Population and Development Planning:
The Incorporation of Population into Policy

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Traditional economic wisdom has occupied itself with achievement of growth in per capita incomes as the basic element of the development process. Population elements of the process have been neglected -- considered a problem which will be solved through more rapid rates of economic growth. Or so it has been thought...

Experience of the past two decades however, has demonstrated that it is not enough to expect that population growth will decline as a consequence or concomitant of development. Nor is it enough to expect that family planning measures by themselves will bring about required declines in fertility. Development planners and administrators must view population variables as inter-related with other factors in development strategy. Not only does population growth and its distribution influence achievement of economic gains, but conversely, development measures have important, often unanticipated demographic consequences. At the same time, it should be emphasized that while measures to control population growth or manage its spatial distribution are of increasing importance, they are not substitutes for the inputs basic necessary for economic development.

The Population Problem

The basis for the extremely rapid growth of the world's population is well known. Unprecedented contemporary rates of population growth have resulted from technological breakthroughs
in disease prevention and cure during the past 30 years, and the prevention of famines which formerly claimed millions of lives and maintained mortality rates at high levels. Decline in mortality has been occurring in societies in which traditional economic and social structures have only recently begun to change. At the same time, fertility behaviour, closely related to these traditional cultural patterns, has remained at high levels. To some extent too, the absence of simple and effective methods of contraception has contributed to the lag in the decline in fertility rates behind those of mortality. The resulting imbalance has resulted in growth so rapid that the size of the world's population will reach 4 billion in this decade, and will double in 35 years. In Latin America, population size will double in 25 years if current rates continue. In Asia and Africa, doubling times approach 30 years. Developing nations faced with such high growth rates find it increasingly difficult to maintain current living standards, let alone raise them. The World Bank has pointed out that in the mid-1960's about two-thirds of total annual investment in a sample of 22 developing countries was required to maintain per capita income at a constant level, leaving only one-third to raise living standards. In such circumstances, it can be argued that unless economic growth rates increase to unprecedented levels, substantial improvement in living standards of millions at the margins of subsistence may depend heavily on reduction in population growth.

The objective of population programs during the past 10 years has, therefore, been to bring about more rapid declines in fertility than would otherwise occur. The major means used to achieve this objective has been the provision of family planning information and services, particularly through government channels, to couples willing to use them.

What has been done

In 1952, India was the only country to have a national family planning policy (although it is generally recognized that the program has existed as an effective instrument only since 1965). During the 1950's and early 1960's, most aid to family planning programs was non-governmental, through private foundations and voluntary agencies. It was not until the mid-1960's that bilateral programs led by Sweden and the United States, and subsequently multilateral programs through the United Nations, began to allocate major amounts of resources to family planning. The World Bank has estimated that in 1971, $225 million was allocated to family planning activities by all bilateral, multi-lateral and private organizations; an increase of some 100 times over allocations 12 years earlier. A much larger amount has been allocated by developing countries themselves for their domestic programs.

By 1972, at least 27 developing nations had adopted official national family planning programs. Many others have large-
scale non-governmental activity, usually with some direct or indirect government support. The UN, the World Bank and virtually all major development aid agencies have given high priority to the global problem of rapid growth. Family planning has been widely recognized to be a universal human right, and accepted as such through much of the world. Increasing numbers of governments support, or tolerate private family planning activities, regardless of their overall demographic objectives.

In some settings, the family planning effort has had distinct payoffs. Rapid declines in crude birth rates, as large as 30-40 percent in twenty years, in Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore, accounted for in part by changes in age structure, delay in age of marriage and increased opportunities for women, are also attributed to increased usage of modern means of contraception provided through family planning programs. Furthermore, the provision of a variety of contraceptives, albeit once again combined with measures increasing opportunities for women, and occurring in a unique political setting, has influenced demographic change in China.

The Problem Remains

Despite these national successes, the global problem of rapid growth remains with us, acute as before. We can no longer be confident of approaches adopted in the 1960's. The limited success of most national family planning programs has clearly shown that a narrow simplistic approach will fail to achieve
significant fertility declines.

Demographic research during the past five years has raised serious questions as to whether family planning programs by themselves are likely to reduce population growth rates, since most couples are still motivated to have larger families than those necessary to replace themselves. Awareness of the means to space children and limit family size is frequently insufficient to assure translation into practice in environments which contain the traditional pressures to maintain high levels of fertility.

It is clear that on the average, global population growth rates cancel out much of the gains from economic growth. It is also clear that rapid increases in population will continue by virtue of the large numbers already born, and by virtue of continuing high fertility rates.

Study of national population projections indicate that what will happen to world population growth as a whole will depend very much on fertility trends in a few large developing countries, particularly China, India, Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Philippines, Thailand, Iran, Egypt, Turkey, Nigeria, Brazil and Mexico. Among these countries, several have only recently adopted policies and programs aimed at reducing population growth, and much can be done to supply family planning information and services. However, this is only one element in a whole network of measures which may have direct and indirect influences on
demand for such services.

New Strategies

It is now frequently advocated that strategies to lower population growth rates be broadened to include efforts to change motivating values and incentives through changes in social institutions and influences on economic, behavioural and educational factors affecting family formation. However, so far we lack the knowledge and experience to translate our intellectual understanding into effective policies and strategies.

Serious efforts are needed to examine ways to influence population variables through other socio-economic development measures. The most obvious to be considered include: changing laws and social norms to raise the age at marriage, increasing the availability of abortion services, and measures to increase both educational and job opportunities for women as alternatives to childbearing. Improvement in chances of infant survival through improved nutrition and sanitation may have major impacts on village life where declines in infant mortality influence attitudes to family size. Of equal importance in many countries, are measures to influence and manage spatial distribution of population in socially desirable patterns.

Many of these measures are gradually being incorporated into national policies. A number of countries are taking their population programs much more seriously. In India for example, the estimated 1971/72 domestic outlay for its family planning
program amounted to more than $80 million. But even this huge outlay amounts to only $0.14 per capita. The program is institutionalized and funded almost entirely from domestic resources. External assistance constitutes a marginal input and is preferred in the form of general budget support. Legal measures have been taken to make abortion more readily available, and sterilization is a highly popular service offered by the program. The Korean and Singapore programs are in similar stages of development.

Thus, there is evolving in the population field, a whole spectrum of expertise, much of it indigenous to the developing nations themselves. This state of affairs indicates a trend toward a reversal of traditional aid relationships. The population field is entering into a new phase of cooperation among equals, and this implies the need for reassessment of their own approaches by international development agencies. In countries with significant experience, support tied to specific projects is increasingly unacceptable. In other countries at the other end of the spectrum of sophistication and commitment, more lead time is necessary to develop information and understanding of the nature and scope of the problem.

Neglected Priority

There is another major set of considerations frequently overshadowed by the dramatic problems of rapid population growth. These relate to providing for and managing the population already born. One of the reasons for past neglect of this problem lies in
the fact that the full impact of the population entering the labor force, searching for jobs in the cities, and demanding schooling for their children will not be fully evident for some years to come. Most planning projections extend only 10 to 15 years into the future, whereas the heaviest population impact can be expected after 20 or 30 years. But rapid rates of rural migration to the cities have already led to uncontrolled expansion of urban areas and serious problems of human settlement in nearly every developing country. At the same time, industrial policies and the application of technological innovation to agriculture have influenced migration in an uncontrolled manner and contributed to unemployment problems. Beyond these immediate concerns, planners' attention must also focus on demands for education, social services, jobs and housing. Politicians' attention must focus on the future impact of population growth and distribution on administrative structures and political organization. No country, including the so-called developed countries, has evolved and implemented an overall population policy to deal with these inter-related issues.

There is no clear strategy which can be universally applied to predictably reduce population growth as well as control spatial distribution. Available evidence indicates that the mix of measures used in one country at one level of development is not necessarily applicable to another at a different stage.
Future Direction for Development Planners

There is no question of the importance of taking population variables more into account in the planning process. Traditional development strategy emphasizing concentration of industrialization in major urban areas has not been evaluated for its demographic impact. Yet it is obvious that industrial policies favoring such centralization are, and will continue to be strong influences on the rapid and uncontrolled rates of growth of cities. Such planning should take demographic and environmental consequences into account and should aim at more balanced strategies, with more effort to decentralize industrial locations wherever possible.

It is essential that planners begin to realize the potential demographic impacts of other development measures. For instance, the impacts of river valley and hydro-electric projects, favorite development projects for the past two decades, have not been analyzed for their effects on internal migration patterns, or their effects on fertility and mortality in the areas benefitting from them. Analysis of potential demographic costs and benefits should be included at the project planning stage in order that desirable consequences may be fully taken into account, and that undesirable consequences may be dealt with early and effectively. Because of the inadequate state of relevant quantitative knowledge of demographic costs and benefits, intuitive analysis is all that can be expected. Nevertheless, it should be incorporated into investment decisions.
There is no question of the importance of the search for new ways to influence fertility decisions - particularly in rural settings. As has been indicated, the most obvious measures relate to opening up alternatives to reproductive roles for women, delaying marriage and improving the chances for survival of existing children. The importance of such measures in the dynamics of village life needs to be better understood.

There is little question that much more needs to be done in expanding and improving existing national family planning programs, and supporting newly-evolving efforts in countries where national programs do not yet exist. Areas needing strengthening include (a) expansion of family planning information and services to all who may desire them; (b) improvement and adaptation of delivery systems to local cultures and traditions, instead of conforming to the "Western" model of clinic-centered delivery to the already motivated; and (c) improvement in the technology of fertility control to include abortion and sterilization techniques, so that couples may increase the effectiveness with which they space and limit their families. The hypothesis that demand for family planning services depends on their full and adequate supply needs to be tested. Some evidence supporting it has been found in India. Subsequently a project jointly financed by the Indian government, the World Bank and the Swedish International Development Agency has been developed to scientifically test the hypothesis and determine its administrative implications. Hope-
fully it will provide a much-needed test of the frequently expressed assertion that we should not dismiss family planning as an ineffective measure to reduce fertility levels until family planning programs have been fully implemented.

In addition, planners need to consider more carefully the human values of individual freedom and collective welfare which should be served by population and development programs. Use of socio-economic incentives, for instance, to influence participation in fertility and migration programs may, on the one hand, bring about conformity with socially desirable objectives. But a dilemma to be resolved arises from the infringement on individual freedom of choice, and the disproportional impact on the poor to whom such measures seem relatively more attractive.

Most of these areas are potential fields of research. Many development decisions are still made in utter ignorance of their potential demographic impacts. Research is necessary to quantify these impacts, and to point the way for alternative selection of strategies.

At the international level, a useful start is being made in these directions in the World Population Plan of Action being prepared by the United Nations for the World Population Conference, 1974. The Plan will take into account the diversity of national population problems which exist, and suggest alternative means to deal with them. When recognition of national problems is the starting point, the importance of rapid and uncontrolled urbanization
becomes as apparent as the problem of rapid growth in size. In such a context, more careful incorporation of demographic factors into economic, educational, social and industrial planning becomes an obvious necessity. Deficiencies in the quantitative methods for such a task are being recognized. Some conceptual and methodological thinking in this direction is being undertaken by the United Nations and by the Population Council. The latter is currently preparing a manual to assist planners to refine demographic planning inputs.

In summary, it is time for us to realize that while we are concerned to handle the short run consequences of current trends, we must also learn how to more effectively influence population trends over the longer run. We must find more effective policies and measures to influence future population growth and distribution. It is also time to recognize that simple solutions to these problems do not exist, but are components of highly intricate inter-relationships. Each country must approach its problem on its own terms. And each country's approach should be respected by international agencies in the realization that population planning efforts are integral parts of development planning efforts, in which all countries must become more equal partners.