

# Report

The parliamentary dialogue on population and development

**19-20 November 2024**

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

## 1. Introduction

### Background

The African Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development (APFPD/FPA) has been at the forefront in promoting the ICPD Agenda. Emphasis has been put on encouraging countries to domesticate and promote issues highlighted in the ICPD and other protocols. Conducting parliamentary engagements at continental level has been the main information sharing moment for parliamentarians.

The role of parliamentarians has been to ensure that the ICPD agenda is followed by different countries which role has to be tracked from time to time. It was considered imperative to follow up on the progress and also guide where necessary for the African countries attain progress.

### Statement

With support from the Asian Population and Development Association (APDA), the Japan Trust Fund (JTF) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), it has been a practice for FPA to collaborate with country parliaments to hold high level dialogues on Population and Development.

The dialogues were intended to reflect on the progress of the country in relation to the ICPD agenda, highlight the key population challenges and propose action points for population interventions. This High-level dialogue has been hosted in different countries on a rotational basis and this year's choice was on Ethiopia and Burundi given the level shown in their population indicators and willingness to do spot checks on the status and progress.

### Justification for the High-Level Parliamentary Dialogue

Among the duties assigned to FPA, it is to ensure that population activities dominate the discussion of domestic parliaments in Africa. The High-Level dialogue was arranged to ensure there is share of information on the population interventions and challenges. It was also an opportunity to make a follow up on the issues agreed upon in the continental parliamentary meetings held from time to time

## 2. Opening Session

The Master of Ceremonies Mr. Estifanos Chewaka thanked members for the turn for the meeting despite the busy schedule they had a parliamentary session was in progress. He took members through the objectives of the High-Level Parliamentary Dialogue and listed the following;

### Objectives

1. To re-engage Members of Parliament in promoting the ICPD Agenda
2. To identify challenges faced by national parliaments in promoting the population agenda and propose action points.
3. To build a foundation for the establishment of a national Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development.



### Welcome remark: Hon. Dessalegn Wedojo, Chairperson of Planning and Budget Committee

He welcomed participants and thanked the House of Peoples Representatives for coordination with FPA and APDA to organize the meeting. He recalled the productive engagements organized by APDA he has been part of.

He noted that FPA is a regional forum and was established to empower and build capacity of African Parliamentarians to address the ICPD PoA and the African Union Agenda 2063. He reported the great

job Ethiopia has done demonstrated in the national efforts to reduce poverty, handle mal nutrition, promotion of education and better health care.



He decried the unfinished tasks that are still in the midst to include inequalities in opportunities, wars and insecurities, limited success to education and health care. He called upon parliamentarians in Africa to update and align national policies, plans and strategic documents to accelerate progress towards the ICPD Agenda.

He further requested as people's representatives to demonstrate a proactive role in interlinkages and make a contribution towards the Population and Development agenda. He implored members to

consider issues discussed in the meeting as a key starting point for coordinated action for different activities and programs in the areas they represent.

#### **Remarks: Dr. Farrukh Usmonov, Representative of APDA**



He welcomed participants to the meeting and thanked the Ethiopian Parliament in collaboration with FPA for organizing the High-Level Parliamentary dialogue. He recalled the Good and enriching experience he got in Ethiopia when he had come to witness the General Assembly of FPA.

It was reported that the Asian Population and Development Association has been cooperating with various parliaments of Africa for many years to address issues on Population and Development including the ICPD PoA and 2030

Agenda for sustainable Development. He called upon members to continue embracing the various programs highlighted at all levels.

He further noted that each region has its own challenges and speed for progress. The three population dynamics faced with Asia and Pacific countries including fertility decline, demographic dividend and population ageing, we should all in the world focus on education attainment, Youth employment. The sustainability of every country depends on the way the Human Resource is handled. This can in the long run not only reduce poverty and inequality but also contribute to achieving SDGs.

He further noted the effects of climate change affecting many societies translated into rising sea level and extreme weather. Agriculture and food production and other sectors have been affected. He called upon participants to:

- Work towards addressing the effects of climate change as he emphasized the need for collective Action.
- Work for adoption of related laws and policies to address the challenges of population and Development
- Collaborate with Civil Society Partners and establish partnership with stakeholders as the discussion continues
- Conduct study visits and dialogues as a move to share experiences and key lessons

He ended by thanking members for their participation and assured them that all issues raised in the meeting will be shared the next Asian and African Parliamentarians' meeting that was schedule on Tanzania in February 2025.

### 3. PRESENTATION

#### **Mr. Wamala Musa Buyungo, Coordinator APFPD/FPA:**

He noted that FPA was established to guide parliamentarians across Africa in recognizing and addressing population and Development challenges for the people they represent. He highlighted the strategic Objectives of the forum to include the following;

- Creating awareness of parliamentarians on the Population and Development Agenda
- Parliamentarians participating in drafting new laws and revising the existing one line with the international instruments and protocols ratified by countries
- To bridge the gap between the community and parliament while addressing population issues in the country.



#### **Roles of Parliamentarians**

He called upon members of parliament to intensify the campaign on population issues by always putting them upon the priority agenda. This could be possible through;

- Establishing a forum or network or caucus for the Ethiopian parliament to take the lead in addressing the population and development agenda. This would help to use the common voice while negotiating for better services on the floor of parliament.
- Undertake outreach program that enhance awareness and responses to the challenges of population and development
- Ensure existing laws and policies in line with strengthening international instruments
- Abolish laws that are not in line with international instruments
- Undertake inclusive advocacy engagement including women, girls, the disabled, the aged one
- Allocation of Appropriate and realistic budgets to critical sectors like health
- Carry out public awareness engagement and parliamentary forum on challenges of population and development

#### **Starting points**

He emphasized the following as factors that could work as a starting point in the implementation of the parliamentary interventions in Ethiopia;

1. Parliamentarians, enjoy the listenership of the community as they are always receptive
2. Strong voice is generated when parliamentarians are in big numbers. Something they agree and caucus on sometimes take the day in the general debate
3. Everyone wants to associate with high profile people. Working with parliamentarians in all aspects becomes easier.
4. Use of communication and media platform (Radio & TV station as a strong mobilization tool.
5. Parliamentarians are decision makers; it would be difficult to go for decisions that are not benefiting their people.

### **H.E. Fikre Gesso, Ministry of Planning and Development:**



His presentation was centered on three thematic areas that included Trends of Major Demographic and Socio-economic Situation of Ethiopia, challenges and opportunities.

He highlighted the mandate of the Ministry of Planning and Development (MoPD) was given the following duties and responsibilities on Population issues by proclamation 2063/2021 to initiate Population policies, strategies and laws; and also prepare detail program compatible with national development plan and implement the same upon approval.

He further noted that the rationale for the population policy in Ethiopia was to cover the following;

1. Low productivity in almost all sectors of the economy resulting in high rates of unemployment and underemployment and hence in absolute deprivation and apathy;
2. Low accessibility of basic social services such as Education, Health and Housing;
3. The perennial problem of food insecurity affecting many parts of the country;
4. High prevalence of maternal, infant and child morbidity and mortality problems that are partially attributed to the low status of women and high fertility; and
5. Low life expectancy at birth

He listed the objective of the population policy to cover 1) Reducing the current total fertility rate of 7.7 children per woman to approximately 4.0 by the year 2015; 2) Increasing the prevalence of contraceptive use from the current 4.0% to 44.0% by the year 2015; 3) Reducing maternal, infant and child morbidity and mortality rates as well as promoting the level of general welfare of the population; and 4) Significantly increasing female participation at all levels of the educational system.

It was further reported that Population issues were integrated in different national and regional development plans that included:

- Plan for Accelerated and Sustained Development to End Poverty (PASDEP) (from 2005/06 to 2009/10)
- Growth and Development Plans I and II (from 2010/11-2014/15 and 2015/16-2019/20)
- Ten years Perspective Development Plan (from 2020/21-2029/30).

These were backed by strong commitments both from the government and non-government side during the early periods of policy implementation. Although the collaboration and commitments of stakeholders started weakening gradually.

Highlights were made on challenges faced in the implementation of the Population policy and the following were reported;

- Absence of policy implementation guideline e.g. action plan for the Population policy
- Limited capacity for integrating population factors into development plans.
- Low understanding among the population about the linkage between population development
- Weak Coordination and implementation capacity both at federal and regional level
- Very limited capacity to design, produce, distribute and evaluate IEC/BCC and Advocacy materials.
- Limited donors' engagement and support on population and development
- Low commitment and participation of stakeholders on population and development issues
- Absence of harmonized Vertical and Horizontal Policy Coordination Structure

He concluded his presentation by considering opportunities available in the country that could help in building a better implementation of the country's population policy as below;

- The commitments of the government to the revision of the old policy based on the current reality and Existence complementary sectorial polices, strategies, programs and plans of action
- Expansion of Health Extension and voluntary service at grassroots levels.
- Increased participation of girls in education at all levels.
- Existence of appropriate Institutional mechanisms for data collection, research and training such as the Ethiopian Statistical service and higher learning institutions at both national and regional levels
- Increasing numbers of local media (including FM radio and Educational Mass Media)
- Existence of Advocacy networks of NGOs and Civil Society Organizations
- Existence RH networks such as the Consortium of Reproductive Health Agencies (CORHA) and Regional and national RH taskforces, CSOs and others

#### **4. Discussion & Question**

It was noted that Population and Development are multi-dimensional issues. Participation of all stakeholders in planning and implementation is vital. The interventions should leave no one behind

As donor support is taking a decreasing trend, there was a proposal for countries to refocus on their spending patterns to give room for sectors that require the highest priority.

As part of the task to enhance member's commitment to promoting the population agenda, it was agreed to have a fully established parliamentary forum to champion the population and Development agenda in the parliament of Ethiopia. An Interim Executive Committee was elected to spearhead the formal establishment. The committee was as follows;

1. Hon. Milikiyas Ayele, Chairperson
2. Hon. Aster Kefitawu, Vice Chairperson
3. Dr. Abraham Alemayehu, Secretary
4. Ms. Kimiya Jundi, Member
5. Mr. Debebe H, Member

#### **5. Action Points to the Newly Established Forum**

In conclusion of the meeting and after the forum being established, the following were agreed upon as quick action points for the Ethiopia Parliamentarians Forum on Population and Development.

1. Reporting to the Speaker of the House the issue and the concern of the meeting and Resolution to establish the Ethiopia Parliamentarians Forum on Population and Development. To use the same opportunity to request the speaker to be patron of the newly established Parliamentary forum.
2. Requesting office facility to support the forum as secretariat and also allow coordination of activities from the Parliamentary premises,
3. Mobilization and Enlisting parliamentarians to join the forum
4. Offering orientations- parliamentarians' workshop on population and development. The Ministry of Planning and Development was tasked to take up the assignment for organizing the orientation meeting
5. Conducting the Strategic Planning exercise for the forum and also embark on the resource mobilization campaign.

## **6. Day 2: Study Visit**

Activities conducted on day 2 were centered on having an interaction with agencies that implementing activities that have a bearing on the population and Development agenda. The key intention was to appreciate the coordination and synergies while bargaining for better services to the people.

### **Meeting with the Women Caucus of Parliament**

The delegation had an interaction with Ms. Kimia Jundi, Chairperson of the Women Caucus in Parliament Ethiopia. She welcomed participants reported that Ethiopia was progressing as far as development the plight of the woman and girl; child is concerned. She indicated that the Ethiopian Parliament constitutes of 547 members out of which 202 are women an equivalent of 42%. She further reported that plans are underway to attract male parliamentarians to join the women caucus.

She highlighted some of the key activities of the caucus was to build foundation for better laws on safe motherhood, male involvement, family planning and girl child empowerment. The approach has been on sensitization and peaceful engagements. The key targets reported for the engagements included, cultural leaders, religious leaders and politicians. Some of the challenges noted in the work of the Women caucus included the following;

1. Violence against women: Violence against women is a major issue in Ethiopia, and it can limit women's choices and productivity
2. Low enforcement of existing favorable laws related to women empowerment
3. Low socio-economic status of women and community stereotypes
4. Limited support from men in domestic chores resulting in work overload for women that prevent them, among other thing, from accessing health services even when they are available
5. Limited access of women to the media and technological innovations

She concluded by reporting some of the key success stories manifested in the having an increased number of women working in the parastatals, increased age of consent for marriage to 18 and increased budget support to women related sectors like health, Education and Agriculture. She called upon for outreaches to ensure that leaders talk to young girls and also encouragement for exchange visits for leaders to learn from each other.

### **Meeting with Officials from Ministry of Planning and Development**

#### **Communication from Mr. Fikre Gesso**

He welcomed the delegation and thanked all the stakeholders for organizing for the dialogue. He thanked the Government of Ethiopia for demonstrating the commitment in ranging population issues on the priority agenda. Noted that the commitment of government is crucial if the country is to attain the promised goals on any agenda.

He noted that treaties and protocols do a lot in guiding the country's direction for national planning. It is a good opportunity for parliament to initiate programs and activities. Establishment of the Ethiopian Parliamentarians Forum on Population and Development was a good opportunity to coordinate all interventions and follow up. He highlighted some of the instruments, protocols and frameworks which guide as follows;

- ICPD Plan of Action
- The Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development (2014)
- Agenda 2063 for Africa Development (2013)
- Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development Goals (2015-2030)
- The Paris Agreement on Climate Change (2015)
- The New York Declaration on Large Movement of Refugees and Migrants (2016)
- The African Union (AU) Road Map on Demographic Dividend through investment in Youth (2016)



He reported that the institution is faced by challenges that include the Inability of institutions to use sex-disaggregated socio-economic data in policies, un-availability of sufficient sex-disaggregated socio-economic data, Limited participation of stake holders in policy design, implementation and Monitoring and evaluation and lack of budget or inadequate resources for population programs and activities. On reproductive health challenges, he reported limited Youth Friendly Reproductive Health Services, Prevalence HTPs and cultural taboos contributing to reproductive ill-health and the unmet need for FPA. He concluded by recommending for the establishment of the National Population Council and request for support in the move towards its establishment.

#### **Visit to the palace of Emperor Haile Selassie**

The field visit was concluded by the tour of the palace started by and built in the memory of Emperor Haile Selassie. The key intention was meant to appreciate the historical and cultural heritage of the country as the key uniting factor.

The Palace was built by the emperor in 1930 and had made it his residence. It was noted that the palace is the biggest historical and tourism base for Ethiopia where some of the facilities are sued as Administrative offices for the country

## **7. Key observations/Recommendations, Conclusion**

### **Key Observations**

Ethiopia as a country is still lagging behind as per the expectations of the treaties, they are party to. The health budget oscillating around 4 to 6 percent is far below the promised ceiling in the Maputo declaration of not less than 15%. Youth unemployment is still rampant as many young people not only lack jobs but also the skills to apply for available jobs. This has moved along with many challenges including drug abuse, risky sexual; behavior like commercial sex among others.

Despite the high speed registered in infrastructure development, this has moved along with challenges of urbanization including income disparities. Parliamentarians are very critical in decision making process. Thus, Population and Development Affairs Executive of the Ministry of Planning and Development identify the major population and development priorities that need decision at country level and work together with parliamentarian network to make the issue the top agenda of the country.

As it is in other African countries, Ethiopia is still faced with a male in many decision-making challenges. Cultural and religious dictations are still undermining the plight of women. There has been lack of coordinated parliamentary interventions in promoting the ICPD agenda. They have committees but

each one has been moving on its way. The country has been faced with challenges of climate change which require to be addressed.

### **Recommendations**

The technical capacities of Ethiopian parliamentarians in population program design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation need to be enhanced through consecutive short term and long-term training. The Population and Development Affairs Executive of Ministry of Planning and Development would organize trainings with the support of population and development stakeholders.

1. Experience sharing from successful countries in parliamentarian network on population and development is very important to effectively implement population and development issues. Thus, MoPD would organize experience sharing visit in collaboration with population and development stakeholders.
2. In collaboration with parliamentarians, network Ministry of planning and development would organize a campaign and inform the community about the significance of Family planning and its contribution to family wellbeing.
3. Enhancing adequate and timely legislation that favors the attainment of the promises in the ICPD PoA
4. Establishment of parliamentary initiatives that could reenergize the role of parliament of achievement the promises of the ICPD PoA
5. Intensifying climate change responses like tree planting, reasonable waste management and investment in water saving technologies
6. Conducting study and benchmarking tours for parliamentarians to have opportunities to learn from other countries
7. Conducting community awareness and sensitization tour not only to assist communities to handle challenges but also to bridge the gap with Parliamentary interventions

### **Conclusion**

The parliamentarian's dialogue on population and development issues was organized for Ethiopia as a country to reflect on the population issues in regard to the status and challenges faced. The key issues noted rotate around lack of empowerment of the vulnerable and marginalized groups.

The role of parliamentarians in mobilization of communities, enacting favorable policies and laws is highly critical in driving the country's agenda towards progress /

## Appendix 1: Programme

Venue: Saro- Maria Hotel, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia	
2024 November 19	
Time	Activity
9.00 - 1000	<p>Opening ceremony</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Welcome remarks by the Chairperson (Ethiopia Parliamentary Committee on Planning and Budget).</li> <li>Remarks by Dr, Farrukh Usmonov on behalf of the Asian Population and Development Association (APDA)</li> </ul> <p>Group photo</p>
10.30 - 10.30	<b>Break</b>
10:30 - 12.30	<p><b>Presentations</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Case of the African Parliamentarians Forum on Population and Development in attainment of ICPD and AADP goals. By <b>Mr. Wamala Musa Buyungo</b></li> <li>The population Status in Ethiopia: Challenges and opportunities. BY <b>Ministry of Planning and Development</b></li> </ol>
12: 30 - 12:40	The way forward by APFPD Officials
12.40 - 13.30	Official closing by the minister of Planning, Ethiopia
14:00 - 15:30	Lunch at Saro-Maria Hotel
2024 November 20	
9.00 - 10.00	Meeting with leadership of Ethiopia Women Parliamentary Caucus
10.00 - 12.00	Meeting with official of the Ministry of Planning and Development
14.00 - 16.00	Visit of the delegates to National Palace of Ethiopia

### List of Acronyms

APDA	Asian Population and Development Association
FPA/APFPD	African Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development
ICPD PoA	International Conference on Population and Development- Plan of Action
GBV	Gender Based Violence
MPs	Members of Parliament
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights

## Appendix 2: Gallery



*Participants of the High-level meeting*



*Chairperson Women caucus making a point*



*Meeting with officials from ministry of Planning and Development*