RoA Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs
  - RoA Ministry of Territorial Administration
  - RoA Ministry of Education and Science
  - RoA Ministry of Health
  - RoA Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs
  - RoA Ministry of Agriculture
  - RoA Ministry of Urban Development
  - RoA Police
  - RoA National Statistical Service
  - The State Migration Service of the RoA Ministry of Territorial Administration
  - The National Centre for AIDS Prevention of the RoA Ministry of Health
- International organizations:

- IOM (International Organization for Migration) Mission in Armenia
  - UNHCR (UN High Commissioner for Refugees) Representation in Armenia
  - UNICEF (UN Children’s Fund) Armenia Office
- Non-governmental organizations and private companies:
    - Association of Women with University Education
    - Mission Armenia NGO
    - Save the Children Armenia
    - Women’s Rights Center
    - *VivaCell-MTS* mobile telecommunication operator
    - *Step by Step* charitable foundation
    - World Council of Churches Armenia Inter-Church Charitable Round Table Foundation
    - People in Need NGO
    - Armenian Red Cross Society,
    - National Institute of Reproductive Health, Perinatology, Obstetrics and Gynecology
    - *For Family and Health* Pan-Armenian association
    - Yerevan State University Students’ Council
    - RoA Public Council
    - National Institute of Labor and Social Research
    - ProMedia-Gender non-governmental organization
    - Center for Socio-Demographic Initiatives

All in all, meetings were held with 50 staff members. Direct contacts were maintained with all the respondents throughout the process of the questionnaire completion with a view to clarify or elucidate answers to the questions.

In addition, a desk review of regulatory and conceptual documents in relevant spheres was conducted making use of the legal information system of Armenia ([www.arlis.am](http://www.arlis.am)) and of the documents posted on the websites of the above-mentioned State agencies, including Government decrees, reports and other program documents.

Since the review is global, its methodology is universal, too, which implies that the specifics of individual countries are not taken into consideration in the said methodology. Naturally, one of the main objectives of such surveys is to lay the groundwork for comparisons; however, at the same time methodological complications occur. In particular, one of the main limitations of the survey methodology was impossibility of making clarifications concerning our country’s specifics. For example, girls as a target group are specifically emphasized in numerous educational issues incorporated in Section 8, whereas both in Soviet as well as in post-Soviet years the girls’ enrolment ratio was not and is not lower than that of boys in the education system in Armenia. Another similar ICPD issue is the country’s literacy rate. According to the official RoA statistics, 99 percent of Armenia’s population is literate<sup>1</sup>; therefore, literacy has not been set as a core issue for State policies. However, the questionnaire methodology does not provide an opportunity to make a similar comment in the relevant section or in another part of the questionnaire.

A number of other problems, which are outlined in the ICPD sectoral policies, do not exist as such in Armenia or, even if such a problem does exist in this country, it is not perceived as such or, rather, it is not defined as a problem in the country’s sectoral policy. For example, one of the problems in the former group is female genital mutilation/cutting.

Among the second group problems is that of adolescent girls’ pregnancy. In Armenia, such girls, especially if they are from socially vulnerable groups, find themselves completely outside the public system. In middle- and upper-class families that problem does not arise because the girl’s pregnancy does not

---

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/armenia\\_statistics.html#98](http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/armenia_statistics.html#98)

become known outside her immediate family. Adolescent girls' pregnancy is regarded as a gross violation of conventional moral norms. Vulnerable families cannot provide any assistance to such adolescent girls, while mechanisms for State or public support are non-existent at all.

It is those pregnant girls that need assistance most because in middle-class families the problem is solved by the family. Facilitating school completion for pregnant girls is particularly necessary. In the respondents' view, in such situations girls from vulnerable families do not have any opportunity at all to proceed further with their education and even though evening and distance learning schools exist, the public stigma does not make it possible for those girls to continue their education. According to the respondents, it is a crucial issue that needs to be raised publicly. However, this important position is not reflected in the survey data because the survey methodology does not make it possible to include such clarifications and viewpoints.

## The overall framework of the analysis .....

The filled-out questionnaire is a database that contains a lot of research data, which can be used to analyze the current demographic situation and a host of problems in Armenia from numerous (e.g. legal, political and sociological) perspectives. The present analysis is grounded in the sectoral policy framework and in the following core review issues:

- a) How are population development issues regulated in Armenia?
- b) What regulatory gaps are there?
- c) What factors facilitated/impeded the process of solution of main population development issues?
- d) What issues surfaced in the course of the survey?

In this analysis, we do not claim to have undertaken a comprehensive analysis of the ICPD issues; we merely seek to identify those general achievements and concerns that can provide a baseline for both decision-makers and researchers with a view of studying the population development problems in greater detail or of finding an appropriate sector policy vector.

## Regulation of main population development issues .....

The following ICPD sectors are at the core of this survey: population and sustainable development, population growth and structure (that includes the needs of adolescents and youth [10-24-year-olds], of older persons and of persons with disabilities), urbanization and internal migration, international migration, wellbeing of family and of individuals, reproductive rights and reproductive health, gender equality and empowerment of women, and education.

The survey results clearly indicate that almost all sectors in Armenia have been regulated because there are relevant legislation and conceptual or strategic documents such as government's concept papers and lists of programs and annual activities and measures. From that perspective, the only large ICPD sector where regulatory documents have not been drawn up yet is, internal migration. In the narrow sectoral sense, a number of important issues have not been regulated adequately or at all:

- In *health* sector: issues of medical abortion and of sexual health of older persons;

- In *family wellbeing* sector: issues of support to families caring for persons with disabilities or with special needs;
- In *population structure* sector: issues of *enabling* older persons to make full use of their skills and abilities and of *promoting* their employment opportunities as well as issues of neglect and abuse of and violence against older persons;
- In *urbanization and internal migration* sector: issues of promoting health, education, training and employment support for internally displaced persons (IDPs) and of proactive planning for urban population growth;
- In *international migration* sector: issues of taking gender and age into account and of facilitating the flow and use of remittances;
- In *education* sector: issues of *providing* training and employment opportunities to out-of-school children and adolescents, especially girls, as well as of *reaching* youth with SRH information and services, of *incorporating* population and sexual and reproductive health (SRH) information into the teachers' training curricula and of *incorporating* SRH information and life planning skills into formal and non-formal education.

Nevertheless, while those issues are not directly addressed through concept papers and legislation, in reality some issues are resolved practically. For example, SRH services have been available to out-of-school adolescents since 2005 within the framework of the *Improvement of Adolescent Health* Program implemented by the Institute of Child and Adolescent Health. Even though the life planning skills are not incorporated comprehensively into various forms and levels of education, nevertheless, some of its elements are incorporated into, at least, main academic subjects taught in formal education, particularly, into the *Healthy Lifestyle* academic course. Some general education schools started to offer a *Vocational Guidance* elective course, which was facilitated by the operation of the Vocational Guidance Center for Youth State non-commercial organization (<http://www.mycareer.am>). The Center is also quite active in non-formal education.

The issues of facilitating the flow and use of remittances in the international migration sector have come to the attention of decision-makers, in particular within the framework of the *Strengthening of scientific-analytical management of labor migration in Armenia* Project implemented by *International Center for Human Development* (ICHD) and International Organization for Migration, and funded by the European Union. Expert discussions have already been held and policy documents have been drawn up, for instance, the *Alternative Solutions to the Financial Issues of Labour Migrants* policy brief, which proposes practical mechanisms for regulating that issue.

In the *population structure* sector, active measures have been planned and taken for implementation of policies related to older persons because Armenia is already regarded as a country with an ageing population. Active State interventions are undertaken to increase the birth rate, in particular through the use of mechanisms of childbirth and child care allowances, the allowance for care of the child of up to 2 years of age and a one-time childbirth allowance, as well as through the improvement of quality of pre-school education and stimulation of construction of housing<sup>2</sup>. The above-mentioned sectoral issues are already perceived as urgent; however, the regulatory and practical measures to address them are still non-existent.

Thus, it can be concluded that all sectors with the exception of the internal migration sector have regulatory documents and legislative Acts, which are in line with the international norms. However, in the course of the survey an opinion was voiced time and again that the solid regulatory foundation notwithstanding, the implementation mechanisms are still inadequate and in need of revision. The situation can be summed up with an observation made by a survey respondent: "Our laws are good, what is needed is their application."

---

<sup>2</sup> Khurshudian, A. and P. Amirjanian (2011). *Analytical report on the RoA strategy of demographic policy and on its harmonization with the RoA 2011 draft annual budget law*. Yerevan (in Armenian).

Another issue, which is closely related to the previous one and is urgent at this level, is a legislative provision for monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. The monitoring and evaluation practices in almost all sectors were qualified as inadequate. Even though it is incumbent on the government agencies to submit annual reports on their activities, appropriate changes have to be made in the format of those reports that will reflect their operation evaluation practices in as comprehensive way as possible. For example, the reports need to include data on incomplete implementation of planned activities as well as to outline ways for further improvement.

## Factors that facilitate/impede the solution of main population development issues.....

One of the core issues of the survey was to identify the factors that facilitate or impede the solution of main population development issues. Probably the most often mentioned facilitating factor was cooperation between various stakeholders that resulted in the practices, momentum of which induced the government to seriously discuss and come up with adequate solutions at a State level. Among those problems are, for instance, issues of child protection and trafficking.

It is noteworthy that the private sector's involvement in responding to the problems has also increased visibly. If merely five years ago the achievements in the solution of some problems were mostly a result of cooperation with international organizations, at present the level of employers' involvement has risen noticeably, especially in education and ICT sectors.

The private sector's involvement should indeed be encouraged; however, in the course of the survey the following question was put bluntly: How are employers involved in the process of solution of this or that problem? There are numerous instances when their involvement is indirect, in particular through charitable foundations. That approach is especially obvious in the sector of policy related to older persons. According to the definition, charitable foundations are civil society entities; however, in reality the beneficiaries' perception is different: the projects are usually ascribed to the employer who is a primary donor to a given foundation. Here a need arises to redefine charity and to clarify definitions provided by the legislation.

Regardless of its size, the State funding is regarded as the second most important factor. Against the background of scarcity of funds such an approach ensures to some extent the policy implementation success due to confidence entertained by middle-level entities implementing the policy and by immediate beneficiaries that the State treats their problems seriously and makes tangible efforts to support satisfaction of urgent needs.

Scarcity of funds is noted as a main impeding factor: since the problems are numerous and multi-layered, sometimes the State budget funds are not sufficient to respond even to the most urgent problems such as, for example, provision of support to families caring for persons with disabilities or with special needs. Cultural factors impede the attainment of greater success in some sectors, for instance with regard to identification of gender violence or of pregnant adolescent girls.

## Summary.....

Summing up, it is possible to outline the following strategies that will enable Armenia to improve its initiatives in attaining the ICPD goals:

- To regulate the main issues pertaining to individual sectors, while ensuring the involvement of all stakeholders;
- To legislate simple and functional mechanisms for monitoring and evaluation of sectoral policies;
- To include the issue of application of legislation into the vision of operation of governmental and non-governmental entities by mobilizing public participation;
- To secure State funding, even if in some cases it has merely a symbolic role, with a view to furthering the success of reforms.