

## Strengthening Population and Demographic Capacity

### Belarus and the Russian Federation



*This case demonstrates how Belarus raised its population and demographic capacity through partnership with the Russian Federation. A shared language and existing relationships among relevant agencies facilitated the partnership.*

#### Issue

The low national capacity of Belarus in the field of demography and population and development, absence of an academic course or programme in demography, lack of high-quality demographic research, as well as reliance on external expertise called for a South-South cooperation initiative. The aim was to build the capacity of local professionals and experts, as well as decision makers, with the view of formulating well-designed population and development policies that ultimately would improve the quality of life of the people.

The Russian Federation, a neighbouring country of Belarus, on the other hand, enjoys a high-level of national demographic capacity with leading experts and academic centres of excellence. Not only do the two countries share a common historical experience and language but they have continued to remain as allies and partners.

#### Towards a Solution

With UNFPA's facilitation and serving as an interlocutor, Belarus and the Russian Federation launched a joint initiative aimed at building the demographic capacity of Belarus, as well as in the broader field of population and development. The costs of activities were covered by the Russian Federation.

A coordination council consisting of representatives from the various Ministries of Belarus (Education, Labor and Social Protection, Health, Foreign Affairs), research institutes and

universities, a representative of the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Belarus and UNFPA was formed to conduct a needs assessment and identify experts and academic centres of excellence, and to monitor the implementation and progress of the cooperation.

The Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of Belarus coordinated all events with national counterparts while the State University of Belarus served as a leading partner relating to the creation of higher education in the field of demography. The Russian partners, on the other hand, provided expertise through training, learning visits and joint research, among others.

Over a period of nearly three years, various activities were carried out involving all key stakeholders in Belarus, including civil society and the mass media, as well as Russian counterparts and UNFPA. These included, among others, training, conferences, round tables and workshops, study visits, public lectures, awareness-raising and press conferences on population and sustainable development issues, formulation of a roadmap for higher education in demography and the creation of a demographic centre of excellence.

#### Results

The capacity of the Belarusian academic community in the area of population and development research and demographic analysis and forecasting has been strengthened through study visits to Russian centres of demographic excellence, participation in workshops and roundtable discussions and

networking with Russian partner institutions, among others.

Institutional capacity in data collection and analysis, forecasting, formulation and implementation of population policies, monitoring and evaluation of population and development plans and programmes has been strengthened through various exchange and learning initiatives.

A specialisation in the field of demography was established in the Geography Faculty of the Belarusian State University and a roadmap for higher education was developed. Moreover, a Demographic Center of Excellence was established at the National Research Institute under the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection. Also, a national network of institutions and researchers dealing with population and development issues was created.

The involvement of Belarusian representatives of the various Ministries - Health, Education, Labor and Social Protection - in various activities facilitated interagency cooperation in the formulation of a comprehensive and integrated social and population-related policies.

## Lessons Learned

The fruitful collaboration led to a new bilateral partnership between Russian and Belarusian academic and policy development institutions. The success of the mutual cooperation and its sustainability can be attributed, among others, to a comprehensive and thorough capacity needs assessment, national ownership with the high degree of involvement of Belarusian key stakeholders, willingness and expertise of Russian academics and scholars and the shared historical experience and social context of the two countries.

## Partners

### Partners in Belarus

Ministry of Labour and Social Protection

Ministry of Health

Labour Scientific Research Institute of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection

National Statistical Committee

Republican Institute of Refresher Training of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection  
Belarusian State University

Economy Research Institute of the Ministry of Economy

### Partners in the Russian Federation

Federal State Statistics Service

Federal Research Institute for Health Organization and Informatics of the Ministry of Health

The Russian Academy of Sciences and the Institute of Socio-Political Research

Center for Population Studies, Faculty of Economics of Lomonosov, Moscow State University

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