

A. INTRODUCTION

The International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in 1994, approved a Programme of Action (PoA) by consensus by 179 countries to improve the quality of life for all people

laws on population issues. Other ways of implementing the ICPD PoA is to modify existing population policies, as demonstrated in the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia and Sri Lanka, while other countries such as Maldives and Nepal have established institutional mechanisms to reach the same goal (United Nations, 2004). Nonetheless, many countries have linked population

Republic of Korea and New Zealand. ESCAP remains at the forefront in advocating for the achievement of the MDGs and works collaboratively with a number of partner agencies including UNDP and the Asian Development Bank.

Given the centrality of achieving the MDGs in its objectives, ESCAP has established an MDG centre in the Office of the Executive Secretary to monitor progress in the achievement of the MDGs. In 2003, the centre published the report

under the direction of the Executive Secretary. In essence, the report assessed the progress ESCAP countries were making in achieving the MDGs. In addition, it summarized the national policies and priorities for reform and the various partnerships involved in helping countries achieve the MDGs. While it was highlighted that striking achievements were attained in poverty reduction, progress was slower in achieving the other goals (United Nations, 2003). Nonetheless, the report highlighted the value of adopting a regional perspective as it draws out the shared experiences and challenges faced by the various countries with the objective of exchanging best practices to meet the goals. Also noted in the report were the difficulties in establishing detailed cross-country comparisons as a result of a lack of internationally comparable time-series data.

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