

Population, Health and Development: Progress and Concerns¹

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About the IASP

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.

Since its inception in 1971, IASP has been actively involved in research on population and related issues and dissemination of knowledge at various levels. These include the International Population Conference in 1951, South Asian Regional Conference on Population and XXI General Conference of IUSSP at Delhi in Sept 1989. It is a matter of immense pleasure that IASP has been selected by the IUSSP to host the 2021 International Population Conference at Hyderabad in the golden jubilee year. Congratulations to all the members of IASP.

Theme of conference

The theme of this conference is Population, health and development and this becomes more relevant in the context of the sustainable development agenda 2030. The linkages between population dynamics, health, human development and sustainable development make the population factors more important for policy as well as programme planning and intervention. I am sure that the deliberations of this conference would improve our understanding in this direction.

Health Status

Let us look at the health scenario. India added 450 million people over the 25 years to 2016 and during this period, the proportion of people living in poverty fell by half. This period of rising prosperity has been marked by a "dual-disease burden", a continuing rise in communicable diseases and a spurt in non-communicable or "lifestyle" diseases, which accounted for half of all deaths in 2015, up from 42 per cent in 2001-03.

India meets the global average in terms of number of physicians, but 74 per cent of its doctors cater to one third of the urban population, or not more than 442 million people, according to a report. The result of this disease burden on a growing and ageing population, economic development and increasing health awareness is a healthcare industry that has grown to \$81.3 billion (Rs 54,086 lakh crore) in 2013 and is now projected to grow at 17 per cent by 2020, up from 11 per cent in 1990. On a positive side, in rural areas, mobile technology and improved data services are playing a critical role in improving healthcare delivery. In spite of some advances, India's healthcare sector must deal with a plethora of challenges.

With the lowest government spend and public spend, as a proportion of gross domestic product (GDP), and the lowest per capita health spend - China spends 5.6 times more, the US 125 times more - Indians met more than 62 per cent of their health expenses from their personal savings, called "out-of-pocket expenses", compared with 13.4 per cent in the US, 10 per cent in the UK and 54 per cent. As per the Tracking Universal Health Coverage 2017 Global Monitoring Report of World Bank and WHO, about 4% of the households in India i.e. about 1 crore households and 5 crores people are impoverished by spending on health care. We need more evidence and insights on this for effective strategies.

India compares unfavourably with China and the US in terms of number of hospital beds and nurses. The country is 81 per cent short of specialists at rural community health centres (CHCs), and the private sector accounts for 63 per cent of hospital beds, according to government health and family welfare statistics.

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Several computer and mobile-phone based e-health and m-health initiatives including the Swastha Bharat mobile application for information on diseases, symptoms, treatment, health alerts and tips; ANMOL-ANM online tablet application for health workers, e-RaktKosh (a blood-bank management information system) and India Fights Dengue are implemented. We need to document and disseminate the impact of these innovative approaches.

Some of the key challenges for India's healthcare include: Population, Infrastructure, Insurance, Rural-urban disparity.

Human Development

Human development is about enlarging freedoms so that all human beings can pursue choices that they value. Such freedoms have two major aspects—freedom of well-being, represented by functioning and capabilities, and freedom of agency, represented by voice and autonomy. Human development for everyone is a realizable goal and we need to build on what we have already achieved and have to explore new possibilities to overcome the challenges. The 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals are critical steps towards human development for everyone. The fact is that the impressive progress on many human development fronts over the past few decades has bypassed many people, particularly those who are marginalized and vulnerable. Such progress has enriched many lives—but not to the same extent and certainly not for all. The barriers are still substantial—economic, political and social—for all human beings to realize their full potential in life. Such barriers are particularly more visible in case of women and girls, and other marginalized sections of the society.

Identifying those who have been left out of the progress in development and mapping their locations and needs are mere an academic exercise, they are essential tasks for useful advocacy and for effective policymaking. Such mapping can guide the policymakers in formulating and implementing policies to improve the well-being of marginalized and vulnerable people. National and state Human Development Reports followed by state policy framework covering population, health and human development can be useful instruments. Collection of relevant information and data is a crucial step in this exercise and innovative data collection mechanisms need to be applied. Demographers, Social Scientists and Statisticians have a major role in this regard.

The Sustainable Development Goals are also crucial for human development for everyone. In fact, the 2030 Agenda and the human development approach are mutually reinforcing. Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals is an important step for all human beings to realize their full potential in life. Tracking and monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals are important to measure the progress, identify the gaps and making changes in policies and implementation plans, if development is off track. To ensure human development for everyone, future substantive work should concentrate on assessing human development, which requires disaggregated data. The Demographers and IASP have to contribute in this as well.

Let us look into some of the issues relating to assessment of human development. In addition to quantitative achievements, quality of development also needs to be assessed. For instance, there may be increase in school enrollment and school attendance of children but understanding of their learning levels would be an important outcome indicator. One has to also use various measures of well-being and deprivations as those left out suffer deprivation in multiple aspects of life. We have a role to play in measuring multiple deprivations and well-being.

Human Development Index of Andhra Pradesh

According to the Human Development Report of Andhra Pradesh prepared for Government of Andhra Pradesh by Center for Economic and Social Studies in 2016, the rank of Andhra Pradesh in Human Development Index (HDI) among 21 major States of India was 12 in 2004-05 and 9 in 2011-12. The districts of Andhra Pradesh with a lower HDI in 2004-05 have improved their HDI status faster compared to the other districts by 2011-12. This reflects declining inequalities in HDI across the districts. The same is evident in case of the three components of HDI, viz., standard of living, health and education. The initiatives taken by the Government to further increase the HDI of AP and other Indian states as well have given encouraging results.

New research carried out by World Inequality Lab (WIL) indicates that economic or income inequality has increased rapidly in India since the 1980s. This reiterates the need for more effective

policy and programme initiatives to enhance access to education, skill development and economic activities with stable income. The population related implications of these inequities need to be studied and documented.

Role of Demographers and IASP

Role of Demographers, Statisticians, Social Scientists, and Development Practitioners is crucial in this regard. Multi sectoral approach is imperative to achieve human and sustainable development and the research carried out should be multi sectoral. There is also need for evidence in terms of data through research in the areas of economic and social inequity, health, education, infrastructure, skill development etc.

IASP through its members across the length and breadth of India, can play an active role in providing evidence and insights to facilitate policy and programme initiatives to address the issues relating to population, health and development linkages.

Quote from Sri Atharv Ved

पश्येम शरदः शतम् ॥१॥ जीवेम शरदः शतम् ॥२॥ बुध्येम शरदः शतम् ॥३॥
रोहेम शरदः शतम् ॥४॥ पूषेम शरदः शतम् ॥५॥ भवेम शरदः शतम् ॥६॥
भूयेम शरदः शतम् ॥७॥

Let our eyes be perfect for 100 years, let us live for 100 years, let our mind be perfect for 100 years, let us keep getting improvement for 100 years, let us get good food for 100 years, let us be there for 100 years, let us be pure for 100 years.

JAI HIND

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