

Statistics Mauritius
2022 African Statistics Celebration Day
18th November 2022

Address by Ms Priscilla Li Ying, UNFPA Head of Office for Mauritius and Seychelles

Theme: “Strengthening data systems by modernizing the production and use of agricultural statistics: informing policies with a view to improving resilience in agriculture, nutrition and food security in Africa”

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen,

All protocols observed

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Today we celebrate African Statistics Day, and the crucial role of statistical data in informing all dimensions of life and society. A few days ago, on 15th November, the world’s population hit 8 billion people, and Africa represents almost 17% of this global population. According to projections, by 2050, Africa will account for one in five of the world’s population. We are able to better appreciate the journey we have covered when we look at statistical data over the years and we can only imagine the infinite opportunities that 8 billion people can bring forward for our planet, for Africa and for Mauritius!

Statistics are not just numbers, they tell stories, human stories - those of people’s health and well-being, of socio-economic circumstances, of prospects and opportunities, of challenges and shortcomings. One of the ways our world has changed considerably over this past generation is the important decline in extreme poverty. Similarly, numbers show reduced maternal and child mortality ratios, telling the stories of healthier women and stronger children. Over the last 20 years, we note more than 35% decrease in maternal deaths at the global level, with an annual average reduction rate of 2.9%.

The rapid development of technology has exponentially increased the scope of data science and innovation, which help us better understand and act on existing issues and emerging trends. Statistical analysis can change the way decisions are made. To locate and reach those

furthest behind, we need to be able to collect and use timely, high-quality, disaggregated population and development data. Modernising the data infrastructure will better equip Mauritius to adapt, innovate and ensure sustainable development and progress in the various sectors in which it dynamically operates.

Since its inception over 50 years ago, one of UNFPA's core mandates has been to strengthen the national statistical system's capacity to collect, process, analyse, disseminate and use census data for development. We are pleased to have accompanied Statistics Mauritius in their latest population and housing census - which as we will get a glimpse of today - has generated a wealth of data critical for good governance, policy formulation, development planning, crisis prevention, social welfare programmes, business market analyses and providing the framework for designing other research studies. Statistics Mauritius thus plays a vital role in facilitating data collection, utilisation, sharing and research.

In Mauritius, accurate data will help [usto](#) better formulate and re-adapt population policies as we address key concerns of the moment such as low fertility rates, an ageing population and other development priorities, within a human rights-based approach. The results of the census can help us develop demographic resilience by proactively anticipating and planning for demographic change and investing, for example, in education, health, gender equality and access to decent work across generations. Similarly, the results can serve a transformational purpose by pointing us to population groups or geographic areas in the country that may be at risk of being left behind in terms of sustainable development due to a variety of reasons, hence catalysing the development of appropriate policies and programs.

We must be able to trust that statistics tell the truth and we applaud the steps taken by Statistics Mauritius to ensure that data are consistent and complete. We commend Statistics Mauritius on its use of technological solutions to successfully and professionally complete this round of the Housing and Population Census, despite all the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Well done Statistics Mauritius!

This is a pivotal moment, and together with statisticians, government and those leading data innovation, let's ensure that the data we generate reflect the human stories behind each and every number.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

As we look at this census' results and build on previous experiences, let us be ambitious and bold in how we use data. Whether it be in the green or the digital economies, social welfare or healthcare, the data ecosystem is evolving with new data users, producers and sources. Let us seize the opportunities to innovate, modernise and transform data to write Mauritius' success stories in addressing sustainable development in all its dimensions - health, education, equitable economic opportunities, food security, environmental protection, to name a few .

May we all, today, build on the sharing of data to generate knowledge and step into a world of possibilities and opportunities.

Thank You
