

## UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW

### RUSSIAN FEDERATION

#### UNFPA INPUTS

##### I. Background and Framework

Russian Federation (mostly as a legacy of Soviet Union) is guided in its legislation by the following major international human rights obligations:

- Millenium Declaration and Development Goals
- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)
- Convention on the Rights of the Child
- UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
- ILO Convention «On equal treatment and equal opportunities for working men and women: workers with family responsibilities»

Materials of International UN Conferences on population and Development (Cairo 1994), Fourth World Conference on Women ( 'Beijing' 1995) and other conferences even if not ratified also play a role in defining framework for Russian legislation.

Russian legislation stays in general in compliance with international laws.

Selected elements of Constitutional and legislative framework with regard to UNFPA mandate are:

- Constitution of the Russian Federation
- Legislative foundations of health promotion in Russian Federation
- Federal law "On prevention of HIV in Russian Federation"
- Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS
- Family Code
- Labour Code

There is no definition of reproductive health and rights in Russian legislation. However the Constitution stipulates (art.15) that it is based on principles of international law. According to Russian Constitution the State is responsible for promoting health and well-being of all its citizens (art. 41) and support to maternity and childhood (art.38). It also states that any form of discrimination is unacceptable.

In order to maintain formal equality of rights and achieve real equality of men and women. the relevant norm was formulated in the Constitution (art. 19): «men and women have equal rights and freedoms and equal opportunities for their implementation». A number of other legal documents appeared in 1990s as its follow up. Endorsement of the Family Code and the new Labour Code, as well as ratification of ILO Convention were significant steps in the direction of gender mainstreaming.

"Legislative foundations of health promotion in Russian Federation" (1993, with consequent amendments) – the document that contains legislative foundations of reproductive rights and health and family planning in Russia – acknowledges the following rights (selection):

- A unalienable right of all citizens not depending on their gender, race, nationality, language, social status and other circumstances to have access to health promotion (art 17.)
- A right to have access to free of charge family planning consultations (art.22)
- A right of a woman to receive free of charge specialized medical treatment in the childbearing, delivery and postnatal periods (art.23)

- A right to be treated with respect and dignity when receiving medical treatment (art.30).
- A right of every adult woman for artificial fertilization (art.35)
- A right to decide freely about maternity (art.36)
- A right of a woman to have abortion (art.36)

Federal law "On prevention of HIV in Russian Federation" (1995) proclaims that Russian Federation citizens with HIV are entitled to all rights and freedoms, which can be limited solely by federal law.

## **II. Promotion and protection of human rights on the ground**

Although Russia has met most of the MDGs the key rights referring to population and development, reproductive health and rights, gender equity are stipulated in laws but not successfully promoted in Russia.

The decline in population is an extremely critical problem for Russia. A steady fall in population can be observed since 1992, as a result of a low birthrates and high mortality. The decline in population, especially among working-age men and women, is seen as one of the greatest risks to the country's security and socio-economic growth. Russia's current population is estimated at 142 million. The country's demographic profile is characterized by negative population growth attributed mainly to low fertility rates and a high mortality.

Russia's total fertility rate is among the lowest in the world at 1.3 lifetime births per woman in 2005. Life expectancy at birth has fallen dramatically over the past decade and is now 73,2 for women and 60,4 for men. Currently, there is a high rate of male mortality, as well as a growing burden of ill health among women. As a result of a decline in fertility, Russia's population has aged rapidly over the last decade and the proportion of the population ages 60 and over is more than 20 per cent. An ageing population implies a shrinking labour force and raising the dependent load, which negatively influence economic growth rates and often means an increase in public expenditure on social security. A decline in pension support and medical coverage of older persons has had drastic effects on the quality of life of senior citizens.

In the area of reproductive health main problems are connected with adolescent and reproductive health, spread of HIV and maternal health. Even though maternal mortality declined rapidly in the past two decades (in 2006 the MMR was 23,8 per 100 000 birth, against 47,4 in 1990) it is considerably higher than Western Europe standards. There are considerable regional differences in maternal mortality ratios across the Russian regions. This is indicating the need for an effective policy response.

Abortion continues to remain the important issue. Abortions, though decreasing in incidence, continue to be common and contraceptive use relatively low. The number of abortions among adolescents has declined in the last few years. Although the number of abortions has fallen in recent times, Russia has been and remains a country with unacceptable high level of abortions. For every 100 births in 2007, there were 106 abortions which is significantly higher in comparison with other industrialized countries.

The percentage of young people who are sexually active has increased from an estimated 28% to 48% in the past 30 years. At the same time, young people's access to reliable information on reproductive health and services remains insufficient. This lead to unintended pregnancies and abortion, as well as to sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS.

Young people, in particular, have been the hardest hit with the majority of new infections occurring in youth between the ages of 15 and 29. Fully 75 per cent of new infections are attributed to heterosexual transmission. A lack of political commitment to comprehensive education on sex and drugs in schools hampers effective prevention programmes among young people.

According to official statistics of the Federal Methodological AIDS center, the total registered number of HIV infected people is 400 327 by the end of 2007, however experts estimate that the real number is more than 1,5 million) and more than million Russians are currently living with HIV up from 87,000 people in 2001. Although the official percentage of those living with HIV is 1.1 per cent, experts say the number is likely far higher with the threat of a generalized epidemic growing by the year.

The Russian Federation is facing one of the fastest growing HIV/AIDS pandemics in the world. Injecting drug use is the predominant route of HIV transmission, but the importance of sexual transmission is increasing. The pandemic has hit young people hardest. Those ages 15-24 account for two-thirds of all registered cases. The population decline projected for the Russian Federation is compounded by the impact of the AIDS pandemic. 2006 was the crucial year for fight with HIV – since then political and economical decisions on the level of President and Prime Minister were settled upon quantity and quality organizational changes in combating HIV epidemics.

With regard to gender equality, problem of domestic violence, particularly violence against women, is extremely relevant, long standing and painful in Russia. A number of studies indicate that up to 30 per cent of women have been the victims of domestic violence. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that government officials do not disaggregate crime data according to gender. This in turn has an impact on policy without accurate statistics, policymakers are reluctant to make tackling domestic abuse a national priority. Despite the fact that Russia ratified the Convention for the Elimination all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 2004, in reality women earn, on average, 35 per cent less than men and around issues of domestic violence and rape, have little to no legal recourse.

The picture of the current situation with population and development, reproductive health and rights and gender equality indicates that human rights entitlements especially with regard to access to quality reproductive health information and services are not attained and safeguarded properly.

### **III. Achievements, best practices, challenges and constraints**

According to MoHSD the following outcomes of “Health” National Project in 2007 are regarded as achievements:

- There are indications that demographic situation is improved: more than 1.3 mln of children were born.
- Birthrate is stimulated. The “Birth Certificate” program (part of the Proposals of the President of the Russian Federation for stimulating birthrate) was scaled up to comprise more than 92% of expecting mothers, the program include providing service at predelivery, delivery and postnatal periods.
- Future promotion of the program is supposed to lower child mortality ratio to 9.3 cases per 1000 live birth in 2010.
- HIV testing of more than 22 mln of Russian citizens was conducted in 2007. For the first time more than 26 thousand of HIV positive people got the needed medical treatment.
- To achieve the goal of sustainable demographic development the Concept of Demographic Policy of the Russian Federation for the period up to 2020 was developed in 2007. It’s main tasks: lowering of mortality ratio and increasing birth rates, improving health, regulation of migration.
- Sub-programme “Healthy Generation” of the “Children of Russia” “Federal Target Programme” covering the period of 2007-2010 was developed aiming at support of maternity and childhood and general improvement of Russian demographic situation.

Ministry of Health and Social Development recognize the following as difficulties encountered by the State in the implementation of its human rights obligations:

- Demographic situation - depopulation
- High mortality ratio caused by disease.
- Economical disparities in the well-being of Russian citizens
- Access to quality medical service
- General social protection issues

#### **IV. Key national priorities, initiatives & commitments to overcome challenges and constraints and improve human rights situations on the ground**

Improvement of Russian social development is based on the following interlinked key national priorities - demographics and health. Demographic situation is recognized as a first and key priority by MoHSD. The support for the existing programmes of the "Health" National Project will be provided.

Of utmost importance are increase of a birthrates and improvement of economic situation of families with children, reduction of mortality ratio, improving of obstetric aid; improvement of well-being, lowering poverty and income disparities of the population; strengthening access to quality medical support; strengthening family and family values (for that the year of 2008 was announced to be a "Year of Family")

A Concept of Demographic Policy of Russia until 2025, was enacted by Presidential Decree in October 2007 with the goal to provide proactive policies to reduce mortality, increase fertility and create an effective migration policy.

A Strategy for Development of Health Care till 2020 is being developed. It will focus on priorities for development, complex approaches in financing of health care, organization of medical support, accessibility and quality of medical service, legal issues of doctor-patient relationship, promotion of rights of patients.

All the strategic decisions with regard to health and demographics will be guided by the main key point – social development and well-being of an individual.

#### **V. Capacity-building and technical assistance**

##### **Technical assistance provided and/or recommended by UN entities.**

UNFPA considers human rights to be the core element in the all its three focus areas of the programme of action – population and development, reproductive health and rights and gender equality. UNFPA Russia encourages particular attention to the rights of the most vulnerable women, men and youth in the fields of development and population, reproductive health and rights and HIV prevention especially with regard to access to information and service.

The projects supported by UNFPA in the Russian Federation since 1995 have focused on population and development policy development, reproductive health including HIV/STI prevention, and advocacy and gender equity. Advocacy and capacity building are the major approaches of UNFPA Russia.

In the area of Population and Development UNFPA is currently focusing on the following goal: data on population dynamics, gender equality, young people, sexual and reproductive health and HIV/AIDS available, analyzed and used at national and subnational levels to develop and monitor policies and programme implementation. Advocacy and knowledge-sharing are crosscutting strategies in the implemented projects.

Ongoing projects in the area are The Generations and Gender Programme and The Russian-language online journal "Demoscope Weekly".

The aim of Generations and Gender Programme (GGP) project is to fill up a gap in demographic statistics especially related to fertility and to produce new knowledge and

deeper understanding of the demographic processes in the context of changing social and economic environment that can be used in policy-making in Russia.

The Project "Demoscope Weekly" provides for evidence-based advocacy on population issues in Russia and the CIS, with policy dialogue on population and development issues and social policies in Russia and the CIS strengthened, permanent cumulative supplement is developed (database, publications), at the same time sustainable strategy for "Demoscope Weekly" is developed.

In the area of Reproductive health and rights the key activities of UNFPA in Russia focus on:

- Reproductive rights and sexual and reproductive health demand promoted and the essential SRH package, including reproductive health commodities and human resources for health, integrated in public policies of development and humanitarian frameworks with strengthened implementation monitoring. The ongoing project "Integrating of HIV prevention in reproductive health services" aims at piloting of the developed national strategy of HIV prevention in RHS.
- Demand, access to and utilization of quality of HIV/STI prevention services, especially for women, young people, and other vulnerable groups increased.  
The UNFPA Russia projects anticipate the following outcomes:
  1. increased demand to reproductive health services for HIV-positive women through strengthening regional capacity and networking in advocating women's reproductive rights in the context of HIV;
  2. policy evaluation and attitudes of key stakeholders towards implementation of programmes for men having sex with men in the Russian Federation;
  3. increased coverage of comprehensive HIV/AIDS prevention and care services among sex workers in several Syberian regions.
- Access of young people to sexual and reproductive health, HIV and gender-based violence prevention services, and gender-sensitive life skills-based sexual and reproductive health education improved. The anticipated outcome of the current project "Strengthening youth peer education organizations' capacities of implementing behavior change communication programs" is increased demand and access of young people to quality of HIV/SRH prevention services though building capacities of youth NGOs in delivery behavioral change communication. In 2007 Y-PEER network (established as a crucial part of the project) initiated networking activities aimed at achievement better access to prevention services. Within the frames of this initiatives, the current situation with access is being assessed, most effective an empowering methods are being identified and the final stage will focus on scaling up access and involvement of the most at risk youth. Gender, human rights and youth-adult partnership principles are included in project components as cross cutting issues.

Having youth as a cross-cutting issue and with a view to increase the fulfillment of youth's right to participation UNFPA has initiated establishment of the Youth Advisory Panel (YAP). The YAP was initially established within the joint UN project "Promoting HIV prevention among young people in the Russian Federation" implemented by UNAIDS, UNFPA, UNESCO and UNICEF. The YAP includes 15 youth leaders who have wide experience in HIV programming and high commitment to advocating for youth issues. The one year YAP working experience has made youth issues more visible at the level of UN country team. Potentially the YAP activities can help to bring broader emerging youth issues to the highest level.

In the area of Gender Equality UNFPA in order to integrate joint priority issues of UNDP and other other UN agencies in the RF and Russian Government currently supports the project "Gender Mainstreaming in Russia (in the context of MDGs and Sustainable Human Development)" that aims at gender mainstreaming in Russia scaled up through building the capacity of civil servants and professors/lecturers in the Russian Academy of Public Services and its regional branches in the Russian Federation.