

## **Message for World Population Day 2010**

### **Everyone Counts**

*Thoraya Ahmed Obaid, UNFPA Executive Director*

As we commemorate World Population Day, “Everyone Counts” is a theme that speaks to the inherent value and dignity of each human being.

The theme “Everyone Counts” highlights the compelling stories that numbers tell us about people. In Asia, when censuses and surveys identified sex-ratio imbalances and missing girls, governments responded, the media reported extensively on the disturbing trends and people were rallied to action. In Europe and other regions, policy debate heated up when data analysis examined the levels of replacement immigration needed to counteract declining and ageing populations.

Data can reveal striking situations in countries. Girls may be delaying marriage, an indigenous population may be drastically under-served, and higher rates of contraceptive use and skilled birth attendance may show progress towards improving maternal health, which is one of the Millennium Development Goals. Censuses, surveys and vital statistics provide critical data to guide plans, policies and programmes to meet people’s needs and improve their lives. This data is crucial as we strive for universal access to education, HIV prevention, treatment, care and support, and reproductive health and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, actively supports countries in the 2010 round of censuses. Censuses are central to UNFPA’s mandate and mission to support countries in using population data for policies and programmes to reduce poverty and to ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, every young person is free of HIV/AIDS, and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect.

Population dynamics – including growth rates, age structure, fertility and mortality, migration, and more – influence every aspect of human, social and economic development. The results of the current round of censuses will be used in statistical systems and policies and programmes for years to come.

On this World Population Day, UNFPA asserts the right of everyone to be counted, especially women, girls, the poor and the marginalized. Censuses and population data play a critical role in development and humanitarian response and recovery. With quality data we can better track and make greater progress to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and promote and protect the dignity and human rights of all people.