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Population and the millennium development goals: Opportunities for the World Bank to advance the Cairo agenda

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Abstract

As the world's largest lender for health, the World Bank has made achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) a corporate priority. Amidst some fears that this commitment may be at the expense of the Bank's previous endorsement and support of the Cairo Programme of Action, this report reviews the World Bank's investment in population and reproductive health. The report shows how the MDGs represent a new opportunity for the Bank and others interested in seeing that the vision of the Cairo agenda is fully implemented. The report is forward-looking, and aims to assist the Bank in mobilizing internal commitment, additional support and resources to finance sustainable population levels and improvements in reproductive health.

The report is based on interviews with current and former staff of the World Bank, and staff from NGOs and other donors (UNFPA, USAID). Numbers of reports, largely available to the public from the World Bank, as well as information from UNFPA and the UN Population Division and other sources were also reviewed. This external review provides follow-up to the Bank's strategy paper, Population and the World Bank --Adapting to Change (World Bank, 1999, 2000 revised) and to the Population Action International (PAI) report, Falling Short (Conly and Epp, 1997).

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