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Monitoring Progress towards UN Population and Development Goals: Practice and Challenges

In 2014, the UNFPA and UN Regional Commissions reviewed the Programme of Action (PoA) of the International Conference on Population Development (ICPD) in Cairo in 1994 and agreed on continuing the programme beyond 2014 to achieve the ICPD PoA goals (ICPD beyond 2014). The respective resolution requested the programme implementation to be region-specific and have regular progress assessment. Regional-specific monitoring was developed and used for the first review in 2018. United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) developed its own Monitoring Framework to check on the implementation of the ICPD PoA in the region. Monitoring, evaluation and results-based management are trending in policy and intervention field as stakeholders are rightly interested in the effects of interventions and in greater accountability in the use of resources. The UNECE Monitoring Framework is in line with this trend. It relies mostly on measuring progress through various quantitative indicators, many of which align with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) monitoring indicators. The aim of this paper is to look at the UNECE Monitoring Framework and compare it with alternative approaches to monitoring. The paper discusses the benefits and limitations of several monitoring approaches. It also discusses what is captured by the quantitative monitoring adopted by the UNECE Monitoring Framework, what is left out and in general what does it bring to our understanding of progress.