



DEVELOPING A RIGHTS-BASED AND FAR-REACHING DEMOGRAPHIC STRATEGY FOR ARMENIA



OBJECTIVE

The GOVERNMENT OF ARMENIA was concerned about a decrease in fertility and was promoting an approach that focused on population targets rather than addressing the issue more holistically.

UNFPA embarked on a COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGIC PROCESS aimed at changing the narrow focus on population numbers. This was done by fostering a demographic resilience approach which consisted of solid and deep-dive analysis to generate the evidence required and by emphasizing how building and investing in human capital is key rather than focusing on a population number as a target. The objective was to show that this was the best way to prepare societies for what's to come, so that everyone's potential is fulfilled.

In other words, the objective was to promote policies aimed at investing in the HEALTH, TALENTS and EDUCATION of people, from a life course perspective, starting at a young age and promoting lifelong learning as the best way to instill confidence that life in Armenia is worth investing in.

The resulting demographic strategy is going to be based on the MOST SOLID and COMPREHENSIVE ever data analysis, and the first ever demographic strategy for Armenia that will have well-grounded costing for budgeting and will undergo validation of the leading minds from the best demography institutes in the world. In addition, UNFPA supports the development of National Transfer Accounts for Armenia that is an important tool in this process.

BUILDING long-term close partnerships and relationships of TRUST with key counterparts responsible for the demographic policies and strategy, such as the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and involving a wider circle of partners that are part of the process, including the Prime Minister's Office.

DEMONSTRATING through investments UNFPA's COMMITMENT to support the Government of Armenia in its efforts towards population policy formulation.

Working to position UNFPA AS A THOUGHT LEADER in the area of population and development, a hub for demographic data and for the most recent, best international experience and expertise in demographic resilience.

Working to maintain, with the help of UNFPA experts in population and development, close ties with the leading global academic centers that work in the area of population and development and DEMOGRAPHIC RESILIENCE.

The strategy was SUCCESSFUL as a result of UNFPA advocacy efforts, the Government of Armenia set up the Council for Improvement of Demographic Situation chaired by the Prime Minister, and UNFPA became the only non-governmental entity to join the Council. The importance of creating the Council is also in shifting from horizontal (when the lead, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs had difficulties administering the issue with the same level Ministries) to vertical governance (from the Prime Minister downwards) of the work to improve the demographic situation. UNFPA was approached to bring in the best international experience, and later on to support the development of the new demographic strategy of Armenia.



STRATEGY

PARADIGM CHANGE in the thinking about demographic challenges in Armenia. The narrow focus on how to create larger population numbers is replaced by an understanding that people's capacities and confidence in the future, not their numbers, are key to addressing these challenges.

In developing the first ever comprehensive and rights-based demographic strategy for Armenia, the Government of Armenia SHIFTED from a QUANTITATIVE to a QUALITATIVE APPROACH.

UNFPA Armenia, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs of Armenia and the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis based in Vienna, Austria signed a trilateral MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING. The MoU will allow for continuously advising the Government of Armenia on general demographic concerns currently existing in Armenia and how to successfully adapt to such trends over the coming decades.

The process of strategy development and signing of the MoU served and will serve as a platform for CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT of local demography experts.

IMPACT



LESSONS LEARNED

The arch-task is to combine two things:

- gain the trust of our counterparts so they see that we are on the same side in building a better future for the country;
- having our counterparts see the future through our own eyes, join our vision of the future.

Also we need to involve national experts - who best know the mentality and ways to present arguments.

Then they will see what is the way that we are proposing and why it is the way to go.

ADVOCATING FOR POLICY CHANGE, ESPECIALLY REGARDING SENSITIVE MATTERS, TAKES TIME. WE NEED TO BE PATIENT AND PERSISTENT.

WE MUST BELIEVE IN WHAT WE SAY, AND DELIVER ON OUR PROMISES.

BUILDING TRUST TAKES A LONG TIME; LOSING TRUST TAKES ONE SECOND.