



PSDA input to the Consultation of the Independent Expert Advisory Group (IEAG) on a Data Revolution for Sustainable Development

October 2014

The Population and Sustainable Development Alliance welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the consultation by the IEAG on the Data Revolution. Our brief input focuses on the importance of population-related data for a data revolution and sustainable development overall.

Population dynamics - including population growth, population decline, ageing, urbanization and migration – and sexual and reproductive health and rights, are critical to sustainable development. By 2050 the world's population is projected to increase from 7 billion in 2011 to 9.6 billion (UN DESA,2013). In the same period the population living in urban areas will grow from 3.6 billion to 6.3 billion (UN DESA,2012). A growing and increasingly affluent world population has implications for planetary boundaries and the achievement of sustainable development. Population trends and changes determine the number and location of people requiring access to food, water and sanitation, health and education services etc, thereby influencing the scale and shape of the development challenges we face. Certain aspects of demographic change, including urbanization and prospects for lowering fertility, including through increasing access to voluntary family planning programmes, can, if harnessed, offer opportunities to advance sustainable development.

The post-2015 framework must address the challenges and harness the opportunities presented by demographic change, including through the consideration of population dynamics, data and projections when identifying and measuring development strategies, goals and targets, and by ensuring the full respect, protection and fulfillment of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

To do this we present the following top-line recommendations for the Post-2015 framework for consideration by the IEAG, as well as more points relating to the proposal of the UN Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals:

Ensure systematic use of population trends and projections in the formulation of development strategies, goals and targets: SDGs, targets and indicators must be forward-looking, based on projected changes in population size, location and age structures which influence demand for and supply of key resources and services. This need was not reflected in the OWG proposal, which overlooked the importance of population data for the planning and the formulation of development goals and strategies. The Rio+20 outcome document stated that; "Through forward looking planning, we can seize the opportunities and address the challenges associated with demographic change, including migration." If, however, goals, targets and indicators are not based on projected changes in population size, location and age structures, it is difficult to see how they will be fit for purpose, since the denominator will be missing from everything that they seek to measure.

Ensure access to timely and complete data for population trends and projections, including through universal birth, death and marriage registration: There is a welcome focus in the OWG recommendations on building capacity to increase the quality and availability of disaggregated data for the purposes of monitoring and accountability, but we point to the specific need for this in relation to population trends and projections. Improvements in capacity to prepare population projections is necessary, and to use them for the formulation of national, subnational and sector development strategies, goals, targets and policies, as well as for monitoring and accountability. Universal birth, death and marriage registration is necessary for a data revolution. The OWG recommendations contain a necessary target on birth registration for all, but death and marriage registration are overlooked.

Use population data to help address inequalities and social equity issues comprehensively:

Monitoring and reporting mechanisms should use data and indicators disaggregated by sex, age, geographical and rural/urban location, migratory status, disability, and other characteristics as appropriate, to ensure development goals benefit all. The focus on this in the OWG recommendations is necessary, but we once again stress the need for improvements in institutional capacities to generate quality population-related data, including birth and death registration and censuses, population trends and projections..

Population data must be used for effective urban planning: Population trends, including urban population growth, rural-to-urban migration and population ageing must be taken into account as part of effective urban planning. For example, sufficient infrastructure, health and education services for growing and changing populations, including migrants, youth and older persons must be planned for and budgets must be in place based on projected need. We were pleased to see in the OWG recommendations a goal on cities and human settlements, with a focus on urbanization. But it is concerning that the targets for enhancing sustainable urbanization and development planning fail to acknowledge the significance of population projections and trends and the need for systematic use of population data for planning purposes.

Sectoral planning should utilize population data: Planning for water and sanitation facilities, food security, health and education services etc., and overall development strategies, must be informed by systematic use of population data and projections.

Prioritise universal access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), including family planning: SRHR must be recognized in full, going further than the UN Open Working Group recommendation, and retaining the sexual and reproductive health commitments in both the goals on health and on gender equality and empowerment of women and girls, with the different and necessary areas of focus. We call on the IEAG to encourage a range of strong indicators to address wide-ranging SRHR issues.

Invest in the cross-cutting issues of health, education, gender equality, empowerment of youth and human rights: These critical investments offer opportunities to improve human health and well-being and advance each of the three dimensions of sustainable development.

For further information: <http://psda.org.uk/>