

Population and Sustainable Development: Role of Demographers¹

Ulimiri V. Somayajulu

Genesis and Activities of IASP

Interest in study of population got pronounced with launching of planning for economic and social development after India's independence. The First Five Year Plan (1951-56) recognised population as an important parameter that needs careful consideration in planning of development efforts and emphasised need for population research oriented to development policies and programmes. Under the second five year plan, Demographic Training and Research Centre (current IIPS) was established and attention towards population was drawn from scholars from social sciences and bio medical sciences.

In 1963, 1st Asian Population Conference was held at Delhi and interactions among Indian Demographers centred on association of Indian Demographers. In 1969, informal meeting of Indian Demographers held at the IUSSP General Conference held at London, reiterated the need for the association. In 1970, Demographers based in Delhi took the lead with active support from Prof Ashok Mitra and Sri A Chandra Sekhar, successive Census commissioners and Registrar Generals of India.

IASP was registered in Feb 1971 with adhoc EC : Prof Ashok Mitra as founder president, Sri A Chandra Sekhar and Sri SP Jain as Vice Presidents, Prof Asish Bose as General Secretary, Sri RP Goyal as Treasurer, Prof A Ghosh, Dr NT Mathew, Prof KV Ramachandran, Dr RS Kurup, Dr PM Visaria, and Dr DB Lahiri as members. In March 1973, duly elected EC took over

The Demography India, journal of IASP was registered in March 1972. First seminar of IASP was held in 1972 at IEG, Delhi to discuss implications of first census results of 1971 census and First conference was held in 1975, at DTRC (IIPS), Bombay. In 1988, International Conference was held at NIHFWD, Delhi. IASP also organised several orientation courses/workshops. IASP also organised the South Asian Regional Conference on Population, as pre IUSSP conference and XXI General Conference of IUSSP at Delhi, in Sept 1989.

The objectives of IASP include promoting scientific study of population in general and India's population problems in particular, promoting, sponsoring and undertaking research on different aspects of India's population, organising conferences, seminars, meetings and discussion groups and publishing books, monographs, journals, newsletters, occasional papers etc.

MDGs and SDGs

The concept of SDGs was born at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Rio+20, in 2012 which was having an objective of producing a set of universally applicable goals that balances the three dimensions of sustainable development viz., environmental, social, and economic.

As all of us are aware, at the Sustainable Development Summit held on September 25, 2015, UN Member States adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, that includes a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to end poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and tackle climate change by 2030. The SDGs build on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that the world committed to achieving by 2015. One can broadly divide the SDGs into three categories : 1) extension of MDGs (first seven SDGs) 2) goals pertaining to inclusiveness (employment, infrastructure, industrialisation, and distribution-goals 8, 9, and 10) and 3) goals on sustainability and urbanisation (last seven goals viz., sustainable cities and communities, life below water consumption

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and production; climate action; resources and environment; peace and justice; and the means of implementation and global partnership for the same).

Special Features of SDGs

SDGs benefit from the valuable lessons learned from the MDGs and carry forward the MDGs agenda that was unfinished, with continuity and sustaining the momentum generated while addressing the additional challenges of inclusiveness, equity, and urbanisation and further strengthening global partnership by including Civil Society Organisations and Private Sector. The SDGs reflect continuity and consolidation of MDGs while making these more sustainable by strengthening the environmental goals. SDGs have evolved after a long and extensive consultative process that included open working groups, civil society organizations, thematic consultations, country consultations, participation of general public through face to face meetings and online mechanisms etc.

While MDGs focused on 8 goals, 21 targets and 63 indicators, SDGs include 17 goals with 169 targets. Analysis by noble laureates suggests that if the UN concentrates on 19 top targets, it can get \$20 to \$40 per dollar spent in social benefits, while allocating it evenly across all 169 targets would reduce the figure to less than \$10. Being smart about spending can make more difference than mere doubling or quadrupling the budget. Human development, human rights and equity are deeply rooted in SDGs with seven targets referring to people with disabilities, six targets to people in vulnerable situations, and two targets to non-discrimination. MDGs had 3 direct health goals, 4 targets and 15 indicators with emphasis on child, maternal mortality and communicable diseases, while SDGs have one comprehensive goal emphasizing well being and healthy living including Non Communicable Diseases. SDGs include a vision of building vibrant and systematic partnerships with private sector to achieve sustainable development. SDGs also have paid attention to involvement of CSOs right from the framing stage itself with significant engagement.

Financial Resources

The exercise of estimating investment needed for some of the SDGs indicated huge resource requirement. The estimate provided by UNCTAD for providing social safety net to eradicate extreme poverty at about \$66 Billion a year while that of infrastructure (water, agriculture, transport, and power) is \$7 Trillion globally. Total investment needed in developing countries is USD 3.9 trillion per year, mainly for basic infrastructure (roads, rail and ports, power stations, water and sanitation), food security (agriculture and rural development), climate change mitigation and adaptation, health, and education. Current investment in these sectors is around USD 1.4 trillion leaving a gap of around USD 2.5 trillion and implying an annual investment gap of between USD 1.9 and USD 3.1 trillion (UNCTAD, 2014). In case of India, the first level of estimates indicate a financial shortfall of INR 533 lakh crores (USD 8.5 trillion) over the mandated 15 years for achieving SDGs. This works out to be INR 36 lakh crores or USD 565 billion per year.

Linkages between Population Dynamics and Sustainable Development

There are numerous links between health and population dynamics and acknowledgement of the same in the SDGs is a good sign and a step in the right direction. Issues that need attention include providing adequate health care for ageing population and family planning services in the developing countries. Factors relating to population dynamics affect other areas addressed by the SDGs as well. For instance, implications of population growth in terms of environmental challenges (global warming, and bio diversity) food security and water availability need attention.

Critical Role of Demographers

Quantification and having measurable indicators to monitor the progress are crucial. Even if one limits to two indicators per target, there will be 338 indicators to monitor and report. Success of

the monitoring exercise depends greatly on availability of data and capability to measure and report them.

MDGs had a time span of 25 years though adopted in 2002 baseline data for 1990 was used and some of the baseline values got revised subsequently. For the SDGs, estimates available for 2015 would be the baseline figures of the indicators. In case of India, NFHS 4 carried out during 2015-16 could be one of the useful sources of baseline data for some of the indicators. Availability of reliable, accessible and timely data on population related factors is essential for development planning as well as monitoring the progress in achievement of the Sustainable Development agendaas highlighted by the UN Commission on Population and Development. Specifically, reliable information about size, growth, distribution and characteristics of populations is crucial not only to guide the development policy supporting the implementation of SDGs, but also to assess progress towards their achievement.

Population census is one critical source of information for sustainable development but in India, we had the last census in 2011. We also need periodic nationwide surveys with robust study design and data quality and reliability. In this context, adopting new information and communication technologies can help immensely in increasing efficiency, reducingburden on resources in terms of time as well as financial. The demographic data as well as estimates need to be disaggregated by sex, single years of age, income, ethnicity, migration status, disability, geographic location and other characteristics. The issues relating to open access to existing data that would facilitate evidence based policy making, dissemination of micro data with adequate safeguards in terms of protection of privacy and confidentiality assurance need attention.

Role of Demographers, Statisticians, Social Scientists, and Development Practitioners is crucial in this regard. Multi sectoral approach is imperative to achieve the SDGs and the research carried out should also adopt the same rather than working in isolation with piece meal approach. There is also need for evidence in terms of data through research in the areas of poverty and hunger, WASH, financial inclusion, food security, health, education, infrastructure, SMART cities, skill development, climate change etc. IASP through its members across the length and breadth of India, can play an active role in getting policy attention to population dynamics related factors at the state level.

Quote from Brihadāranyaka Upanishad verse

सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनःसर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः ।सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तुमा कश्चिद्दुःखभागभवेत् ।

शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah, Sarve Santu Nir-Aamayaah |Sarve Bhadraanni Pashyantu, Maa Kashcid-Duhkha-Bhaag-Bhavet |Shaantih Shaantih Shaantih ||

Meaning:

May All become Happy, May All be Free from Illness, May All See what is Auspicious, May no one Suffer, Peace, Peace, Peace

Dr. U. V. Somayajulu, President, IASP,
CEO and ED, Sigma Research and Consulting, New Delhi