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# REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CAIRO PROGRAMME OF ACTION (1994 - 2009) ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONSTRAINTS

Report prepared for the Caribbean Subregional meeting to assess the implementation  
of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on  
Population and Development (ICPD)  
15 years after its adoption

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The purpose of this report is to assess the current situation on Aruba in the light of the ICPD vision on improving the living conditions of its inhabitants. We will also provide an overview of the progress made during the past years together with the opportunities and constraints faced. Furthermore, we will identify emerging issues in the further implementation of the ICPD Program of Action and the Caribbean Plan of Action on Population and Development.

### **The social, economic and demographic situation on Aruba**

According to the 2000 population census, 90,506 persons were living on Aruba on census night, October 14th 2000. Of these persons 43,434 were males and 47,072 were females. Current estimates, based on the 2000 census figures, combined with the mutations from the Population Registry, are that Aruba currently has a population of about 106,000 persons.

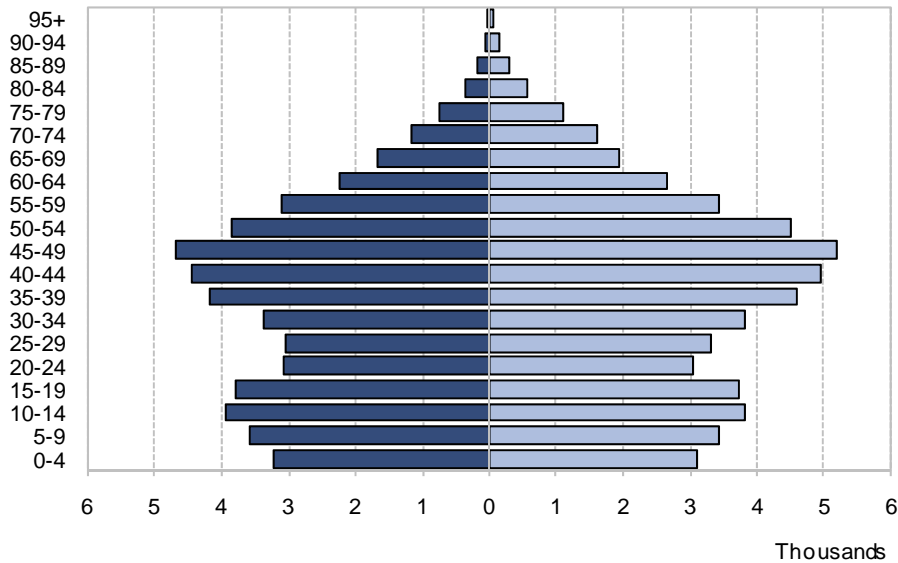
Although international migration has always been a part of Aruba's demographic entity, much of the change in the size and composition of the population has taken place during the last ten years. The fast growing economy not only solved most of the unemployment problems on the island, but also triggered a large demand for all types of labor. From 1989 until 1993, Aruba witnessed very high growth rates and was one of the fastest growing countries on earth. During this period, the average growth rate was well above 5 percent annually. Growth rates have fallen since then. Between 1994 and 1997 population increase was on average still above 3 percent. But since 1997 the growth has come down to about 1 percent annually. However, in 2003 growth was again well above 2 percent. Since the last Census held in 2000, the population of Aruba increased with 15,544 persons. And even though the population is not growing as fast as it used to be, the net growth in 2008 totaled 14.5 persons per thousand. With an estimated 106,050 persons by the end of 2008, the population density was 589.2 persons per square kilometer. Ranking number 14 among the most densely populated countries of the world. In the Caribbean region, Aruba is the most densely populated country, next to Barbados

Throughout Aruba's economic history, migration has acted as a demographic regulator. In times of economic growth foreign laborers came to the island, while in times of economic contraction, people tried their luck overseas. However, the stream of so many foreign workers to Aruba has been unsurpassed in the island's history. The large influx of foreign workers created some serious infrastructural problems on the island. During the early nineties, the shortage of housing facilities created an overheated housing market. It has also been very hard for utility companies- such as water, electricity and telecommunications- to keep up with the sharp increase in demand due to rapid population and economic growth. The 2000 population census showed that out of a total of 90,506 persons, 59,886 (66.1 percent) were born on Aruba, while 30,104 (33.9 percent) were foreign-born. Most migrants originate from surrounding Latin American and Caribbean countries and from the Netherlands. In 2000, seventy nine different nationalities lived on the island. Residents were born in no less than 124 different countries. Migration trends in the last thirty years clearly reflect the economic, political and social events that took place during this period. We will have to wait for the 2010 census to get a detailed picture of the composition of the population between native and foreign born persons. It is estimated that the percentage of foreign born persons has further increased. Currently, 36 percent of the population living on Aruba is not born on the island.

Aruba experienced a very rapid decrease in human fertility from 1958 till 1967. During this time the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) fell from a level of 5.26 births per women to a level of 2.58, which is less than half the rate of just ten years before. Because of this rapid fertility decline the population pyramid became quite irregular. Another important aspect that contributed to the irregular age structure were the high levels of immigration that were concentrated in those age groups of high economic activity. Figure 1 shows Aruba's irregular age distribution.

In many countries adolescent fertility is considered a major social problem. Currently, adolescent fertility is 5.1 per 100 for Aruba. The current figure is a little down from 1991, when 5.8 children were born to adolescent women. Other countries in the region have levels that are significantly higher than on Aruba. However, it is generally accepted that more attention should be placed on teenage pregnancy.

Population Pyramid 2008



Many countries in the world have seen an increase in life expectancy in recent years. For instance, life expectancy in Western Europe increased from 76 years in 1990 to 78 years in 1998. Life expectancy increased with 3 years from 66 to 69 in Latin America. It is disappointing to note that life expectancy in Aruba went down by somewhat more than a year for both males and females since the 1991 census. In 1991, the life expectancy was 71.1 for men and 77.1 for women. Current levels of life expectancy are slightly lower than the levels observed in 1981. A possible explanation for the reduction in life expectancy may be found in the imbalance of dietary intake of the population and consequently the overweight of many citizens on Aruba. In 2006 a health survey was conducted on Aruba. For the purpose of this survey, the 'WHO STEPwise approach to chronic disease risk factor surveillance' was adopted. The STEPS research showed that among adults 25-65 years of age, Aruba has reached the point where the average adult male is obese. The average BMI-value for males aged 25-64 years is currently 30, for females this is 28.8.

Ageing of the population has become a main concern throughout the developed world. Ageing is the inevitable consequence of fertility decline, and accelerates once replacement or sub-replacement fertility is reached. At the earlier stages of the ageing process, fertility-induced ageing can be observed at the bottom of the age pyramid. In addition to the ageing due to a fertility decline, a drop in mortality may also contribute to the ageing process. Once life expectancy increases, the population starts ageing 'at the top' of the pyramid.

Currently, the Aruban population has entered a phase of rapid ageing of its population. Between 1991 and 2000, the percentage of persons 65 years and older did not really increase. At that time 7.0 percent of the population was older than 65. In 2008 the population 65 years of age and older has increased to 9.3 percent.

The mean age of the population increased from 32.6 to 33.4 years between 1991 and 2000. In 2008 the mean age of the population further increased to 36.7 years. It is interesting to note that in 1960 the mean age was only 23.9 years. Much of the ageing of the Aruban population is masked by the arrival of large groups of foreign workers that came to Aruba in recent times. To understand the ageing process, it is necessary to look at the intertwined effect of the ageing of the native and foreign-born population and the continuing immigration. The data from the upcoming 2010 census will be a valuable source to disentangle the effects of ageing and migration patterns.

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During the past decade Aruba has made significant progress in its social and economic development. Social indicators provide a clear picture of the developments that have taken place in our society. Some positive indicators of the current situation in Aruba are, among others:

- Infant mortality rates are very low at 7.4 per thousand.
- Universal access to free health care through the General Medical Insurance, and sufficient availability of qualified medical staff. When necessary, specialized treatments abroad are available through the General Medical Insurance.
- An overall literacy rate of about 98 percent.
- The participation in primary and secondary education is almost universal.

However, in the long run several issues continue to pose a challenge to sustainable development. These issues are strongly related to the dramatic and rapid economic, demographic and social changes that took place on the island during the last twenty years and to the current global economic and financial crisis.

The demographic and economic changes of the last two decades had a strong impact on the Aruban society. Migrants have filled specific niches on the labor market. Many migrant children have problems integrating in the Dutch based education system. The Aruban society is growing older at a fast pace. This is a reason for immediate concern.

As many countries in the region, Aruba's economy is highly dependent on the tourism industry. Because of the economic turmoil, worldwide the tourism industry has suffered significantly. On Aruba, the effect of the economic downturn on tourism has -up to now- not been really dramatic. For 2009 (year to date) the overall occupancy rate for hotels has declined with 6.5 percent, while timeshare occupancy was down with 4.5 percent. The revenue per available room is (year to date) 10.9 percent lower than in 2008. Although this is a significant decrease, one has to take into account that especially the first half of 2008 was exceptionally good. Cruise tourism on the island did not suffer at all. For the first 6 months of 2009 there was even an increase of 6 percent in the number of cruise tourists, compared to last year.

Other sectors of the economy seem to have been hit more seriously by the economic crisis. Valero, the island's oil refinery, decided recently to stop operations for a period of 3 months. In April, the total import was 22 percent lower than in 2009. However, in May this reduction was only 5 percent compared to 2008. The year to date generated tax decreased with 6 percent in 2009, compared to 2008. Unfortunately, no data are available about rising unemployment. Information from the Labor Department indicates that the number of persons who come to register as job seekers, has increased significantly in 2009 compared to the previous year.

However, as in many countries in the world, the government of Aruba is really concerned about the possible course of its economy and the effect this may have on its efforts to improve the living conditions of its population and to achieve sustainable national development.

## Review of the implementation of the ICPD: achievements and constraints

### Migration

Migration to Aruba has been widely recognized as a vital element in the country's development process. In Aruba, international migration is the most important component affecting population growth. Consequently, issues related to migration have been on the political agenda for many years.

Data on international migration are obtained from two types of sources: administrative sources and household-based inquiries. The Population Registry provides detailed data about entering and departing migrants. This register produces fairly reliable information on the incoming citizens and foreigners. However, outgoing migration is far less accurately registered. It is estimated that about one in three migrants do not deregister themselves when they leave Aruba.

The second source of data on migration, namely household-based inquiries, include the census held in 1991 en 2000, and the recently held '*Aruba Migration and Integration Study, 2003*'. No further migration

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surveys were held after 2003. The upcoming 2010 population census will again provide a wealth of valuable information about Aruba's migrant population

The Admission and Deportation Act (Landsverordening Toelating en Uitzetting or LTU) and the policy of the DIMAS require employers to recruit employees in Aruba first. In 2006 the government started applying a more strict policy towards immigration. This policy was introduced to limit the number of migrants. From 2006 on permits were only provided for a period of 3 years. According to the LTU, new-comers in the group of immigrants of 2006, would have to leave in 2009. For a work permit to be given, the employer generally has to show that no qualified local worker is available to fill the position. These measures were in the first place taken to protect the local labor market. In 2006 the number of immigrants dropped with 38 percent.

#### Reproductive health

Aruba took steps to meet the family planning needs of the population and tries to provide universal access to a full range of safe and reliable family planning methods. The government subsidizes the Foundation for Promotion of Responsible Parenthood, and the Community Nursing & Home Care Organization. These organizations assist couples and individuals to meet their reproductive goals. To make quality family-planning services affordable, acceptable and accessible to all who need and want them.

It is the responsibility of the Foundation, together with the Department of Juvenile Public Health and the Department of Sexually Transmitted Diseases to improve the quality of family planning. They strictly adhere to the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) guidelines. Together with the Foundation 'Pro Lechi Mama', the Foundation for the Promotion of Responsible Parenthood also promotes breastfeeding. To prevent unwanted pregnancies and reduce the incidence of high-risk pregnancies, female condoms and emergency contraception choices are available through the family physicians and all the pharmacies.

Despite the extensive program of the Foundation, the level of teenage-pregnancy is still considered to be too high. The teenage pregnancy rate stands at 5.1 per 1000.

#### Ageing

The Ageing Index<sup>1</sup> for Aruba increased from 42.0 in 1991 to 48.3 in 2000. In 2008 the index saw a further dramatic rise to 70.45. The growth of the population aged 60 and older is currently at a rate of between 3 and 4 percent per year. These figures clearly show the extend of the ageing problem within Aruban society. It will be one of Aruba's major challenges for the future to make arrangements for its rising elderly population.

Currently, Aruba's welfare system provides a wide array of services and benefits that is aimed at the socially vulnerable groups, such as the destitute, the unemployed, orphans and widows, the youth, the disabled and the elderly. The social welfare system consists of three different categories: public assistance programs, social security programs and social services.

The public assistance system includes different programs such as family allowances, legal services, funeral cost subsidies and house-rent subsidies to indigent families in public housing projects.

The social security system includes an old-age pension scheme, a widow(er) and orphan insurance program, medical insurance, disability insurance and an unemployment benefit fund. The first two programs are general insurance covering the national population. The others cover only the employees earning salaries or wages lower than an established maximum.

Aruba's social services delivery system is based on a partnership principle, which is regulated by law. It states that the government, if found so, will subsidize through this regulation needed welfare services.

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<sup>1</sup> Ageing Index (Population 60+ year old / population 0-14) x 100

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A comprehensive and uniform health care system that guarantees equal accessibility to an array of basic health care services and medical products to all residents is the aim of the General Health Care Insurance. This has been introduced as of January 2001. In general, the demand of health care services by elderly persons is very high. By this means, the General Health Care Insurance can guarantee elderly persons to an array of basic health care services and medical products.

There is no doubt that because of the rapid pace of population ageing, maintaining the same level of social services will require special efforts at various levels of policy making and program development.

#### HIV/AIDS

As per 1-1-2008, the period prevalence from 1987-2007 for HIV/AIDS for Aruba is 0.4%. In absolute figures there are a total of 405 people living on the island with HIV/AIDS. The institutional framework to combat the disease is functional. The department of Public Health of Aruba has a surveillance system for contagious diseases. Residents of Aruba infected with the HIV virus have access to free medical care through the General Medical Insurance. Female Commercial Sex Workers on Aruba are also being monitored by a program managed by the Services of Contagious Diseases. Country of origin of these FSW is predominantly Colombia. This program includes comprehensive information about STD's, information about the use of condoms, screening for STD's, including HIV/AIDS, before they can start working as FSW.

However, being an open society where the inflow and outflow of persons is very high, it is important to take necessary steps to ensure that the situation does not worsen in the future. Based on this consideration, the Government of Aruba in cooperation with UNAIDS, designed the 'National Strategic Plan for an Expanded Response to HIV/AIDS for Aruba 2003/2007.' This plan was issued in June 2003. The main objective of the National AIDS Plan is to contain or slow the spread of HIV/AIDS in Aruba<sup>2</sup>. It furthermore aims to minimize the devastating impact of HIV/AIDS on individuals and the high risk groups. These goals are to be achieved through:

- Health promotion for behavioral change
- Diagnosis, treatment, care and support
- Surveillance and epidemiology
- Advocacy and partnerships
- Institutional strengthening and resource mobilization

There are currently three organizations in Aruba dealing with HIV/AIDS:

1. The AIDS Task Force Aruba (ATFA), which is a working group consisting of government officials of the Department of Health. The ATFA is responsible for providing technical advice to the Minister of Public Health on policy regarding HIV/AIDS issues.
2. The Women's Club of Aruba, a NGO that has worked in the area of HIV/AIDS prevention for years and was instrumental in the creation of the first National AIDS Committee Aruba (NACA).
3. UNAIDS Theme Group, a multi-sectoral group, consisting of representatives of government departments, NGO's, UNAIDS and the private sector. The focus of this group is on the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS in Aruba.

Several projects are currently executed. In most cases they are coordinated by the UNAIDS Theme Group. Video and radio materials were developed to create awareness in the community through TV and radio programming on HIV/AIDS. Several workshops were organized to sensitize and educate specific groups within our community. Different workshops were organized for the personnel of the Hospital on the treatment of persons infected with HIV.

One limitation concerns the fact that the statistical figures available on HIV/AIDS epidemiology are based on reported seropositive cases. The true number of HIV infected people, and people living with AIDS are

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<sup>2</sup> Prevention strategies include: A) voluntary counseling; B) voluntary testing; C) Condom availability and use D) targeted interventions to vulnerable groups, E) Prevention in pregnant women, F) behavior change communication and information, education and communication) Strengthening capacity of service providers from different sectors H) Others

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not known. The reported HIV cases are yearly cumulative totals. Since some of the infected persons may have left the country, have developed AIDS, or have deceased, the HIV prevalence at any given year cannot be established accurately.<sup>3</sup>

#### Gender

The need for women's equality is stressed throughout the ICPD Program of Action. The improvement of women's political, social and economic status is seen as essential for stabilizing population growth and achieving sustainable development. Women in Aruba legally enjoy complete equality with men, as measured by the objectives set by the ICPD-POA in the component "Empowerment and status of women." Based on available indicators, the actual position of women seems to have improved in the past years. The following depict points some positive developments of the position of women in our society.

- Educational attainment of women is an important indicator of their position in society. The developments in education in the past ten years were very favorable for young women:
  - Girls in Aruba have higher school enrollment rates than boys, especially at more advanced levels of education.
  - Since 1990, the number of fellowships and loans granted to Arubans to study abroad is higher for girls than for boys.
  - Up to age categories 30 - 34, there are more women than men with a university education. The same applies for higher non-university education.
  - Illiteracy is very low in Aruba. About 2 percent of both males and females are illiterate. Participation rate in primary and secondary education is 99 and 97 percent respectively.
- Labor Market
  - The Census 2000 results show that the position of women on the higher side of the labor market has improved considerably compared to 1991. In 1991, 41.2 females per 100 males were at senior managerial levels. In 2000, this sex ratio increased to 55.9.
- Legal, administrative and policy measures to protect the rights of girls and women
  - As of 1 January 2002, the New Civil Code entered into force for Aruba. With the introduction of Book 1 of the New Aruban Civil Code the old law of persons and family was replaced. With the revision of this law a large number of discriminatory provisions have been abolished.
  - The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW-Protocol) entered into force on Aruba in 2002.

Despite these positive developments, there is still room to continue promoting gender equality and empowerment of women.

#### Data, Research and Dissemination

To implement policies and programs to influence demographic outcomes an essential prerequisite is a sound research base and database. In the area of development of information systems, there was an increased attention of the government during the past decade to strengthen the statistical country's capacity. Sufficient means were allocated to implement the necessary statistical systems to support policy and program development, monitoring and evaluation.

According to the ICPD Plan of Action governments should undertake timely and periodic reviews of their development strategies, with the aim of assessing progress towards integrating population into development and environment programmes. Currently, the Aruban government is in the process of a project which works very closely along these lines. This project is called 'Aruba 2025'. The most important outcome of Nos Aruba 2025 is the formulation of a national integrated strategic plan (NISP). The definition of this plan will stimulate the coordination between the concerned stakeholders. The Nos Aruba 2025 process is a multidimensional process that will aim as much as possible that the relevant stakeholders reach a consensus together about the final interpretation of the sustainable development concept and the strategy that should be implemented to guide the development in the preferred path.

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<sup>3</sup> Government of Aruba (2003), National Strategic Plan: Expanded Response to HIV/AIDS for Aruba 2003/2007.



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## ✚ Other population issues

The following two issues can become problematic in the near future, and are already being addressed by the Government of Aruba.

### 1. Health problems as a consequence of changing life styles.

The rising living standard in Aruba brought about changes in life style that affect the health situation of the population in a negative way. The higher income and labor participation rates for both men and women shifted the consumption pattern in such a way that more and more persons have an unhealthy lifestyle. In its 1993 report "One Heavy Island", the Directorate of Health reported that more than half of the population in Aruba is overweight. In the 1998 Income and Expenditure Survey conducted by the CBS, it was found that a greater share of available income is spent on fast food.

Results of the 2000 Census indicate that life expectancy at birth on Aruba dropped from 77 years for females and 71 years for males in 1991 to 76 and 71 years respectively in 2000. The probabilities of dying in age group 55 - 70 for male and 60 - 70 for females are considerably higher in 2000 than they were in the 1991 Census. The loss in life expectancy for males is clearly caused by higher mortality at more advanced ages. For females this pattern is less clear. The 2000 Census results also indicate a high prevalence of chronic diseases such as diabetes (4.5 percent of the population indicated they have diabetes) and high blood pressure (8.4 percent of the population). Results from the 2000 census were further supported by the findings from the 2006 STEPS-survey. Results from this survey show that the general health condition of the Aruban population has further deteriorated. A higher percentage of persons were found with serious overweight. Moreover, more people were found with elevated blood pressure, high blood pressure and diabetes. Moreover, a higher percentage of persons than ever before indicated they were suffering from one or more health conditions such as back pain, psychological problems, migraine, etc...

It will be an important challenge for Aruba in the coming years to find an adequate strategy to deal with these important health issues.

### 2. Carrying capacity of Aruba

The rapid social, economic and demographic developments that are taking place in Aruba have a great impact on the standard of living and on the environment. The population density of the island continues to increase pressure on already limited resources, such as land. In the last decade the economic development of the island has been concentrated in the area around the hotels at the South West side of the island. This lopsided regional development has generated an internal migration to the region around the tourist zones.

During the last few years, a Geographical Information System (GIS) was developed. This GIS is an important tool in the development of regional planning. Currently, various organizations within the government are committed to set up regional development plans.