

## SUMMARY REPORT

### Francophone West Africa Regional Conference Population, Development, and Family Planning: The Urgency to Act

*Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso*

*February 8-10, 2011*

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#### BACKGROUND

Nearly two years ago, the governments of France (French Agency for Development—AFD) and the United States (U.S. Agency for International Development—USAID), along with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, decided to co-fund the “Francophone West Africa Conference—Population, Development, and Family Planning: Urgency to Act.”

With different sponsors involved, reaching consensus about the goal, objectives, technical content, and structure of the conference proved to be challenging. In September 2010, USAID requested technical assistance from RESPOND to:

1. Provide leadership to shape the technical content and the session structure of the conference agenda
2. Identify, guide, and fund the expenses of 20 presenters and facilitators (via a subaward to Equilibres et Populations, the organization primarily tasked with conference logistics)
3. Prepare technical guidance for the preparatory work of country delegations and for breakout group work during the conference
4. Provide technical assistance during the conference
5. Provide guidance for and review of a final conference report, under the direction of AFD

His Excellency Blaise Compaoré, President of Burkina Faso, hosted this first-ever regional conference on population, development, and family planning (FP) for Francophone West Africa. The gathering spotlighted a key issue for the region, which has some of the world’s highest fertility rates and unmet need for family planning. The conference was held February 8–10, 2011, in Ouagadougou, with the official opening ceremonies held at the International Conference Center and the rest of the event at the nearby Laico Hotel.

High-level, eight-person delegations attended the conference from eight Francophone West African countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, and Togo. The delegations consisted of national government ministers or their representatives (health, finance and planning), parliamentarians, health program managers, and religious leaders. Other conference participants included representatives from:

- The sponsoring agencies
- International and regional organizations, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the West African Health Organization/Economic Community of West African States (WAHO/ ECOWAS), the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), the European Commission, and the World Bank
- International nongovernmental organizations
- Cooperating agencies involved in reproductive health (RH) and population

## OBJECTIVES AND ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES

The objectives of the conference were to:

1. Reaffirm the commitment of Francophone West African governments and donors to increasing access to quality FP/RH information and services
2. Exchange national, regional, and global experiences; effective practices; and tools to improve access to and the quality of FP/RH programs
3. Foster national partnerships through country-delegation collaboration
4. Recommend country-specific actions for the way forward

The organizing principle underpinning the conference was holistic planning. The [agenda](#) highlighted best practices and country experiences; each day was organized according to themes:

- Day 1 theme—Inspire, inform, exchange experience, and reaffirm commitment
- Day 2 theme—Plan for success: Address challenges; exchange knowledge, effective practices, and tools
- Day 3 theme—The way forward: Concrete actions to advance the population and development agenda

## SUMMARY, DAY 1

### **Theme—Inspire, inform, exchange experience, and reaffirm commitment**

The inspiration began with the opening ceremony, which was deftly orchestrated to have maximum impact on the participants. Country flags adorned the grand hall of the International Conference Center. The official delegations entered along a red carpet flanked by military honor guards and a military band. President Blaise Compaoré was joined on stage by the Prime Minister of Burkina Faso, the President of the National Assembly, the Head of the Constitutional Court, and an estimated two dozen ministers and other senior leaders. To add to the festive atmosphere, well-known local performer Siasso entertained the audience by singing two upbeat songs.

Welcome speeches were delivered by Burkina Faso's Prime Minister, Mr. Tertius Zongo; the U.S. Embassy's Deputy Chief of Mission, Ms. Deborah Klepp; and the Minister of Cooperation under the French Minister of Foreign and European Affairs, Mr. Henri de Raincourt. Ms. Klepp highlighted successful FP efforts in the region and described the Obama administration's commitment to maternal and child health and plans for continued partnership. Mr. Raincourt announced that, beginning in 2011, the French Government was pledging 500 million Euros over five years to maternal, newborn, and child health in the region through the Muskoka G8 initiative.

**Burkina Faso on the Move**, the lead technical presentation of the opening ceremony, was delivered by Ms. Delphine Barry, Permanent Secretary to the National Council on Population in Burkina Faso. Ms. Barry comprehensively, yet succinctly, analyzed how population factors interact with and relate to social and economic development. The presentation, prepared with technical assistance from the Population Reference Bureau (Engage Project), used multimedia technology and audio and visual effects that stimulated the minds of the audience. The speaker's passionate delivery and messages about the importance of FP inspired conference participants and were touchstones for the event.

In remarks made after the lead presentation, President Compaoré observed that African nations must establish vigorous policies that not only support FP programs but also aim to improve the quality and accessibility of all health care services. He added that FP must occupy a primary place in the strategic choices made by governments. President Compaoré expressed gratitude for international cooperation and recognition of the urgent need to address population and development challenges. His presence, as well as that of other Burkinabé senior leaders who joined him on the stage, raised the political profile of the conference and underscored the significance of the topic, not only for Burkina Faso, but also for other countries in the region.

The conference venue then shifted to the Laico Hotel. Dr. Modibo Maiga of The Futures Group facilitated the plenary sessions for the remainder of the day. The morning plenary **Why Invest in Family Planning?** featured two presentations:

- [Family Planning as a Critical Development Strategy](#), Dr. Johanna Lucinda Austin-Benjamin, WAHO/Burkina Faso
- [Taking Stock: Regional Trends of Family Planning](#), Dr. Seipati Mothebesoane-Anoh, WHO/AFRO

These two presentations established credible cause and essential situation analyses for the conference.

The afternoon plenary session **Country Perspectives** featured a regional overview and seven country presentations: [Benin](#), [Guinea](#), [Mali](#), [Mauritania](#), [Niger](#), [Senegal](#), and [Togo](#), which synthesized each country's demographic situation as well as its progress and challenges in FP and social and economic development. These country presentations were based on reports prepared by country experts with technical support from Jean-Pierre Guengant and Yarri Kamara, consultants for the French government.

## SUMMARY, DAY 2

**Theme—Plan for success: Address challenges; exchange knowledge, effective practices, and tools**

This day largely focused on information sharing, with Dr. Pape Gaye from IntraHealth International serving as the facilitator. The morning plenary session, **Building a Foundation for Success: Holistic Programming and Creating an Enabling Environment**, featured insightful presentations and discussion on a range of topics, country experiences, and global knowledge.

- [A Holistic Program Vision](#), Dr. Isaiah Ndong, EngenderHealth
- [Addressing Cultural Barriers, Myths, and Misconceptions](#), Mrs. Fanta Manchini Diarra, Mali
- [Anthropological Perspectives](#), Dr. Fatoumata Ouattara, Institute of Research and Development, Burkina Faso
- [Improving Access to Family Planning by Developing Service Capacity Through Demedicalizing, Decentralizing, and Democratizing](#), Dr. Bocar Mamadou Daff, Senegal Ministry of Health
- [Improve Access to Family Planning Through Community-Based Distribution \(Malawi\)](#), Dr. Elise Ouedraogo/Diendere, Burkina Faso Ministry of Health

The afternoon session comprised two rounds of concurrent sessions structured around the three components of holistic planning: supply, demand, and creation of an enabling environment.

### ***Holistic Planning: Component 1: Supply***

Six presentations shared global and country experiences regarding contraceptive security and FP integration.

*Topical Theme: Contraceptive Security*

- [Overview of Contraceptive Security and Synthesis of Tools](#), Dr. Meba Kagoné, John Snow International/Deliver Project
- [Effective Supply Chain Practices](#), Dr. André Savadago, Center of Expertise, Research, and Development for Health Logistics
- [Mechanisms for Coordinating Purchase of Contraceptives at the Regional Level](#), Dr. Félicien Nezzi on behalf of Dr. Placido Cardoso, WAHO

*Topical Theme: Family Planning Integration Approaches*

- [Family Planning and Postabortion Care in Guinea](#), Dr. Yolande Hyjazi, JHPIEGO
- [Family Planning and Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Global Experiences](#), Dr. Blami Dao, JHPIEGO
- [Pregnancy Care Package in Mauritania](#), Dr. Mohamed Ould Abdelkader, Sebkhia Maternity, Mauritania

### ***Holistic Planning: Component 2: Demand***

Four presentations focused on social marketing and demand generation. They featured experiences in Mali and Burkina Faso as well as UNFPA activities in the region.

- [Social Marketing Experiences in Mali](#), Dr. Rodio Diallo, Population Services International
- [The Experience of Social Marketing and Communication in Burkina Faso](#), Mr. Simplicie Séraphin Toe, PROMACO
- [Responding to Underserved Populations: Unifying Supply and Demand Across Rural Areas to Meet Unmet Need](#), Mrs. Hélène Tiendrébéogo, Marie Stopes International/Burkina Faso
- [Examples of Successful Demand Creation Activities](#), Mr. Hugues Koné, UNFPA/SRO West and Central Africa

### ***Holistic Planning: Component 3: Creation of an Enabling Environment***

Three presentations described health care financing experiences in Madagascar, Mali, and Rwanda.

- [Social Franchising in Madagascar](#), Ms. Lalaina Razafinirinasoa, Marie Stopes International
- [Mali Experience on Family Planning and National Insurance](#), Mr. Cheickna Touré, Malian Mutual Insurance Technical Union
- [Performance-based Financing and Family Planning Experiences](#), Dr. Paulin Basinga, School of Public Health, National University of Rwanda

## SUMMARY, DAY 3

### Theme—The way forward: Concrete actions to advance the population and development agenda

The documentary film [Empty Handed: Responding to the Demand for Contraceptives](#) set the mood for the day. Produced by Population Action International with support from the Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition and PATH, *Empty Handed* tells the story of women’s lack of access to reproductive health supplies in Sub-Saharan Africa and its impact on their lives. It documents the challenges at each level of the supply chain and identifies key areas for improvement.

After the film, the day’s facilitator, Dr. Cheikh Mbacke, consultant to the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, provided guidance to the country delegations for their working groups. The delegations convened for two hours to articulate concrete follow-up steps, identify key actions and priority program areas, and develop preliminary action plans. Because of time limitations and the small sizes of country delegations, the breakout group exercise was not intended to yield fully formed action plans. Conference speakers, scientific committee members, and conference facilitators provided expert technical assistance to the delegations. During the working groups, each country delegation also reviewed a draft conference declaration aimed at formalizing a united commitment to act in cooperation with the sponsoring donors.

During the afternoon plenary, conference participants presented country reports, reviewed and agreed to conference declarations, and discussed next steps. Presentations covered a range of essential actions presented within the framework of holistic planning.

Mrs. Fanta Diarra, a member of parliament from Mali, read the [call to action](#) agreed upon by participating countries. In summary, the countries agreed to:

- Systematically integrate population, RH, and FP into national development plans and poverty-reduction strategies
- Increase by 30 percent the number of health professionals authorized to offer RH/FP services
- Ensure the regular increase of national budgets for the purchase of contraceptives

Ms. Sarah Lahmani, a representative from AFD, read the donor panel’s [joint statement](#). Excerpts follow:

*For three days now we have been addressing complex, difficult, and sensitive topics focusing on population policies and family planning. All these subjects are very important and express the unmet needs of economic and social development and of the fight against poverty. . . . We are ready to provide you with support by mobilizing the necessary technical, human, and financial resources. We commit to do this as part of a joint and coordinated approach, and in compliance with the principles of the Paris Declaration and the Accra Action Plan. . . . We will therefore positively welcome any strategy concerning, for example, preventing high-risk pregnancies, reducing unmet need for family planning, and promoting family planning.*

The closing ceremony included remarks made by Mr. Seydou Bouda, Burkina Faso’s Minister of Health; Professor Nouhoun Assance, Niger’s Minister of Health; and Dr. Scott Radloff, USAID’s Director of the Office of Population and Reproductive Health. They invited everyone to embrace the spirit of the conference, to actively pursue the defined strategies, and to mobilize the necessary resources for FP and related development priorities.

## Notable Outcomes and Next Steps

- **Achieving extraordinary high-level political support.** Not only did President Compaoré open the conference, but on the second day, he also unexpectedly invited a select group of U.S. and French government representatives, donors, and country representatives to meet at the presidential palace. At this meeting, President Compaoré pledged his continued strong leadership in Burkina Faso and within the region. Joined by the Minister of Health, Seydou Bouda, the President spent more than half an hour with the group. He thanked donors and country representatives for their common efforts and emphasized that economic development and health are two integrally linked parts of a whole. President Compaoré explained that, in the past, couples tried to have as many children as possible because they needed many hands to work for the family. But with improvements in health, families now should have only as many children as they can feed and care for. Health and population are a key part of realizing Burkina Faso's development plans.
- **Gaining strong financial and technical support from a new partner in FP.** The French government pledged 100 million Euros for FP over the next five years and committed to posting family planning specialists in Francophone West African countries.
- **Planning for concerted action.** Each delegation developed a preliminary action plan for strengthening FP programs and policies within its country, focusing on priorities that will most rapidly advance its programs.
- **Strong statement of commitment.** The country delegations issued a call to action through the Ouagadougou Declaration. Highlights include:
  - Systematically integrating RH/FP into national development plans and strategies for economic growth and poverty reduction
  - Reducing maternal mortality and unmet need for FP in Francophone West Africa by 25 percent by 2015.
- **Formalizing donor commitment by creating an active partnership.** Donors attending the conference issued a joint statement of commitment and spent a fourth day (February 11) developing plans to improve donor coordination and provide support at both the country and regional levels. They also are finalizing joint guidance to countries for action, developing a country matrix showing donor contributions, and writing a report of the conference and donor meeting.
- **Maintaining momentum for FP programs in Francophone West Africa.** Donors are planning a follow-up meeting in 2011 that will target the private sector, including civil society and nongovernmental organizations. The international conference on FP research and best practices, planned for November 30–December 2, 2011, in Dakar, Senegal, will provide an opportunity to follow up on this conference and a similar conference held in Kampala, Uganda, in November 2009.

*Prepared by:*

**Maureen E. Clyde, RESPOND Project/EngenderHealth**