



# AFPPD Needs Assessment

2021

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## I. Objectives:

The Needs Assessment was conducted for understanding how AFPPD can best serve our member countries to fulfill the ICPD PoA (Cairo/Nairobi+25) and the SDGs by the year 2030. More specifically, it examined the effectiveness of AFPPD's Strategy for 2016-2019, with its emphasis on:

- Strengthening the capacity of members of parliamentarians, and of the National Committee, to advocate for Population and Development, specifically in the areas of Ageing, Youth and Gender;
- Providing capacity-building with focus on the availability and usage of information, data and research and media relations; and
- Providing platforms for knowledge transfer and policy dialogue with focus on international partnership and mentorship.

The Needs Assessment examined the relevance of the above emphases, and also sought new foci and directions for AFPPD's new strategy to be developed for 2022-2025.

## II. Methodology:

The questionnaires were sent to all 33 member countries on March 9, 2021. Thirteen responses from 11 countries were received (Appendix 1-A). Following up on the questionnaires, interviews were conducted with the members of parliament and national committees of 6 countries (Appendix 1-B).

## III. Limitations and Key Challenges of the Assessment:

The response to the questionnaires varied to a great extent among the 5 regions. There was no response received from **Central Asia**<sup>1</sup>. One response was received from **East Asia**<sup>2</sup> and from the **Pacific Region**<sup>3</sup>. The majority of responses was received from **South Asia**<sup>4</sup> and **Southeast Asia**<sup>5</sup>. Also, the majority of responses was from countries where commitment to population and development issues is strong and the legislative framework has been well established.

Most likely, the degree of the responses coincided with the degree of the commitment to AFPPD's activities. However, the Assessment was not able to identify the needs of those countries that were less responsive to the questionnaire.

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<sup>1</sup> Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan

<sup>2</sup> China, Japan, Korea, Mongolia

<sup>3</sup> Australia, Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Tuvalu

<sup>4</sup> Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Iran, Nepal, Pakistan, Maldives, Sri Lanka

<sup>5</sup> Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste, Vietnam

This Assessment was useful to learn about successful examples and practices and the needs for implementing and modifying fundamental policies and legislation on population and development. This is to confirm that AFPPD has been supported by limited core member countries. Mutually beneficial relationships have been established between AFPPD and these countries, developing synergy for achieving the ICPD Commitments. However, the Assessment was not useful for identifying the needs of those countries that were less responsive to the questionnaires. The reasons for less responsiveness might be attributed to the fact that population and development is no longer a country's policy priority because the ICPD Commitments and SDGs have already been achieved or on track to achievement, or, the countries lack a strong commitment to, and leadership for, population and development issues. As response to questionnaires and arrangements for follow-up interviews were led by members of the National Committees, the lack of responses might also be attributed to weak or practically no existent National Committees.

#### **IV. Findings:**

**More than 80% of questionnaire responses assessed their country's commitment to population and development issues as high or sufficient:**

- 6 responses (54.5%) assessed "highly committed"
- 3 responses (27.3%) assessed "committed"
- 2 responses (18.2%) assessed "somewhat committed"
- No response assessed "no commitment"

**Implementing and monitoring existing laws and policies needs to be strengthened:** Even in the countries where the legal and policy framework has been well established, implementing existing laws and policies is not easy. Parliamentarians can play a larger role by closely monitoring the implementation of laws and policies, and, by advocating for population and development policies among fellow parliamentarians and citizens.

**Ensuring adequate budget appropriation for population and development issues to be included in annual budgets.** Many respondents expressed significant concern over reductions in budgets as a result of reallocation of public finance to more imminent threats and problems directly related to COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, budgetary resources related to sexuality education and family planning have been reduced due to COVID-19 pandemic.

**AFPPD's three focused areas of Ageing, Youth and Gender are equally important for most countries.** Based on multiple choices:

- 10 responses (90.9%) regarded the issues of "Youth" as the national priority
- 7 responses (63.6%) regarded the issues of "Gender" as the national priority
- 6 responses (54.5%) regarded issues of "Ageing" as the national priority

More specifically, the respondents want AFPPD to focus on:

- **Youth education** for employment—while some countries are paying more attention to demographic dividend, youth unemployment remains a serious problem for many countries. For small countries, in particular, there are not enough training opportunities for youth.
- **Children’s issues**—particularly, on adolescent pregnancy, which has been declared a social emergency for some member countries; and, child marriages, as well as the exploitation of children by technology, especially by the Internet.
- **The Gender Gap and the empowerment of women**—according to the latest World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Report, progress in Asia in this area lags behind other regions in general, especially in the political empowerment of women.
- **Ageing**—populations in Asia are ageing rapidly, but too few organizations/institutions are tackling this issue.
- **Immigration**—COVID-19 has increased the need for health services and family planning provided to migrant populations and other vulnerable groups.
- **Strengthening advocacy and sensitization**--given the broad range of issues for which to advocate, continuing and sustainable efforts to sensitize parliamentarians and citizens are needed. To build the support of the parliamentarians’ constituencies, and to achieve the best results, it is advisable to expand advocacy and sensitization programs, not only at the central government level but also at the local government level.
- **Strengthening and capacitating National Committees**--building the capacity of the NC secretariat is as important as building the capacity of parliamentarians. There are established and well-functioning NCs, consisting of over 50 elected members in Asia. Such NCs have a secretariat with full-time dedicated staff working for them; therefore, secretariats are more permanent and ensure the sustainability of NCs. Skills in advocacy and communication, resource generation, and the utilization of new technologies (e.g., social media mobilization) are vital to establishing and strengthening NCs. Well-established NCs are mostly financed by international organizations with limited or non-existent financial support from national governments. Almost all NC secretariats are concerned about financial resources. A transition mechanism to solicit governmental support or other means of resources is needed.

## V. Suggestions/Recommendations

Among the interviewees, there was consensus to continue with the emphases laid out in the Strategy for 2016-2019 as a basis for AFPPD’s new strategic response. In their views, AFPPD’s most important role and function is to provide a platform for members to exchange and share knowledge, especially reporting on “best practices” of other countries so that the capacity to advocate for population and development issues will be strengthened.

Because the advancement towards ICPD Commitments differs so much, and the national priorities and capacities of member countries differ to a great extent, a one-size-fits-all approach won't work.

**More country-specific programs, initiated and led by National Committees with the support of AFPPD, are encouraged.** With input from parliamentarians, agenda-setting and topic-selection should correlate with a country's needs and priorities. In-country sensitization/advocacy workshops can be an effective way to identify potential advocacy champions of particular issues. Such identified potential champions (as a small group) will receive intensive training—either in a selected-country and/or by the Peer-to-Peer Advocacy Program organized by AFPPD.

**Inter-country study-visits can reinforce MP's knowledge of, and commitment to, particular issues** and can help create solidarity among different countries striving to bring the issues up to the regional and global level.

**It is important for AFPPD to be a repository of research and data for population and development issues.** Research papers and other useful information--about policy guidance, in particular--should be collated on a regular basis and be readily available on the AFPPD website. To disseminate the up-to-date information and work programs of AFPPD, the publication of a quarterly newsletter and/or fact sheet is highly recommended.

**A capacity-needs assessment shall be conducted to identify the specific needs of those countries where the ICPD Commitments have been challenged and restrained by slow progress towards the achievement of SDGs.** Such an Assessment can be useful for expanding the engagement of members beyond the core supporters.

**The retired MPs' experience and leadership can be well utilized,** especially as in-country, or even international, mentors to adjust and compensate for the changes of MPs.

**Resource mobilization is the concern.** Finding a way to tap into those resources beyond international organizations to strengthen and sustain National Committees is key to fulfilling ICPD Commitments and SDGs. An innovative approach, such as providing a platform where National Committees and potential funding partners can be connected, needs serious consideration. Even a small grant would significantly assist National Committees to expand their functions and advocacy efforts.

## Appendix

### (A) List of Respondents to Questionnaires

Country	Name	Position/Affiliation
Bangladesh	Hon. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury	Member of Parliament
Bangladesh	Mr. Kamal Billah	Member of the National Committee
Bhutan	Mr. Tsyewahg Norbu	Staff
Cambodia	Hon. Damry OUK	Member of Parliament
India	Hon. Viplove Thakur	Member of Parliament
India	Mr. Manmohan Sharma	Member of the National Committee
Indonesia	Hon. Ermalena MHS	Member of the National Committee
Iran	Mr. Kambiz Kabiri	UNFPA
Mongolia	Ms. Otgon Majaa	Adviser of the Legal Dept. of the Parliament Secretariat
Pakistan	Mr. Rahim Shah	Staff
Philippines	Ms. Nenita Dalde	Member of the National Committee
Tonga	Hon. Lord Tu'ivakano	Member of Parliament
Vietnam	Ms. Vu Thi Binh Minh	Staff

### (B) List of Interviewees

Country	Name	Interview date/time (in D.C.)
Philippines	Ms. Nenita Dalde	March 19, 9 AM
	Hon. Maria Lourdes Acosta-Alba	March 27, 10 AM
Vietnam	Dr. Nguyen Van Tien	March 28, 11 PM
	Mr. Đinh Ngọc Quy	
	Ms. Vu Thi Binh Minh	
India	Hon. Viplove Thakur	March 30, 12 AM
	Mr. Manmohan Sharma	
Indonesia	Hon. Ermalena MHS	March 31, 3 AM
Cambodia	Hon. Damry OUK	April 1, 9 AM
Bangladesh	Hon. Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury	April 6, 9 AM
	Mr. Kamal Billah	