The Cooperation Council for the Arab States Of the Gulf

Secretariat General

The General Framework of the Population Strategy for the GCC Member States

Preface

The Secretariat General and the competent committees of the Gulf Cooperation Council have paid due attention to the importance of arriving at a general framework for cooperation and coordination with regard to population strategies and policies. The GCC is conscious of the strong co-relation between population and development and is desirous of striking a balance in the population structure and composition of the work force so as to ensure homogeneity of the Gulf society and to affirm its Islamic and Arab identity. The GCC states are also desirous of maintaining stability and cohesiveness. These States also seek to increase the level of economic participation of their citizens.

This document ("The General Framework of the Population Strategy for the GCC Countries") was agreed upon after conducting research and holding discussions within the framework of the GCC. The Ministerial Committee for Planning and Development commissioned the committees subordinated to it to prepare this framework. The committee, which was composed of Ministerial agencies, discussed the document in light of comments and proposals received from the planning institutions and governments of the member countries of the GCC.

In April 1998, the Ministerial Committee on Planning and Development reviewed this document and approved it and recommended the Ministerial Council to present it to the Supreme Council. In its 76th session (June 1998), the Ministerial Council recommended the ratification of the document. Subsequently, the Supreme Council ratified the document in its 19th session held in Abu Dhabi on 18-20 Sha'abaan 1419 AH corresponding to 7th - 9th December 1998.

The document outlines the goals, which the GCC countries shall strive to pursue with regard to population. It also contains policies and aims related to achieving the rate of population growth commensurate with development aspirations. The document provides for attaining an appropriate population structure through training and development of human resources and the national cadre. The document calls for arriving at an appropriate population structure by means of efficient organization of recruitment of foreign workers and by adopting policies to control urban development and internal migration.

The Secretariat General, while publishing this document, is confident that the strategy will strengthen the existing cooperation between the GCC States in the field of population and national labor. This is because while formulating their population

policies the member States shall incorporate the principles, strategic goals and instructions laid down in this strategy thereby bringing about coordination and approximation of policies between them.

In course of implementing these policies, the member States shall formulate specific programs in light of the situation of their population. Based on this strategy it will be possible to evaluate the extent to which the desired goals may have been achieved. The results of these programs shall be discussed in the meetings which, are to be held regularly under the auspices of the Ministerial Committee on for Planning and Development.

Allah is the Granter of all success…

The Secretariat General
Economic Affairs Sector
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The General Framework of the Population Strategy for the GCC States

A: Introduction

The population strategy of the Cooperation Council for the Arab states of the Gulf (GCC) derives its importance from four basic facts:

1 - The success of development efforts depends, to a large extent, on the strong link between population and development. This is because incorporation of population changes in the economic and population strategies leads to acceleration of the pace of sustainable development and contributes toward achieving population goals which in turn lead to improvement in the quality of life. On the other hand, consistency among economic and social development plans and the population strategy for GCC States plays progressive role in strengthening the relationship between population and development.

2 - The GCC states have made major strides in the field of economic and social development. However, this pattern of development has heavily depended on immigrant workforce. The time has now arrived for the GCC states to make a shift towards a changed pattern of development, a pattern that is dependent on the Gulf workforce. That can be achieved only through implementing a population strategy, which aims among other things at honoring the role of the GCC citizen in the process of sustainable development.

3 - Any flaw in the population structure – the effect of which does not just remain limited to a single aspect, but encompasses several aspects, related with population growth, distribution and characteristics- threatens development efforts and impedes it in the long run. Rectification of this flaw in the state of population depends on adopting policies that try to alter the population structure in favor of GCC citizens so as to strike a balance between population and available resources.

4 - As per the theory of demographic change, the current state of the population in the GCC countries is passing through the second stage. This stage is characterized by increased level of fecundity and continuous decline in death rate among citizens owing to enormous improvements in the field of health services. The GCC countries are witnessing a number of social and economic changes. These changes include providing equal opportunity of education to males and females, delay in the age of marriage and entry of women in the job market and improvement in the standards of living. Such changes shall affect the pattern of population growth among the GCC citizens. This requires formulating appropriate population strategies to address these changes.

As such the importance of putting into place a general framework for population strategy for the GCC States becomes clear. The framework lays down the dimension of integration between them, specifies the major elements and trends governing the choice of means capable of achieving population goals with utmost efficiency and effectiveness.

Based on this framework the member States shall formulate clear and balanced population strategies, which specify the measures, and programs, that contribute toward achieving economic, social, demographic and political goals of the State by influencing some important demographic realities, in particular the size of population, rate of population growth, geographic distribution of population and other population

characteristics like qualitative structure, age structure and levels of fecundity, death rate and urbanization and the extent of participation of citizens in the workforce .

The people are the end as well as means of development. Therefore, conscious of the strong link of the population with sustainable development and with securing national security; and recognizing that clear cut population policies contribute toward the success of comprehensive development programs and reinforce the cooperation between the GCC States in this field; this document sets forth the basic principles of the GCC population strategy, its general goals and delineates the population strategy comprehensively in accordance with major demographic axes.

B: Basic Principles of the Population Strategy :

The population strategy of the GCC States is based on a group of principles derived from the founding charter of the GCC, its policies, as well as development plans. In addition, these principles are also derived from the general strategies for development in the GCC States. These principles are described below:

1 - The existence of a special relationship and shared attributes and similar systems founded on Islamic faith, which binds the GCC States together.
2 - The common destiny and unity of purpose, which brings its peoples close.
3 - The keen desire to accomplish coordination, integration and association in all fields.

C: The General Goals of the Population Strategy:

Based on the principles described above, following are the general goals of this strategy:

1 - Striking a balance between the population structure and the composition of the work force, which ensures the homogeneity of the Gulf society and reinforces its Islamic and Arab identity and protects its stability and cohesiveness.
2 - Striking a demographic balance between population growth and available resources.
3 - Accomplishing balanced inter- regional development in all member States in order to limit internal migration to cities.
4 - Developing the human capital by providing health and social care, education and training at appropriate levels.
5 - Developing the educational system to keep pace with the modern teaching trends so that it fulfills the demands of the job market.
6 - Achieving optimum utilization of the Gulf work force and motivating it to participate in all spheres of productive and remunerative work in both manufacturing as well as service sectors.
7 - Increasing the rate of economic participation of both male and female citizens and paying due attention to opening new avenues of work for the Gulf women.
8 - Replacing immigrant labor with Gulf labor and creating job opportunities with high productivity for the Gulf labor. Facilitating the movement of national labor between GCC States so that it puts a limit to unemployment and strengthens the role of the citizens in process of sustainable development.
9 - Developing population statistics and compiling data on the job market and raising the level of its accuracy and comprehensiveness and to update it on a regular basis and make uniform the statistics related definitions and meaning.

D: Population Policies :

The general goals of the strategy reflect the end that must be achieved. The policies translate the basic principles to structures that contribute in directing the process of implementation towards the general goals.
The following elements constitute the core of the population policies:

1- The Population

a- Achieving appropriate population levels for the citizens of the GCC.
b- Providing preventive and curative health care for infants with focus on having gap between two births to decrease infant mortality and maternal deaths.
c- Continual improvement of health care during pregnancy and birth. Encouraging medical examination before marriage and opening centers for this purpose. Conducting health awareness campaigns.
d- Continuation of efforts for prevention of epidemics and endemic diseases.
e- Attention to training and rehabilitation of national cadres working in the field of health.
f- Decreasing the level of migration to GCC States and focusing upon recruiting technically skilled and trained manpower possessing exceptional specializations.
g- Conducting research on a regular basis to know the demographic changes in relation to the available resources.

2- The Population Structure:

a- Recruitment of immigrant workers in accordance with specific standards on the basis of age ensuring employment of manpower in jobs commensurate with age. This will help in raising productivity.
b- Taking into consideration the educational level of the foreign labor consistent with the demands of the job in different sectors of the economy with a view to decreasing the rate of unemployment among foreign workers.
c- Encouraging the citizens to work in the private sector.
d- Rationalizing and controlling the recruitment of household workers and evolving appropriate mechanism to do away with illegal workers in the GCC States.

3- Increase in Urbanization and Internal Migration :

a- Decreasing disparity between urban and rural regions so as to limit the migration towards cities.
b- Creating urban centers close to industrial areas and providing general utilities and basic amenities therein to limit the rapid growth of large cities.
c- Developing the basic amenities in the rural areas and working towards settlement and stability of nomadic population.
d- Redistribution of certain services as well as economic and social activities in small cities.
e- Preservation of and protection of environment and controlling all forms pollution.
f- Giving priority to provision of housing and evolving national plans for judicious utilization of land, water and other resources so as to derive optimum benefit out of these resources.

4 - Human Resources Development :

a- Complete and productive employment of the national work force in various spheres of work by means of education, rehabilitation and training.
b- Facilitating employment and transfer of national work force within the GCC States and creating more work opportunities for them and replacing immigrant labor with national labor.
c- Recruitment of foreign work force in accordance with legal standards – both quantitatively and qualitatively – based on real needs and in consonance with the demands of development, social stability and demographic homogeneity.
d- Encouraging the citizens to join institutions for technical education and centers for vocational training and providing the required men and material to develop such institutions and centers.
e- Distribution of the workforce in different sectors of the economy thereby making them more productive and increasing their participation in development.
f- Activating the role of the private sector in assimilating the national workforce and developing market mechanisms with a view to making it more effective in terms of employment of national work force.
g- Continual review of the educational systems outputs so as to effect required changes in it in tandem with demands of development plans and programs.
h- Widening the scope of work for the women of the Gulf region in appropriate spheres, which do not contradict with Islamic values and enable them to meet their family needs on the one hand and those of work on the other.

5- Maternity, Childhood and Family :

a- Provision of necessary social services to achieve family stability and cohesiveness. The institution of family should be protected from all factors that tend to weaken it. The family bonds should be strengthened because the family is the base of society.
b- Providing mother and child care services as part of primary health care services for all population groups.
c- Raising the awareness level of the child in the Gulf region and encouraging them to increase their level of self awareness and developing their skills and abilities. Special attention should be paid to outstanding and the gifted children.
d- Paying attention to groups with special needs like the aged and the disabled.
e- Decreasing the negative influence of household foreign workers on the Gulf child and raising him / her in accordance with Islamic and Arabic values.
f- Paying attention to pre- school children and supporting pre- school centers and kindergartens along with developing their educational programs.

6- Population Statistics:

a – Conducting population census, demographic surveys and analytical studies on a regular basis and publish-ing their results .

b- Developing statistical bureaus and providing required men and material to conduct their work.

c- Co-ordination and co-operation between statistical bureaus in order to avoid any occurrence of conflicts between data thereby ensuring its optimum utilization in planning and research.

d- The Universities, academies and research centers should show interest in GCC states' population related issues and studies.

e- Dissemination of statistical awareness among the citizens to ensure their responsiveness to statistical bureaus during population census .

f- Building population data bases and evolving appropriate ways and means for exchange of information among the GCC countries.

E: Implementation Mechanism:

1- The GCC states shall take from the General framework for the population strategy for the GCC countries, aspects that suit their population policies and serve to co-ordinate their population policies.

2- Each Member State shall prepare programs to implement these policies and to achieve these goals in accordance with their national population situation. It will be possible by these means to measure the performance and the extent to which success was achieved in realizing the population goals.

3- Regular meetings of the representatives of the GCC states shall be held every three years to discuss the population situation, policies and their achievements. The meetings will take stock of the achievements made in this regard during that period with the desire to share the experience of each country and to bring about co-ordination among them.