



4th China-Africa Conference on Population and Development

***Theme:** Harnessing Population Dynamics for Health and Sustainable Development: Strengthening China–Africa Cooperation*

Welcome Remarks

By

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Excellencies, Honourable Ministers, Distinguished Delegates, Esteemed Colleagues and Friends,

It is a profound honour to join you today at the 4th China–Africa Conference on Population and Development. As the Executive Director and CEO of Partners in Population and Development, an intergovernmental alliance representing 28 member states across Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East, I am privileged to participate in this critical forum for dialogue, strategic collaboration, and collective action in advancing the health and development agenda of the Global South.

We convene at a pivotal juncture. The world is experiencing transformative demographic transitions: regions with burgeoning youth cohorts coexist with societies confronting accelerated population ageing; some countries face declining fertility and shrinking labour forces, while others continue to grapple with substantial unmet needs in sexual and reproductive health (SRH). These trends are reshaping socioeconomic trajectories, public health priorities, and human capital potential, highlighting the urgent need for evidence-based policy, innovative financing, and cross-regional collaboration.

PPD: Advancing South–South Cooperation in Population and Development

PPD was established in the wake of the landmark 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, with the mandate to institutionalize South–South Cooperation (SSC) in population, reproductive health, and sustainable development. Three decades later, the imperative for countries of the Global South to learn from each other, pool expertise, and jointly leverage resources is more pressing than ever.

The Central Role of PPD Dhaka: A Global Hub for Demographic and Health Cooperation

For participants from China and Africa, it is important to underscore the centrality of PPD Dhaka in our global South–South cooperation architecture. While PPD maintains regional offices in China and Uganda, and a Liaison Office at the United Nations in New York, our Dhaka Headquarters functions as the strategic nerve center that coordinates, convenes, and catalyzes multi-country initiatives in population, public health, and development finance.

Key functions of PPD Dhaka include:

1. Global Coordination and Knowledge Exchange

PPD Dhaka orchestrates the exchange of policies, programmes, and innovations among 28 member states, connecting Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Middle East through ministerial dialogues, thematic working groups, and technical knowledge networks.

2. Policy Advocacy for ICPD30 and Beyond

As Permanent Observer to the UN General Assembly, PPD Dhaka leads global advocacy for the ICPD Programme of Action, mobilizing political commitment, supporting national policy reviews, and advancing South–South positions on population, health, and development financing.

3. Capacity Development and Knowledge Management

Through Dhaka-based training, fellowship programs, and technical networks, PPD strengthens national capacities in demographic intelligence, SRH supply chain management, health systems financing, ageing populations, and digital health solutions.

4. Catalyst for Resource Mobilization and Innovative Financing

PPD Dhaka plays a critical role in mobilizing development finance, designing blended financing instruments, establishing pooled procurement mechanisms, and facilitating strategic commodity security partnerships.

5. Governance and Ministerial Leadership

PPD Dhaka ensures SSC is anchored in political ownership, accountability, and sustainability, with a Board of Ministers providing strategic oversight and guiding long-term development outcomes.

Demographic Realities: Urgency for Strategic Investment

Population dynamics across the Global South present both unprecedented opportunities and critical risks:

- Africa is home to the largest youth population globally, representing a potential demographic dividend that could accelerate socioeconomic transformation.
- Asia faces rapid population ageing, heightening demand for geriatric care, long-term health financing, and social protection systems.
- Many countries experience labour market constraints, with either shrinking workforces or insufficient job creation for young populations.
- SRH challenges persist, with nearly half of maternal mortality concentrated in low- and middle-income countries, and pervasive unmet needs for family planning.
- Urbanization, digitalization, migration, and climate change are reshaping health, demographic, and economic landscapes.

Harnessing these demographic transitions requires proactive investment in SRH, gender equity, education, employment, multisectoral planning, and robust health systems financing. The theme of this conference, *Harnessing Population Dynamics for Health and Sustainable Development*, reflects the urgency of aligning demographic realities with national and regional development strategies.

The Promise of China–Africa Cooperation

The China–Africa partnership represents a transformative model for development cooperation in the 21st century. China’s expertise in poverty reduction, health systems strengthening, demographic management, and digital innovation, combined with Africa’s dynamic population and economic growth potential, creates a fertile ground for mutual learning and scalable solutions.

PPD has facilitated this cooperation through technology transfer, policy exchange, and capacity-building initiatives. Our China Regional Office has advanced innovations in ageing, SRH, and digital health, while our Africa Regional Office and African Union Liaison Office have strengthened institutional frameworks, policy dialogue, and programme implementation. This exemplifies the power of South–South and Triangular Cooperation (SSTC): countries co-create solutions, pool resources, and leverage technical expertise to maximize developmental impact.

Financing as the Decisive Factor

Despite progress, inadequate financing remains the principal constraint to fully realizing demographic dividends. Many countries face fiscal pressures, high debt burdens, and competing priorities that undermine investments in SRH, demographic intelligence, and youth development programs.

PPD is positioning itself as a financing catalyst, exploring:

- Blended finance mechanisms to mobilize private capital for health and demographic programs.
- Development impact bonds targeting SRH and population transition outcomes.
- Regional pooled procurement to reduce costs and stabilize supply chains.
- Catalytic investment funds to scale digital health, youth initiatives, and demographic data systems.
- Triangular Cooperation frameworks combining Chinese technical expertise, African demographic opportunities, and multilateral financing.
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Strategic Pathways Forward

To translate demographic potential into sustainable development outcomes, we must:

1. Strengthen governance and institutional capacity for efficient resource allocation.
2. Integrate demographic evidence into national development planning, budgeting, and labor market strategies.
3. Prioritize SRH and reproductive health services as critical drivers of human capital formation.
4. Expand SSTC and Triangular Cooperation to co-develop digital health, ageing solutions, and climate-resilient health systems.
5. Mobilize sustainable, diversified financing to close gaps in SRH commodities, health workforce, and demographic intelligence.

PPD’s Commitment

As we approach ICPD30, PPD aims to become a next-generation SSTC platform uniting ministers, policymakers, funders, and technical experts around shared goals:

- Strengthening Dhaka as a hub for policy innovation, strategic financing, and capacity building.
- Expanding China–Africa knowledge exchange for SRH, ageing, youth development, and digital health innovation.
- Supporting member states in designing financing instruments that unlock investments in demographic transitions and SRH systems.
- Ensuring ministerial leadership and political ownership remain central to SSC.
- Driving accountability through monitoring, evaluation, and evidence-based advocacy.

Conclusion: A Shared Vision for Health, Prosperity, and Resilience

This conference provides an invaluable platform to exchange knowledge, catalyze partnerships, and convert demographic challenges into engines of development. The outcomes will inform policies, strengthen institutions, and mobilize resources across Africa, China, and the Global South.

I am confident that our deliberations will:

- Deepen China–Africa partnerships,
- Catalyze innovative financing mechanisms, and
- Advance the health, wellbeing, and resilience of populations across the Global South.

Let us seize this moment to reaffirm our commitment to building healthier, more prosperous, and resilient societies through solidarity, shared learning, and South–South Cooperation.

On behalf of PPD and our Dhaka Headquarters, I extend my deepest gratitude for your partnership, dedication, and unwavering commitment to the ICPD vision.

I wish us all a productive, insightful, and impactful conference.

Thank you.