

Population Growth and Development Prospects for Pakistan

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I. POPULATION OF PAKISTAN

Since its founding Pakistan has exhibited a continuously high rate of population growth. When measured by population size it has moved from the thirteenth largest country in 1950 to the seventh largest country in 1996 (Table 1). Today Pakistan exhibits the highest rate of growth among the world's largest countries, and according to some projections will become the third most populated country in the world by the year 2050 [United Nations (1998)]. Given the country's present resources, this magnitude of population growth has serious implications for the social and economic well-being of the people of Pakistan.

A staggering statistic shows that the area now constituting Pakistan which had only 16.6 million people at the turn of the century, will surpass the 150 million mark by the new millennium (less than a year away). Among the projected top ten contributors to world population growth during 1995-2000, Pakistan ranks third in absolute numbers (Table 2), and number one in rate of growth. Based on the population of 1996 (Table 1) and the projected absolute population increase (Table 2), the population of Pakistan is projected absolute population increase (Table 2), the population of Pakistan is projected to grow at a rate more than 300 percent faster than China and 170 percent faster than India. In absolute and relative terms Pakistan's population growth is unusually high.¹

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Author's Note: Financial support from Bishop's University is acknowledged. Part of the paper draws on an eight-week visit to Pakistan in 1997. During this period, meetings and interviews were held with government officials, NGOs, foreign missions in Islamabad, business leaders, religious leaders, professionals, and many other individuals (over 100) in all walks of life. I thank them all for their courtesy, frankness, and openness. Special thanks to Dr M. Irfan, Joint Director, PIDE, for his time and many ideas.

¹Recent Census figures of 1998 show a smaller population and somewhat slower growth rate than indicated in this paper. Even using these new data, the conclusions of the paper remain [Khan (1998)].

Table 1

*The 13 Largest Countries Ranked According to Population Size**

1950			1996			2050		
Rank	Country	Population (Million)	Rank	Country	Population (Million)	Rank	Country	Population (Million)
1	China	555	1	China	1,232	1	India	1,533
2	India	358	2	India	945	2	China	1,517
3	U.S.A.	158	3	U.S.A.	269	3	Pakistan	357
4	Russian Federation	102	4	Indonesia	200	4	U.S.A.	348
5	Japan	84	5	Brazil	161	5	Nigeria	339
6	Indonesia	80	6	Russian Federation	148	6	Indonesia	318
7	Germany	68	7	Pakistan	140	7	Brazil	243
8	Brazil	54	8	Japan	125	8	Bangladesh	218
9	United Kingdom	51	9	Bangladesh	120	9	Ethiopia	213
10	Italy	47	10	Nigeria	115	10	Iran	170
11	France	42	11	Mexico	93	11	Zaire	165
12	Bangladesh	42	12	Germany	82	12	Mexico	154
13	Pakistan	40	13	Viet Nam	75	13	Philippines	131

* Source: United Nations, Population Division, Popin Web Site, P.1, 1998.

Table 2

Top Ten Contributors to World Population Growth, 1995-2000

No.	Country	Net Addition (in Thousands)	Percent of World Pop. Growth	Cumulative Percent
1	India	15,999	20.6	20.6
2	China	11,408	14.7	35.3
3	Pakistan	4,048	5.2	40.5
4	Indonesia	2,929	3.8	44.2
5	Nigeria	2,511	3.2	47.5
6	United States of America	2,267	2.9	50.4
7	Brazil	2,154	2.8	53.1
8	Bangladesh	2,108	2.7	55.9
9	Mexico	1,547	2.0	57.9
10	Philippines	1,522	2.0	59.8
	Sub-total	46,494	59.8	59.8
	World Total	77,738	100	100

Source: United Nations, Population Division, World Population Prospects: The 1998 Revision, (forthcoming).

This high rate of population growth has resulted in a large proportion of the population below 14 years of age. Over half the population is under 20 years. This is a serious problem for Pakistan. Despite a respectable economic growth rate over a prolonged period, averaging 6.5 percent during 1980–91, the high population growth has kept per capita income low by international standards (Table 3). The high fertility rate coupled with declining death rates has created a situation which puts tremendous strain on the provisions of adequate resources for health, education, employment and other social programmes. In terms of employment, a rapidly growing labour force requires a continuous and sustained expansion in economic activity just to maintain the current low level of income. In a recent study Rashid Amjad makes reference to this point:

“The most direct and socially explosive impact of this high population growth over 3 percent is on the employment situationthe Pakistan economy will need to create 2.3 jobs every minute in the 1990s to ensure that the existing employment situation does not worsen, as the labour force will be increasing by 1.25 million per annum in this period.” [Amjad (1992)].

The population pyramid for Pakistan shows the high proportion of population aged below 14 years in contrast to the global picture (Figure 1). Even within developing countries, Pakistan's higher birth rate has resulted in a higher proportion of the population under 14 years (see Table 3). Obviously a high ratio of young causes a momentum that promotes a rapidly expanding population for the future.

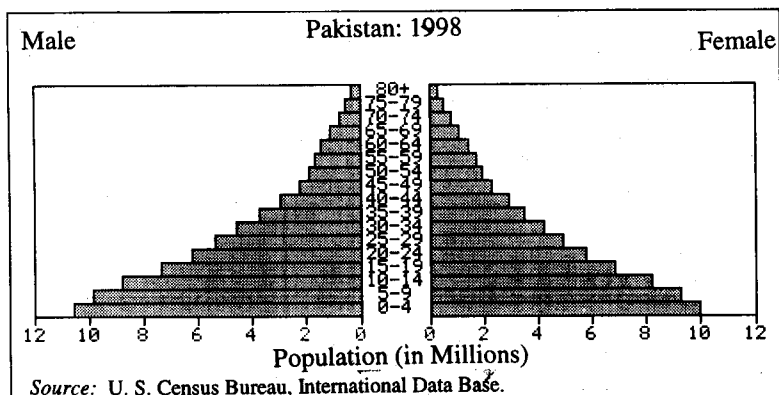


Fig. 1. Population Pyramid for Pakistan.

Table 3
Key Demographic Indicators, 10 Selected Asian Countries*

Country	Population (Thousands)	Annual Population Growth Rate	Crude		Total Fertility Per Woman	Population Under 14 (Percent)	Infant Mortality (per 1000)	Per Capita GNP (US\$)	Per Capita Real GDP ** (PPPS)
			Birth Rate Per 1000	Death Rate Per 1000					
China	1,253,567	0.9	16.0	7.1	1.8	25	37	620	2,604
Japan	126,380	0.2	9.6	7.1	1.4	15	4	39,640	21,581
South Korea	46,444	0.8	14.9	6.4	1.7	22	9	9,700	10,656
Indonesia	204,336	1.4	21.8	7.8	2.5	31	49	980	3,740
Malaysia	22,174	2.3	25.8	4.5	3.3	36	11	3,890	8,865
Bangladesh	124,178	1.6	26.8	9.6	3.1	38	77	240	1,331
India	974,912	1.6	25.0	9.0	3.0	34	71	340	1,348
Iran	63,471	1.5	21.0	6.0	3.1	40	39	1,648	5,768
Pakistan	141,680	2.7 ^a	35.8	7.7	5.0	42	73	460	2,154
Turkey	64,747	1.5	21.7	6.5	2.5	29	43	2,780	5,193
Avg. for the Group	302,189	1.45	21.8	7.17	2.7	30.7	45.7	6,030	6,324

Source: * - UN, ESCAP Data Sheet, (1998) UNDP, Popin Website.

** - UNDP, Human Development Index, 1997.

a - This is the figure quoted, Actual difference between crude birth and death rates gives a higher rate of 2.8.

The female population between 15 and 44 is so large that, at the current fertility rates, combined with a tradition of early marriage, this is a recipe for continuing explosive population growth. Reference to this fact was made at the 31st session of the UN Commission on Population and Development.

“In Pakistan about 41 percent of the population is under 15 years of age, and about 20 percent of the population are females in the reproductive age group, suggesting possibilities of a high momentum of population in the future also” [Mahmood (1998)].

Table 3 provides an interesting demographic comparison between Pakistan and other selected Asian countries for recent years. Six are predominately Islamic countries, India has a substantial Muslim population and the remaining three (China, Japan and South Korea) are included in this group because they offer additional comparisons of demographic indicators. Pakistan's record of family planning is the worst. Pakistan has the highest figures in terms of annual population growth rate, population under 14 years, and total fertility per woman. Infant mortality is the second highest of the group after Bangladesh. The most significant information revealed is the fact that Pakistan's population growth rate is substantially higher than the average of the group. To those who attribute Pakistan's population growth rate to its Islamic traditions, the performance of Indonesia, Bangladesh, Iran and Turkey; all Islamic countries, clearly demonstrates the inadequacy of this assertion. In fact, one could argue that if other Islamic countries have been so successful in reducing the fertility rate so could Pakistan.

By focusing on opportunities and choices for women and emphasising women's needs, reduced population growth is only part of the benefits that could result. Empowerment of women has been a focus of many countries. Unfortunately Pakistan does not compare well on this front. Table 4 illustrates comparisons of gender related development for the same 10 countries as the previous table. Pakistan scores poorly in terms of female literacy rates, enrolment ratios and share of earned income. Its overall gender-related rank is 131, the second lowest of the group. Improvement of women's status has been deemed essential for real economic progress and lowering of the rate of population growth. Despite some progress made in recent years, the reality is deeply disturbing.

II. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOR PAKISTAN

In advanced economies, technological progress has resulted in such economies of scale that continuous growth in demand is necessary to fuel further economic progress. In contrast, many developing countries like Pakistan are struggling to provide the resources necessary for education, clean water, electrical power, and health care. Population density is sufficient to provide low distribution costs when

Table 4
Gender-Related Development Index: 10 Selected Asian Countries

Country	Gender Related Development Index		Adult Literacy Percent		Combined, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, Level Gross Enrollment Ratio (%)				Share of Earned Income (%)	
	Rank	Value	Literary Rates		Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
			Male	Female						
China	93	0.641	90	73	65	62	62	62	62	38
Japan	13	0.902	99	99	79	77	66	77	66	34
South Korea	37	0.826	99	97	66	78	66	78	71	29
Indonesia	88	0.651	90	78	61	59	61	59	67	33
Malaysia	45	0.785	90	78	60	62	60	62	70	30
Bangladesh	140	0.342	49	26	40	31	40	31	77	23
India	128	0.424	66	38	60	46	60	46	75	25
Iran	92	0.643	78	59	67	63	67	63	81	19
Pakistan	131	0.399	50	24	53	27	53	27	80	20
Turkey	55	0.753	92	72	60	54	60	54	64	36

Source: UNDP, HDR 1998, Gender Related Index. UNDP Website: UNDP.org/hydr/98gdi.htm.

real wealth expands. For the developing country with good development plans, which exclude population control, it is easy to reason that population growth can eat up much of the improvements that were intended.

In a recent study of Kelly and Schmidt (1994), it is shown that in the 1980s, population growth acted as a brake on average economic growth measured as the rate of growth of per capita GDP. More interestingly, their analysis showed an even stronger relationship between population growth and poor economic progress for the poorest, less developed countries. The results were consistent for the earlier periods through the 1960s and 1970s. The rising dependency ratio acted as a significant constraint on the growth of per capita GDP. With a rising dependency ratio, it is not unrealistic to expect rising consumption related to young persons, thus retarding savings, increasing government expenditure and ultimately cutting into future growth of GDP. Pakistan, throughout this period experienced high population growth rates and was one of the poorest countries. It is probable that per capita growth of GDP would have been more positive had population growth been kept lower.

The National Research Council's study (1986) considered by some as a revisionist document [McNicoll (1994)], had come to the same conclusion as Kelly and Schmidt (1994). "*On balance, slower population growth would be beneficial to economic development for most developing countries.*"

The revisionists claim that the adverse effects of high population growth can be mitigated through well functioning institutions. This possibility must be questioned in the context of Pakistan, where political governance has had to go through numerous upheavals of alternating military and civilian rule throughout its history. An interesting survey of literature on the subject by Cincotta and Engelman (1997) recognises this point:

"Population growth appears most detrimental and most difficult to surmount in the poorest, least-developed countries, where modern institutions have yet to realise their potential to organise society and economies".

Many institutions, particularly in less developed countries suffer from institutional bias since "*Institutions are not necessarily....created to be socially efficient; rather they.... are created to serve the interests of those with the bargaining power to devise new rules*" [North (1981)]. A good discussion of negative externalities, with relation to population growth, is provided by Birdsall and Griffin (1993).

Population growth reduction accompanied by adaptive institutions played a positive role in the case of East and Southeast Asia, where remarkable progress in fertility decline occurred in a single generation. Experience of countries like South Korea demonstrate that despite a low level of human development and poverty in the

1960s, they were able to reduce the fertility rate substantially and embark on significant economic progress.

“Research indicates that shifts to smaller family size and slower rates of population growth in East Asia played a key role in the operation of an educated work force, the accumulation of household and government savings, the rise in wages and spectacular growth of investment in manufacturing technology” [Population Action International (1998)].

Fertility decline alone is not sufficient to account for the development experienced in South Korea, but is a powerful complimentary factor. For example, South Korea gave a high priority to education, an essential ingredient for economic progress. As fertility declined and income grew, household and government educational investment per child rose sharply. With fertility decline, *the same percentage* of government budget spent on education between 1970 and 1989, permitted real expenditure per student to quadruple as the number of school-age children slowed. Pakistan’s experience of continuing high fertility, coupled with weak institutions, poor education and political instability, is in sharp contrast to South Korea.

Clearly, economic development is a complex and multi-dimensional process in which the rate of population growth is just one factor. Given the current level of economic indicators in Pakistan, development is a real challenge. However, high population growth is a serious added constraint. It limits the potential benefits of improved education, health, nutrition, shelter, and provision of clean drinking water, energy, transportation, justice, a clean environment, and above all, reduction in poverty.

Some argue that other issues are important to development and that population growth is a false issue deliberately created by rich countries. They argue that for many developing countries population growth is desirable. Many of these proponents come from the third world. In the light of recent research, these views are becoming less acceptable.

“In the last hundred years, no nation on earth has moved from the poor and less developed status to prosperous and developed status until it achieved a total fertility rate (tfr) of 2.3 ...Countries begin to pick up momentum on the way to development at a tfr of 2.5. They do not truly arrive until they reach a replacement rate of 2.1 or lower” [Poindexter (1998)].

It is clear that to achieve sustained economic development a country must go through a fundamental transformation on many fronts and that a reduced tfr of 2.3 or

lower is just one of these elements. A reduction in tfr, in and of itself, will not guarantee economic growth and prosperity. At the same time, it is important to recognise that by letting development occur, the population problem will not take care of itself. Pakistan, with an enviable record of strong GDP growth averaging 6 percent and material advances on many fronts, has not experienced a slowing rate of population growth nor improved per capita wealth comparable to countries who were able to slow their fertility rate. The post World War II experience provides ample evidence that

“no nation can first develop, and then have its population growth decline ... that even if all other determiners are positive, economic development of a magnitude to move a country into the ranks of developed prosperous nations, absent a 2.3 or lower tfr, will not take place” [Poindexter (1998)].

III. POPULATION POLICY IN PAKISTAN

In one form or another Pakistan has had a population policy in place since 1965. If its purpose was to reduce the population growth rate in the country obviously it has not been very successful

“The dismal demographic indicators indicate serious shortcomings in the design and implementation of the Family Planning/Population Welfare Programme. Since its adoption in early 1960s more than Rs 8 billion have been spent without much to show for it. Contraceptive usage has been minimal, there has been no rise in marriage age, and birth rates have not fallen” [Pakistan 2010 (1997)].

A substantial body of research clearly shows that in comparison to many less developed countries, Pakistan's performance on this front has indeed been weak. While actual performance is a matter of record and facts are indisputable, explanations are varied and complex. In recent years, Pakistani demographers and other social scientists have examined, analysed and produced a considerable number of research papers and reports on a host of socio-cultural and economic factors that provide some answers to the population problem in Pakistan [Hakim (1994); Perveen (1994); Manzoor (1994); Sathar (1994) and Ali and Zahid (1998)].

Results of these studies and considerable existing international research, unfortunately, has not yet been utilised sufficiently in the implementation of an effective family planning programme or development of a coherent population policy. As previously noted, a very small proportion of married women is using any contraception. In devising a proper programme it is helpful to know the reasons why a large proportion is still categorised as non-users. The major reasons offered for

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non-use of contraception by married women is shown in Table 5. It is worth noting that neither availability nor expense were very prominent reasons given. Husbands' preferences, religious reasons, and lack of knowledge were the main reasons, offering some clues for programme improvement.

Table 5

Distribution of Ever-Married Women who are Non-Users of Contraception by Reason for Never Using Contraception by Expenditure Quintile*

	First Quintile	Second Quintile	Fifth Quintile	Overall
Husbands Prefer not to	38.9	38.8	30.9	35.6
Bad Side-effects	4.5	9.6	8.5	7.0
Expensive	5.9	6.0	1.7	4.3
Not Available	0.6	4.6	3.1	3.1
Did not Know Enough	18.7	10.3	9.8	12.6
Ineffective Methods	4.3	0.5	3.6	2.3
Religious Reasons	18.9	17.0	16.9	17.7
Husband Ill or Away	2.1	4.1	2.7	2.3
Other	5.9	8.2	22.8	14.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: World Bank tabulations from PIHS, 1991. (Reproduced from Pakistan 2010, 1997).

*Excluding those who state they wanted more children.

Despite increased efforts in the 1990s, the effectiveness of the programme continues to be problematic. Interesting evidence is provided in Table 6 which shows that Family Welfare Centres, visited by monitoring teams, were found to be very deficient in many ways. On average, the monitors discovered that about 24 percent of the centres were engaged in false reporting, 58 percent had no clients, 38 percent were in operation without sanctioned staff and 19 percent had no one in charge of the centres. These statistics clearly show the ineffectiveness of the programme and call for some fundamental changes.

In summary, the population policy has not been effective so far. The basic premise is simply this: Pakistan has had and continues to have a very high population growth rate. A substantial reduction in this rate of growth is essential, in the shortest time, if the country wishes to make any real progress in other aspects of economic development. Whatever development path is chosen, whatever policies and programme are initiated to overcome the constraints and challenges, the task will be a lot easier if population growth is checked. An effective population policy is a must. It is of critical importance to the nation's overall development strategy. Failure to recognise this is tantamount to one step forward and one step backwards.

Table 6

Summary of Major Findings of Field Monitoring Reports, 1995–1996

	Pakistan	Punjab	Sindh	NWFP
FWC* Visited	921	612	173	136
FWC Found Closed	69 (7.49)	46 (7.52)	9 (5.20)	14 (10.29)
FWC Open with no Staff	10 (1.09)	5 (0.82)	5 (2.89)	0 (0)
FWC Open with no Incharge	178 (19.33)	114 (18.63)	32 (18.50)	32 (23.53)
FWC without Sanctioned Staff	351 (38.11)	247 (40.36)	65 (37.57)	39 (28.68)
FWC False Reporting	217 (23.56)	123 (20.10)	56 (32.37)	38 (27.94)
FWC with no Client	539 (58.52)	359 (58.66)	110 (63.58)	70 (51.47)

Source: Summary of Major Findings of Field Mission Reports (UNFPA/GOP Project Pak/94/P14.1995-1996, (Reproduced from Pakistan 2010, 1997).

Note: Parentheses denote percentage of relevant category.

*FWC – Family Planning Centres.

The following are proposals to improve existing family planning programmes:

1. Recognition and Commitment

To solve a problem one must first accept and recognise its existence. In Pakistan it is not generally recognised that a large and rapidly growing population is a serious problem. The majority of people do not rank population control as one of the most serious issues facing the country. Editorials, letters to the editors, and news stories devote considerable space to political and economic problems ranging from health issues, unemployment and jobs, corruption, energy shortages, food, water, and housing shortages, transportation deficiencies and civil unrest. Population issues never make the headlines, nor are they referred to in relation to all the shortages noted as problems.

While some educated people acknowledge it is somewhat of a problem, many do not think it is their concern, but rather that of the poor, and should be dealt with by the government. This attitude is a recipe for continued inaction and provides no momentum for change.

What is recommended here is an all out effort, at all levels, to promote a country-wide campaign that Pakistan has a serious population problem. Such a

unified campaign is a necessary first step towards any successful population policy. This requires a firm commitment on the part of the political leadership to give a clear signal to the country. To attain this commitment, the intelligentsia through such conferences as this, must alert the media and pressure the elected officials.

Official statements, partially for international consumption, paint a rosier picture than other reports and an informal survey of my own sample group have demonstrated. A recent report indicates 94 percent awareness of the family planning programme, and 24 percent contraceptive use by December 1997 [Mahmood (1998)]. This is in sharp contrast to the Pakistan 2010 report (1997) that indicates a 38 percent contraceptive knowledge and current contraception use among married women aged 15-49 of 10.3 percent. A better measure of the problem, is the government's own statement:

"The total fertility rate in Pakistan has declined to about 5.4 children per women, but a married woman in Pakistan still produces on the average 6 to 7 children during her reproductive life" [Mahmood (1998)].

These figures contrast startlingly with Bangladesh where average family size has dropped from 7.4 lifetime births per woman to about 3 in 1996 [Ali (1998)]. Despite widespread poverty and huge underdevelopment in Bangladesh, an Islamic country, efforts to control population growth were successful. This success provides a challenge to the classical transition theory that population growth will slow down only after economic development occurs. In just two decades, the country has achieved a remarkable increase in knowledge and use of contraception whereby at least four methods of contraception are known to almost all married women, and contraception use has increased from less than 15 percent to over 66 percent [Ali (1998)]. One of the factors leading to success in Bangladesh was the government's sustained political commitment.

2. Information, Education and Communication Strategy

Information, education and communication (IEC) to promote demand for family planning and encourage a smaller family-size norm is part of the recognition strategy. Teachers can talk to children, physicians can talk to patients, employers can talk to their employees, and religious leaders can be co-opted to exert enormous influence. The first step is for the population at large to become aware of the serious problem that a fast growing population brings to our nation.

A well designed IEC strategy is essential in increasing demand for family planning services. The Ministry of Population and Welfare (MOPW) should play a leading role in the design and coordination of an IEC plan. It should make efforts to co-opt NGOs; academics; religious, community and business leaders; women groups.

and other formal and informal associations in both urban and rural areas. Such efforts should enlarge the focus of IEC by direct involvement of larger groups as partners in broadening the scope from the current situation where the MOPW is the sole responsible agency.

3. An Effective Population Policy

Once there is real recognition of the problem, an effective policy based on both the supply and demand side of fertility reduction is urgent. Although in the past, the supply-side may have been deficient, the demand-side has been all but absent. Without clear, public recognition of the problem there has been little demand for the fertility services provided. With this corrected then the next step is to have a policy in place to respond to the new awareness.

Perhaps the major factors, which contributed to success in Bangladesh, should be applied in Pakistan. Some of them exist,² in whole or in part, in the present family planning programme, so with a few adjustments, the Pakistan situation can be improved. The factors attributed to success in Bangladesh are: *“government’s sustained political commitment, material and child health based strategy, cafeteria approach to services, active government NGO partnership, sustained donor commitments, and use of research in policy making”* [Ali (1998)]. Presently Pakistan has strong research abilities, and a fair effort in the cafeteria approach to services. In addition to the recognition and commitment step so crucial for the demand-side as emphasised in step one, more government NGO partnership could be established.

4. NGO Involvement

While the MOPW has an important leadership role, greater reliance should be placed on domestic and foreign NGOs not only in promoting small family size, but also in providing family planning and reproductive health services. NGOs have the resources, the know-how and above all a real commitment to the cause. The MOPW should assume an overall coordinating and facilitating role vis-à-vis the NGOs and other private organisations operating on either the supply or demand side. MOPW can, for example, act as the primary contact for NGOs and provide them with assistance in reducing bureaucratic red tape at all levels, including the importation of equipment and supplies which are necessary to carry out their work effectively.

The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) called for governments to pay greater attention to population issues and involve NGOs in various programmes. Pakistan was a participant to this conference and at

² The Village Based Family Planning Workers scheme is a positive example of following the Bangladesh programme when, during the 8th Plan (1993–98), 12000 VBFPWs were to be recruited [ZOPW and Population Council, Research Report No. 3 (1995)].

least the rhetoric of then Prime Minister Bhutto attests to the commitment of the government.

“Pakistan cannot progress if it cannot check its rapid population growth. Check it must, for it is not the destiny of the people of Pakistan to live in squalor and poverty condemned to a future of hunger and horror” [Bhutto (1994)].

The NGOs' contributions in reproductive health and contraception provision have been remarkable. The work of the Marie Stopes Society and the Family Planning Association offer excellent examples of well conceived and implemented programmes in Pakistan.

NGOs contributions in Pakistani context may include: Advocacy programmes; Debates and conferences; male involvement, promoting education; mass media campaign, programme financing and technical assistance.

5. Religious Involvement

Given the undeniable importance of religion in Pakistan, genuine cooperation and clear endorsement of family planning by the religious leadership in the country, is of utmost importance for successful implementation of any fertility reduction programme. This avenue must be explored fully, as has been the case in many other Islamic countries such as Indonesia, Bangladesh, Iran, and Malaysia, to name a few. Their examples clearly show the feasibility of this option. Precisely how it may be accomplished is left to people with more expertise in this area.

IV. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The simple conclusion of this paper is that a large and rapidly growing population is both a challenge and a constraint to development prospects for Pakistan. The challenge must be met with a real sense of purpose and commitment by the leadership of the country and should, at the same time, be a serious concern to each and every citizen. Half-hearted attempts of the past must be replaced by new efforts to lead the country as a whole to recognising its reality. With this new recognition the country must accept to tackle the problem by assigning top priority to population control.

Clearly, the population problem is a vital challenge and constraint for the development of the country. Unfortunately, it is not the only one. For real progress, efforts on all fronts must continue in order to improve the standard of living and the quality of life for all. The point to be emphasised is that failure on the population front will negate success on other fronts. The country simply cannot afford to add four million people annually to an already large population base.

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Comments

The author has very rightly pointed out the concern about high population growth in Pakistan and its constraining effects on the execution of development strategies of the country. To begin with, the paper gives a detailed account of the seriousness of fast growing population in relation to development prospects and then critically reviews the weak implementation of the population policies and programmes in reducing fertility and family size. By putting Pakistan in a comparative perspective with other countries in the Asian region in terms of its socio-demographic indicators, the author attempts to show relationships between demographic changes and socio-economic development and severity of the population problem for Pakistan in this context.

I strongly share the author's concerns about population growth and its implications for future development in Pakistan. However, I would like to raise three major comments on the objectives and statistical aspects of the paper, mainly for the purpose of improving the contents of analysis.

1. Although the paper presents some important statistics on selected demographic and socio-economic indicators, data used to show Pakistan's situation in comparison with other countries needs to be updated and corrected. The information is mainly drawn from UN and other sources, and the figures quoted for Pakistan are not depicting the recently changing demographic situation for Pakistan. For example, the population figures and the annual population growth rate for Pakistan as shown in Table 3 are over-stated. Ideally, it would be better to use recent sources of census and survey data in Pakistan.

Moreover, the author has drawn statements and statistical figures heavily from the Pakistan 2010 report which again need revision and correction for estimates on crude birth rate, population growth rate and contraceptive use as described on pages 15, 18 and 20 of the paper. I feel that with erroneous information cited for Pakistan, the author's interpretation of statistical facts and relationships between various indicators may be overstated and would be misleading for readers.

2. As mentioned before, the main thrust of the paper is to consider the link between population growth and economic development. As is well known that population and development variables are strongly co-related and the two-way relationship between these parameters is a complex one. In fact, demographic change provides the lens or the window through which the future economic trends can be viewed which, in turn, have their demographic effects. No attempt, however, is made in the paper to show

how development and economic policies in Pakistan have affected population growth or vice versa. The author has discussed the economic development and population growth issues in isolation without linking changes in population indicators and some development measures.

As evidence suggests, there are three ways to deal with population and development issues and reduce population growth rate: (i) through development and economic expansion as observed in many South East and East-Asian countries; (ii) through strong and effective family planning programmes even at low levels of socio-economic development as observed in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Iran, etc.; and (iii) a combination of both. The analysis presented in the paper does not address any of these scenarios to show the co-direction of changes between population and development indicators. The relevance of the paper would be substantially enhanced if the author had reported or discussed some policy measures of development and their effect on demographic change to show the linkages between the two and how that could be used to devise effective population policy for Pakistan.

3. My final comments relate to the involvement of NGOs in dealing with the population problem. I feel that the role of NGOs has been over emphasised in bringing demographic change in Pakistan. Public policies are instrumental in stimulating demographic transition and in implementing specific programmes. It clearly needs to be determined how and in what way NGOs can co-ordinate and help the government in tackling population problem. Most of the suggestions proposed in the paper to deal with population issue have already been initiated in Pakistan including IEC strategies, role of mass media, advocacy programmes and male involvement in population programmes. It has, however, been assessed that the major problem with these policy measures is the implementation of programmes in an effective manner.
4. In the end, I must say that I fully support the author's conclusion which states that a rapidly growing population is both a challenge and a constraint to development prospects for Pakistan, and there is no reason to deny that the challenge must be met with a real sense of purpose and commitment by the government and, at the same time, by every citizen of the country. The paper has undoubtedly addressed and highlighted a burning issue in the context of development prospects of Pakistan and should gain due attention on all possible fronts in order to improve the standard of living and the quality of life for all in the country.

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