



REPUBLIC OF KENYA



2022 World Population Day

Theme: End GBV, New HIV Infection and Pregnancy among Adolescents for a Resilient Future



Let's take a moment to reflect on our population policies

MESSAGE OF THE CABINET SECRETARY, THE NATIONAL TREASURY AND PLANNING, HON. AMB. UKUR YATANI, EGH

The World Population Day is a global event observed on July 11 annually in line with the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 45/216 of December 1990. The commemoration is an awareness campaign on the prevailing population and development issues affecting the world.

The celebrations started in 1987 when the world's population crossed five billion. This year's commemoration has great significance, as the world population is projected to be eight billion in November.

In Kenya, the day is being marked amidst three critical challenges affecting majorly our young population. Hence the theme: *"End GBV, New HIV Infection and Pregnancy among Adolescents for a Resilient Future"*. I am glad that Kenya, through the National Council for Population and Development, will join the rest of the world in marking this important day. Our national celebration will be held in Kajiado County.

Kenya continues to make remarkable progress on population and development indicators. In 2019, Kenya had a population of 47.6 million. This represented more than a fourfold increase of the country's population of about 10.6 million in 1969. Notably, Ken-



ya's population age structure has undergone a remarkable change over the same period, with the proportion of children in the population decreasing while that of working age adults and older persons increasing.

The country's population is projected to continue increasing in the coming decades. By 2063 when Kenya will be marking 100 years of independence, the population will have grown to about 82.5 million people. This will have implications on the socio-economic development of our country.

For Kenya to be prosperous, we need to harness the opportunities that are available to us for the improvement of the population's quality of life, with the aim of addressing the changing needs of the various population segments, namely children, youths, working age adults and older persons, as well as the unique needs of our girls and women.

Though much progress has been made in protecting and empowering women and girls in the country, they still face numerous challenges, including adolescent and unintended pregnancies, gender based violence, and HIV infections. As a country, we have the opportunity to address these concerns through the implementation of the Medium Term Plan IV, the ICPD25 Kenya Country Commitments, the Kenya Population Policy for Sustainable Development, the African Union Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, among others.

As we commemorate the World Population Day 2022, I call upon all stakeholders to reflect on the successes and challenges of our population programme. A world of eight billion people is an opportunity for us to re-dedicate ourselves to the implementation of these development frameworks.

I wish you all a happy and reflective World Population Day 2022.

Numbers matter, but we must count carefully

STATEMENT BY UNFPA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Dr. Natalia Kanem, UNFPA Executive Director



Anders Thomsen, UNFPA Representative, Kenya

The World Population Day offers a moment to celebrate human progress. Our world, despite its challenges, is one where higher shares of people are educated and live healthier lives than at any previous point in history. Societies that invest in their people, in their rights and choices, have proven time and again that this is the road to the prosperity and peace that everyone wants, and deserves.

Let's keep this fact in mind when, in the next few months, the total number of people in the world tops eight billion. This milestone will attract much attention and debate, and likely scaremongering over "too many" people. That would be a mistake.

Focusing only on population numbers and growth rates often leads to coercive and counterproductive measures and the erosion of human rights, for example, to women being pressured to have children or prevented from doing so. It can deepen already acute inequalities, such as through policies shutting down reproductive health care or denying adequate pensions for the elderly, further marginalising the most disenfranchised.

The population story is far richer and more nuanced than a single number can capture. There may be more people in the world today, but equally important is the unprecedented demographic diversity we see within the global population. A growing number of countries face population ageing, and roughly two-thirds of the world's population now live in a country or area with below-replacement fertility, or fewer than 2.1 births per woman. Others have youthful and growing populations. And more people are on the move, either by choice or driven by crises ranging from conflict to climate change. Understanding these shifts is critical to harnessing opportunities and mitigating potential downsides.

People are the solution, not the problem. At UNFPA, we advocate for measuring and anticipating demographic changes. Each country should have the information it requires to meet the needs of diverse population groups and ensure that individuals can realise their full potential. When people have the power to make informed choices about whether and when to have children, when they can exercise their rights and responsibilities, they can navigate risks and become the foundation of more inclusive, adaptable and sustainable societies.

Achieving this demographic resilience starts with a commitment to counting not just numbers of people but also opportunities for progress and barriers that stand in the way. This calls for transforming discriminatory norms that hold individuals and societies back. It leads us to economies that work for all people instead of just a few, and to a fair use of resources so that we can mitigate risks and meet the needs of current and future generations.

We are each much more than a number, as is the human family. Numbers matter, but let's count carefully. A resilient world of eight billion, a world that upholds individual rights and choices, offers infinite possibilities for people, societies and our shared planet to thrive and prosper.

MESSAGE OF THE PS STATE DEPARTMENT FOR PLANNING MR. SAITOTI TOROME, CBS

As we mark this year's World Population Day, we wish to recognise and appreciate the progress that we have made as a nation on various population indicators, with the support of various stakeholders.

Remarkably, Kenya's life expectancy is improving. As at 2019, our life expectancy at birth was 61 and 67 years for males and females, respectively. This is an improvement from 2009 when the life expectancy at birth was 58 for males and 61 for females. Further, there has been reduction in preventable deaths and marginal reduction in dependency ratio.

Despite the progress made, the unacceptable level of incidents of gender based violence, new HIV infections, and pregnancy among adolescents, continue to draw us back. We must collectively address these challenges that dim the prospects of a promising future for our girls and women countrywide. Elimination of these challenges will put the country in a better position to harness its demographic potential and accelerate the achievement of the goals of Kenya Vision 2030, Agenda 2063 on the Africa we want, and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable



Development.

In May 2022, the Kenya Population Policy for Sustainable Development was approved by the Cabinet. This progressive policy will now be presented to Parliament for adoption as a Sessional Paper. The goal of the policy is to attain a society in which all the people are secure, healthy, broadly educated and empowered for improved quality of life for current and future generations. No doubt, this new policy will add to the impetus of development programmes and policies in addressing the pressing needs of the country's population, including the elimination of incidents of gender-based violence, new HIV infections, and pregnancy among adolescents.

MESSAGE BY THE DIRECTOR GENERAL, NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR POPULATION DEVELOPMENT, DR. MOHAMED A. SHEIKH

The 2022 World Population Day comes at a time when the entire globe is recovering from the effects of the Covid19 Pandemic and many other challenges affecting the wellbeing of humanity. We also mark this day when our Global Population is expected to hit eight billion in November 2022, up from the seven billion in 2011.

Looking at the past population trends across the world, we have made remarkable progress, and still there is work ahead. In Kenya, we are faced with the challenge of Triple Threat, which we are addressing in a multi-sectoral approach to save our future generation. Teen pregnancy continues to have a significant impact on society, teen parents themselves, and the children born.

As a council, we continue to work closely with all stakeholders on population issues and in developing solutions to address especially the issue of teenage pregnancy. I am glad the efforts to address teenage pregnancy through a coordinated formation of committees at various levels, starting with Principal Secretaries at the national level and County Commissioners at the county level, are bearing fruit. We have further coordinated the formation of Parents and Teachers Association Networks in the counties, and cascading these networks to the lower levels of society to discuss how to engage adolescents.

NCPD remains committed to closely working with all stakeholders, both at the national and county levels, to address cross-cutting population issues for the wellbeing of the Kenyan people.



Silent Pandemic: The Triple Threat of New HIV Infections, GBV and Pregnancy among Adolescents

The Kenya Population and Housing Census 2019 discloses that adolescents (age 10-19) constitute about one quarter of Kenya's total population. This group forms the next cohort of young adults in whose human capital potential will be essential to drive the country's sustainable development aspirations for decades to come. However, there are some significant obstacles in the way of these young people that could severely undermine their abilities to realise their full potential and for the country to benefit from the demographic dividend.

In Kenya, the *Triple Threat of Pregnancy, New HIV Infections and Gender-Based Violence (GBV)*, has been identified as a major challenge among adolescents, threatening their future. The three issues are often interlinked. For example, GBV of a sexual nature can lead to HIV infection and pregnancy, while HIV infection can result in partner-conflict

and GBV. A sexual encounter can result in all three threats.

The prevalence of teenage pregnancy and early child bearing are persistent and unacceptably high. Data from the 2019 census indicate that nationally, 10 percent of adolescent girls, aged 15-19, had given birth to one or more children. Notably, there are significant variations across the country that call for targeted action at sub-national level. About a half of the counties report higher percentages of adolescent pregnancy than the national average. Samburu (18 percent), Migori (17.9 percent), Narok (17.5 percent), Mandera (16.8 percent) and West Pokot (16.7 percent) are the five counties with the highest proportions of adolescents, aged 15-19, who have given birth. Nyeri (4.2 percent), Nyandarua (5.3 percent), Makueni (5.3 percent), Kiambu (5.7 percent) and Machakos (6.4 percent) have the lowest prevalence.

The consequences associated with unin-

tended pregnancy can be devastating. According to the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census analytical report on gender dimensions, pregnant teenagers face many socio-economic challenges. These include social stigma, lower education levels due to dropout as a result of pregnancy, and poverty, among other issues. Teenage girls with lower educational attainment are more likely to become mothers than those with higher educational attainment. This further denies them opportunities for self-development, making them vulnerable to gender-based violence and greater poverty.

Ending AIDS as a public health threat is a key priority for Kenya. Great strides have been made in the last decade towards the reduction of new HIV infections. The *Kenya World AIDS Day Progress Report 2013-2021* reported an impressive reduction in new HIV infections in the country from 101,560 in 2013 to 32,027 in 2021.

The report shows that while the trend in fewer new cases was noted across all age groups, a major concern is that most of the new HIV cases are among adolescents and young people. In 2020, adolescents and young people between 15 and 24 years accounted for 42 percent of new cases, with Nairobi, Homa Bay, Uasin Gishu and Meru counties registering the highest numbers.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, HIV testing among adolescents 10-19 dropped by 71 percent among boys and 52 percent among girls. Despite

this reduction, the proportion of new HIV infections was higher among boys (1.9 percent) and girls (1.67 percent) aged 10-14, compared to the older adolescents. However, girls 15-19 reported half the burden of infection at 51 percent. Kajiado reported the highest HIV positivity rate at the county level among adolescents who newly took HIV tests at health facilities across the country in 2021.

Despite policies and legislations to protect girls and boys from Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), its occurrence is widespread in the country among adolescents. According to data collected at health facilities across the country, there was a three-fold increase in reported cases of SGBV among adolescents 10-17 between 2018 and 2021. At the county level, between 2018 and 2021, more than three quarters (77 percent) of cases of SGBV among adolescents (10-17) were reported in 15 counties, with Kisumu, Nairobi and Kilifi taking the lead. Almost half (45.4 percent) of the cases were reported in Nairobi, Kilifi, Siaya, Bungoma, Kisumu and Nakuru.

The triple threat has adverse effects on population and development. Foremost, adolescent pregnancy contributes to higher fertility that leads to rapid population growth. It is also a leading cause of maternal death. Second, the triple threat increases the burden on essential social service, including healthcare and education, with little to spare for investments for economic

growth that would spur opportunities for the large youthful population. Third, the three threats work in concert to undermine girls' and women's rights and empowerment, while narrowing women's opportunities for meaningful participation in development. Overall, the triple threat perpetuates poverty at family, societal and national levels.

For the country to make progress concerning ending the triple threat, education for both boys and girls has to be prioritised by all stakeholders. Higher education attainment is, among others, associated with lower risk of child marriages and early child-bearing, less vulnerability to GBV, better health seeking behaviour, and increased potential earnings in adulthood. In this regard, the Government of Kenya has heavily invested in providing basic education for all children and committed to ensuring 100 percent transition to secondary education. However, much more effort has to be made to achieve this milestone. According to the Kenya Economic Survey Report of 2022, the primary to secondary school transition rate dropped by 12.5 percent between 2020 and 2021. Further, a 2022 UN Women report observes that 17 percent of girls and 13 percent of boys in Kenya, 15-19 years old, are neither in school, training of any sort, nor in employment.

Building a Resilient Future

While Kenya has developed and implemented appropriate policies and programmes to promote the sexual and reproductive health of the population, poverty, myths and misconceptions about family planning, climate change, and gender inequality continue to impede the achievement of population and health programme targets.

Therefore, there is a need to increase advocacy on the population programme, enhance reproductive health information to improve adolescents' knowledge, promote prevention strategies and leave no one behind. Traditional and social norms that encourage harmful practices, including child-marriages, female genital mutilation and GBV, must also be decisively addressed. Efforts to build resilience on matters of climate change while improving environmental conservation must be revitalised.

To address these challenges, the government and its partners made key commitments in 2019 during the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD25) that was hosted in Nairobi, Kenya. The Kenya Country Commitments address the Triple Threat and aspirations of the young people. For example, the first Commitment endeavours to ensure young people attain the highest possible standard of health. Other critical commitments prioritise education, skills development and youth empowerment, all geared towards harnessing Kenya's demographic potential.

By fully implementing the Commitments, the country will be on a sound footing for building a resilient future.

Percentage of adolescents (aged 15-19) who had given birth to one or more children (Kenya Population and Housing Census 2019)

