



Distr.  
LIMITED  
E/ESCWA/SDD/2017/WG.1/WP.9  
26 April 2017  
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

**Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)**

**2017 Arab Forum for Sustainable Development**

**Special Session Concept Note**

**Using the demographic intelligence for achieving  
the 2030 Agenda**



**United Nations  
Beirut, 2017**

17-00273

The Special Session on “Using the demographic intelligence for achieving the 2030 Agenda” is organised by the Arab States Office of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

## **Background**

With a new ambitious universal agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their targets seek to build on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the International Conference for Population and Development Program of Action (ICPD PoA); global and persistent efforts are still needed to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions is the greatest global challenge and is an indispensable requirement for peace and prosperity. To avoid some of the fragmentation that occurred during the implementation of the MDGs, collaboration and partnership need to be the principle methodology to implement the SDGs. This requires revitalized partnership and coordination efforts with focus on the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable, leaving no one behind.

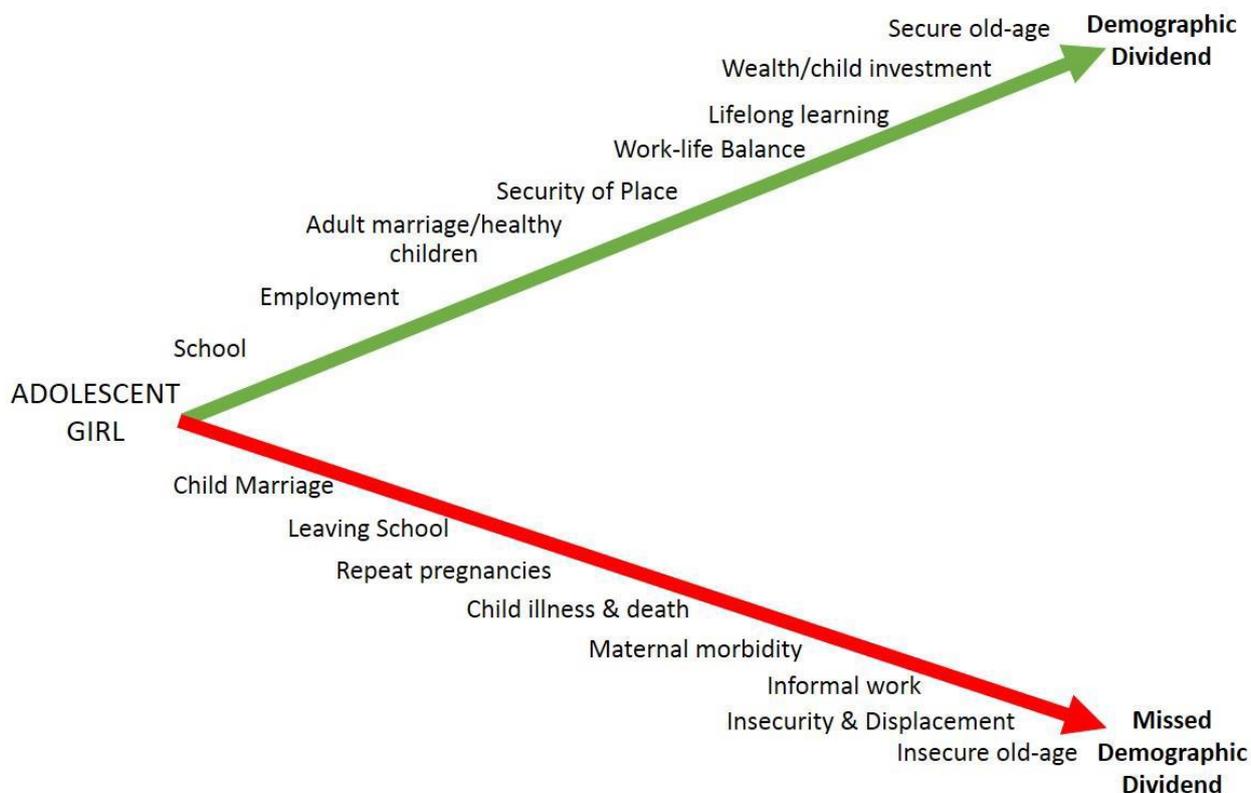
In the coming years, the population lens will be a crucial tool to monitor the SDGs. Many developing countries, including a considerable proportion of Arab States, are undergoing a demographic transition due to falling fertility rates and a decreasing dependency ratio (the proportion of young people aged 0-14 years and older people above 65 years relative to those of working age).

Recent changes in population dynamics with different migration status and displacements in the Arab region, require equivalent changes in policies and strategies. Inclusion of refugees and displaced people within the SDG framework is an objective to fulfil.

Moreover, the change in population age structure is pivotal in addressing policies and strategies set by Member States within the framework of the SDGs (Population Centred SDGs). Countries should be encouraged to use the population lens and address the different stages of the growth of a human being through the life cycle approach. Member States will need to provide the necessary for children to benefit from a healthy childhood, capitalize on the greater proportion of working age people to accelerate economic growth, and implement widespread and effective strategies to empower, educate, and employ the population within an enabling environment. Key policy areas that need to be strengthened and operationalized in order for the “demographic dividend” to be harnessed include:

1. Stronger health systems to ensure infant, child, adolescent and maternal health, universal access to quality sexual and reproductive health, including family planning services.
2. Empowerment of women and young people, through the promotion of gender equality across all sectors of the economy and ensuring that all people have the right and freedom to avoid child or forced marriage, early or unwanted child-bearing, gender-based violence, harmful practices; and that all women and adolescent girls have the right for education, to decide who and when to marry, and the number and timing of children.
3. Education and training of young people for the demands of the job market, including skills for entrepreneurship.
4. Employment of populations of working age people (including older workers) in decent work, and ensuring economic policies that promote inclusive growth, expanded markets and use innovation to modernize the economy.
5. Good governance and accountability to deliver the above, reaching the furthest behind first, leaving no one behind, and assuring peace and security, and including through the generation, analysis and use of population data by public and private sectors and civil society.

Realizing such a demographic dividend requires multiple intersecting investments thus achieving the concept of linkages between goals and targets (Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 17). Yet the most essential, without which no progress will be made, is building the capabilities of people and ensuring their rights and freedoms to achieve their potential (Figure 1 illustrates pathways to harness or miss the demographic dividend (DD)).



The availability of data and relevant ICPD based SDG indicators for planning, monitoring progress and evaluation of actual achievements are crucial to ensure this integrated approach through the population lens. Commitment of countries to use different available sources including census data, administrative data, and civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) is needed to visualise the picture for ensuring achievements and identification of gaps. However, the disaggregated data needed to address all vulnerable groups- including children, youth, persons with disabilities, people living with HIV, older persons, indigenous peoples, refugees, internally-displaced persons and migrants- as specified in the 2030 Agenda, are sparse.

During the 2016 Arab Forum on Sustainable Development (AFSD), population and demographic challenges were identified as an important lens to visualize the recent characteristics of the Arab region. UNFPA ASRO is mandated on leading the ICPD-SDG Agenda in the Arab Region together with ESCWA and LAS.

### Session Objectives

To continue and build on this dialogue, UNFPA is holding this session to:

1. Demonstrate the importance of the population lens in SDGs; population dynamics and the age structure concurrent relation with the 2030 Agenda.
2. Display data gaps and the need for ICPD based SDG indicators for monitoring SDGs through the population lens.

Exemplify how Arab States can use the DD and related data to visualize integrated approaches in monitoring ICPD-SDGs related indicators and how it could frame and build the bigger picture of their achievement.

In a participatory manner, the session will allow for discussions using the following dimensions/discussion points:

1. Presenting the current and future projections of population dynamics (highlighting age structure change, migration effects, and projected dependency ratios).
2. Relate population dynamics to the SDGs framework and the need for integration with relevant indicators.
3. Mapping the latest population achievements in empowerment with the DD as an example (with tapping on different issues as examples: child marriage, adolescent pregnancy, gender equality, GBV, universal health coverage, including access to quality integrated RH services, education, employment and economics).
4. Identify and display examples of data gaps that present shortfalls for monitoring and hence achieving a DD within the SDGs framework.
5. Discuss the required transformational change in societies, governance and legislations.
6. Illustration of examples of national policies regarding key drivers, e.g. compulsory education, SRH coverage, FP commodity security, youth employment and empowerment policies, etc. As well, policies supporting gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, e.g. girls' education, addressing adolescent pregnancy, child marriage, FGM statistics, women's participation in labor force, women's decision-making around fertility and SRH, etc.
7. Specify different national experiences; examples to include evidence generation for integrating population demands into SDG planning and integration of emerging population dynamics (integration of refugees) into SDG planning.

Responding to youth needs as a pathway to achieve DD within SDG context, through the civil society experience.

Key messages of the session are the following:

1. Population centred SDGs is a lens that helps in achieving SDGs key principle "leaving no one behind".
2. Integrated and coordinated approaches to a population age group (sector) are pivotal to harness the demographic dividend (DD) and achieve an interrelated set of SDGs.
3. ICPD-SDGS set of indicators can enhance the monitoring process of SDGs.

It is useful to explore the different experiences Arab countries have had using the demographic lens, noting the stages of progress they've achieved.

## Proposed Agenda

The session will be held in Arabic. Panellists are welcome to use PowerPoint presentations and/or discussion points.

Time	Presentation	Speaker
15 minutes	Overview and discussant	UNFPA
10 minutes	The DD experience and data	Population Expert
10 minutes	Young people demands	Representative for young people and civil society
10 minutes	Integrating population demands into SDG planning	Government official
10 minutes	Integration of emerging population dynamics (refugees) into SDG planning	Government official
30 minutes	Discussions	Participants