Collecting, analyzing and disseminating quality, timely and disaggregated population data to identify the population size, structure and distribution is essential to plan development work and is also key for informed decision-making.

It took hundreds of thousands of years for the world population to grow to 1 billion – then in just another 200 years or so, it grew sevenfold. In 2011, the global population reached the 7 billion mark, and today, in 2021, it stands at about 7.8 billion.

This dramatic growth has been driven largely by increasing numbers of people surviving to reproductive age and has been accompanied by major changes in fertility rates, increasing urbanization and accelerating migration. Today, with major demographic shifts occurring and attention focused on international development, accurate and timely data are more important than ever.

UNFPA helps countries identify and understand such trends, which are critical to development. UNFPA is one of the world’s largest funders of population data collection. Without population data, especially on those left furthest behind, it will not be possible to achieve the three transformative results that UNFPA aspires to contribute to as part of the 2030 Agenda: (a) ending preventable maternal death, (b) ending unmet need for family planning, and (c) ending gender-based violence and all harmful practices.
Trends in Turkmenistan

The current statistical system requires regular improvement of the quality and reliability of gender-disaggregated data, including data on young people, to better inform public policymaking and planning. Analysis, dissemination and availability of such data also requires further attention, for example, of population and housing census data, which was not published for the last 25 years. The civil registration and vital statistics system – another important source of population data – needs further development to be able to generate high-quality data. The system needs digitalization of data entry and processing operations, coordinated inputs and actions by relevant national stakeholders, alignment of digital applications used by national ministries and agencies and stronger partnerships between them.

Limited accessibility to high-quality disaggregated population data limits the ability of policymakers to identify and respond to the needs of vulnerable populations, especially persons with disabilities, women and young people. It also hinders the development and improvement of relevant policies and legislative frameworks as well as targeted investments towards quality social services.

Turkmenistan has sufficient domestic resources to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. However it will be important to increase efficiency in public spending, aligned with national SDGs priorities. Besides, successfully meeting the SDG targets will also depend on a further commitment closing the existing data gaps, including quality of and access to data, and increasing institutional capacity to implement laws and policies. Investing in reliable and quality data is key to having robust national results frameworks to track results of policy documents and help estimating funds required for their realization.

The country is currently preparing for the 2022 Population and Housing Census and plans to use a digital data collection method. The upcoming census should generate actual data on the number of people, their spatial distribution, age and sex structure, their living conditions, disability and migration status and other key socioeconomic characteristics. Such data are critical for national and sub-national development planning, tracking progress of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the distribution of infrastructure and social welfare programmes, election planning and market analysis.

As part of census preparation, the State Statistics Committee conducted a census costing exercise with technical support from UNFPA in order to effectively plan and manage the different census operations. Such an exercise, which costed the entire census at 11 million USD, is meant to help better understand the financial implications, facilitate appropriation of sufficient resources from the national budgets and, where required, seek support from the international development community.

UNFPA is key partner of the Government in Population and Housing Census 2022.

Photo: UNFPA Turkmenistan.
UNFPA in Action

UNFPA supports the Government in increasing investments in population data and in building the institutional capacity to understand population trends and identify and respond to the needs of the population furthest behind.

UNFPA’s partnership with the Government focuses on bringing the data collection system in compliance with the international standards through strengthening national capacity in population data collection and analysis. Special attention is given to developing the capacity of public servants and policy makers in the application of modern methods of data analysis for decision-making, with a focus on demographic trends. As an example, UNFPA supported the State Service Academy under the President of Turkmenistan in integrating issues of population trends and gender mainstreaming in policy decision-making into its curriculum.

The government also continues to adapt and integrate the relevant Sustainable Development Goals’ targets and indicators into national development programmes with support from several partners including UNFPA.

Turkmenistan is one of the first countries globally that collected data to support SDG indicator 5.6.1 about free women’s choices on their reproductive health. This indicator showed that 42.2 percent of women aged 15-49 in Turkmenistan do exercise freely their reproductive rights. The Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the Beijing Platform for Action affirmed reproductive health as a fundamental human right and emphasized that empowering women and girls is key to ensuring the well-being of individuals, families, nations and the world at large.

The ability of women and girls to exercise their basic human rights, including their right to decide freely if, when and how many children to have, is a prerequisite for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. To further improve this indicator by 2030, there is a need to promote changes in lifestyles, promote positive and supportive social norms and support government policies that can allow women and girls to fully exercise their reproductive rights.

UNFPA also supported the development of the National Strategy on Development of the Health Information System of Turkmenistan for 2019-2025. The Strategy is to ensure access to health data, supply the government and society with data to be used to improve the quality of healthcare services, foster interagency cooperation and coordination within a unified digital data system and align data collection and processing with international standards to ensure comparability. The adopted Strategy is currently being implemented by the Government. UNFPA is also implementing a regional project funded by the Russian Federation in support of nine countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, including Turkmenistan, to conduct population and housing censuses as part of the 2020 Census Round.

UNFPA support to the Government in Population and Housing Census 2022

UNFPA: Delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person’s potential is fulfilled.
New priorities of partnership in 2021-2025

Within the framework of its current five-year Country Programme (2021-2025), UNFPA is supporting investments in governance reforms and people-centered policies and services that will be based on high quality disaggregated data, including population data.

Key state ministries and agencies, under the coordination of the State Statistics Committee, will be supported in introducing international methodologies and systems to collect and analyze disaggregated population data, which respond to the priorities of state programmes, as well as the data gaps in monitoring SDGs related to the International Conference on Population and Development Agenda.

UNFPA will contribute to the achievement of the results under programme component on population dynamics by:

1. providing technical support to the 2022 Population and Housing Census;
2. disseminating and using the results of the domestic violence survey for policy outcomes;
3. producing data for the UNFPA-prioritized SDG indicators;
4. promoting data transparency and strengthening the use of disaggregated population data; and
5. advocating for and strengthening institutional capacity to incorporate population and development analysis into planning and policy decisions.

These interventions are key to achieving the commitments agreed to by the Government of Turkmenistan during the Nairobi Summit in November 2019 which include enhancing the quality, access and use of disaggregated population data, in line with international standards, to inform evidence-based population policies and progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

Within its technical advisory support, UNFPA will support the Government of Turkmenistan in holding the 2022 Population and Housing Census, advancing the national civil registration and vital statistics system, helping to collect, process and analyze data to measure the progress towards the SDGs and provide evidence for essential Government development programmes and initiatives, holding thematic population surveys and research to provide data on the most vulnerable groups of population, including persons with disabilities to ensure that no one is left behind.

To deliver these commitments, UNFPA will use its regular resources, as well as financial and technical resources from the UNFPA Regional project “Strengthening Population Data Collection, Analysis and Utilization for Evidence-Based Policy Making in the Commonwealth of Independent States” funded by the Russian Federation. It will also seek additional funding opportunities offered by UN Trust Funds, other regional programmes, development partners and joint UN programmes.

UNFPA: Delivering a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person’s potential is fulfilled.
Partners

The key partners are the State Statistics Committee of Turkmenistan, the Ministry of Health and Medical Industry of Turkmenistan, the Ministry of Finance and Economy of Turkmenistan, the State Service Academy under the President of Turkmenistan and other relevant stakeholders.

Sources:
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