



United Nations Population Fund
MYANMAR

THE MISSION OF UNFPA

UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, delivers a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled.

UNFPA - because everyone counts

NEWSLETTER

2012

Editorial

The year 2012 has been an exciting one for the UNFPA team in Myanmar since it represents the start of our Third Programme of Assistance to the country. UNFPA's Country Programme 2012-2015 has been crafted to meet the development needs of Myanmar in the areas of Reproductive Health, Population and Development, and Gender Equality and has been aligned with the country's development plans towards the achievement of the goals set out in the ICPD Programme of Action and the Millennium Declaration. The Country Programme also builds on good practices and lessons learned from previous Programmes of Assistance, thereby ensuring that all initiatives are strategic, results-oriented and intended to promote equity adopting a human rights-based approach.

The main objectives of our Third Programme of Assistance are to strengthen national capacity to: a) improve the availability of high-quality reproductive health care, including HIV prevention services among women, men, young people and populations most at risk; b) increase the availability of high-quality disaggregated data on population, reproductive health and gender; and c) promote gender equality and the advancement of women.

Among the many events that took place this year, two of the most notable were the visit of the UN Secretary General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon who led the exchange of Official Framing Letters for the upcoming 2014 Population and Housing Census between the UN and the Government, as well as, the visit of the UNFPA Executive Director, Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, to discuss the reform process currently underway in the country and to reaffirm UNFPA's continued support to national priorities. These high-level visits were significant to raising awareness about UNFPA's new Country Programme and the need for continued joint initiatives among the many development partners in the country.

Within the UNFPA technical areas – Reproductive Health, Population and Development and Gender Equality – there were also many interesting activities that took place this year, which you can read about in detail in this year's Newsletter. These activities represent the beginning of a five-year Programme that will seek to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in Myanmar. Among these activities, there have been several events highlighting the preparatory work for the Myanmar Population and Housing Census in 2014. The support received thus far from the Government and other national partners for this initiative has been tremendous and is reflective of the desire for up-to-date, accurate data on Myanmar's population. We hope to receive even more technical and financial support in 2013 as we move towards the pilot-census and further preparatory work.

UNFPA, Chair of the UN MDG Monitoring and Evaluation Group and the Gender Theme Group, has also worked closely with other sister UN agencies, the Government and NGOs to develop a joint MDG assessment report and gender situation analysis by mid-2013.

We, at UNFPA, are looking forward to continuing the implementation of this new Country Programme in 2013 and to working closely with our national and international partners to support the achievement of the country's development goals. We believe that only through partnerships can we effectively address the multi-faceted development challenges in Myanmar and so, we would like to thank all our partners from the Government, civil society and the donor community for their continued support and cooperation.

Mohamed Abdel-Ahad
UNFPA Representative

Central Census Commission prepares for 2014 Population and Housing Census

The Central Census Commission of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar organised its third meeting on October 10, 2012 to discuss preparations for the 2014 Population and Housing census.

In his opening address, Vice President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and Patron of the Central Census Commission Dr. Sai Mauk Kham urged all concerned parties to recognise the census as a national priority. U Khin Yi, the Minister of Immigration and Population and the Chairperson of the Commission reiterated Myanmar's close cooperation with UNFPA to provide technical assistance and to ensure that the census is conducted in accordance with international standards.

Mr. Mohamed Abdel-Ahad, UNFPA Representative highlighted the technical assistance provided by UNFPA thus far in a number of areas including questionnaire design, identification of data processing technology, mapping and cartography as well as the development of a plan for publicity, advocacy and communications on the census. A UNFPA Chief Technical Advisor on Census has been recruited to oversee the implementation of the census, transfer knowledge, establish quality control mechanisms and ensure adherence to international standards.

continued on page 2 



Vice President Dr. Sai Mauk Kham, the Patron of the Central Census Commission, together with members of the Central Census Commission viewing GIS mapping exercise in preparation for the 2014 Population and Housing census, on 10 October 2012 in Nay Pyi Taw. 

As it relates to resources for the census, Mr. Abdel-Ahad placed emphasis on the role of UNFPA in building the capacity of the human resources dedicated to working on the census through capacity development initiatives with national census staff in the form of on-the-job training, technical assistance and study visits.

However, in the area of financial resources, Mr. Abdel-Ahad commented, “Technical preparations for the census are on track, but there is a significant funding gap of \$ 38.5 million”. In response, Dr. Sai Mauk Kham said in his concluding remarks that: “We urge international development partners to support the census as a national development priority”.

The Central Census Commission is the highest coordinating body for the census. Other coordinating bodies include the Census Technical Committee, the Census Advisory Committee and the Census Budget Committee. The Government agreed to UNFPA’s advice of forming a Technical Advisory Board of prominent experts on census and other related disciplines to participate at key milestones of the census and provide advice and oversight to the Government.

A pilot census is scheduled on 30 March to 10 April 2013, while the actual census will take place during the same period in 2014. The preliminary results of the census are expected to be released in July 2014, while final results will be released in early 2015. The census is estimated to cost \$58.5 million, of which the Government and UNFPA have committed \$20 million, leaving a funding gap of \$38.5 million.



U Khin Yi, Minister of Immigration and Population and Chairperson the Central Census Commission reiterating cooperation with UNFPA for the 2014 Population and Housing Census at the 3rd meeting of the Commission on 10 October 2012, in Nay Pyi Taw.

Community Learning Centres promoting an integrated approach to gender equality

UNFPA and UNESCO have revitalized the Community Learning Centre Initiative to pilot an innovative and integrated approach to promoting gender equality and the advancement of women in a community setting. The pilot project is being implemented by François-Xavier Bagnoud (FXB)-Myanmar in Thahlaykwin and Kayinseik villages in Tanlyin township, Pyawbwey village in Twantay township and in Shwepyithar township.

The Community Learning Centres (CLCs) are now fully functional with trained peer educators who lead sensitization and education sessions to increase awareness among community members on reproductive health, HIV/AIDS prevention, gender equality and other health related topics. The Centre Library has been strengthened with new materials and reader groups have been formed that facilitate the sharing of experiences among community members and discussion on issues affecting families.

Vocational training in sewing, embroidery, candle-making, arts and craft have been provided to interested members in the community. Interest-free bridge loans have been provided to eligible women and men as capital for starting small and medium businesses in the community. Persons needing reproductive health services can access these through the mobile clinics that visit the various communities and in cases where referrals are needed, arrangements are made with health centres for the necessary care to be received.

In addition to peer education, FXB-Myanmar also uses theatre to discuss topics that are taboo in Myanmar society including reproductive health, HIV and STIs. This method is especially appropriate for Myanmar as the culture, social attitudes and religious beliefs in Myanmar make it difficult to discuss in the community. These theatrical presentations feature real stories from targeted communities to portray the social problems which can arise as a result of misconceptions about reproductive health, HIV/AIDS and gender equality issues. This edutainment technique has been used in all four CLCs and has proven to be a highly effective method of communication and education not only with youth but also with large groups of community members.

The revitalization of the CLCs and the use of their unique approaches will help to create common ground for men and women, both young and old to discuss and share information on issues of reproductive health and gender equality. This in turn, will help to promote positive behavior change among community members towards more healthy lifestyles.

The Community Learning Centre component was first introduced in Myanmar in 1994 as a small part of the education project under the Human Development Initiative (HDI) programme of UNDP, with the ultimate goal to empower individuals and communities and improve people’s quality of life through education and community development activities.

World Population Day 2012 : Moving towards Universal Access to Reproductive Health

UNFPA and the Ministry of Immigration and Population (MOIP) jointly organised a commemorative ceremony for World Population Day in Nay Pyi Taw on 11 July 2012 to recommit to the globally-agreed target of achieving universal access to reproductive health by 2015.

A wide range of stakeholders from the government, civil society, the United Nations and the diplomatic community attended the event. In his opening address, Dr. Sai Mauk Kham, Vice President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar elaborated on the significance of this year's theme "Universal Access to Reproductive Health Services" and commended doctors, nurses, midwives, contraceptive services providers, youth-friendly services and those who provide services to the poor, the displaced, and the disabled, among others. He pledged Myanmar's cooperation with the nations of the world to achieve the goals of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action and MDGs with emphasis on universal access to reproductive health.

Mr. Ashok Nigan, UNDP Representative and UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, delivered the UN Secretary General's message on World Population Day that called for urgent, concerted action by Member States to improve access to reproductive health care. The Secretary-General urged countries to mainstream reproductive health and rights into all development and poverty reduction plans and reminded countries that investing in universal access to reproductive health is a crucial investment in healthy societies and a more sustainable future.



Vice President Dr. Sai Mauk Kham delivering the opening address at the commemorative ceremony for World Population Day in Nay Pyi Taw on 11 July 2012.

Mr. Mohamed Abdel-Ahad, UNFPA Representative underscored the importance of universal access to reproductive health as a fundamental human right with far-reaching health, social and economic benefits. He commended the Ministry of Health for its leadership in reproductive health care; the donor community for their recent initiatives to increase investments in health-related MDGs; and NGOs and UN sister agencies for their collaborative efforts to implement such initiatives and called for more effective coordination, synergies and complementarity among such initiatives to maximizing their impact. He also pointed out that funding is shrinking at a critical time when 1.8 billion young people aged 15-24 are entering their reproductive years and are urgently in need of quality family planning information and services. Many poor and low income countries are unable to meet their needs of contraceptives as they rely heavily on donor support.

"There is a need to build on existing political will to bridge remaining gaps in laws, policies and funding and address health system issues to accelerate progress towards universal access to reproductive health," he added.

Winners of photo and article competitions on universal access to reproductive health services were awarded gifts at the commemorative ceremony. To recognise the front-line champions who help to increase access to reproductive health, five outstanding midwives were honoured and awarded for their outstanding contributions to saving the lives of women and children.



Five outstanding midwives who helped to increase access to Reproductive Health services were honored and awarded at the commemorative ceremony for World Population Day 2012.

Government committed to International Standards on Census

On April 30, 2012, the Government of Myanmar signed and exchanged Framing Letters with the United Nations on the visit of the UN Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon to Myanmar. Organised by the Ministry of Immigration and Population, this signing ceremony symbolized the commitment of the Government to adhere to the International Standards in its conduct of the 2014 Population and Housing Census in Myanmar.

The Government is developing census plans with support from UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, including expertise on listing households, developing enumeration maps, training enumerators, setting up information technology infrastructure, processing data, and analysing and disseminating the results.

Speaking at the signing, the Secretary-General said he was “very encouraged by the Government’s strong commitment to the project”, and urged donors to support it. Under-Secretary-General Vijay Nambiar, the Secretary-General’s Special Adviser on Myanmar, presented a letter to U Khin Yi, the Minister of Immigration and Population, with the key principles that meet the international standards for census-taking. U Khin Yi signed a letter in response confirming the Government’s commitment to these principles.

Mr. Nambiar stated that the census “will provide important benchmark data for national development planning and assessment, including the impact of the launched reforms”. The principles laid out in the Framing Letters stressed that for a credible census to be conducted, the following requirements will need to be met:

- Updated laws to define responsibility, set the scope and timing, secure funding, and oblige enumerators to report accurately and the public to cooperate. Confidentiality must be guaranteed to ensure cooperation.
- The census must be universal and inclusive of all national races - enumerators must have unimpeded access to all regions of the country.
- A well-structured administration that pools resources from various national institutions will be needed for the census.
- A consultative body involving local and national government agencies, NGOs, community representatives and professional associations was recommended.
- A national information campaign to inform the public about the census objectives, content and methods, and their rights and obligations will be needed.
- Global standards for census-taking, approved by the United Nations Statistical Commission, must be followed.

The Secretary-General observed that training people to conduct the census will be challenging, given Myanmar’s lack of recent experience. Another challenge will be to gain access to the whole country. “I hope that current and future ceasefires will make this possible. The involvement of minorities and civil society will be crucial”, he added. Vice-President Dr Sai Mauk Kham said the 2014 census is a priority for Myanmar and thanked the Secretary-General for his support. He said the Government “will cooperate closely with UNFPA to oversee the quality of the census so that the result will be accurate and up to international standards”.



UN Secretary-General Mr. Ban Ki-moon, Vice President Dr. Sai Mauk Kham, UN Under-Secretary-General Vijay Nambiar, Minister of Immigration and Population (MOIP) U Khin Yi and partners from UN and Government at the Official Exchange of Letters between UN and MOIP for the 2014 Population and Housing Census in Myanmar.

Parliamentarians support the Census

Plans for Myanmar's 2014 Population and Housing Census were discussed with lawmakers and members of the National Commission on Population and Development on May 3, 2012 in a forum organized by UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund and the Ministry of Immigration and Population.

This Forum took place on the heels of the formal exchange of Framing Letters between the Government of Myanmar and the United Nations to conduct the 2014 census in accordance with international standards. The event was also the first gathering of Myanmar's newly established Parliamentary Committee on Population and Social Development.

The purpose of the Forum was to share and discuss the Census Plan and to receive the commitment of Parliamentarians for a successful census in Myanmar. U Khin Yi, Chairperson of the National Commission on Population and Development, told the Forum that "A successful census will require broad and effective partnership involving various government sectors, parliamentarians, civil society, the private sector and international organizations". He continued by stating "It will be the role of the Commission to help facilitate that partnership".

The Parliamentary Committee Chairperson U Maung Maung Swe agreed and said that data obtained from the

census will be linked to national planning. He called on all stakeholders to cooperate in undertaking the 2014 census.

UNFPA Representative Mohamed Abdel-Ahad echoed the sentiments of the Parliamentarians for stakeholders' cooperation when he said that the census would be an essential tool for developing responsive policies. He added that "Censuses generate accurate information on population growth and help to estimate current and future needs, including needs for schools, teachers, hospitals, doctors, nurses and employment opportunities, housing, and social security and safety nets."

Throughout the Forum, the National Commission and the Parliamentary Committee members discussed a number of issues which included:

- The content of the census questionnaire
- Inclusiveness in the census of all the territories of Myanmar including coverage of remote areas
- The need to mobilize local authorities and constituencies to support the census at state, region, township and lower administrative levels.
- Communications activities using various channels—including the media, local leaders, faith-based organizations and community volunteers—needed to create public awareness about the census.



Members of the National Commission on Population and Development and Parliamentarians from the Parliamentary Committee on Population and Social Development discussing plans for 2014 Population and Housing Census, in Nay Pyi Taw on 3 May 2012.

Celebrating International Women's Day 2012 : Connecting Girls, Inspiring Futures

In collaboration with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement and the Women Protection Technical Working Group (WPTWG) consisting of faith-based organisations, community-based organisations and local NGOs, UNFPA celebrated International Women's Day 2012 in Nay Pyi Taw on 8 March, and in Yangon on 12 March under the Global Theme - 'Connecting Girls, Inspiring Futures'.

In Nay Pyi Taw, a wide range of stakeholders from the government, civil society, UN and the diplomatic corps attended the commemorative event. In his opening address, Dr. Sai Mauk Kham, Vice President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, urged women to take part in rural development, environmental preservation and management as well as natural disaster preparedness under the guidance and leadership of the State. He also recognized efforts to promote health and socio-economic status of women and called for the sustainability and acceleration of good practices made by the Myanmar Women's groups including Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation (MWAFF), Maternal and Child Welfare Association (MMCWA), Myanmar Women Entrepreneur's Association (MWEA) and all local and international NGOs that are working for the welfare of women in different areas. "It is obvious that women's capability and gender equality are critical roles for the comprehensive development of the nation." he said.



Dr. Thet Thet Zin, President of MWAFF sharing the objectives and future work plans for the enhancement of the role of Myanmar women at the celebration of International Women's Day 2012, in Nay Pyi Taw on 8 March 2012.

The official message of the Executive Director of UNFPA, Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, highlighted that rural women have limited autonomy and low status, which puts them at increased risk of hunger, gender-based violence and other human rights violations. "Advancing rural women's political, social and economic status are vital ends in themselves as well as critical strategies to eradicate poverty, promote women's rights and pave the way for sustainable development". He called on all stakeholders to join efforts in promoting women's health, education and rights and to improve gender equality and build a world of opportunity where every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe and every young person can fulfill their potential.

International Women's Day was also celebrated in Yangon on 12 March 2012 led by NGO Gender Group, Thingaha Gender Working Group, Women Organisation's Network of Myanmar (WON) and Women Protection Technical Working Group (WPTWG). Photo and video documentations, and advocacy materials were displayed at the 20 booths.

Through the International Women's Day, all stakeholders, including government organizations and non-government organizations are called to fully collaborate and cooperate in the advancement of women, especially for the empowerment of rural women.



Stakeholders from government, civil society including MWAFF, MMCWA, MWEA and local and international NGOs, UN and diplomatic corps attending the celebration of International Women's Day 2012, in Nay Pyi Taw on 8 March 2012.

UNFPA Executive Director makes first visit to Myanmar



Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, UNFPA Executive Director and Under Secretary-General of the United Nations meeting with President U Thein Sein and key national leaders in Nay Pyi Taw on 27 August 2012 to explore further support for Myanmar development.

Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director of UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, made a three-day visit to Myanmar in August where he met with key national leaders to explore how the Fund can further support Myanmar's development and its reform process. During his visit, Dr. Osotimehin met with President U Thein Sein to discuss UNFPA's continued support towards the 2014 Census; ways to strengthen reproductive health services in Myanmar; and, the need for a comprehensive youth policy. Dr. Osotimehin stressed the importance of following UN international standards for conducting a census and including all population groups in the count. The President was appreciative of the visit by the Executive Director and also on UNFPA's support to the development of Myanmar.

The Executive Director also met with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, to seek her support in addressing shared concerns such as the well-being and empowerment of young people and women's reproductive health in Myanmar. Their discussions focused on the need to improve maternal health care and make contraceptive methods more available to women in Myanmar in order to reduce unintended pregnancies and abortions and to save lives.

Dr. Osotimehin also met Minister of Health Dr. Pe Thet Khin, the Speaker of Parliament Thura U Shwe Mann, members of the Parliamentary Committee on Population and Social Development, other senior government figures and members of Parliament. During these meetings, the Executive Director highlighted some of the areas needing support in Myanmar's plan to achieve universal access to reproductive health. He stated the need for increasing supplies of quality reproductive health commodities; for enhancing the skills of health workers including midwives and skilled birth attendants; for revising policies; for addressing legal barriers; and for ensuring adequate funding for development plans.

On the last day of his visit, Dr. Osotimehin wrapped up his three-day visit to Myanmar with a meeting of young reproductive health advocates and private sector leaders. The UNFPA Executive Director listened attentively to the participants in the Myanmar Medical Association's Youth Development Programme on their efforts to raise young people's awareness on reproductive health issues including HIV prevention in Myanmar. Dr. Osotimehin remarked that empowering young people is a priority for UNFPA, and told them that the national leaders he met with in Nay Pyi Taw had welcomed his offer to help the country engage young people in developing policies to promote their health, education and employment prospects. He further encouraged the young people to develop their capacity and act as change agents. These encouraging words along with the show of commitment by UNFPA were greatly appreciated by the young people and they committed to continue working towards the overall development of their country.



Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, UNFPA Executive Director and Under Secretary-General of the United Nations met with Noble Laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi on 27 August 2012, in Nay Pyi Taw, to seek support in addressing shared concerns on the well-being and empowerment of youth and women's reproductive health in Myanmar.

London Summit on Family Planning

Local partners reaffirm commitment to Birth Spacing in Myanmar



Representatives from the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID), Marie Stopes International (MSI) and UNFPA at the press briefing on 11 July 2012, in Nay Pyi Taw, to support the call of the London Summit on Family Planning for more collaborative efforts to satisfy unmet need for voluntary family planning services in Myanmar.

On July 11, 2012 the UK Government and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, in partnership with UNFPA launched a groundbreaking effort to make available affordable, lifesaving contraceptive information, services, and supplies to an additional 120 million women and girls in the world's poorest countries by 2020. At this London Summit on Family Planning, global commitments were made to make high quality, voluntary family planning services more available, acceptable and affordable. Strategies to strengthen family planning programmes were recommended and included the integration of family planning into broader reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health programmes, including HIV services.

In Myanmar on the same day, the UK's development agency—Department for International Development (DFID), Marie Stopes International and UNFPA organized a press briefing to support the Summit's call for more concerted and collaborative efforts to satisfy unmet need for voluntary family planning services, prevent unintended pregnancies and abortion, and reduce maternal and infant mortality.

At the press conference, officials announced that the Government of Myanmar increased the budget for health and the Department of Health created a budget line for contraceptives to improve the health of mothers and children. In the same vein, the United Kingdom and other donors stated that they will provide new funding to accelerate achievement of health MDGs in Myanmar. "The UK is committed to improving maternal and child health globally and in Myanmar," noted Paul Whittingham, DFID Director for Myanmar. Mr. Whittingham said his Government intends to contribute £80 million over the next four years to the multi-donor Three MDG Fund for health in Myanmar. "Through this contribution, the UK will help avert 153,000 unwanted pregnancies and ensure that 57,500 women receive antenatal care visits," he stated.

Family planning, or as termed in Myanmar by the Ministry of Health, birth-spacing, is about saving lives, and protecting mothers and children from death, ill health, disability and under development. As a key component of reproductive health, access to birth-spacing information, commodities and services is a fundamental right for every woman and community if they are to develop to their fullest potential. "Marie Stopes International in Myanmar, with the leadership of the Department of Health, and together with local and international NGOs, serves to improve access to those needs for the communities in Myanmar—particularly the underserved," noted Dr. Sid Naing, Director, Marie Stopes International in Myanmar.

Over the past 30 years, UNFPA has supported reproductive health programmes in Myanmar in partnership with the Ministry of Health and NGOs, and has been the main supplier of contraceptives to the country. Despite that support, Mr. Abdel-Ahad, UNFPA Representative for Myanmar noted, "Nearly one fourth of Myanmar married women of reproductive age would like to practise contraception but do not have the means to do so." He said efforts by the Government and development partners to ensure the availability of modern contraceptives are critical to prevent unsafe abortion - the leading cause of maternal death and disability in the country.



Local media personnel and representatives from the United Kingdom Department for International Development (DFID) attending a Press Briefing to support the call for more collaborative efforts of London Summit on Family Planning, in Nay Pyi Taw, on 11 July 2012.

UNFPA State of World Population Report 2012

9

By choice, not by chance:

Family Planning, Human Rights and Development



At the launching of the State of World Population Report 2012, in Nay Pyi Taw on 14 November 2012, Mr. Mohamed Abdel-Ahad, UNFPA Representative presenting the importance of Family Planning that have impact on significant health, social and economic benefits.

UNFPA and the Ministry of Health jointly launched the 2012 State of World Population Report in Nay Pyi Taw on 14 November 2012, under the theme “By choice, not by chance: family planning, human rights and development” which highlights access to family planning as an essential human right that can unlock unprecedented rewards for socio-economic development.

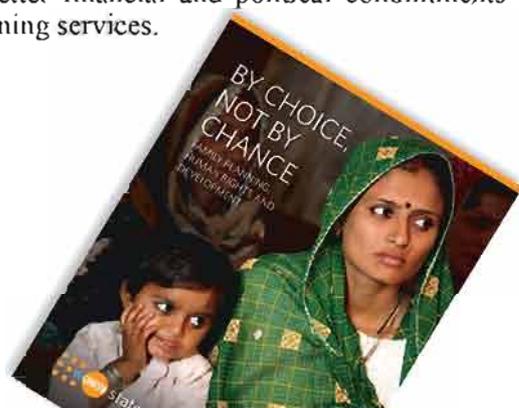
The State of World Population Report 2012 focuses on family planning and rights and emphasizes the fact that it is the right of all to make decisions concerning reproduction free of discrimination, coercion and violence. The report explains why family planning is a human right for individuals in both developing and developed countries. It synthesizes several frameworks for health, reproductive health, and family planning, while elevating the discussion about the importance of engaging men. It also explains how sexual behaviour changes in different social contexts and across age groups is increasingly at variance with old patterns about sexuality, which represent a barrier to making family planning available and accessible to all.

In her opening address at the launching ceremony, Dr. Nilar Tin, Deputy Director General of the Department of Health, indicated that the Ministry of Health has attached priority to maternal and child health care in its National Health Plan for Myanmar. She also stated that the Ministry of Health established a national budget line to cover part of the needs for birth spacing commodities in Myanmar and emphasized the importance of cooperation among Ministries, UN agencies and non-governmental organizations in meeting the goals set out in the National Health Plan. She welcomed the call by the State of World Population report 2012 for better financial and political commitments for family planning services.

Mr. Mohamed Abdel-Ahad, Representative of UNFPA highlighted family planning as a human right which enables individuals and couples to decide on the number, timing and spacing of their children. He elaborated on the health and socio-economic benefits of family planning and explained that family planning can save the lives of women and infants since it enables women to avoid unintended and unwanted pregnancies and abortion. “Nearly one quarter of Myanmar women of reproductive age have expressed desire to practice birth spacing but do not have access to contraceptives” he added. He commended the political commitment of the Government towards reproductive health and family planning, and underscored that meeting the country’s needs for contraceptives, estimated at \$5.8 million in 2012, would reduce maternal and infant mortality. He quoted Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director of UNFPA saying “Family Planning must be fully integrated into all current and future development initiatives, including the global sustainable development framework that will build on the MDGs after 2015”.

To reflect Myanmar experiences, Dr. Theingi Myint, Deputy Director (MCH) of the Department of Health presented an overview of the national birth spacing program in Myanmar and Dr. Sid Naing, Director of Marie Stopes International emphasized the need for service providers to target families in rural areas, with low income and education, and to provide them with accessible, user-friendly family planning services. Fruitful discussions and clarifications were made at the panel discussion, including sharing of country situations by the Embassies of Indonesia and the Philippines.

This year’s report calls for a multipronged approach to ensure access to family planning by all women, men and young people. It suggests that countries seek to simultaneously strengthen health systems, introduce or enforce laws that protect individuals’ rights, reduce poverty, challenge harmful traditional practices, eliminate child marriage, end discrimination, remove logistical impediments and ensure a broad range of contraceptive supplies.



Celebrating Older Persons

In collaboration with the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, and HelpAge International Myanmar, UNFPA celebrated the International Day of Older Persons at Nay Pyi Taw on 1 October 2012 under the theme, “Longevity: Shaping the Future”. A wide range of stakeholders attended the event including members of the Government, civil society, the United Nations and the diplomatic community as well as 130 older persons from around the country.

Dr. Daw Myat Myat Ohn Khin, Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement delivered the opening address and highlighted the importance of active and healthy ageing, the need to establish a mechanism to promote the quality of life of older persons, and the need to pay more attention to gender concerns and the special needs of older women. The Minister said that the proportion of elderly people had increased from 8.7% of the population in 2007 to 9.1 % in 2010 and is projected to reach 20% by 2050. The Government is fulfilling its role as stated in the Constitution – “the Union shall care for the aged” – through the work of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, and the Ministry of Health in carrying out elderly care activities in collaboration with UN agencies, INGOs and local NGOs.

Addressing the demographic transition in Myanmar, UNFPA Representative, Mohamed Abdel-Ahad called for developing a two-pronged policy: the first set of policies is to utilise the “demographic window of opportunity” of having nearly 60% of population in the working age (15-59) and requires promoting job opportunities and improving access to social services to increase per capita income, savings and investments and help boost economic growth. The second is “active ageing” policies aiming to enhance the health, participation and security of older persons, taking into account their rights, needs, preferences and capacities. Both policies need to adopt a rights-based approach and ensure social inclusion and equity. He highlighted the recommendations of the most recent study on the socio-economic characteristics of ageing conducted by the Government, UNFPA and HelpAge International. These include: finalizing and implementing the draft National Plan of Action on Ageing; building a clearly defined system of social protection for older people to complement care by families; addressing vulnerabilities of older women; and educating the young about ageing issues.

continued on page 11 »



At the commemoration of International Day of Older Persons in Nay Pyi Taw, on 1 October 2012, Mr. Mohamed Abdel-Ahad, UNFPA Representative presenting UNFPA contribution to Dr. Daw Myat Myat Ohn Khin, Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement.



continued from page 10 »»

At the commemorative ceremony in Myanmar, certificates of honour were awarded to donors who contributed to the event. The elderly persons invited to the event, including the oldest man aged 110 years old and the oldest women aged 120 years old, were presented with gifts and medicine. A representative from the Older People Self-Help Groups presented on their activities, highlighting the rights and the needs of elderly persons.

The United Nations has been making a concerted effort to place population ageing in a more positive light by recognising older persons as assets rather than liabilities for society. In his message for the International Day of Older Persons, the UN Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki Moon said; “Longevity is a public health achievement, not a social or economic liability. On this International Day of Older Persons, let us pledge to ensure the well-being of older persons and to enlist their meaningful participation in society so we can all benefit from their knowledge and ability”.



↑ Elderly persons from the Older People Self-Help Groups attending the celebration of International Day of Older Persons at Nay Pyi Taw, on 1 October 2012.

Counting Older Persons

In Myanmar, there is limited information on the situation of older people. The lack of a national census since 1983 has contributed to the paucity of recent representative information about even their basic characteristics. Social protection measures for the elderly in Myanmar are still in an early stage of planning and development and coverage of the current generation of older persons is very limited. Reliance among elders who cannot support themselves rests overwhelmingly within the family and in particular on adult children. As Myanmar fertility rates have fallen and future older persons will average smaller family sizes, there will be fewer productive age persons per capita available to provide their support.

The 2012 Survey of Older Persons in Myanmar, a representative sample survey conducted in multiple regions of the country is the first such representative survey of older persons in Myanmar. It provides concrete evidence on their needs, concerns, and contributions that will be helpful in guiding the design of future interventions as well as for policy development on ageing.

The report highlights that the well-being of the older population in Myanmar will be affected by a number of factors in the country's social and economic development. For instance, if there is continuing economic growth, adult children will be in a financially better position to provide material support. In addition, formal channels of financial support through the government may broaden reducing dependency of informal support from adult children. Thus, the impact of declining family size on the welfare of coming generations of older persons in Myanmar remains an important issue to monitor and incorporate in policy and program responses to population ageing.

The report also underscores the need to finalise and implement the draft National Plan of Action on Ageing; to build a clearly defined system of social protection for older people to complement care by families; and to address vulnerabilities of older women; and to educate the young about ageing issues.

The Survey Report will be available on the UNFPA Myanmar website in early 2013.

ICPD Beyond 2014 – Myanmar takes stock



At the National Forum in Nay Pyi Taw, on 24 October 2012, findings on International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) beyond 2014 Global Review questionnaire is reported to the National Commission on Population and Development and to the Parliamentary Committee on Population and Social Development.

In 1994, at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), 179 governments committed to a 20 year Programme of Action which showed that population and development are inextricably linked and that empowering women and meeting people's needs for education and health, including reproductive health, are necessary for both individual advancement and balanced development.

Myanmar has committed to fulfilling the ICPD Programme of Action (PoA) as well as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and continues to actively work towards the achievement of these goals through its development plans and programmes. At this juncture, with only two years left to the 20th anniversary of the ICPD PoA, UNFPA has commissioned a Global Survey of 'ICPD Beyond 2014' to assist countries in measuring their progress towards the goals set out in the Programme of Action and to chart the way forward in addressing key gaps and weaknesses in their national development efforts.

The National Commission on Population and Development led the ICPD Beyond 2014 Survey in Myanmar. The Commission and UNFPA established a national review mechanism and formed a Technical Review Committee with membership from Ministries and NGOs. The responses to the questionnaire were obtained from representatives of government ministries, NGOs and UN agencies and then collated by national consultants. To validate the information in the questionnaire, a workshop in Nay Pyi Taw, jointly organized by UNFPA and the Ministry of Immigration and Population (MOIP), was held on September 14, 2012.

To finalise the process, a National Forum hosted by the MOIP and UNFPA was held on October 24, 2012 in Nay Pyi Taw to report the findings of the ICPD Beyond 2014-

Global Review questionnaire to the National Commission on Population and Development and the Parliamentary Committee on Population and Social Development. In his opening address, U Khin Yi, Minister of Immigration and Population, stressed the importance of the survey's findings, which reflect the situation in Myanmar in terms of the quality of life of the population. He recognized the thoughtful and pertinent inputs and active contribution of all respondents at various ministries to validate the responses to the questionnaire. He added that "The findings of this survey will support the implementation and future plans for population and development at the national level."

The review has allowed for an assessment of Myanmar's progress over the past five to ten years on the ICPD agenda along with an update on the current situation which takes into account the ongoing democratic reforms in the country. While the results of this national survey show that Myanmar has made significant progress in some areas within the ICPD mandate, there is still need for increased efforts by policy makers in Myanmar to address gaps that inhibit the achievement of the ICPD and MDG goals. It is hoped that decision makers in the areas of Reproductive Health, Population and Development and Gender Equality in Myanmar would find this publication very insightful and would utilize it in planning their development programmes for the coming years. The publication will be available on the UNFPA Myanmar website in early 2013.

Youth drama promotes healthy choices

Through a partnership with the Government of Germany, UNFPA and its implementing partner - the Myanmar Medical Association (MyMA), and under a project called “Promoting access to Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health (ASRH) and HIV information by University Students” youth from the Youth Development Programme (YDP) of MyMA conducted peer education activities and used mass media, telephone hotlines and websites to promote messages of healthy choices.

The youth from YDP produced a drama film titled “Grow the plant, let the flowers blossom” with the aim of addressing young peoples’ need for information on HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive health. The film focuses on adolescent health problems, especially unwanted pregnancy and HIV infection and demonstrates the importance of choice by making an analogy which compares nurturing a flower until it blossoms with making good decisions and its positive effect on one’s life. The film’s message is essentially that the decisions and choices that youth make today affect positively or negatively, the achievement of their dreams.

The film was shown at several movie theatres in Yangon, including the Junction Square, Junction Mawtin and Taw Win center free of charge on the 15th, 19th and 20th June, followed by a national broadcast through several local TV channels. The film has been widely advertised in several local journals and the state newspaper “The Mirror”. DVDs of the film have also been produced to be used for educational purposes. “ This artistic and creative film is most appropriate for all youth to watch and gain lessons” commented the Myanmar Times newspaper.

A questionnaire was circulated to the audience of the film seeking their feedback on what they would do if they were in the position of youth who encounter health problems. Awards were provided to the 10 persons who gave the best answers to the questions. In addition to this film, this project has established two telephone helplines (white line for boys and pink line for girls) to provide correct information and counseling to young people on sexual and reproductive health and refer them to health facilities to receive services as needed.

The project is part of the UNFPA Programme of Assistance to Myanmar (2012-2015). The programme attaches priority to addressing young peoples’ needs for sexual and reproductive health information, education and communication and services. In cooperation with the Ministry of Health, UNFPA will support the development of guidelines on youth – friendly reproductive health services.

Young people aged 10-24 constitute nearly thirty percent of the Myanmar population and represent a powerful source for the development of their nation. Addressing young people’s reproductive health needs, in the context of an overall youth strategy and development programme, is crucial to their wellbeing and the realization of their potential.



UNFPA responds to Crises in the Field

Humanitarian Support to Rakhine State

In view of immediate needs of the persons in Rakhine State, UNFPA presented 2,000 Dignity Kits to the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement on 15 June 2012 to be distributed to women in the affected communities especially to those who have become homeless and reside in camps in Buthidaung, Maungdaw and Sittwe. Each kit contains essential items for women in emergency situations to meet their basic daily needs, ensure their health and well-being and preserve their dignity.

In addition, UNFPA supported the Myanmar Medical Association (MMA) by providing access to medical supplies and health-care services through five mobile clinics in Rathedaung and southern Buthidaung. With the cooperation of township health authorities, MMA provided life-saving maternal health, obstetric care and newborn care services to affected persons.

Six Emergency Reproductive Health (ERH) kits which can serve 400 pregnant women were provided and 1500 women were provided with contraceptives. UNFPA also supported two medical officers and one project assistant to provide life saving RH care and medical services at the mobile clinics. UNFPA works with Township Medical teams of the Department of Health to provide life-saving maternal health, obstetric and newborn care, protection of women and the prevention of gender based violence.

The inter-community conflict in Rakhine State, which started in early June has resulted in loss of lives and livelihoods as well as widespread damage to property, including the burning of more than 2,000 houses and the displacement of 37,000 people.



2,000 Dignity Kits provided by UNFPA for women in conflict-affected communities in Rakhine state, being loaded onto trucks in Yangon, on 15 June 2012 for distribution through the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement.

Meeting the needs of Internally Displaced People (IDP) in Kachin State

After 16 years of tensions in the Kachin State, the conflict resumed on June 9th 2011 which has caused hundreds of casualties on both sides, and displacement of almost 80,000 civilians along the Chinese border areas and around Myitkyina, Waingmaw, Momauk, Bhamo, Mansi and Shwegu townships.

In partnership with Karuna Myanmar Social Services (KMSS) through the project "Provision of Medical services and Maternal Care to IDPs in Bhamo district, Kachin State", UNFPA supported the affected community in Kachin state, from July to November 2012.

KMSS and Kachin Baptist Convention (KBC) have extensive experience in humanitarian and relief interventions, and have been providing social services and conducting development projects in the conflict and remote areas in Kachin State. Through these partners UNFPA has provided 1500 dignity kits to women of reproductive age and to pregnant women in 14 IDP camps located in Non-Government Controlled Areas (NGCA) and Government Controlled Areas (GCA) in Bhamo township.

Before the distribution of 1500 dignity kits and provision of 5 cartons of emergency Reproduce Health kits to affected families in Myitkyina township, training on reproductive health care, and awareness on usage of RH/Hygiene promotion and referral for women on emergency were provided to health staff and potential resource persons from other agencies in Bhamo, in cooperation with Medecins du Monde (MdM) already based in the region. KMSS reported that the dignity kits have helped to improve the personal hygiene of IDP women in the camps.



In September 2012, through the collaboration of Karuna Myanmar Social Services (KMSS), community leaders from Nam Tim La village, Mansi township, Kachin state receives UNFPA Dignity Kits for distribution to Internally Displaced People (IDP).

Myanmar Parliamentarians receive support to be Agents of Change

With the aim of promoting increased cooperation and partnership among Asian Parliamentarians in the areas of population, development and related fields, the UNFPA Myanmar Country office, in cooperation with the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD), has been supporting Myanmar Parliamentarians in a number of activities to not only raise their awareness on key issues in Reproductive Health, HIV, and Gender but also to further their understanding on the linkages among these issues for Myanmar's overall development.

The Parliamentary Committee on Population and Social Development (PCPSD) and National Commission on Population and Development were established in 2011 and include lawmakers from various political parties and ethnic groups. These two structures have facilitated greater dialogue on the development, implementation and monitoring of population policies. They have also furthered the understanding among parliamentarians and their constituencies of the interrelationship between population, environment and sustainable development issues.

UNFPA supported the establishment of a library for the Myanmar Parliamentarians that houses 162 books and journals on reproductive health, HIV and AIDS, maternal health, population and development among other topics. Furniture and equipment for the library were also provided by UNFPA. On 29th August 2012, Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, UNFPA Executive Director officially opened the library at the Office of the Parliamentary Committee on Population and Social Development.



Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin, UNFPA Executive Director and Under Secretary-General of the United Nations launching the sub-library established with the support of UNFPA in the office of Parliamentary Committee on Population and Social Development on 28 August 2012, in Nay Pyi Taw.

Capacity building and South-South cooperation for Myanmar Parliamentarians

UNFPA has been providing the Parliamentary Committee with technical assistance and policy advice as well as facilitated the Parliamentarians' participation in meetings and fora organized by AFPPD. Some of these fora include:

- Indo-China Focus Group Meeting on HIV/AIDS Legislation in Bangkok, Thailand from 21-22 April 2012 - Four Myanmar Parliamentarians attended headed by U Myint Thu, Secretary of the Population and Social Development Committee (PCPSD).
- The fifth International Parliamentarians' Conference on the implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action (POA) (ICPI 2012) organized by AFPPD took place in Istanbul, Turkey, on 24-25th May, 2012. The Myanmar delegation headed by U Maung Maung Swe, Chairperson of PCPSD attended the conference and joined 56 parliamentarian delegates from Asia-Pacific representing 22 countries to express solidarity with other global Parliamentarians and to reiterate their support for the completion of ICPD POA. Through the "Istanbul Statement of Commitment", the Parliamentarians reaffirmed their commitments to



Member of Parliamentarians U Maung Maung Swe, Dr. Nay Lin and Daw Su Su Hlaing, attending the 5th International Parliamentarians' Conference in Istanbul, Turkey on 24-25 May 2012

mobilise the necessary resources for the ICPD agenda and strengthen parliamentary oversight in the implementation of the ICPD agenda.

- At the 10th General Assembly of AFPPD Asia-Pacific in Transition conducted on October 24-26, 2012 in Bangkok, Dr. Nay Lin, a Parliamentarian from the Health Promotion Committee attended to join Parliamentarians representing 25 countries of Asia and Pacific regions, to review and discuss the roles of Parliamentarians in the implementation of ICPD Programme of Action beyond 2014.
- The AFPPD also organized a 'Southeast, East and Northeast Asia and the Pacific Parliamentarians Forum on the MDGs Acceleration and Post-2015 Development Agenda' on 20-21 November 2012 in Manila, the Philippines. U Maung Maung Swe and Dr. Nay Lin attended the forum that brought together Members of Parliament and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in the sub-regions to engage in reviewing MDG achievements and challenges, identify policies and programs to accelerate progress, and contribute to the formulation of the post-2015 development framework.

UNFPA believes that partnership with Parliamentarians is vital to build support for the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Because Parliamentarians act as the bridge between the people and their government, they are instrumental in advocating for the rights and needs of the people. By enacting and improving relevant laws and policies, Parliamentarians help to create an enabling environment for the achievement of the ICPD goals and the MDGs.

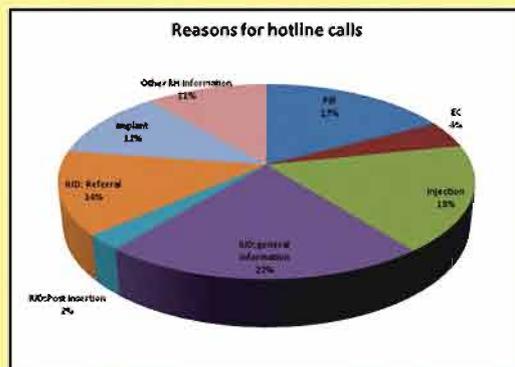
PSI and UNFPA establish a Hotline

UNFPA and Population Services International (PSI) have been working together to ensure access to, and utilization of, quality sexual and reproductive health products and services for women, men, young people and most-at-risk populations in Myanmar. One innovative approach that PSI has recently implemented is a Reproductive Health Hotline to provide birth spacing counselling, and other reproductive health information, to women of reproductive age.

Despite a slow start, PSI's innovative hotline has experienced huge success in the short timeframe it has been operating. From September 2011 – July 2012 the hotline received on average 16 calls per month. However, following promotional airings on TV and radio since August 2012, hotline calls have increased substantially. From August 2012 – December 2012, 3,282 hotline calls were received.

Callers have been largely interested in finding out more information on IUDs – typically requesting general information, specific post insertion information, and referral details for Intra-Uterine Device (IUD) sites. Due to hotline referrals, a total of 44 IUD insertions took place at registered Sun Quality Health clinics with labour facilities.

PSI plans to maintain and promote the hotline service in 2013 to increase knowledge of birth spacing options, usage of birth spacing methods, and reduce unsafe abortion among communities.



RH Hotline Business Card

UNFPA WISHES TO THANK ITS DONORS AND PARTNERS FOR THEIR GENEROUS SUPPORT, COLLABORATION AND TIRELESS EFFORTS THROUGHOUT 2012 TOWARDS IMPROVING MATERNAL HEALTH, PREVENTING HIV AND EMPOWERING WOMEN IN MYANMAR.

Non-governmental Organisations

- Aide Médicale Internationale (AMI)
- Association François Xavier Bagnoud (AFXB)
- Gender Equality Network
- HelpAge International (Myanmar)
- Japanese Organisation for International Cooperation in Family Planning (JOICFP)
- Karuna Myanmar Social Services (KMSS)
- Marie Stopes International (MSI)
- Médecins du Monde (MDM)
- Myanmar Anti-Narcotics Association (MANA)
- Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association (MMCWA)
- Myanmar Medical Association (MMA)
- Myanmar Nurse and Midwife Association (MNMA)
- Myanmar Red Cross Society (MRCS)
- Population Services International (PSI)

Donors

- Asia Development Bank
- Australian Government Overseas Aid Program
- Department for International Development - United Kingdom
- European Union
- Japan International Cooperation Agency
- Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
- The Government of Denmark
- The Government of Germany
- The Government of Norway
- The World Bank
- United States Agency for International Development

Private Sector

- The Republic of the Union of Myanmar Federation of Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Partners in Government

- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Immigration and Population
- Ministry of National Planning and Economic Development
- Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement
- National Commission on Population and Development
- Office of the Union Attorney General
- Parliamentary Committee on Population and Social Development



United Nations Population Fund

UN Building, No. 6 Natmauk Road,
G.P.O. Box 650, Yangon, Myanmar.

Tel: +95 (1) 546 309

Fax: +95 (1) 546 029

E-mail: myanmar.office@unfpa.org

<http://myanmar.unfpa.org>

UNFPA MYANMAR 2012