

Iraq National Population Commission (INPC)



State of Iraq Population 2010

• The First National Report on the State of Population
• in the Context of the ICPD and MDGs



February 2011



Supported by the United Nations Population Fund

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Acknowledgment

Iraq National Population Commission (INPC) would like to acknowledge the outstanding efforts of UNFPA Iraq CO for providing training, technical and financial support for preparing this first report on the state of Iraq population 2010. INPC would like also to appreciate the efforts of all national experts who contributed to the preparation of the report and the required scientific analysis.

Dr. Mehdi al-alak (head of INPC) supervised the preparation of the report; and Prof. Amal Shash (Planning and development Advisor) and Dr. Luay Shabaneh (CTA, UNFPA Iraq CO) provided technical support, reviewed the final version of the report.

Preface

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo in 1994 formed a turning point in the history of international cooperation for the consideration of cross-cutting issues of population and economic growth, sustainable development and their mutual relationship.

The action program of the ICPD on a number of objectives and actions to address population and development for a variety of challenges in the context of population policies and national development, which aims to improve the quality of people's lives, whether present or future generations. The ICPD recognized that the formulation and implementation of population-related policies are the responsibility of each country must take into account the economic and social conditions and environment of each country with full respect for various religious and ethical values and cultural backgrounds of all the people.

ICPD 1994 established a comprehensive vision of development requirements, and prepared the ground relied upon by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have become documents mutually reinforcing with each other, tying each population issues to development in its wider sense and the conference concluded with consensus on a program of work for subsequent twenty years, and saved this program to many issues related to population and development, including sexual and reproductive health, education, gender, human rights, environment, internal and external migration and the prevention and control of HIV Aids.

During the past two decades, the ICPD action program and the framework of MDGs played a central role in the formulation of population policies for developing countries in shaping the priorities of the national agenda for their intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, where States have embarked on the implementation of actions contained in the ICPD Programme of Action to achieve the goals of the ICPD, and the objectives of the MDGs at either end, the progress of developing countries in achieving these goals has been uneven.

It should be noted that Iraq did not participate in the Cairo Conference to avoid any obligations directly or indirectly in the area of population policies established in the ICPD Programme of Action, noting that Iraq did not adopt a population policy, formally declared despite formation of the Commission and a national population policy which has

been ineffective and non-serious violation what happened in other countries, because the general directions of the policy of the Supreme Iraq at that time were not looking positive for this issue, as it was aimed at maintaining the natural increase of population of the same, but encouraging increase, without taking into account the interdependence of population growth to economic growth and the installation of the population and the burden of dependency resulting from on it.

Iraq despite its oil wealth and large water and human capital of educated and skilled capacities has slipped from one of the most advanced countries in the Middle East to a country with lowest human development index in the region, due to a series of long and successive wars in addition to the sanctions imposed on Iraq during the period 1990-2003.

Therefore, the achievement of the MDGs and improving the lives of citizens became the most important pillars of the national development strategy 2007-2010, the National Development Plan 2010 - 2014 where they focused on the most important priorities to achieve economic growth and development of human resources and improve infrastructure. But progress towards achieving the MDGs has been, and still requires overcoming obstacles existed since the time of the most important for political stability and the consolidation of good governance and the demise of the security concerns at all levels.

This report provides information on the progress made by Iraq towards achieving the goals of ICPD Programme of Action within the framework of the MDGs taking into account the overlap and synergy between the MDGs and the goals of the Cairo Conference 1994. The report consists of three parts; the first focused on the evolution of the demographic situation in Iraq in general and addressed the composition of the population, geographical distribution of population and the demographic transition including the change in fertility and mortality rates and population mobility resulting from the displacement and internal and external migration. The second part presented the linkages between population and development and follow-up to Iraq's progress in achieving the objectives of the Cairo Programme of Action within the framework of the MDGs with respect to the elements of sustainable development and human development, and the third part addressed population policy and the challenges it faces. In addition, the report included forward-looking scenarios for the prospects of the relationship between population and development in accordance with scenarios based on the available data which lacks reliable estimated at the disaggregated level in the absence of the population census.

We hope that this report provides an important tool to formulate population policies, and constitutes a basis for future benchmarking to track progress on Iraq's population state towards the development goals and to provide an important opportunity for policy makers and development planners to draw development plans sensitive to population factors.

Dr. Mehdi Al-Alak
Head, National Population Commission
(INPC)

Executive Summary

This first report, entitled “The State of the Population in Iraq 2010.” depicts a preliminary representation of the demographic situation in Iraq, it paves the way for a comprehensive objective study that constitutes a reliable, scientific, analytical and authoritative base on the size, structure and distribution of the population, thus enhancing knowledge of the vital interrelation between demographic issues.

The report consists of three parts, the first of which reviews the development of the demographic situation in Iraq in general. It tackles such issues as the structure and geographic and spatial distribution of the population, as well as the demographic transition, including fertility and mortality rates, as well as population mobility, i.e., displacement and internal and external migration. It also includes scenarios that explore prospects for the relation between population and development. The first part diagnoses a set of characteristics to elucidate the demographic situation in Iraq. These characteristics are tantamount to challenges that necessitate short- and long-term treatment within the framework of a development-specific population policy.

Since the 1970s, Iraq’s population has grown rapidly, thanks to population policies targeting the promotion of population growth. In 2007, the population of Iraq was estimated at 10 fold the country’s population in 1927. If fertility and mortality rates continue at their current pace, Iraq’s present population will double in 23 years, a situation that entails negative repercussions on the people’s quality of life, unless the traditional perspective of the relation between population growth and development changes. The report reveals that Iraq, like many developing and Arab countries, is suffering from an imbalance in the geographic distribution of the population and from the predominance of a single population bloc, i.e., the capital and its surroundings, as well as the emergence of the phenomena of concentration in large cities, urban swelling, growth of haphazard housing around the metropolises. This situation depicts itself in environmental degradation, inferior services and poor levels of development management; in other words, imbalanced geographic distribution of the fruits of development, as revealed in deprivation indicators. The present report also shows large variances among governorates in fertility and mortality rates, clearly depicting corresponding variances in the level of health services in a manner that is not commensurate with the population’s needs. These facts indicate that it is necessary for population policies to focus on

understanding the rapid urbanization and civilization process and its potential impacts and challenging these effect through developmental plans and programs.

The current demographic transition is witnessing rapid wide-ranging potentially-effectual changes. Based on available data on demographic transition indicators, the report monitors and diagnoses three population policy priority issues, namely:

1. The fertility rate in Iraq is still high (at 4.3 children per woman), despite a decline which took place in recent years.
2. Population mobility has witnessed unprecedented changes, not resulting from natural trends in the patterns of internal or external migration, as monitored throughout the last century and documented in the country's official censuses, but rather from forcible factors associated with wars, armed conflicts and acts of violence, leading to internal and external displacement and forced migration.
3. The Iraqi society is a young society with a high dependency rate caused by the high percentage of children in the society. The rising ratio of young people constitutes an opportunity and a significant challenge as Iraq embarks on the demographic window stage after the end of the upcoming decade. This constitutes a challenge to population policies, as well as a demographic and developmental opportunity to enhance socio-economic development.

The analyses in this report come to the conclusion that utilizing the demographic window is still subject to development interventions targeting the reduction of fertility rates.

The second part of the report addresses the relation between population and development and follows up on Iraq's progress in the area of achieving the goals of the ICPD Program of Action, within the framework of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in terms of sustainable development, human development, gender and reproductive health. This part discusses the relation between population and development and shows how the population-resources relation could be disrupted or deformed, not because of the scarcity of resources, but because of misuse and mismanagement. Nor does Iraq suffer from imbalanced resources; the petroleum resource provides a real surplus that can cover for the scarcity of other resources. Thus, economic and development policy-makers have always envisaged that population growth will not burden resources for a long time to come. Looking at population as mere numbers disregards the existence of linkage and integration between population, development and the environment, resulted with the fact that population growth has not been challenged by developing human and natural resources and no policies have been adopted that

aim to achieve the sustainability of development and the safeguarding of the rights of the upcoming generations. Population growth brings about increased quantitative demand on the combined living requirements of water, food, energy, housing, transportation, health care, education and recreation. This demand develops with the acceleration of the development processes and the increased aspiration of the population for improving their standards of living and consumption patterns. This escalating pressure on the resources needed to meet these requirements will lead to the exhaustion of natural resources, as in the case of lower productivity of water in agricultural lands, and even to depleting human resources.

Achieving the MDGs by 2015 in the areas of access to water, housing, and safe environment, provides a measure of the progress Iraq has made in addressing the impact of population on sustainable development. Chapter 1 of the second part of the present report depicts a slight improvement in the ratios of the people's enjoyment of access to safe potable water and adequate sanitation facilities, or to a safe environment or decent housing. This reveals a case of mis-matching between development programs and the Iraqi population program, simply because of the absence of a population policy. This part focuses on the levels of human development achieved by Iraq in the areas of health and education, as well as poverty gaps. This part also concludes that Iraqis do not enjoy long life, as life expectancy has dropped from 65 years in 1987 to 58.2 years in 2007.

The discrepancy in life expectancy between Iraq and the neighboring countries is more than 10 years. Furthermore, almost 23% of the Iraqi population live under the poverty line. This requires the current development plan to adapt its investment programs and objectives in the direction of lowering the poverty rate by the year 2015 to the targeted level of 16% as specified in the PRSP in harmony with the MDGs. At the same time, achievement of the primary education for all Iraqi citizens is still not completed, even though the compulsory, free primary education policy has succeeded in raising net primary enrolment rates to the level of 90.8% in 1990, the rate declined to 89.2% in the scholastic year 2008/2009.

The second part singles out a chapter for [reproductive health](#) to address issues contained in the all-inclusive definition of reproductive health and reproductive rights by the ICPD 1994. The chapter concludes that the prevalence of family planning devices in Iraq still has a long way to go to reach the required level to reduce fertility to the replacement level or thereabout.

The second part also addresses the issue of [women empowerment](#) and acknowledges the existence of positive trends in female school enrolments, as well as great achievements, unparalleled in the Arab states, in the area of women's political participation; yet, Iraqi women still have much to achieve in order to enjoy equality and equity in the other areas.

In its last chapter, this part concludes that [youth](#) constitute a special case that requires paying increased attention to surveys' findings regarding the youth's poor levels in terms of the characteristics of their education and skills, coupled with rising unemployment rates among the youth, who should be heavily relied upon to achieve the developmental advancement of the society.

The [third part](#) of the report deals with Iraq's population policy and the challenges it faces and shows the trend of previous policies to promote population growth. It reviews the population policy's ways and tools and shows, at the same time, the shortcoming in developing human resources and the population in general. This part shows that continued negligence of the role and significance of human beings and non-inclusion of human issues in the development process have many consequences, more importantly aggravation of the poverty plight, higher levels of illiteracy, especially among women, soaring unemployment, multiplied numbers of refugees, and widening gender and rural-urban gaps. These phenomena have been coupled with higher fertility rates, expanded family sizes, and rising child and maternal mortality rates and dependency ratios.

In light of the above-cited cases of failure in the area of population, and in addition to the provisions of the 2005 Permanent Constitution regarding the geographic distribution of resources and electoral constituencies, it has become imperative to seriously re-consider population policies in order to make them meaningful and allow them to go with economic and social growth, but without neglecting the human priorities that harmonize with the principles of sustainable development and assessment of deprivation, as stipulated in the Constitution. Also, it has become necessary to provide estimates every year or two of the populations of governorates and regions in order to guarantee equity in the distribution of financial resources in the annual public and regions' development budgets.

The Iraqi Government responded favorably to an initiative by the Ministry of Planning to establish a [National Population Commission \(NPC\)](#), comprising representatives of the official and non-official agencies involved in population issues, namely, the ministries of health, labor and Social affairs, education, culture,

youth, and human rights, as well as the bureaus of Awqaf, civil society and women and the Kurdistan Region. The tasks and goals of the commission are defined as follows: “To prepare and adopt policies to achieve the long-range strategic objectives that bring about quantitative and qualitative changes in the lives of citizens and realize sustainable development, justice, and equal opportunities, as well as short-range policies to break down long-range strategic objectives into shorter terms of 5–10 years, linked to the financial allocations required for achieving the objectives, as well as clear and efficient policies, in addition to implementing the goals and objectives adopted at the 1994 International Population and Development Conference in Cairo.

The Commission enjoys continued cooperation and technical support from the [United Nations Population Fund \(UNFPA\)](#) through consultative workshops addressing the mainstreaming of population issues into development plans, as well as training courses in the area of in-depth demographic analysis, with the aim of establishing a task force of national experts. The Commission’s prioritized tasks would include adopting a [national population plan/strategy](#). In its concluding part, the present report offers a proposal regarding the objectives to be contained in the Population Plan/Strategy to be prepared, could be sorted into three domains, namely:

- a) **The reproductive health domain:** Reducing maternal and infant mortality rates, as well as total fertility rates, to levels to be decided later within specific time frames; increasing pregnancy and birth spacing (the highest child mortality rates are among older mothers and in cases of short birth spacing); boosting prevalence rates of modern, safe family planning methods by satisfying the unmet need for family planning and raising the public sector’s contribution to the provision of family planning services; and the civil status law in action to curbing early marriages and its negative impact on the health and welfare of mothers and children; and creating opportunities for girls to receive some education.
- b) **The justice, gender equality and empowering women domain:** Establishing justice and gender equality in all aspects of life will contribute effectively to the achievement of sustainable development. Hence, the strategy may include objectives for achieving gender equality in terms of civil, social, economic and political rights; creating equal opportunities for women in all the areas of employment; adopting the required measures to give women the chance to access material and moral life opportunities on equal footing with men; and empowering women to achieve their full

potentials, enhance their contributions to formulating and implementing policies, and participate in all production and income-generating activities, as well as education, health and culture.

- c) **The population and sustainable development domain:** The national population strategy realizes the linkages between population and economic growth and takes into consideration the requisites for incorporating population issues into development strategies in all aspects of planning, implementation, follow-up and decision-making pertaining to improving the quality of life for human beings. Thus, the strategy may provide for rationalizing population growth so that growth rates become commensurate with the requirements of development; adopting effective measures to rehabilitate persons with disabilities and meet their education, training and employment requirements; enhancing the health, welfare and potentials of all children, adolescents and youth, meeting their requirements and raising their awareness of reproductive health and sexually-transmitted diseases; developing support of the elderly, enhancing the quality of their lives and empowering them to work and lead a decent life; distributing the population in a manner that balances the requirements of development; organizing trends of internal emigration; curbing the prevalence of haphazard housing; intensifying efforts to reduce illiteracy rates, especially among women; improving the qualitative and quantitative indicators of primary and basic education; improving employment opportunities and alleviating unemployment and poverty, especially among females; paying increased attention to meeting the population's housing requirements, improving housing conditions, and stimulating the private sector to increase its contribution to this area; enhancing measures regulating optimal utilization of natural resources, preventing environmental degradation, and using demographic data in managing and assessing the impact of the environment.

In its final part, the report also reviews the challenges and population-related policies included in the National Development Plan (2010–2014). It lists several conclusions, which have been reached in the light of evaluating the state of the population in Iraq, and looks into the achievement of the MDGs in the near future.

Finally, even though Iraq may achieve some of the MDGs at the National level during the coming 10 years, huge efforts are still needed in Iraq to address the improvement of human development levels and guarantee sustainable development. There is also a need to examine sub-national levels in the regions and governorates, especially as Iraq suffers from developmental distortions and

imbalances in the geographic balance of development. There is a need for a population policy, supported by integrating population issues into the other development sectors, in order to play a significant role in achieving developmental goals. Hence, the current opportunity is favorable for Iraq to start looking for the future within an enlightened developmental vision that takes into consideration the current situation, as well as the future objectives and the way to achieve them, including the population vision and its role in achieving the objectives of development.

