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4D – Dialogues on Demographic Diversity and Dividends

Data for Demographic Dividend(s)

Introduction

Harnessing a demographic dividend holds great potential for a country's socioeconomic development and progress towards reaching the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, in order to benefit from a demographic dividend, investments in the empowerment, health, education and employment of (young) people are key. This requires careful planning and decision-making based on sound knowledge about how many people are living in a country or region, where they live, how old they are, what needs they have. Therefore, having access to reliable, timely, disaggregated and internationally comparable data is important for planners, governments and national as well as international organizations.

Despite great efforts to improve the availability and use of necessary data, many challenges remain. In many countries the collection of demographic data as well as data on health, education or employment is mostly conducted by external agencies (and/or with support of international organizations) at sometimes large or irregular intervals. Since many surveys often do not cover the whole population, the collected data may provide an insufficient basis for mapping the needs of the entire population. What is more, data is often not processed and analyzed sufficiently and due to lack of interpretation skills not utilized for planning processes. Thus, there is a need to ensure national ownership and to strengthen the capacities of the public and private sector with regard to the collection and analysis of demographic data.

The need to close these data gaps has been repeatedly reiterated ever since the adoption of the ICPD Programme of Action in 1994. After the international community confirmed their commitments to accelerate progress towards achieving the ICPD promise at the Nairobi Summit last year, it is now time to become active and to step up efforts in the collection and analysis of disaggregated population data. The same holds true for the Agenda 2030 and the AU Agenda 2063, which have underlined the importance of providing aggregated data for monitoring and evaluation processes.

Need for Action

- **Strengthen data collection**

In order to leave no one behind, high-quality data – disaggregated by sex, age and other relevant categories – are required at international, national and local levels. It is therefore important to strengthen national statistics systems, including population censuses, household surveys, civil registration and vital statistics (CRVS) as well as the development of information systems for improving data on health, education and employment. Thereby, making use of new methods such as, for example, gridded population data generation (geospatial data), mobile phones or community participation to collect “big data”, need to be further strengthened as well as the necessary institutional framework conditions and technical infrastructure.

- **Democratizing data and safeguarding rights**

Population trends and the possibility of a demographic dividend can only shape national development in a positive manner when population and household data are widely accessible and utilized as a public good. At the same time, safeguarding the rights of respondents to privacy and confidentiality need to be ensured at all times.

- **Further improve data analysis, use and communication**

The collection and production of population data alone is not sufficient, but must be complemented by strong efforts to ensure the analysis and use of data for policymaking. Until now, many countries that undertake censuses lack, for example, the ability to process, analyze and use generated data for development planning. To this end, capacities in national statistical offices to prepare data for policy making, communication, stakeholder involvement and other purposes need to be further expanded.

- **Tools to monitor progress towards the demographic dividend**

Several tools have been developed to evaluate the outcomes towards a demographic dividend in different sectors – ranging from indices on human capital, data on education quality to statistics on the business environment – that are crucial for modelling, quantifying and monitoring progress. There are multiple tools at hand: It is necessary to make them known and to show how to use them.

- **Ensure financing and availability of needed resources**

In order to meet the need for accelerating improvements in data collection, processing and use the necessary financial means and resources must be mobilized. Governments, international organizations and private partners must therefore become active and establish reliable financing flows and mechanisms.

Best practices

Today, a growing number of analytic tools are available for improving data generation and processing, but since there is no “one-size-fits-all” approach, every country must decide for itself which ones are useful and best meet its own needs. Exchanging knowledge, experiences and best practices from different countries on different approaches and tools is key to achieving positive results.

- **Combined Census Method – Indonesia**

In Indonesia, a Combined Census Method was used in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic to survey the entire population of the country (including Indonesians living abroad) during at least one year. This was done via an online census and a self-filling questionnaire that had to be filled out. The data collection was based on Computer Aided Web Interviewing (CAWI) and Pencil and Paper Interviewing (PAPI). Administrative data, telecommunication data with permission of users, data from the police force as well as geospatial data were used in combination. These were synchronized with all relevant institutions. The result: more than 50 million people responded. But one challenge persists: the data needs to be matched by region and individual.

- **Cross-Cutting Initiative – Togo**

In Togo, a cross-cutting initiative on “Population Dynamics in National Sector Planning” was embarked to better orient the country’s planning processes towards mid- and long-term demographic developments. The output of the initiative, which was active from March 2015 to March 2016 in three medium-sized cities, motivated Togo’s Ministry of Development Planning to pursue the population dynamics approach in its Five-Year and 2030 Vision plans as well as extending it to other ministries. An initial assessment of the collection and use of demographic data created awareness of the gaps that needed to be filled and pointed to appropriate training for planners. Based on existing data, the Directorate of Population Studies then developed its first sector-specific prospective demographic studies. A *‘Guide for integrating population dynamics in national planning’* was produced and widely disseminated. It is now used both for training and planning, including budgetary allocation, and is part of an oversight structure to ensure that population dynamics is integrated into all future planning in the country.

- **A digital bracelet after birth – Burkina Faso/Togo**

In parts of Burkina Faso and the city of Aného in Togo the Burkina-french enterprise “iCivil Africa” is testing a digital bracelet after birth since 2018. A QR code, similar to a personal reference number, is generated for every newborn child. This is mounted on a bracelet and provides information on the child’s name, parents and date of birth. This information is also transmitted to the nearest registry office via encrypted text message. Using the bracelet, the child can then be registered, and receive an official birth certificate. Thus, newborns are equipped with an individual proof of identity, with which they can later identify themselves to various institutions and exercise their rights. The bracelet remains in the family, providing family members with permanent proof of the birth and identity of the child.