

DEVELOPMENT ADVOCATE PAKISTAN

Volume 6, Issue 1

Population Growth: Implications for Human Development



DEVELOPMENT ADVOCATE PAKISTAN



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Pakistan



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Printed by:

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ISBN: 978-969-8736-26-9

March 2019

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Pakistan's Population Challenge

Pakistan is the sixth most populous country in the world with its population estimated at 207.8 million in 2017. Its population growth rate of 2.40 percent is the highest in South Asia and stands in sharp contrast to the 1.0–1.5 percent growth rate of other South Asian countries. Pakistan's population has increased by more than six-folds since the first post-independence census held in 1951. This massive growth in population possesses serious challenges for the country's socio-economic development.

The high growth in population could be attributed to a number of factors. Pakistan has the lowest contraceptive prevalence rate in South Asia, which has stagnated at 35 percent over the last couple of years. One in five married women in Pakistan are unable to access effective methods of family planning if they want to avoid pregnancy and plan the number and spacing of children. Low contraceptive prevalence may be further attributed to weak service delivery systems and markets and cultural norms.

Between 1993 to 1998, Pakistan ran a successful family planning programme which was instrumental in reducing fertility rates and increasing contraceptive prevalence. The key element of the programme was the recruitment of trained Lady Health Workers (LHW) to provide primary health care and family planning services to women at community level. The LHW were pivotal in expanding family planning services to the poor and educating them on the available methods. However, from 2000 onwards, successive governments' attention to family planning programmes started to reduce.

However, it is encouraging to note that population and family planning is now again getting space on the government's policy agenda. The Federal Government has constituted a Task Force on Population and Family Planning to develop a strategy for controlling population growth and guiding its implementation. The Task Force, headed by the Prime Minister which includes all provincial Chief Ministers as members, is working towards three key targets; increasing contraceptive prevalence rate to 55 percent, reducing fertility rate from 3.6 births per woman to 2.1, and decreasing population growth rate to 1.5 percent. Given the devolved governance structure in Pakistan, the inclusion of Chief Ministers in the Task Force is key to implementing a coordinated and comprehensive family planning programme.

Pakistan could learn from other Muslim countries that have successfully controlled their population growth rates, such as Bangladesh and Iran. Bangladesh's population was almost 71 million

in 1971—close to Pakistan's population of 65 million in 1972. Today, the population of Bangladesh stands at 164.7 million with an annual growth rate of 1 percent. It launched a successful family planning programme soon after independence that was based on recruitment of young married women trained to provide door to door services on contraceptive use. This was coupled with a mushroom growth in rural family planning clinics and extensive awareness raising through different means of outreach.

Similarly, Iran has documented one of the fastest drops in fertility rates, from 6.5 births per woman in 1980 to 1.6 by 2017. This is attributed to a successful programme that engaged religious institutions and reputed clergymen on family planning, increased access to free contraceptives, counselling for new couples and mass media for raising awareness on family planning.

The abovementioned successful family planning programmes have addressed both demand and supply side drivers. Pakistan should also employ an integrated approach to population control. On the supply side, it needs to increase the outreach and quality of services while on the demand side, it has to create awareness and the community's demand for family planning services. Focused efforts on both supply and demand side are important for optimizing population growth rate.

Without addressing the population challenge, Pakistan will continue to face a phenomenal task in achieving higher ranks on the Human Development Index (HDI). Data shows that accelerated progress in human development and reduction in population growth rate have mostly occurred simultaneously. When Bangladesh surpassed Pakistan in HDI in 1997, it had a much slower growth in population than Pakistan's. Between 1990 to 2000, Bangladesh's population grew by 24 percent while Pakistan's population expanded by 32 percent. Higher population puts stress on service delivery systems and hence reduces the outreach of services.

A new person is added in Pakistan every 8 seconds and at the going rate, the total population is projected to exceed 350 million people by 2070. Without coordinated, urgent and dedicated efforts, Pakistan is unlikely to achieve its 2020 target for increasing contraceptive prevalence to 55 percent as part of its commitment at the Family Planning Summit, 2017. A holistic approach with inclusion of provincial and other stakeholders, is required to formulate a sound policy and oversee its execution. The reduction in population growth rate is an important enabler for accelerating human development and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Dynamics of Population in Pakistan

Note: The Main Analysis has been written by the team at the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) including, Dr. Dur-e-Nayab (Joint Director and Director Research), Dr. Rizwan-ul-Haq (Assistant Professor) and Dr. Saima Bashir (Senior Research Demographer).

Background

Pakistan is confronted with a host of issues. These include low human capital, fiscal constraints, poor quality of health, energy shortages, food, water and energy insecurities, high unemployment rate, especially among youth, and vulnerabilities linked to gender, religion and ethnicity. It would not be wrong to assume that underlying all these issues, is the much neglected, large population in the country, with a consistently high growth rate.

Despite having the oldest population planning programme in the region, Pakistan's population growth rate remains higher than almost all regional countries. As of 2017, Bangladesh's population growth rate stood at 1.05 percent, Iran's at 1.15 percent, Sri Lanka's 1.13 percent and India's 1.13 percent.¹ While these countries display a growth rate of around one percent, Pakistan's population continues to grow by over two percent annually.²

The right approach to adopt is in having a consolidated initiative regarding population planning that is based on human development, focusing on health, education and inclusivity. The issue is not given due importance despite the fact that in Pakistan, one birth takes place every 6 seconds, a person dies every 22 seconds, there is a net migrant every 3 minutes and as a net effect, a person is added every 8 seconds. Going by these numbers, at the end of the day, a huge 10,800 individuals are added to the country's population.

Pakistan's Population Profile

a. Population Size and Growth

The best estimates on population size and structures can be derived from a population census. However, the erratic frequency of these in Pakistan has rendered them somewhat inadequate for the purpose.

The latest census, conducted in 2017, for which the final estimates are awaited even

Table 1: Population Size and Growth in Censuses 1951-2017

Census Year	Population (in millions)	Average Annual Intercensal Growth Rate (percentage)
1951	33.78	-
1961	42.98	2.5
1972	65.31	3.7
1981	84.25	3.1
1998	133.35	2.7
2017*	207.77	2.4

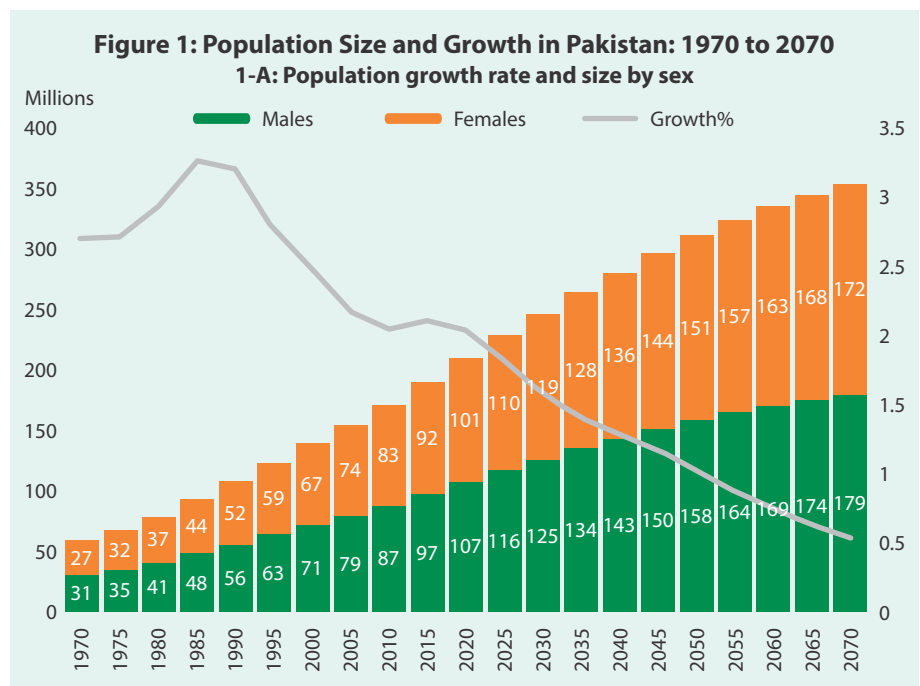
Source: Population Censuses of Pakistan.

Note: * Denotes Provisional Results.

after a passage of two years, was carried out after a gap of 19 years. The provisional census results showed that the population projections being done since the previous census (in 1998) were assuming lower fertility and growth rates than the country was actually experiencing. Table 1 shows the results of the six censuses conducted in Pakistan since its inception. The high average annual intercensal growth rate

reflects the momentum with which the population of the country has grown and will continue to grow in the years to come.

In 50 years from now, the size of Pakistan's population is expected to go beyond 350 million people (Figure 1-A). Moreover, the growth rate, while showing a decreasing trend, will not reach 1 percent per annum before 2050. This huge population size is a



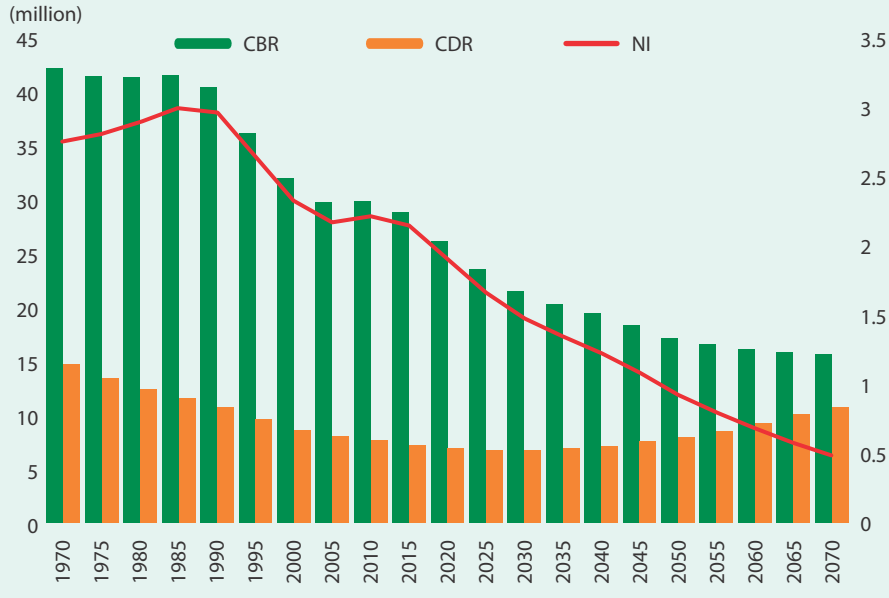
Source: World Population Prospects, United Nations, 2017 revisions.

1. World Bank Development Indicators Database

2. Annual population growth rate for a year is the exponential rate of growth of midyear population from the previous year to the next one, expressed as a percentage. Population is based on the de facto definition of population, which counts all residents regardless of legal status or citizenship.

Figure 1: Population Size and Growth in Pakistan: 1970 to 2070

1-B: Crude birth rate (CBR) and crude death rates (CDR), and the rate of natural increase (million)



Source: World Population Prospects, United Nations, 2017 revisions.

result of a continued high fertility rate and the momentum provided by it.

Figure 1-B presents the crude birth and crude death rates (CBR and CDR) along with the rate of natural increase (NI) in the

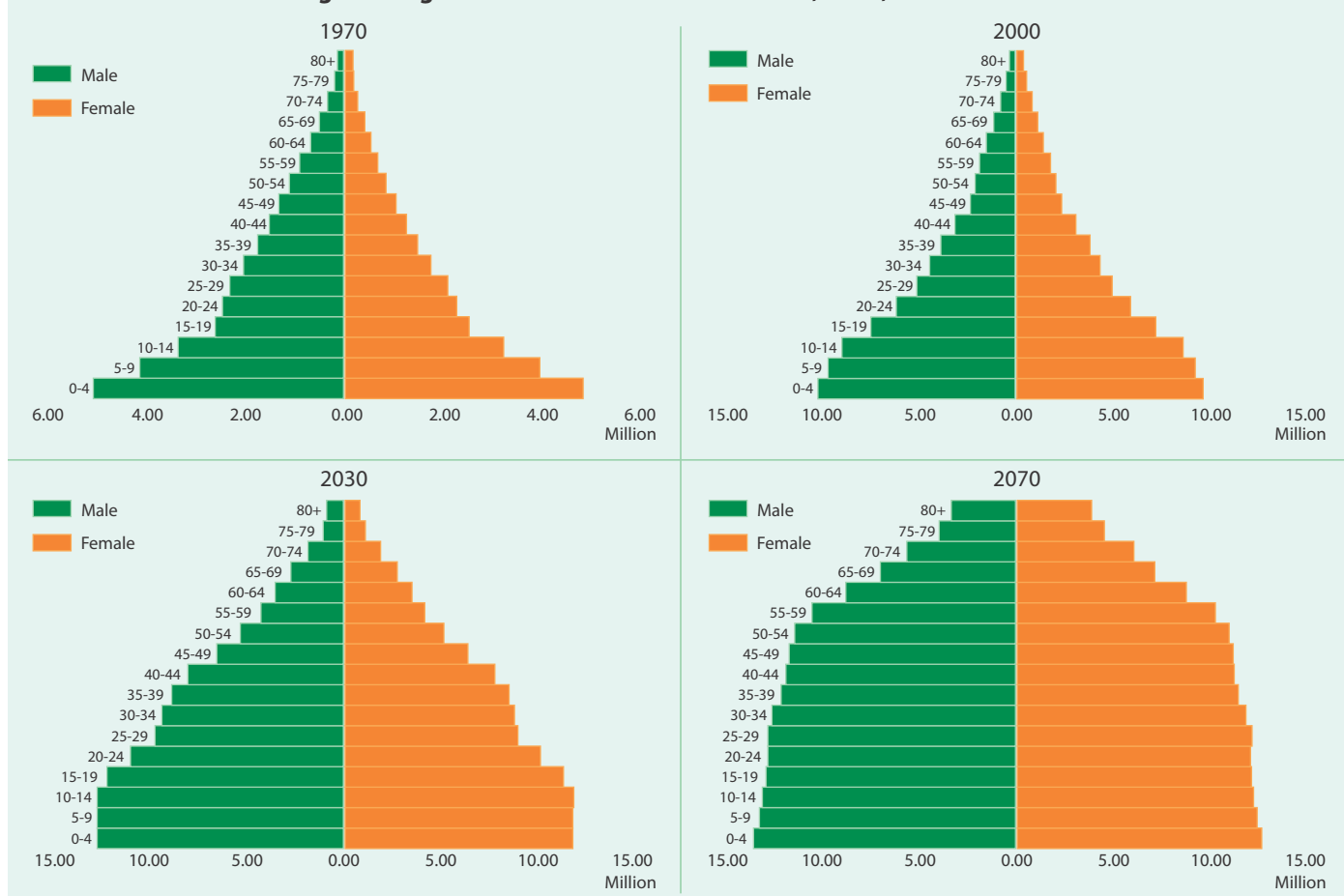
country. Trends depict that even by 2070, the CBR remains more than 15 births per 1000 population. After 2030, the increasing CDR will contribute to the lowering of the NI with more than 7 deaths per 1000 popula-

b. Population Composition: The Age-Sex Structure

While the size of the population is integral to a country's dynamics, the structure also holds important implications for a country and the policy formulation linked to all sectors. Pyramids are the best way to present the age-sex structure of any population. Pakistan's population was characterized by a classical pyramid till the year 2000, with the wider base reflecting high fertility levels in the country (Figure 2). Within 30 years (1970 to 2000) the population in the 0-4 age group doubled from approximately 10 million to around 20 million. The momentum provided by these numbers can be gauged from the next two pyramids (2030 and 2070), where the base starts getting cylindrical but with huge numbers.

The age-sex structure has implications for health, education and employment indicators. The whole idea of the demographic dividend, resulting from demographic transition,³ emerges from the dynamics resulting from the changes in the age-sex structure. The demographic transition started taking place in Pakistan in the early 1990s and the country currently has the opportunity to avail the advantages that can be reaped through this peculiar

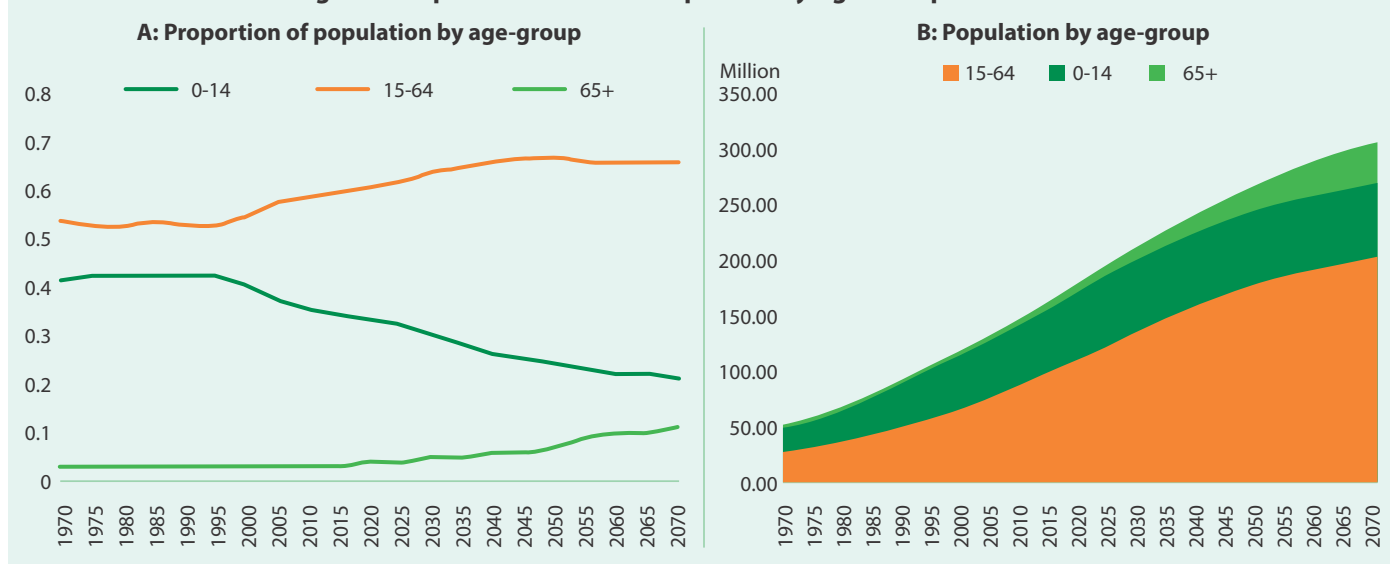
Figure 2: Age-Sex Structure of Pakistan: 1970, 2000, 2030 and 2070



Source: World Population Prospects, United Nations, 2017 revisions.

3. Demographic dividend is the potential economic benefits offered by changes in the age structure of the population, during the demographic transition, when there is an increase in working age population and an associated decline in the dependent age population. As a net effect, the rate of growth of the labour force exceeds that of the total population. Definition derived from: Nayab, D (2006), "Demographic Dividend or Threat in Pakistan?", The Pakistan Development Review

Figure 3: Population Size and Proportion by Age-Group: 1970 to 2070



Source: World Population Prospects, United Nations, 2017 revisions.

demographic phase.

Different ages have different implications and can be grouped in various ways, depending on what needs to be seen. There are, however, three age-groups that are most commonly used as they best represent population dynamics. These are, 0-14 years (the young), 15-64 years (the working ages) and those aged 65 years and above (the elderly).⁴

The concept of demographic dividend is also based on these age-groups when it premises that the economic gains can be reaped when the 15-64 age group is bigger than a combination of the other two (0-14 and 65+), leading to a lower dependency rate.

Figure 3 presents the size of each of this age-group in Pakistan from 1970 to 2070. The proportion of the 0-14 age group is seen to be declining with time, in contrast to the elderly and working ages (Figure 3A). The 15-64 age group bears the largest numbers (Figure 3B). In the 0-14 age group, while the proportion declines, but owing to the population echo, after an initial increase, the numbers remain almost consistent (Figure 3B). The proportion and number of the elderly saw a continuously increasing trend (Figure 3A and 3B).

c. Mortality Trends

Infant mortality rate (IMR) is the best indicator to gauge the overall development status of any population. However, Pakistan does not fare too well in this regard. The IMR for the country remains the highest in the South Asian region (Table 2).

This, however, does not mean that there has

Table 2: Infant Mortality Rate (per 1,000 live births) (as of 2017)

Country	Mortality Rate
Bangladesh	26.9%
Sri Lanka	7.5%
India	32.0%
Nepal	27.8%
Pakistan	61.2%

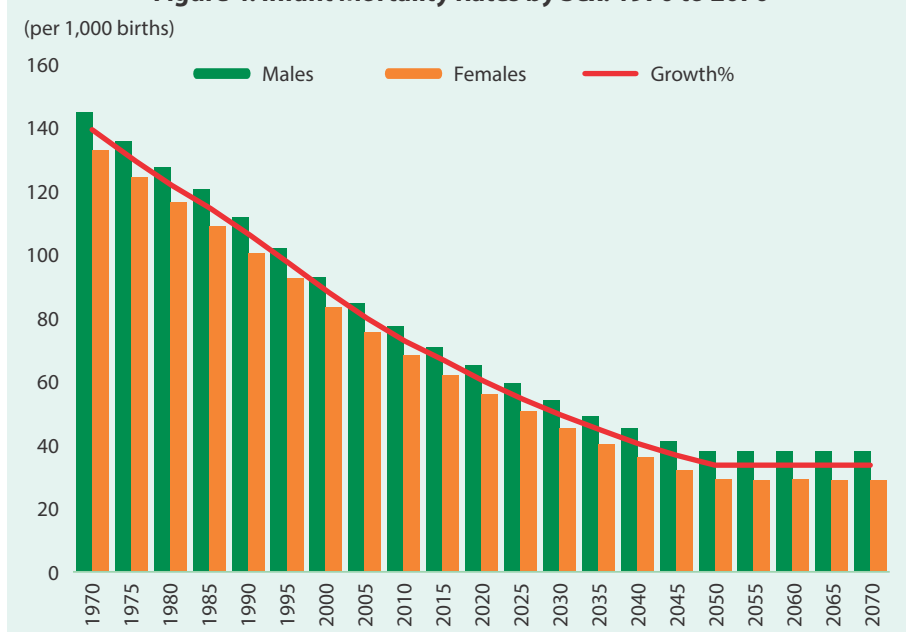
Source: World Bank Development Indicators Database.

been no improvement in it over time. The IMR has certainly come down from a very high 139 infant deaths per 1000 livebirths in 1970, to the current rate of 60, but it is still

high by all standards (Figure 4). By 2070, the IMR is projected to be 29 infant deaths per 1000 livebirths. The IMR for male infants is higher than female infants across all years, given that the female infant has more chances of survival, genetically⁵ (Figure 4).

All ages have different probabilities of survival and the rates of death are higher, as one would expect, among infants and the elderly. The overall mortality rate, therefore, depends on the age structure of the population. The more a population has young and old in its composition, the higher the mortality rate. Figure 5 presents age-specific mortality rates for Pakistan over the years, by sex. Relating these mortality trends with the age structure

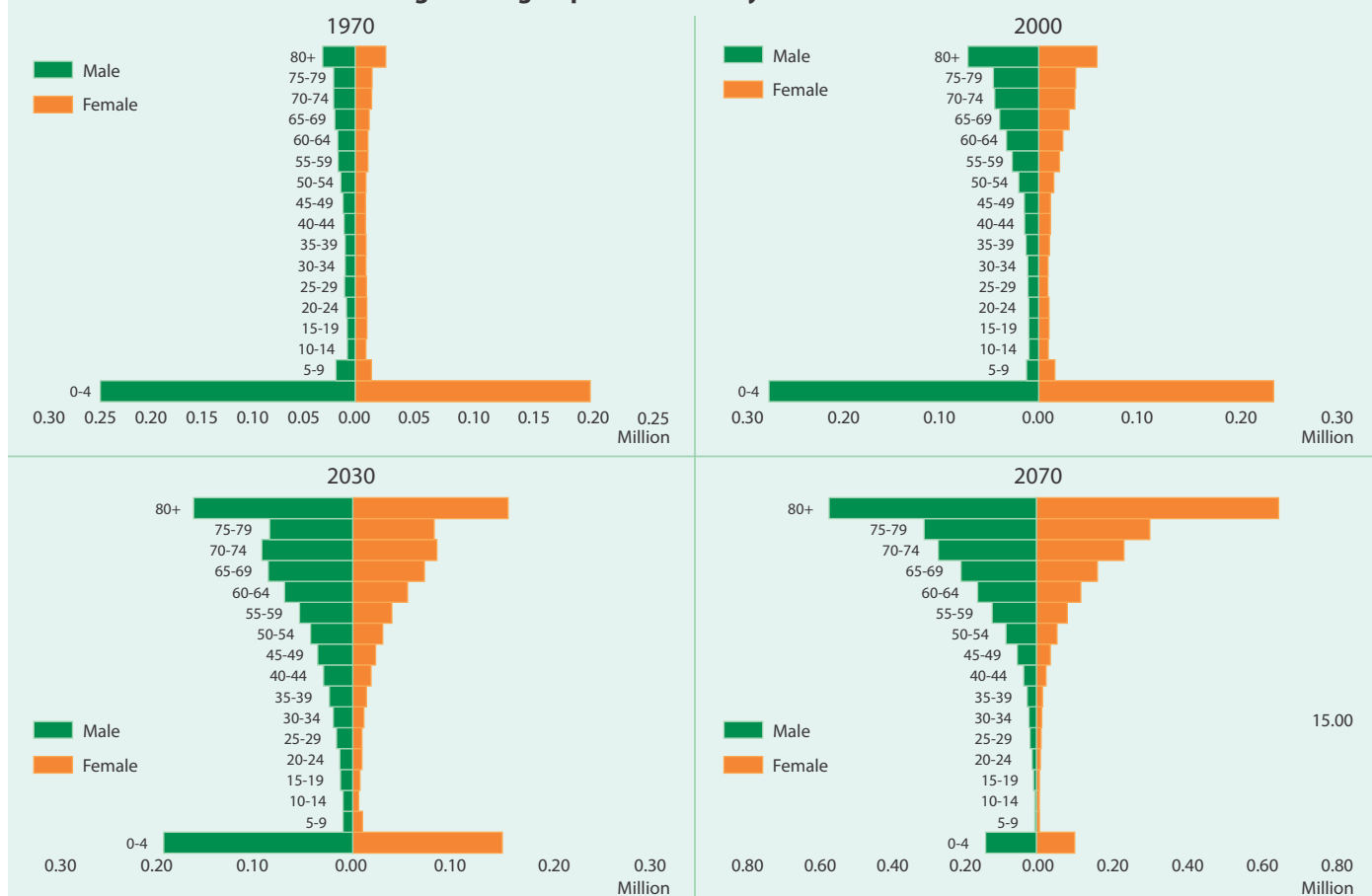
Figure 4: Infant Mortality Rates by Sex: 1970 to 2070



Source: World Population Prospects, United Nations, 2017 revisions.

4. Other important categories include the 0-12 months (infants), 0-4 years (children), 15-24/29 (adolescents) and females aged 15-49 (the reproductive ages). Each have their own peculiar needs.
 5. Life expectancy is also a good indicator for the mortality levels of any population but since IMR is a part of estimating it, so presenting one here should suffice. For the sake of reference, life expectancy in Pakistan has gained 15 years from 1970 till date, and females live marginally longer lives than males in the country.

Figure 5: Age-Specific Mortality Rates: 1970 to 2070



Source: World Population Prospects, United Nations, 2017 revisions.

(presented in Figure 2), a clear relationship between population death rates linked to the presence of the infants and the elderly, can be seen.

Population Policies in Pakistan

Clarity of the issue with concrete understanding of the fundamental concepts and underlying reasons are the starting point of any incisive policy, including that linked to population. One of the pre-requisites for its effectiveness is political commitment, which can be achieved after an intense and wider national debate as suggested by the experience of other regional and Muslim countries, including Iran, India, Indonesia, Egypt and Bangladesh. In Pakistan, such a debate has yet to occur, which could pave the way for a population policy that is embedded in the development discourse of the country.

Issues related to population are wide spread, stretching from its size, growth, distribution and age structure, to fertility, family planning and reproductive health. Another important tenet of population and development is health and mortality, which not only focuses on communicable and degenerative diseases, but also emphasizes on the health issues associated with one's life style. One of the neglected areas in the population policy discourse in Pakistan is

urbanization and internal migration, and there are no policies at all on the issues of spatial distribution in the country.

Pakistan's family program dates back to the 1950s, with many shifts in the program, especially between 1970 and 1990. Due to weak institutional memory and different ideological orientations, every new regime restructured the program according to its own understanding and beliefs. Strong political will in the 1990s provided sustainability in the program which led to significant improvements in some of the basic parameters of population, such as a lowering of fertility rates and improvements in the contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR). Later, owing to a lack of implementation, lack of inter-sectoral coordination and inappropriate overlook, the program could not reap the benefits of the momentum provided by the government in the early 1990s.

Table 3 presents a summary on how the issue of population planning has been approached by the periodic five-year plans formulated by the government, to govern all aspects of running the country. A closer look at polices pertaining to population clearly shows that the discourse has mainly been confined to population control. In the development discourse, a broader view of population growth and economic

development is suggested instead of a narrow family planning focus. Rather than directly focusing on population control, motivation and demand for smaller families may be promoted through socio-cultural and religious factors, on which a country's education and advocacy should have a clear focus.

The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) advocated looking at family planning from the development lens, rather than focusing merely on the narrow vision of birth control. Even before ICPD, the issue was stressed in the following words of the South Commission (1990):

"While family planning measures are vitally necessary, they are more effective as security and living standards improve. Poverty must be eradicated, for only then will it be possible to create the conditions in which people are more likely to see virtue in smaller families"⁶

Mahbub-ul-Haq advocated the same: "Population growth is a developmental issue, not a clinical problem. No one denies today that top priority must be given to reducing high rates of population growth in the developing world. The differences are on strategies, not on objectives. Family planning must be regarded as an integral

6. PIDE, Fakhari A. Siddiqui, "Importance of a Population Policy in Pakistan." Available at <http://pide.org.pk/psde/pdf/Lectures/Mahboob-ul-Haq-Lecture/Mehboob-ul-haq-lecture-2001.pdf>

Table 3: Population Policies in National Development Plans of Pakistan, 1955-2018

Population Policies	Five-Years Plans									
	1955 to 1960	1960 to 1965	1965 to 1970	1970 to 1978	1978 to 1983	1983 to 1988	1988 to 1993	1993 to 1998	1998 to 2003	2013 to 2018*
1 Supporting of Family Planning for Demographic Reasons	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2 Integration of Family Planning with Health Services	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3 Populating Growth Targets	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4 Extension of Family Planning Services	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5 Socio-Economic Development and Fertility Decline	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
6 Family Planning Acceptors Targets	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7 Family Planning Education	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
8 Population Education	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
9 Delay of Marriage to Reduce Fertility	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
10 Use of Mass Media for Family Planning Information	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
11 Motivation Schemes for Small Families	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
12 Policies on Abortion	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
13 Family Planning Incentives	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
14 Improved Status of Women and Fertility Decline	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
15 Comprehensive Population Strategy	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Note: * The exercise of having five year plans was halted for a few years (2003-2013), instead different vision plans/frameworks came out.

part of the new models of sustainable human development. Divorced from such development models, and pursued as condom distribution programmes with single-minded zeal to meet 'unmet demand' they will fail...We cannot slip a condom on poverty."⁷

Population policies in Pakistan still require a holistic approach for them to be truly effective. In the wake of the 18th constitutional amendment, the issue took a new turn when the federally controlled Population Welfare Programme was transferred to the provinces, and now provincial governments hold the responsibility to devise the population policy. As the population policy in Pakistan was solely focused on population control and family planning, the three population policies devised by Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Sindh are still using the same indica-

tors, neglecting all other relevant issues. The Balochistan government is yet to produce its policy document.

Family planning programs in the country have largely focused on limiting populations and hence, have missed in reaching out to certain quarters of the society. In recent times, men's involvement has been realized to be an equally important factor in family planning. The engagement of religious leaders in dispelling misconceptions about birth control, has been put forward through outreach and counselling. The need for a holistic approach linking all population related issues under one umbrella is requisite, where policies linked to population are conceptualised from a development perspective.

Being a signatory to international commitments and with national ownership of the

Sustainable Development Goals, Pakistan has an overarching responsibility to work towards eradicating all kinds of deprivations and promoting citizen well-being. There is, thus, a need to provide reproductive health care and family planning to all citizens under a larger human rights based development context rather than from a narrow birth control perspective.

Regional Comparisons

Despite the onset of demographic transition in the early 1990s in Pakistan, the country still faces serious population problems. The adverse consequences of population effects on other development efforts (i.e. poverty, education, gender inequality, health and nutrition standards etc.) are obvious. Equally obvious is, therefore, the need for an effective and envisioned population policy. An effective

7. Ibid

Table 4: Demographic Indicators for Selected Countries

Country	Total Population (000)	Projected Population 2050 (000)	Crude Birth Rate per 1000	Crude Death Rate per 1000	Annual Growth Rate %
Bangladesh	169,775	201,927	18.5	5.3	1.04
India	1,383,198	1,658,978	18.7	7.4	1.1
Iran	83,587	93,553	15.6	4.5	1.04
Pakistan	208,362	306,940	27.4	7.2	1.91

Source: World Population Prospects, United Nations, 2017 revisions.

policy formulation has to be based on a thorough understanding of the key determinants of population growth.

Recent empirical evidence shows that it is a combination of economic, social, cultural, religious and institutional factors which are important determinants of the desired family size. Equally important are factors such as the level of poverty, education, gender equality and health services which interact in a complex manner to influence family size and population growth.

A regional comparison with four countries who have similar socio-cultural and/or religious circumstances shows Pakistan as an outlier, be it CBR or the population growth rate (Table 4).

In terms of the Total Fertility Rate (TFR), other nations have drastically decreased their TFR at around 2 children per woman, while Iran has the lowest TFR of 1.6 children per woman. Pakistan stands with the highest TFR (Figure 6).

Several lessons can be derived from this regional comparison. First, the main target area of focus should be reduction in the incidence of unwanted pregnancies. On the demand side, the main impediment to the lower growth rate is the demand of large families. The recent Pakistan Demographic and Health survey (PDHS) 2017-18 provides evidence that the desired family size in

Pakistan is still near to four children.

There is a lot that can be learnt from Bangladesh and Iran. Bangladesh's robust family planning program proved to be effective in decreasing their fertility. It provided door to door delivery of contraceptives to women who had traditionally been in seclusion. Female health workers, who were part of this initiative, were specifically recruited and trained for the purpose. The success of this program resulted in an increased use of contraception in Bangladesh from 8 percent in 1975, to over 61 percent in 2011. In addition, the government was actively involved in curbing population growth. It did so by implementing several programs simultaneously. These included an immunization program for children and their mothers, a sanitation drive, a drive against diarrhea, and special focus was attributed to girls' education. Finally, another lesson from Bangladesh would be to invest in female labour force participation that leads to increasing opportunity cost of having children, thus, lowering the desire for large families; and increasing the outreach of mother and child health initiatives to the doorsteps of those needing it.

Iran is also a good role model. The average family size in Iran halved from 5.2 to 2.6 children between 1988 and 1996, after the authorities launched a family planning campaign. Iran is also a good example in

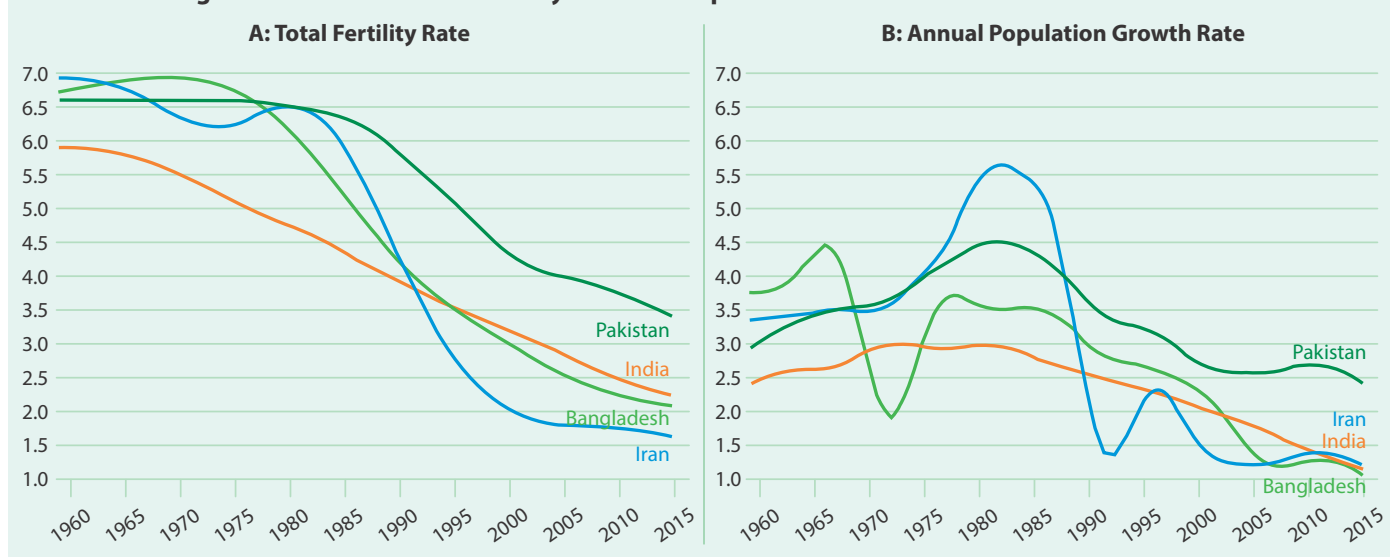
how to involve the clergy in the process to remove any impediments linked to religion, and how to implement a policy once made. From couples having to attend mandatory contraception classes before getting married, 'fatwas' (a ruling on a point of Islamic law given by a recognized authority) established that protect a woman's right to control her fertility, free distribution of contraceptives, increased access to sterilization and edicts from religious leaders affirming women's rights, the country saw one of the most significant drops in birth rates.

Drivers of Population Growth in Pakistan

Fertility, mortality and migration are three factors affecting population dynamics in any country, and these processes are driven by a variety of factors including awareness and success of family planning and contraception methods, socioeconomic factors, and cultural norms and attitudes. Pakistan is currently in mid-transition where the birth rate has exceeded the death rate and thus, the country is experiencing rapid population growth. Many factors are contributing to this rapid growth of population, some of which are quantifiable, while some are not. And in the case of Pakistan, the latter appears to be more important.

Traditional demographic transition theory

Figure 6: Trends for Total Fertility Rate and Population Growth Rate for Selected Countries



Source: World Bank Development Indicators Database

holds that fertility rates decline due to two main factors. First, the desired family size of couples declines as the cost of children rises and child survival increases. Second, government intervention plays a key role. However, in Pakistan's context, the desired family size of parents is still four despite the sixty years' history of the family planning program. Although the Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (CPR) increased with time, it still remains low by all regional and global standards.

According to the latest Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2017-18, despite knowledge about family planning being almost universal, only 34 percent of women are currently using any family planning methods (both traditional and modern). Moreover, the unmet need for family planning is on the higher side. Around one fifth of women who either have a need for family planning or want to limit or space births, are not using any sort of contraception to avoid pregnancy. Consequently, unmet need for family planning leads to a high rate of unintended pregnancies/births and induced abortion. Pakistani women have an average of 0.9 more births than they want and around 2.25 million women resort to induced abortion to avoid unwanted pregnancies.⁸ Abortion is illegal in Pakistan, so most are done clandestinely under unsafe conditions. High fertility accompanied by low contraceptive use therefore remains a key cause of high population growth in Pakistan.

Despite near to universal knowledge of contraception, the low CPR in Pakistan is an enigma which can be explained only in terms of cultural non-acceptance of using contraceptives. Familial pressure can also be attributed as one of the factors in the desire for larger families.

Male child preference continues to be strong in Pakistan and can act as a driver for population growth. The desire for having a son is not only to carry forward the family name, but sons are considered as old age insurance. Property ownership considerations make male heirs much more desirable than females.

Likewise, in marital transactions, the bride's parents are supposed to offer a large dowry to the groom in most parts of the country. Female participation in the job market is also low, making daughters 'not economically beneficial' for families.⁹ Consequently,

women are forced to continue to bear children until they produce a son. With respect to desired sex ratio, Pakistan is ranked at 2nd position out of a total 61 countries.¹⁰ The strong desire for having a son leads to many unwanted pregnancies and births. Apart from its effect on population growth rate, evidence suggests that the strong desire for a son has serious implications for the health of the mother and child, with more resources, financial as well as nutritional, directed towards sons as opposed to daughters. Existing evidence suggests that the desire for having a son leads to higher fertility and consequently lower use of contraception.¹¹ The 'son preference' has played a major role in Pakistan missing the MDG targets and will continue to contribute to high population growth.¹²

The presence of large numbers of Afghan refugees has had a weighty impact on the demographics of Pakistan as well. After the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in December 1979, refugees began streaming over the borders into Pakistan, peaking at approximately 4 million refugees settling at one time. Due to a weak governance and registration system, many of these refugees gained Pakistani nationality which at times, have had serious consequences for the country. Given the humanitarian issues for taking in the refugees, we cannot, however, ignore the negative demographic spillovers of this movement.

Implications of Population Growth on Development

The continuous high population growth in Pakistan has been eroding a part of any development gains that have been made. A decline in the fertility rate and lowering of the population growth rate can provide impetus to economic growth, most importantly by freeing resources that can be diverted to develop the human and physical capital. High population growth impacts human welfare and development beyond just numbers. Usually, implications of high population growth are correlated to people's standard of living, health, education, income and provision of basic services such as transport, housing, sanitation and security. However, human development and well-being is not limited to these areas alone as it also entails people's self-respect, dignity and freedom of choice. According to the United Nations, "Continued population growth driven by

persistent high fertility makes it harder for governments to eradicate poverty and inequality, combat hunger and malnutrition, invest in education and health, improve access to basic services, plan and develop cities, protect local ecosystems and promote peaceful and inclusive societies"¹³

Pakistan's rapid population growth inhibits the government's efforts to provide for the basic needs of the people. The most recent Population Census 2017, conducted with a gap of 19 years, puts Pakistan as the fifth most populous country in the world with a population of 207 million. As discussed earlier, Pakistan is an outlier in terms of population growth among its neighbouring countries. According to the recent 6th population and housing census (2017), population growth rate is at 2.40 percent: much higher than that in India (1.2 percent) and Bangladesh (1.03 percent).¹⁴ With such a high population growth rate, a considerable proportion of the country's resources are consumed instead of being accumulated as capital for development purposes. To that extent, the rate of development lags behind that of population growth, which triggers stagnation in social service delivery. Pakistan faces severe water and electricity crises, environmental degradation and shrinking of agricultural land because of encroachments by housing societies to accommodate the ever-increasing demand for houses. Food shortages, contraction in the job market and urban congestion have exacerbated as well.

Rapid population growth has implications for almost all aspects of a nation's life, some of these are for:

a. Education

No family planning program can work in isolation to address the challenge of overpopulation. Other systems and sectors need to be in place to achieve the target of reducing the population growth rate. For example, girls' education requires immediate attention in a country where literacy rates are among the lowest in the world (58 percent). Literacy rate for men is 70 percent whereas for women it barely touched 48 percent in 2015-2016.¹⁵ Education statistics in rural areas are even worse. The poor state of education, let alone women's education, is evident from the fact that the government is spending only 2.2 percent of the GDP on education.¹⁶

8. Study by Sathar, et al. (2014)

9. Study by Channon, et al. (2017)

10. Study by Bongaarts, et al. (2014)

11. Studies by Chaudhuri, et al. (2012); Channon, et al. (2017)

12. Supra 10

13. United Nations (2015), "Integrating population issues into sustainable development, including the post-2015 development agenda." Available at <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/commission/pdf/48/CPD48ConciseReport.pdf>

14. Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2017.

15. Economic Survey of Pakistan, 2017-18

16. Ibid

Education and fertility go hand in hand. Education provides women tools to make informed choices which could change their fertility desires.¹⁷ Educated women are more likely to imbibe ideals of a smaller family. Research shows that educated women are more responsive to family planning services as they have smaller family desires and incur more opportunity cost of having large families. Studies have found that women with a primary and secondary level education are more likely to use contraceptives as opposed to illiterate women.

b. Employment

High population growth has serious consequences for the provision of productive employment. Pakistan's high population along with the young age structure, increases the supply of the labour force. With 65 percent of Pakistan's population being below the age of 30, there is a youth bulge in the country. Ideally the rate of job creation should match the rate of supply of the labour force. Currently, around 15 percent of young people aged 15-24 are unemployed.¹⁸ Abundance of labour force means that the number of people seeking employment increases more rapidly than the number of available jobs.

Although the proportion of dependents has stalled due to declining fertility rates in Pakistan, the labour force remains large due to earlier high fertility rates. This decline in dependency ratio provides a golden opportunity to reap the benefits of demographic dividend. However, this cannot be done without adequate and timely actions taken to productively engage the young labour force. Most of this young population, however, is uneducated or poorly educated and also does not possess the skill-set which could render them productive.

Increase in labour force but poor job prospects holds back technological advances and industrialization due to abject poverty, which in turn reduces the demand for manufactured goods. People are forced to work in unproductive sectors or to take up traditional jobs—mainly agriculture, with its low productivity and poor wages. End results are low saving rates and low labour skills, both of which inhibit the full development and utilization of natural resources.

Recently, there is a growing realization to engage young people in meaningful activities and respond to the high youth unemployment. However, the challenges are multi-faceted and the resources are scarce. Among many challenges, the most

pressing ones are: the transition from school to the labour market is not smooth; the youth unemployment rate is higher than the adult unemployment rate; many young people work in the informal sector as unpaid family workers, own-account, or casual wage workers; and, female youth are in a worse position as compare to their male counterparts on various employment dimensions. While many problems in this sphere apply to adults as well, some challenges are youth-specific, such as the insufficient returns at initial job entry for better-educated youth.¹⁹

Social Security

With no formal, universal social security system in place in the country, the increasing number of the elderly face an uncertain future. Increasing trend of nuclear families and lack of formal sector employment (which has certain post-retirement benefits) can leave the elderly in a very vulnerable situation. Pakistan would still not be an ageing country fifty years from now as the proportion would still be low, but in absolute numbers, there would be near to 26 million people in the country aged 65 years and above by the year 2050, and a huge 41 million by 2070 (as can be seen from Figure 3-B). In addition to retirement pensions or old-age security, survivors insurance, disability insurance and healthcare for the disabled should all be considered and developed. Although certain initiatives have been taken of late but with a cash-strapped economy, universal social security coverage in Pakistan seems like a distant dream at present.

c. Environment and Energy

There is an increasing recognition that the growth of cities is inevitable and the solution to urban problems depends heavily on effective urban planning, infrastructure development and management. Rapid and often unplanned population growth is associated with population demands that outstrip infrastructure and service capacity leading to environmental degradation. The energy requirement of the growing population too, has burdened every successive government. Energy generation, pricing and its allocation to regions, provinces, residential or commercial use, all have created management problems. Lack of investment and bad governance are the dominant factors, but increasing demand due to population pressure is no less a reason.

d. Health

The young and the elderly, along with reproductive age population, need specialised health care. Pakistan is going

through a phase where the absolute numbers in each age category makes providing healthcare a daunting task. There is a growing number of elderly but so is the number of children and those in the reproductive age. There are facilities focusing on the health needs of mother and child, but not a single facility exists in all of Pakistan offering specialised geriatric care. With the financial constraints faced by provincial governments (as health is a provincial subject now), allocating money to health in general and specialised healthcare in particular, is a challenging yet unavoidable task.

The Way Forward

There is a lot that needs to be done to get population policies right in Pakistan. While learning from others' experiences is vital, simply emulating them will not yield desired results. Ideas have to be indigenously generated around the following lines:

- Reconceptualise the whole notion of population planning by actually adding 'planning' into it. Population planning is way beyond using contraceptives and limiting population. A holistic approach is needed towards population issues that encompasses all related issues, thus, enabling people to better plan their families.
- Translate the youth bulge into a 'demographic dividend' by investing in quality education, health and skill development, and creating new jobs and productive opportunities. There is a need to realise that the dividend is not automatic and has to be reaped.
- Improve health services for all, especially children, the elderly and females in reproductive age. Evidence suggests that taking care of maternal-child health would have a direct effect on lowering fertility rates.
- Invest in women's education as it is likely to bring about the attitudinal change needed for attaining reduced fertility. A multi-pronged policy approach is needed to transform values about ideal family size from the current level of four children, to two.
- Make population related data more reliable and up to date as all planning, be it education, employment, transport, housing, health or anything at all, is based on these numbers. All kinds of planning are for people, so good planning needs authentic data.

17. Studies by Jejeebhoy, et al. (1995); Stein et al. (2014)

18. Labour Force Survey 2017-18

19. Supra 9

Economic Growth and Population Dynamics

The population dynamics and economic growth of a nation are interlinked across multiple variables, a few of them being the size of the nation's workforce, the income brackets the population is divided into, age structure of the labour supply, amount of national savings and investment in the economy, and productivity of the economy. Considering a country such as Pakistan, where population growth remains high and steady compared to a relatively low economic growth rate, the implications can be hazardous if not appropriately addressed.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita is a crucial component of gauging economic growth. Often attributed to measuring a country's standard of living and an economy's health, it is also a variable used to determine future economic policy. As of 2017, Pakistan's GDP per capita was calculated to be USD 1222.52, equivalent to ten percent of the world's average GDP per capita. This statistic not only depicts that Pakistan has a long road ahead in terms of improving its living conditions, but also shows that the population is staggeringly large compared to the amount of resources available in the economy.

Pakistan's population as of 2017 stood at 207 million, at an average growth rate of 2.4 percent since 1998, whereas Pakistan's GDP growth rate was 2.1 in 2018. Analysing the country's population as a whole, however, is insufficient in correctly gauging how a population increase would impact the economy. The country comprises of several income brackets. Till 2014, approximately 48 percent of Pakistani households were categorized in the 4th and 5th quintiles, which are the two lowest income groups in Pakistan. These groups contribute the most to poverty in Pakistan and least to overall economic growth. A population increase may not necessarily impact the economy as positively as expected because people residing in inadequate living conditions face issues such as a lack of education, health problems, and little to no job training, due to which they fail to reach their full productive capacity.

Considering developed nations such as Singapore and Germany, both of which boast per capita GDPs of USD 55,000 and USD 47,000 respectively, it is evident that economic growth is not much affected by changes in their population dynamics because their production requirements are being met. Therefore, Pakistan needs to ensure workers from low-income groups are granted the potential to grow in their industries through education and job training, and contribute more significantly to GDP growth. As a developing nation, Pakistan needs to first implement policies which improve the overall productivity of its population before expecting substantial GDP growth as a result of population increase.

The age structure of a nation's population has a marked impact

on its anticipated economic growth. Children and adolescents are typically the net consumers in a household where working age adults are generally net producers. Therefore, an increase in population does not insinuate economic expansion until a certain age range of the population enters the labour supply. This phenomenon is known as the demographic dividend: when the dominant portion of a population comprises of working age individuals and the phase in which potential for economic growth is exponential. Fortunately, Pakistan is at the very cusp of this 'window of opportunity', with 64 percent of its population below the age of 30 and its youth continuing to enter the labour supply till at least 2050. Pakistan needs to avail this golden chance by not only lowering its illiteracy rate but also providing quality education. Even more pressing is the issue of creating jobs as approximately 2.1 million youth enter the labour force annually.

Analysing age structure brings another relevant variable into the discourse: Pakistan's dependency ratio. Referring to the amount of dependents (people younger than age 15 or older than 64) that an employed person must sustain, the dependency ratio of Pakistan was 64.67 percent in 2017. This is relatively high compared to more developed countries around the world but fortunately for Pakistan, this issue has the potential to be resolved as millions of our population enter the working age. A lower dependency ratio for Pakistan would mean the economy comprises more of productive individuals than consumptive ones.

A household wherein the dependency ratio is high most likely suggests that the family size is large and the number of employed persons, too little. As of 2016, the size of an average household in Pakistan was 6.31 members. A large household with a high dependency ratio means there are more children who need investment in their education. This leads to less savings spared for investment in the economy. Again, luckily for Pakistan, the expected flow of working age population into the work force can alleviate stress on even large households by reducing the number of dependents. The consequent savings have the potential to be catalysts for investment, economic growth and a better standard of living in Pakistan.

Pakistan is a country brimming with potential and it is at the brink of redirecting its trajectory towards a brighter tomorrow if only corrective measures are implemented today. Through policy and reform, our overflowing population can be injected into the work force and lower the unemployment rate. At this point, Pakistan needs to focus on providing sufficient education so as to make the population employable, creating not just more but also satisfactory jobs to prevent a brain drain, and ensuring resources remain steady for our future generations' use and growth.



Handwritten text on the whiteboard, likely in Urdu, including a list of items and their quantities. The text is partially obscured and difficult to read in detail, but it appears to be a list of materials or supplies.

Impact of Population Growth on Child Rights in Pakistan



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Current Scenario

Pakistan is the 6th most populous country in the world. Its current population growth rate is higher than neighboring countries like India, Bangladesh and Nepal. Estimates suggest that if present trends persist, the population of the country may swell up to 376 million by 2047. Unimpeded population growth in Pakistan is amongst one of the serious challenges the country faces today. Inadequate access to healthcare and educational facilities, and poor supply of nutrition to mothers and children, are explicit fallouts of rapid population growth. Inadvertently, the brunt of the crises falls on people, especially women and children from low-income groups. About a third of people in Pakistan live below the poverty line. This piece attempts to analyze the effects of rapid population growth on rights of children, especially their health, nutrition, education, care and protection.

Importance of Children for National Development

Children are the future of human society. Health care, nutrition and education are pivotal foundations of child development which determine their potential role and contribution in the society. Hence, it is significant to analyze the effects of rapid population growth on children with respect to their holistic development.

Child Rights: International Commitments of Pakistan

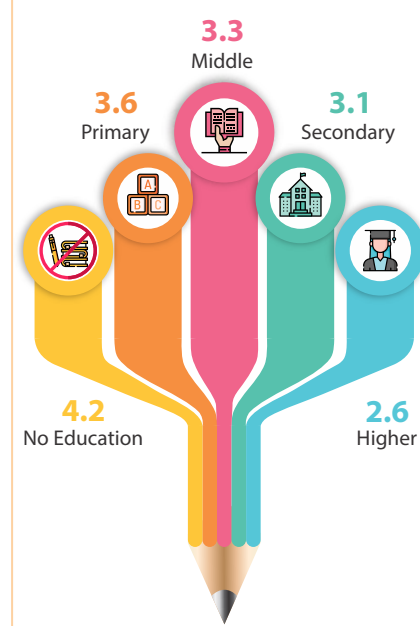
Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) recognized the right of children to free and compulsory elementary education. In 1989, the world community approved the United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child (CRC) which acceded all important rights to children which are catalytic for their welfare. This historical Convention covers most of those rights which are crucial for the holistic development of a child's personality. These include (i) Protection against all forms of physical or mental violence, negligent treatment; (ii) Right to health care, provision of nutritious foods and clean drinking water; (iii) Right to free basic education; (iv) Right to rest, leisure and play; (v) Protection against economic exploitation i.e. child labour etc.; (vi) Protection against all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse; and, (vii) Protection against abduction, sale or trafficking etc. Pakistan ratified this Convention in 1990. Later on, Pakistan enacted a number of laws for the protection of children against economic exploitation and provision of free basic education. Nonetheless, complete enforcement of these laws could not be ensured. Being a signatory of 'Agenda 2030 of Sustainable Development', Pakistan has an obligation to implement child rights promised in the SDGs.

Nexus of Fertility with Education and Poverty

Several studies have established that there exists an inverse relationship between the level of mothers' education and their fertility rate (Figure 1). An analysis of Population Census (1998) data also confirms this phenomena.

It has also been seen that mothers belonging to the low wealth quintile group,

Figure 1: Fertility and Education Level of Mothers (Number of Children)



Source: National Institute of Population Studies (2019), Pakistan

tend to have more children as compared to those belonging to the higher wealth quintile (Table 1). Hence, fertility rates decline with an improvement in the economic status. Since mothers giving birth to more children also belong to the low wealth quintile, hence, chances of schooling for children born in poor families are bleak.

Right to Good Health and Nutritious Food

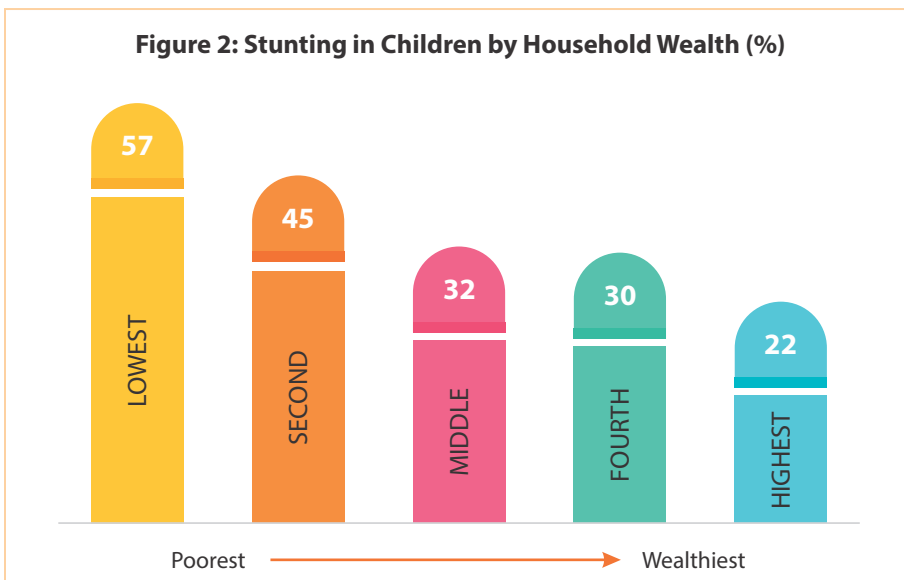
Families existing in the lower wealth quintiles with a large number of dependent children, are unable to purchase adequate food that meets nutritional needs. Owing to low education levels of the parents, other available low cost alternate food choices

Table 1: Economic Status of Mothers and their Fertility Rate in Pakistan

Wealth Quintile	Lowest	Second	Middle	Fourth	Highest
Fertility Rate (Number of Children)	4.9	3.6	3.8	3.0	2.8

Source: National Institute of Population Studies (NIPS) 2019, Pakistan

Figure 2: Stunting in Children by Household Wealth (%)



Source: NIPS (2019), Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2017-18

are also ignored. Resultantly, children born in poor families with higher fertility, face malnutrition that causes stunting (Figure 2). It can be deduced that higher fertility directly or indirectly reduces the provision of nutritious foods for children, thus hampering their physical growth.

Child Mortality and Characteristics of Mothers

A high rate of child mortality is observed in families with higher fertility, poor income and low education levels. An inverse relationship between the low education level of mothers and the high prevalence of child mortality exists (Figure 3).

Reasons accounting for high child mortality in families with high fertility rates and low levels of mothers' education are understandable. Poor and uneducated mothers are likely unable to comprehend the

benefits and risks of proper prenatal care and nutrient intake during pregnancy, as family income is low and dependent

Table 2: Nexus between Population Growth Rate, Literacy Rate and Out of School Children

Province	Punjab	Sindh	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	Balochistan
Annual Growth Rate of Population (1998-2017)	2.13 %	2.41 %	2.89 %	3.37 %
Adult Literacy Rate (10+)	62 %	55 %	53 %	41 %
% of Out of School of Children (Primary Level Age 5-9)*	39 %	49 %	44 %	56 %

Source: Author's own calculation

Note: * Worked out from based on the Net Enrolment Rates in the PSLM 2014-15

children are many. Nutritional deficiency not only affects the health of pregnant mothers, it also hinders the physical growth

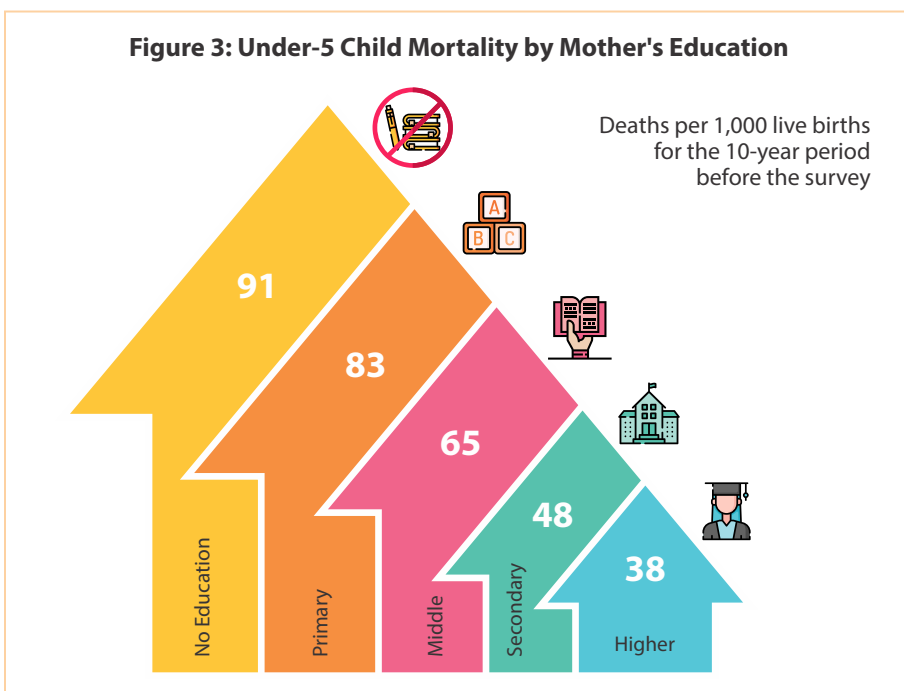
of the fetus. This leads to low weight babies at birth, which may also increase the risks of under-five child mortality. Fetal malformation of babies can often lead to disabilities.

Impact on Education of Children

Studies have shown that children from large families attain less schooling. This phenomena is attributed to multiple factors. Resource dilution or less amount of money per child are major factors. As a result, very few or none of the children hailing from large families will go to school. In such situations, families give preference to the schooling of boys over girls. Owing to large families, less individual attention and lack of one-on-one coaching with each child leads to a higher rate of drop out or low learning outcomes. Low-income households with a large number of children are less likely to send their kids to schools as they are unable to bear the opportunity cost. These parents tend to either engage their children to help in family occupations,

or send them out to earn through menial and hazardous jobs, or put them as an apprentices in workshops to learn vocational skills which infringe upon the basic rights of children in Pakistan.

Figure 3: Under-5 Child Mortality by Mother's Education



Source: NIPS (2019), Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2017-18

The ratios of out of school children are also high where population growth rate is high. For example, the highest percentage of primary out of school children is in Balochistan (56 percent) and this province also has the highest population growth rate of 3.37 percent. Meanwhile, the lowest population growth rate is in Punjab, and consequently, lowest percentage of out of school children are also in the same province (Table 2).

Population Growth and the State's Contribution to Child Rights

Data shows that it has been possible for developing countries to achieve improvements and contain their population growth rates, by investing more in children's education and health. Around 1981, Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan had annual population growth rates of 2.7 percent, 2.21

Table 3: Impact of Population Growth on Right of Children to Education

Country	1999 Annual Population Growth Rate (1995-2000)	2001 Out of School Children in Million	2019 Annual Population Growth Rate (2010-19)	2019 Out of School Children in Million
India	1.6 %	20.54	1.2 %	2.886
Bangladesh	1.7 %	2.425	1.1 %	1.000
Nepal	2.4 %	0.917	1.1 %	0.200
Pakistan	2.8 %	8.144	2.4 %	5.000

percent, and 3.2 percent respectively. During 1999-2000, these countries had a large number of out of school children, owing to consequent pressure on existing resources required for the expansion of educational opportunities. Through effective policies of population control, India and Bangladesh were able to contain inflow of new babies, improved their participation rate of young children in primary schools and substantially reduced the total number of out of school children. Pakistan failed to follow suit and resultantly, after about two decades, the country with its staggering population growth, has more out of school children than Bangladesh and India (Table 3).

While there are huge differences in the population of these countries-for instance, the population of India is six times that of Pakistan-nevertheless, the number of out of school children in India are about half that of Pakistan.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Mothers with a higher fertility rate are usually poor and illiterate as well. Large family sizes and low incomes restrict the provision of nutritional food to all family members. Children, during their first 1000 days are in dire need of nutritious food. Due to malnutrition and lack of health care, children are often likely to be underweight or experience stunted growth. This not only reduces their ability to attend school, but also reduces their chances of earning higher levels of income and moving up the ladder of social mobility. Negative implications of population growth on education, health and the well-being of children have been established and elaborated above. The following strategic actions by the federal and provincial governments, as well as international development partners, are suggested:

- Increase investment in education and health of children and mothers;
- Enforce laws enacted by the parliament for protecting the rights of children;
- Create institutionalized mechanisms for planning, implementation, and oversight of interventions for Early Childhood Care and Education, which is part of SDGs. For example, 'National Commission on Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)' as recommended by the National Parliamentary Consultation on SDGs (April 2019);
- Integrate 'Population Education' into school curricula and in training programs for teachers, sensitizing them about the effects of rapid population growth on basic social services, environment, children and women; and,
- Launch an advocacy drive through mass media to increase awareness in the public about rights of children and responsibilities of parents, local communities and the government machinery.

Pakistan will continue to have low indicators of education and health until concrete steps are taken by stakeholders to contain rapid population growth in the country.

Population Growth: Implications for Human Development¹



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Population Growth:² Situational Analysis

The sixth Population and Housing Census, which was undertaken in two phases during the March-May 2017 period, shows an increase of 57 percent in the total population of the country since the last 1998 census, reaching at 207.8 million. The population of Pakistan grew at a rate of 2.4 percent per annum on average during the 1998-2017 inter-censal period, declining only marginally from 2.6 percent for the last inter-censal period, 1981-98. This indicates no major change in the demographic behavior of the population during the last two decades. Pakistan also fares the highest in terms of population growth rate when compared to other countries in South Asia as well as other Muslim countries (Table 1).

The annual growth rate of Pakistan during the recent inter-censal period is higher in urban areas, 2.70 percent, than the corresponding rate for rural areas, 2.23

Table 1: Population Growth (Annual Change, %)

Country	Annual Growth
Pakistan	2.0
India	1.1
Bangladesh	1.0
Sri Lanka	1.1
Turkey	1.5
Egypt	1.9
Malaysia	1.4
Iran	1.1

Source: World Bank Indicators Database

percent, increasing the level of urbanization modestly from 32.5 percent in 1998 to 36.4 percent in 2017.³ However, the share of urban localities in total population is closely associated with the definition used in the census to identify a locality as 'urban'. Since the 1981 census, an administrative criterion has been adopted: all localities, which were either metropolitan corporations, municipal committees, town committees, or cantonments at the time of census, were treated as urban. In other words, only the areas notified as 'urban' by the provincial governments were treated as 'urban' in the last three censuses-1981, 1998 and 2017. However, the use of this definition may not reflect the reality. The level of urbanization in 1998 was estimated as 39 percent by counting rural localities with urban characteristics as 'urban'.⁴ It is likely that, at present, the share of urban areas (or urbanization) is at least 45 percent if large rural localities with urban characteristics are considered as 'urban'.

The average inter-censal (1998-2017) growth of population varies across provinces-2.1 percent in Punjab, 2.4

percent in Sindh, 2.9 percent in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and 3.4 percent in Balochistan. This variation in growth has affected the distribution of population among the provinces. The share of Punjab has declined from approximately 56 percent in 1989 to 53 percent in 2017, while Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan have witnessed an increase in their share in total population. Sindh has retained its share, at 23 percent in the 2017 Census. This change in provincial shares in the country's population has economic as well as political implications, as the number of seats in the national and provincial assemblies and National Financial Commission Award (NFC) are primarily based on the size of the population.

There has been a debate in the country on the provincial population growth rates and their share in total population. Natural increase (births minus deaths) and migration are the two major drivers that affect the size as well as rate of growth of a population.

For natural increase, the data on births and deaths is required. Unfortunately the 2017 Population census has not administered the long form to collect information on births, deaths and migration. The 2017-18 Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (PDHS), which was conducted soon after the 2017 census, has filled this gap to some extent and provides representative statistics on births (fertility) and migration, but the statistics regarding deaths are limited to children.⁵

It is argued that the findings of the 2017-2018 PDHS largely second the results of the 2017 Population census. Firstly, for example, the PDHS shows that the total fertility rate (TFR) declined only modestly from 3.8 births per women in 2012-13 to 3.6

1. 'Human development' is used in this note as an approach that focuses on people, their opportunities and choices. Its three foundations are: (i) To live a long, healthy and creative life; (ii) To be knowledgeable; and, (iii) To have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living. These foundations of human development are assessed in this note by health, education and poverty respectively. The human development perspective entails that the process of development should at least create an environment for people to develop to their full potential and to have a reasonable chance of leading productive lives.

2. The term 'population growth', as used in this note, refers to the 'average annual growth of the population of Pakistan or a province for an inter-censal period'. The recent inter-censal period, 1998-2017, spreads over 18 years. Under this definition, the population counted in two respective censuses is used for the estimation of an average annual growth rate.

3. Based on the results of the latest census, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics 2017.

4. Arif, G.M. (2003); "Urbanization in Pakistan; Trends, Growth and Evaluation of the 1998 Census, in Population of Pakistan: an Analysis of 1998 Population and Housing Census," eds. A. R. Kemal, M. Irfan and N. Mahmood, PIDE/UNFPA Islamabad (2003).

5. National Institute of Population Studies and ICF (2019); Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2017-18, National Institute of Population Studies, Islamabad/the DHS Program, ICF, Maryland.

births per women in 2017-18, and the contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) remained stagnant during this period. Even if a longer period is considered (2005-06 to 2017-18), the decline in TFR is only 0.5 births per women. So, Pakistan has been experiencing a very slow fertility transition, thus showing no major change in overall growth rate.

Second, TFR varies across the provinces; 3.4 births per women in Punjab to 3.6 in Sindh and 4.0 in KP and Balochistan.

Third, the incidence of in-migration also varies across the provinces-being lowest in Balochistan (6.1 percent) to highest in Punjab (13.4 percent). The incidence of migration is respectively 8.0 percent and 6.7 percent in Sindh and KP. Moreover, internal migration, according to the 2017-18 PDHS, has largely become an intra-province phenomenon (74 percent).

It thus appears from these statistics that the provincial population growth rates are driven mainly by natural increase (fertility), which has been relatively higher in KP and Balochistan. Further, the 2017-18 PDHS shows a reverse migration, from urban to rural areas in KP; it could be primarily an inter-province movement, explaining, at least partially, the relatively high population growth in this province.

A Review of Human Development Indicators

A review of the 'human development' indicators shows that, because of much more rapid decrease in the death rate than the decrease in the birth rate, life expectancy at birth has increased over time: from 63.4 years in 1981 to 67.4 years in 2017 for females, and from 62.4 years in 1981 to 65.6 years in 2017 for males. Although neonatal mortality has declined during the five years preceding the 2017-18 PDHS, infant and child mortality remained high at 62 and 74 per 1000 live births respectively.

Child mortality in Pakistan is much higher than in other countries of the region, and it impacts the fertility behavior of a population. The net enrolment of primary as well as secondary school remained low. However, a substantial improvement has been witnessed in antenatal care, institutional deliveries and skilled birth attendance.

An improvement in the standard of living (poverty reduction) has also been

witnessed over the last decade-the proportion of those living below the poverty line declined from 50 percent in 2005-06 to 24 percent in 2015-16.⁶ The decline in poverty is more pronounced in urban areas as opposed to rural areas. Targeted poverty reduction programs like the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), recovery in GDP growth and continued higher inflows of remittances are probably key factors that contributed to poverty reduction. However, child malnutrition, an indicator of hunger and food security, measured by stunting, wasting and underweight, has not shown a major improvement-38 percent of children under five are stunted, according to the 2017-18 PDHS. Almost half of the population of Pakistan does not have access to sufficient food for an active and healthy life at all times. The per-capita available water reduced from 5653 m³ at the time of independence (1947) to 1000 m³ in 2018, and if the situation remains the same, there will be only 550 m³ per capita available water in 2025.⁷

Population Growth and Human Development Nexus

Population growth (or changes) is clearly part of the development story. However, the key questions are how large a part and how context specific are the various linkages. For example, poverty has declined during the last decade and, probably because of the Maternal Newborn and Child Health (MNCH) program, maternal and child health care (antenatal care, institutional deliveries etc.) has also improved markedly.

However, no improvement could be witnessed in child malnutrition (food security), child mortality and school enrolment. Why is it so? There is a concentration of population around the poverty line and a minor change in per-capita household expenditure shifts the concerned households above the poverty line. But, this small change in the standard of living (poverty reduction) does not generally enable households to spend more or invest in health and education; they only meet their basic needs particularly food. Thus, without strong and persistent government interventions in health, education and nutrition, the achievement of relevant SDGs seems to be very difficult.

The population-poverty and poverty-

health (and nutrition) nexuses are quite complex. There is a need to understand this complexity. An analysis of three rounds of longitudinal data depicted how two household-level demographic variables, dependency ratio and household size, have a positive and statistically significant association with chronic poverty⁸ and the probability of falling into poverty.⁹ The household-level economic variables (or assets) including the ownership of land and livestock, housing structure (pacca) and availability of room have a significant and negative association with both chronic poverty and falling into poverty. It shows the interplay of demographic (population growth) and economic factors in poverty movements; simply reducing the dependency ratio is unlikely to improve the living standard of population, which requires an access to assets as well.

Similarly, regarding the poverty-nutrition nexus, evidence from Pakistan as well as other countries shows that there is a need to look beyond food availability. The episodes of illness reduce the ability of body to convert food into energy, leading to high levels of malnutrition among children. The frequent episodes of diarrhea account for high neonatal and infant mortality in Pakistan and elsewhere as well.¹⁰ Thus, while reduction in poverty is vastly dependent on private household expenditures; improvements in child malnutrition and health, in addition to the availability of food, are largely driven by public expenditure on improving sanitation, provision of clean drinking water and child care services.

Demographic Dividend

Based on the East Asian experience, there has been a growing interest among economists, demographers and sociologists in the shift of age structure associated with a decline in fertility. Where does Pakistan stand? It appears from the available statistics that the window of demographic opportunity has opened for Pakistan in the form of growing working age population as well as the youth bulge, and it will continue for approximately, the next three decades. However, the situation remains unclear regarding utilizing this opportunity and making it a dividend for the nation.

On one hand, the modest decline in fertility during the last two decades (from 4.9 births per women in 1990-91 to 3.6 births in 2017-

6. Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Finance, Economic Survey 2017-18.

7. Statistics from the Pakistan Metrological Department

8. Chronic poor are those who were below the poverty line in all three rounds of the longitudinal survey.

9. Arif, G.M. and Shujaat Farooq (2014); "Rural poverty dynamics in Pakistan: evidence from three waves of the panel survey," Pakistan Development Review, Volume 53, Number 2, pp 71-98.

10. Although there has been downward trends, the prevalence of diarrhea and acute respiratory infection (ARI) among children under 5 years was 19% and 16% respectively, according to the 2017-18 PDHS.

18) has contributed in reducing child dependency because of a decline in the share of young children (0-4 years) in total population and a corresponding rise in the share of working age population (15-64). More than a quarter of the total population is in the youth category (15-24). This change in age structure-more people in the labour force and fewer young people to support-is surely a window of opportunity for economic growth.

On the other hand, it is also a fact that fertility transition in Pakistan is slow, resulting in high-growth of population, which may adversely affect the ability of households to invest in human capital, a necessary condition for economic growth and improving wellbeing. The experience of other countries suggests that the demographic dividend is not automatic and it can only be capitalized by the right social and economic investments. The key areas of investment in the present demographic situation are: (i) Strengthening population and health programs; (ii)

Expanding education and skill opportunities; and, (iii) Creating productive jobs. A relevant question here is, can the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) be an opportunity to reap the demographic dividend through skills development and provision of productive employment to working age population, particularly youth? It is argued that the population of Pakistan, particularly youth, has abilities to seize economic opportunities. The example includes the placement of more than 10 million Pakistanis in overseas labour markets, mainly the Middle East and associated inflows of workers' remittances, which have a significant contribution at both the micro and macro levels. A similar type of opportunity for youth employment within Pakistan can support the population to have a chance of leading productive lives.

Conclusion

There is a need to make population a part of the development story of the country. The

population issue in Pakistan is multidimensional in nature. The growth of population is one dimension. The other dimensions include low school enrolment, gender disparities, high levels of child mortality and malnutrition, persistence of high rural poverty, youth unemployment, food insecurity and declining availability of water. All these dimensions shape attitudes and behaviours, including demographic behavior. Small family norms can better be promoted by addressing all these dimensions of the population issue.

The multidimensional nature of the issue requires coordinated efforts by the relevant ministries and departments of the federal and provincial governments. It is recommended that the 'human development approach' that focuses on people, their opportunities and choices, may be adopted to drive guiding principles for designing integrated policies to develop the abilities of people and to give them a chance to use them.

The Nexus between Women Empowerment and Population Trends



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Researchers and reform activists have always advocated for gender equity and women's empowerment as prerequisites of social reform. Empowerment by definition, is 'a process by which the powerless get greater control over circumstances in terms of both ideology and resources'.

A multitude of social and cultural barriers have directly or indirectly hindered women empowerment. While women play a pivotal role in raising children, caring for household members and running their home-in addition to their roles that exist outside the home-lack of formal education and poor nutrition for girls, early marriage and multiparity are some of the determinants that restricts their empowerment. On the part of the community, a lack of social support networks, religious barriers and restrictions on women's mobility outside the home also affect women empowerment.

Women's Right of Choice: Key to Slowing Population Growth

Over the last half a century, studies have shown that the best way to slow population growth is not through coercive 'population control', but by ensuring that all people are able to make real choices about childbearing.

Women's rights are key. Fertility rates remain high where women's status is low. Less than one-fifth of the world's countries

will account for nearly all of the world's population growth this century. Not coincidentally, these countries are also the ones where girls are less likely to attend school, where child marriage is common, and where women lack basic rights. Pakistan is sadly one of these countries and unless corrective measures are taken to redress the situation at a fast pace, it will further deteriorate.

What is important to understand is that women's rights and reproductive health are vitally important in their own right, as a matter of public health and social justice. They can also help slow population growth. Providing access to contraceptive tools and information will enable women to limit the size of their families of their own free choice. This will enable healthier and wealthier families, better able to thrive in a 'climate-changed' world.

Pakistan is at a crossroads, and not for reasons one might think.

Data from the latest Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey (PDHS) shows the country is at the cusp of economic growth, but only if it accelerates fertility decline and women's empowerment through increased access to voluntary family planning and other strategic investments.

The anticipated economic growth is due to a phenomenon known as the demographic dividend-the accelerated economic growth that results from changes to a country's age structure, namely a decrease in the share of young dependents (net consumers), relative to an expanding proportion of working-age adults (net producers). With a relative increase in the working-age population, if educated and productively employed, these changes can usher in better living standards for families, increased production per capita, and higher rates of savings and investment.

With a population exceeding 207 million, Pakistan is slowly progressing through its demographic transition-or the movement from people living short lives and having large families, to living long lives and having smaller families. Historically, high fertility has distorted Pakistan's age structure. In fact, the average number of

children per woman did not fall below six until the 1980s. As a result, the country is characterized by large numbers of children and young adolescents. Last year, 34 percent of the population was below the age of 15, requiring significant government and household investments to fund the health, education and other consumption needs of the youngest age groups. Another 30 percent of the population is between the ages of 15 and 30.

The new 2017-18 PDHS shows that fertility has declined to 3.6 children per woman. However, this represents an annual decrease of just .05 from the last survey round-a significantly slower pace of decline than that observed in East Asian countries at similar points in their demographic transitions. In order to facilitate a robust dividend, fertility decline must accelerate so that today's generation of children and young adolescents progress into their working-ages, while successive generations of children decrease in size.

Although fertility decline and the resulting maturation of the age structure are critical for the dividend, this trajectory is anything but guaranteed without increased access to voluntary family planning. Importantly, family planning programs have not only been shown to increase the social acceptability of birth control and smaller families, but they also provide voluntary, affordable and effective methods to help women have the number of children they desire.

The 2017-18 PDHS reports that 25 percent of married women are using modern contraception, a 16 percentage point increase over two decades. While notable, one in five married women have an unmet need for family planning, putting millions at risk for mistimed and unplanned pregnancies each year. Also contributing to the slower pace of fertility decline is the preference for large families by Pakistani women and men (four children on average), which has remained unchanged since 1990.

Improving access to family planning is not only important for expediting fertility decline and age structure shifts, but is also critical for making the most of the prospects the dividend offers. Family planning is

important for preventing unintended pregnancy, unsafe abortions and maternal death/disability, thus averting missed opportunities in education, employment and lifetime earnings. Harnessing women's potential thus, also requires empowering women of all ages through the expansion of education and employment opportunities. So far, Pakistan's record isn't stellar; according to the PDHS, 51 percent of women have never attended school (compared to 25 percent of men) and just 29 percent of women were employed within a year of the survey (compared to 98 percent of men).

Women Empowerment Issues: Implications for Population Growth

"Women hold up half the sky," reads an old Chinese saying. Indeed, women have traditionally been the world's farmers, child bearers, and caretakers—the backbone of families and societies. And yet, women continue to suffer from gender discrimination in much of the world. This second-class citizenship is detrimental first and foremost to the well-being of women themselves, and is also a major obstacle to advancing economic development, reducing poverty and achieving environmentally sustainable societies.

Access to Education: There are too many families in Pakistan who are unable to afford school expenses needed to educate their children, and when such funds can be accessed, they are often put towards educating sons rather than daughters. Globally, girls are 1.5 times more likely than boys to be excluded from primary school, and roughly two-thirds of the 781 million illiterate adults are women.¹ Educated women are typically healthier, higher earners, marry later and have fewer children.

Gender Equality: Many societies, including Pakistan, prevent women from full participation in public, political, and economic life, confining them to more domestic roles. These norms and prejudices can prevent women's equal access to education, property rights, credit, job training and employment. Women who are employed experience glaring economic discrimination, globally earning on average 24 percent less than men. When women are income earners and financially independent, they are more likely than men to put that money back into their family—paying for better nutrition, medicine and improved housing.

Women in Government: Many legal and social institutions, like national constitutions and political parties, fail to guarantee women's equality in political participation. Women are underrepresented at many levels—worldwide only 22 percent of legislators are women and only 19 women are serving as Heads of State (out of 195 countries).² Women in political leadership positions more often champion issues involving women's rights and health, as well as other issues that would otherwise be overlooked.

Child Marriage: Gender inequality, poverty, cultures and traditions, and lack of education all drive child marriage, a practice that severely impacts the health, education, and independence of women around the world. Girls who become brides often drop out of school and miss educational opportunities, which in turn limits their employment opportunities and financial security. Younger brides have more children in their lifetime on average, driving fertility rates up and contributing to population growth, particularly in developing nations. In Pakistan, Sindh is the only province that has passed the law on child marriage act in 2013 but implementation remains weak. The other provinces are yet to follow suit.

Women's Health: In societies where daughters are valued less than sons, girls often receive less care, attention, and treatment than the boys in the family. These problems are exacerbated if they live in rural and remote areas with poor infrastructure. As adults, women living in poverty are exposed to greater health risks and often do not have the means to pay for healthcare (including family planning) and adequate nutrition. Women's access to information and services to protect their reproductive health—including decisions over the number and timing of children—are especially important. Complications involving pregnancy and childbirth are the second biggest killer of women of reproductive age, chiefly because many women in Pakistan lack access to family planning and basic healthcare services. When women can choose the number and timing of births, they tend to have fewer children, leading to better health outcomes for mother and child and giving women more freedom to fully participate in society. These disparities must be addressed for the autonomy and well-being of women, as well as for the social and economic development of global society because advancing women and girls benefits everyone; it benefits the individuals

themselves, it benefits families, it benefits communities, and it even benefits the entire country.

Women Empowerment and Gender Development

In Pakistan, women constitute about 49 percent of the country's population. Pakistan is committed to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) including goal 5 i.e. gender equality and ending all forms of discrimination against women and girls. The government has internalized Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as National Goals. The participation of women in the development process of Pakistan has been recognized as an important element. The indicators of women development are gradually improving but not yet sufficient to achieve gender parity that remains elusive in school enrollment, labour market share and in the decision making arena. There are several attempts by federal and provincial governments to enhance women job quota in public sector and in assemblies. However, there is little change witnessed in the national landscape so far.

A Case of Positive Disruption

Last year, ex Chief Justice of Supreme Court undertook suo moto action on unprecedented population growth rate following the release of census results. The suo moto was on human rights petition. It led to an unusual attention to an issue which has so far been neglected or sidelined in the political arena. A Task Force was constituted that worked for a few months to come up with select set of 8 recommendations to accelerate family planning programs in country. These recommendations have now been approved by the Council of Common Interests (CCI). A Federal Task Force, chaired by the Prime Minister and 4 Provincial Task Forces, chaired by respective Chief Ministers, has been set up as a result of CCI recommendations. This is for providing oversight and holding provincial/federal governments accountable for implementation of CCI approved recommendations. If the level of implementation matches the speed at which all these activities occurred, then Pakistan will likely experience acceleration of high impact family planning practices leading to an improved contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR), decreased growth rate and lowering of unmet need. This will also help the country to move closer to its FP2020 targets, a commitment made in the global community, to achieve mCPR (Modern CPR) by 50 percent in 2020.

1. UNESCO Institute of Statistics (2016), "Leaving no one behind: How far on the way to universal primary and secondary education?" Available at <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000245238>

2. UNWomen, "Facts and Figures: Leadership and Political Participation." Available at <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/leadership-and-political-participation/facts-and-figures>

Pakistan's Population and its Dwindling Natural Resources



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Pakistan's population grew at an inter-censal growth rate of 2.4 percent between 1998 and 2017—far more rapidly than anyone had anticipated. The stress of growing numbers on the country's resource base, especially its finite natural resources, is leading to imbalances, currently considered 'challenges', but expected to escalate to crisis levels in the near future. Yet, when the findings of the 2017 Census were announced, the disturbing news that we were 207 million—several million more than the most conservative fertility decline estimates had suggested in 2010—was accepted easily, as if it had no relevance to the country's present or future development outlook.

The political and media spotlight turned immediately elsewhere, mainly towards the politics of the numbers, such as political seats, finance shares, and provincial leverage and shares. Unfortunately, this complacency regarding unsustainable population growth is endemic and misplaced.

By 2030, our population is projected to rise to 268 million. In a business-as-usual scenario, the issues arising from the resulting stress on natural resources are likely to become even more acute, manifesting as crises in agriculture and food production, health, poverty, and in fact, all aspects of development and wellbeing.

Water Crises

Let us start with water, the scarcity of which for irrigation, sanitation, and above all, for drinking and personal use, has at last caught public attention. Ironically, until 1981, we were water abundant at 2,123 cubic meters (m³) per-capita. But even then, several decades ago, the writing was already on the wall. Past population policies laid out many scenarios warning us of what might come in a few decades. In the late 1980s, when Pakistan was water abundant despite a galloping population growth, the National Conservation Strategy warned that the abundance would not last. By the 1998 Census, our population was already 132 million and growing at 2.6 percent annually. Water availability was beginning to enter the stress levels of 1,351 m³ per-capita.

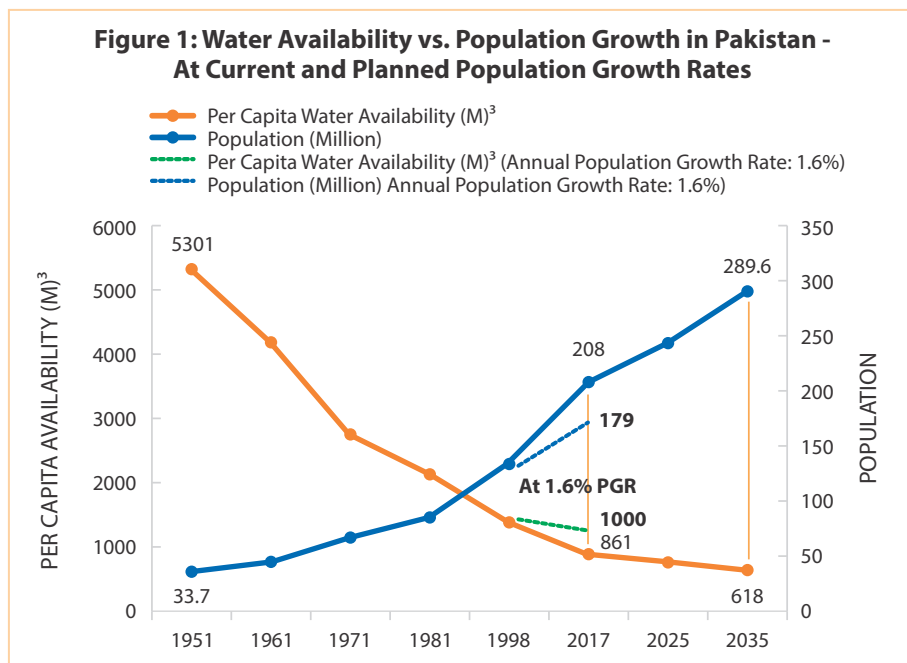
Part of the complacency in Pakistan may be because it was assumed that population growth rates had begun to decline and would follow the trends of other countries in the region. But the period between 2000 and 2017 saw little change in fertility and population growth rates in the country, while the rest of the region experienced huge changes. And in 2017, the new census indicates that the apocalyptic prediction

has come true: we are in a state of water scarcity at 861 m³. Had inter-censal growth been 1.6 percent, as projected under the best policy scenario, we would be at 1,000 m³ today (Figure 1).

With diminishing water resources and a growing population, the per-capita availability of water will continue to decrease, impacting everything, even the health status of communities where water availability falls below 7.5 liters per person per day, which according to the World Health Organization, is the minimum required for maintaining hygiene and health. On the other hand, a reduction in fertility, achieved by preventing the four million estimated unwanted births and pregnancies taking place every year, could markedly improve per-capita water availability.

Impact upon Land

Water is not the only resource under threat; it is important to focus also on the impact of rapid population growth on land and its use. With environmental changes, water shortage, and escalating population pressure, availability of agricultural land, which was abundant in the 60s and 70s, has fallen to alarming levels. A rapidly growing



Source: Pakistan Water and Power Development Authority and Population Council Estimates

population exerts pressure on the land and water resources, driving people away from agriculture to the cities in search of other work.

Ironically, increasing urbanization leads to further pressure on agricultural land; urban sprawl and the need to provide housing and commercial space to even faster-growing urban populations is leading to the cooption of agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes, contributing to another major creeping crisis—that of limiting the capacity of Pakistan to feed its own population. The effects are beginning to become well known in the shape of wheat shortages and the increasing need to import essential food items, including fruit and pulses. Land prices have skyrocketed due to the rush to acquire agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes, primarily for real estate, and also to transform new land under cultivation. The ongoing conversion of existing prime agricultural land for non-agricultural use is a steadily intensifying economic and social flashpoint. And the conversion of this land back to agriculture may be close to impossible. Estimates delineate that urban sprawl encroached upon 77,000 hectares of land, most of which was prime agricultural land.¹

The total cultivated area in Pakistan has increased by just 40 percent during the last 60 years, while the population has increased more than five times and urban expansion has escalated, with major cities sprawling well beyond their old limits. Efforts to bring new or marginal lands under cultivation are under way, but this strategy is limited by the poor quality of such lands and the greater investment required to make them cultivable.

The 2002 Population Policy acknowledged the need to expedite fertility decline to catch up with other nations. Had the recommendations of the policy been adhered to, the fertility rate would have been close to replacement levels in 2019. Instead, the 2017-18 Pakistan Demographic and Health survey shows that Pakistan's fertility rate is 3.8 children per woman, while other neighboring countries are reaching around 2.2 children on average. Yet, apart from the occasional

passing reference, the issue of our still unbridled population growth is forgotten or quickly shrugged aside in discussions of the water crises, our shrinking food base, and the melting of our glaciers—as if it were some unalterable phenomenon that just happened or is out there.

Combating the Issue: National and Global Examples

Very recently, however, reaction has finally come from an unexpected quarter. In 2018, the then Chief Justice of Pakistan turned his attention to the connection between water and population and took suo moto notice of the alarmingly high rate of population growth. Concern for the numbers and what they mean in terms of providing the very basic of education, health, housing, and of course water to live, has finally been voiced in a Population Symposium on December 5, 2018. The matter was taken up by the Council of Common Interests (CCI), and its recommendations are being taken seriously. Could this be Pakistan's turning point?

It is still not too late, and our leadership can still mitigate or at least curb future risks of entirely depleting our limited natural resources. Bangladesh offers a classic learning model: as a young country fraught with large climatic disaster risks, including cyclones, rising sea level, and water-borne disease, it recognized the need to reduce population growth right from independence because it was essential for survival. As a result of this vision and commitment, Bangladesh, which started out with roughly the same fertility trends as Pakistan, has reduced its population growth rate to about half of ours and has been able to manage its human and natural resources more efficiently.

The Population Council and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) have made concerted efforts over the past six years to use evidence to point out to influential groups, including political parties, religious leaders, bureaucrats and media personalities across the board, that Pakistani couples want fewer children, and that we must seize this critical opportunity to reduce fertility to be in a position to manage emerging challenges. While

political parties expressed concern, and even promised to include better access to birth spacing services in their manifestos, this obvious intervention failed to retain the attention it deserves. Once more, along with the CCI recommendations and mandate, there is a chance to look at population numbers and quality and act to balance these with our financial, human, and above all, natural resources. Others, like Malaysia and Indonesia, have managed to craft a careful equilibrium between population growth and national resources. China too, a large country, made a concerted plan to reduce population growth in order to preserve its finite natural resources and to maximize its human and economic resources to eradicate poverty, and eventually become a superpower.

Perhaps one unexplored avenue for drawing attention to the intertwined issues of population growth and natural resource depletion is to bring a demographic perspective to bear on the complex issues of climate change. With more attention to the social and demographic aspects that mediate the outcomes of climate change, and by bringing into the discourse the people affected, a convincing argument can be made for viewing vulnerability to climate change holistically. Climate change and environmental groups may then pay greater attention to population. After all, it is impossible to understand and reduce vulnerability to climate patterns and changes without taking population dynamics into account. Moreover, demographic projections are critical for forming a more accurate picture of future vulnerability, which is essential in preparing for climate impacts that will play out on decadal time frames. Demographers advocate that a deeper and more nuanced understanding of population size, age structure, household size, and urbanization be incorporated in decision-making around climate change mitigation and adaptation,² which should furthermore be linked with efforts for poverty reduction and development. By marrying demographic analysis into this powerful group, the importance of effecting reductions in population growth may gain traction at last.

1. UNDP Pakistan, Development Advocate Pakistan (2018), "Sustainable Urbanization."

2. Hoepf-Young, M., Mogelgaard, K., & Hardee, K. (2009). "Projecting Population, Projecting Climate Change. Population in IPCC Scenarios." Washington: Population Action International.

Interview



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Pakistan's current population growth rate is amongst the highest in the region. In your opinion, what are the implications for this on Pakistan's social indicators? Would this impact Pakistan's progress towards SDGs?

The provisional results of the 2017 census indicate that Pakistan is one of the fastest growing countries with a population of 208 million. The country's annual population growth rate was 2.4 percent during 1998-2017, much higher than what was originally estimated (1.86 percent) before the census count. With the current growth rate, Pakistan's population would double in just 29 years, whereas the average doubling time for other South Asian countries is about 60 years. The country's population growth rate is much higher than the rest of the South Asian countries, except Afghanistan. All other countries are now clustered around, on average, at 1 percent annually.

Pakistan ranks 150 out of 189 countries on the 2017 human development Index. Education and health statistics for Pakistan show a dismal picture; Pakistan's completion rate of primary education, infant and maternal survivals are amongst the lowest in the world.

These striking demographic dynamics raise a number of issues for the country. Pakistan's continued rapid population growth will significantly affect its capacity to ensure basic needs such as quality health and education services, as well as address challenges related to urbanization and other services, including housing, water, and electricity. High population growth requires an expansion of services and infrastructure which is eating into the developmental gains being made and furthermore, makes the task of achieving the Vision 2025 and the SDGs doubly daunting.

There are four main points that I would like to elaborate in relation to population growth and social development.

First, except the oil-rich economies, no country joined the high-income category without radical acceleration of its demographic transition. The first negative implication of the high population growth is the pressures it puts on development because available resources are spent on meeting the needs of the rapidly growing dependent population (education, health, housing, security, and other infrastructure), rather than expanding investments and improvement in the quality of life of the citizens.

Second, despite the remarkable gains in the state of reproductive health (antenatal care, skilled birth attendant) and child vaccinations in Pakistan over the last decade, Pakistan still has a long way to go to

say that again

"...Current demographic conditions in Pakistan are favourable for taking advantage of the 'window of opportunity'."

reduce maternal mortality. Thousands of women in Pakistan die during childbirth due to pregnancy complications. There is a huge disparity among provinces, Balochistan having one of the highest maternal mortality in the world.

In this regard, unintended pregnancies are considered one of the important cause of maternal deaths and affect both demographic trends and people's health and well-being. Pregnancies that occur too early, too late or too frequently can lead to illness during pregnancy and complication at the time of birth. It leads to higher fertility rates and consequently the increasing population growth. On average, a woman in Pakistan has 3.6 children during her lifetime. If Pakistan's fertility rate remains unchanged, the population of Pakistan would be growing unfolded. Clinics and hospitals are already too few and crowded to meet existing needs, and their system will have to expand rapidly to serve a growing population.

Third, population density and urbanization are two major factors affecting infectious disease spread. Areas with high density are more prone to spread of diseases more quickly and easily because of close proximity to one another. Slums around urban areas are extremely vulnerable to infectious diseases due to poor sanitation, high population density and high levels of poverty, all of which increase disease incidence.

Fourth, high population growth has a significant impact on per capita supplies of both freshwater and cropland. Nearly 40 million people in Pakistan were undernourished in 2015-2017. Recent empirical evidence shows that 40.2 percent of children under five years of age in Pakistan are stunted, a condition reflecting the cumulative effect of chronic malnutrition. Food production is contingent on cropland and water supply, which are under stress with the growth in human population. Pressure on limited land resources, driven in part by population growth, can mean an expansion of cropland. This often involves the destruction of vital forest resources or overexploitation of arable land. Lowering fertility and providing adequate birth spacing will enhance their ability to provide enough food for their families.

Finally, fertility and education are greatly associated. Smaller family sizes allow the household to send more children to school and can promote girls' education. Family size has the utmost impact on educational achievement in households where schooling is available but expensive. Girls from large households with relatively inadequate resources are the least likely to attend school.

Thus, the growing population in Pakistan poses a significant threat to women's empowerment, food security, environmental

sustainability, development, and stability. As a key denominator for development and poverty alleviation, Pakistan's population will have a direct and indirect effect on the attainment of all the 17 SDGs and 169 targets. Focusing on attaining population related specific targets in SDGs 2 to 6 will directly put Pakistan on a sustainable population growth path and this requires a coordinated and multi-sectoral approach.

Given the current growth rate of 2 percent, Pakistan would need to create 120 million jobs by 2040, 85,000 more primary schools by 2040, and 19 million more houses by 2040. Also, the country needs to expand its other infrastructure such as health facilities, transportation, etc.

What are the implications on economic indicators?

Rapid population growth undeniably hampers the pace of economic growth. Economic growth is also driven in part, by the age structure of the population. Since ICPD 1994, we have witnessed a momentous change in thinking about the role of population in the development process. Population dynamics matter a lot, and it is categorically clear that the pattern and pace of demographic change in Pakistan in the coming decades do impede the country's macroeconomic performance.

Current demographic conditions in Pakistan are favourable for taking advantage of the "window of opportunity". However economic benefits from the large working-age population are not inevitably attained, but are dependent on investments in human capital to increase productivity, creation of jobs, and an environment that encourages investments and savings. If conditions are suitable, a country can undergo more rapid economic growth, a phenomenon known as 'Demographic Dividend'. The logic is that as fertility declines, families have more resources to invest in their children's education and health, thus improving the overall human capital.

However, recognition of the economic benefits of these changes is obviously related to the country's capacity to absorb workers into productive employment, which is reinforced by good governance; increasing pace of industrialization; well-developed financial markets; and above all, wide and deep investments in education and training.

Finally, reducing the unemployment rate and providing decent jobs to the growing number of individuals entering the workforce, is a huge and urgent challenge for the government. Population dynamics play a hammering impact on the unemployment rate. Using the Labour Force Survey 2017-18, we estimated that, on average, about 1.6 million new jobs will be required to be created every year until 2030, just to keep unemployment at its existing level as of 2017.

Pakistan has a history of population control programs, however, it appears that their impact has been limited. What policies and plans are required, and what sort of implementation mechanism is needed to move forward in managing and combating population growth in Pakistan?

Virtually, in all population policies of Pakistan since the 1960s, the main content was to attain certain demographic targets; e.g. attaining replacement fertility, CPR to a certain level, etc. But is a population policy, in the logic of setting demographic targets from time to time, enough to improve the well-being of individuals, change families' reproductive behavior and diffuse ideas about family size and investments in children, or are other factors far more important?

In Pakistan, policymakers emphasized on slowing population growth primarily through the provision of family planning services. However, sixty years of experience has revealed that family planning

programs have a modest impact on fertility. Fertility reduction is clearly the complex interaction of a range of socio-economic factors that affect the population, reproductive health outcomes and the overall pace of demographic transition.

Since population issues concern everyone and cannot be addressed by a single department effectively, a new multi-sectoral population program needs to be planned by the government, to effectively tackle this issue.

The aforesaid scenario has led the government to broaden the approaches of fertility reductions that seek to improve the lives of the poor through improved nutrition, health and education, greater economic autonomy for women, ensure gender equality, as well as family planning information and services.

Keeping in view this multi-sectoral approach, in 2018, an extraordinary and bold commitment was made by the government to address population issues and improve access to family planning information and services. In this regard, the government established Taskforces at the federal and provincial levels to implement the recommendations of the Supreme Court.

These recommendations, which were approved by the Council of Common Interest (CCI), are a set of interventions in eight strategic areas identified while keeping in view the population situation in Pakistan, the challenges faced and the global best practices and initiatives which are likely to yield tangible results and help in addressing matters relating to rapid population growth rate, low contraceptive prevalence, high fertility and high mortality rates. Unlike previous initiatives, the new recommendations emphasize rights, universal access and multi-sectoral approach to addressing population issues.

The recommendations include:

1. Ensure Universal Access to FP/RH Services
2. Federal government to create a five-year non-lapsable Special Fund for reducing population growth rate
3. Legislation
4. Advocacy and Communication
5. Curriculum and Training in Education
6. Contraceptive Commodity Security
7. Support of Ulema

Are there any global examples of population control programs that have been successfully implemented? What are the lessons that Pakistan can replicate and learn from?

Several countries in the South Asian region have been able to stabilize the population including Bangladesh and Iran. I will briefly compare the two countries with Pakistan.

Bangladesh and Pakistan have much more in common and levels of development are broadly similar, even though Pakistan scores slightly higher on a number of development indicators. By the late 1990s, Bangladesh's fertility had declined to 3.3 births per woman while in Pakistan fertility remained at 5.0, a difference of 1.7 births per woman. In 2014, Bangladesh reached near replacement fertility of 2.3 births per woman, a remarkably low level for such a poor country. In contrast, Pakistan's fertility remained higher at 3.6 births per woman in 2017-18.

The divergent fertility trends in these two countries can reasonably be attributed to differences in their family planning programs.

Pakistan's program has been fragile and ineffective, lacking adequate government funds and commitment. In contrast, Bangladesh has implemented one of the world's most effective voluntary family planning programs, using the experience and lessons from the 'Matlab' experiment. Family planning services were delivered through the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. An exceptional feature of the program is its staff of literate female health workers who counsel women and distribute supplies at their doorstep, thus overcoming the barriers posed by 'purdah' (a religious and social practice of female seclusion). At the same time, the government implemented a nationwide Information, Education and Communication (IEC) program. For example, Radio Bangladesh heard throughout the country, has dedicated more than an hour each day to population and family planning issues since the 1980s.

Iran's achievement is probably one of the best in history. In 1989, the Iranian government sharply reversed course and became a strong supporter of family planning. The government of Iran formulated effective legislation via the national family planning law. Iran has developed a well-integrated structure of reproductive health and family planning programs in primary health care along with intensive community outreach and male involvement. A comprehensive health network made up of mobile clinics and 'health houses' provide family planning and health services to 80 percent of Iran's rural population. Pre-marital counseling and classes for both men and women on modern contraception were mandatory.

Free contraceptive services were provided throughout the country. Iran was the only country in the region with a government-sanctioned condom factory. In addition, a forceful IEC campaign communicated the benefits of small families along with robust multi-sectoral coordination to raise awareness on population issues and family planning.

The response was direct and huge. Fertility declined from more than 5 births per woman in the late 1980s, to around 2 in 2000. No other country with a population of over one million experienced a decline of such scale during the 1990s. Iran's population program has been complemented by female literacy, mandatory premarital contraceptive counseling for couples, men's participation in family planning programs and strong support from religious leaders.

In addition to effective family planning programs, for successful population programs, the following key interventions are needed:

- Access to quality primary, secondary and tertiary education especially for girls;
- Improve female employment and empower women and girls and decision making;
- Establish a well-integrated structure of delivering reproductive health and family planning services through the health departments;
- Involvement/partnerships with religious leaders;
- Multi-sectoral approach since population issue is not only a health issue. Involvement of ministries of education, communication, gender, agriculture, environment among others; and,
- Strong communication campaign to combat misconception, myth, and stigmas.

say that again

"...Involvement of the private sector is key, with the public sector given the responsibility of monitoring only."



Shaheen Attiq-ur-Rahman

Former Member, Standing Committee on Literacy and Non-Formal Basic Education

Former Member, Standing Committee on Population Welfare

Former Minister for Social Welfare and Women's Development, Government of Punjab

Child Commissioner, Mohtasib Alla's Secretariat, Federal Government

How does the growing population impact upon good health and quality education indicators across all age cohorts (SDG goals 3 & 4)?

With an explosive population, the most affected segments are the vulnerable, poor and marginalized, irrespective of whether they reside in rural or peri-urban slums. Pakistan has nearly 44 to 34 percent stunted children and has the dubious honour of being the 5th largest in terms of tuberculosis patients globally. 20 women die daily due to complications in child birth. Poverty is increasing and it increases unabated, there is no space left for work in the agriculture sector.

Moreover, although Basic Health Units (BHUs) are said to exist in every Union Council (UC), they are often overlooked by the Provincial cadre; in fact, even the District is oblivious of its effectiveness. The facility of 'health at your doorstep' is missing. Women will not walk miles to get help for contraceptives.

Finally, the government's myopic strategy to ease the Lady Health Workers (LHW) position into oblivion, has also damaged the health of women.

In terms of education, approximately 74 percent of the youth are illiterate and this statistic increases especially in the 10+ years age category, as well as in rural areas and for females. Approximately 70,500,000 in Pakistan are illiterate, with nearly 30,000,000 in Punjab alone.

A major reason accounting for an increase in population levels is owing to the fact that a majority of mothers are illiterate and have no proper understanding of family planning practices and where to go for relief.

In terms of secondary education, Pakistan stands at the bottom of the spectrum when it compares to other countries in South-Asia such as Bangladesh, India, Nepal etc. In the province of Punjab for instance, the whole education system is warped: 50,000+ primary schools, about 9000 Secondary schools and 7000 odd High Schools. Up-ward mobility for learning is thus botched.

Most 'male' secretaries in public institutions are shy of the Ministry of Population, owing to which much activity is not seen. It is given to competent bureaucrat women but their clout is missing. Budget

allocations suffer, as this Ministry is wedged between social welfare and special education.

How have budget allocations been influenced by increasing populations?

The population has increased tremendously. Inaccuracies in findings of the 2017 Census render them unsuitable to be used. The teaching trend to have budget allocations more towards large urban centers, with swift roads and the development of inter-city trains, has cut profusely into the budgets of most human development sectors.

How do these have an impact upon the overall productivity of cities?

With no income, poor education, lack of recreation and no social safety nets to fall back on, the dependency ratio has increased. Cities and towns, especially at the Tehsil HQ level, are being inundated by rural to urban migrations. This is resulting in the emergence of huge slums, in order to accommodate increasing populations. Most of these slums thrive on illegal land holdings and gradually become conduits to doubtful activities.

Another frightening change in the urban scene are the many housing societies which have come about, like of Lahore, slowly encroaching into Muridke and the other half nibbling at Kasur. The agriculture sector is the most to suffer, owing to land being usurped by these societies, hence rendering their produce to become increasingly expensive, as land holdings decrease.

What policies and plans are required to move forward?

In terms of health, BHU's at the UC level must be the pivot of activity with the model of the LHW's reinvigorated. LHW/Doctors should be disbursed loans that enable them to start clinics catering to women's health.

In terms of education, the syllabus must be revised to incorporate 'population mathematics' that encourage children to calculate the benefits and losses of increasing populations, with relevant real time examples from households. This kind of analytical thinking regarding population dynamics from an early age is important to 'get the mind going'.

Over the course of working in nearly 300 villages, it has been realized that less children are desired due to the economic situation, but service delivery is very poor and access for women is not easy.

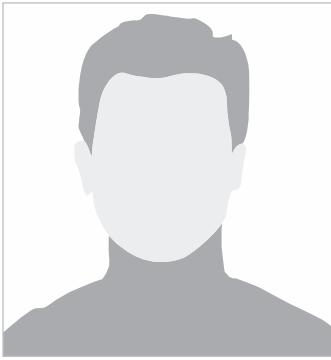
Involvement of the private sector is key, with the public sector given

the responsibility of monitoring only. The most successful collaboration under this was "Sathi" initiative.

Finally, there must be political and public will to be able to have better managed families.

say that again

"...Pakistan has one of the youngest work force in the world."



Ehsan-ul-Haq

Chief Executive Officer
National Trust for Population (NATPOW)

How do dependency and non-dependency ratios impact upon economic growth in Pakistan?

By 1998, Pakistan was ranked as the world's sixth most populous country. The provisional data of the 2017 Census recorded 207.7 million habitants within Pakistan. With the current population growth rate of 2.4 percent per annum, Pakistan's population is geared to rise to 282 million in 2030 and 450 million by 2050, and is likely to surpass Indonesia, Brazil, Russia, and the United States. This projected growth would further strain water, forests, and arable land resources, as well as reverse the economic gains made in recent years.

The current high growth rate is causing an increase in the dependency ratio of the population below 14 years of age. The increasing number of the elderly population is also exacerbating the dependency ratio.

At present Pakistan has more than 65 percent dependent population (less than 14 years of age and higher than 65 years of age). This high ratio of a dependent population has multiple adverse impacts on the economic growth of Pakistan, including:

- Decrease in investment rates by individuals/families because of less availability of physical capital. This situation is contributing in the low rate of economic growth in Pakistan.
- High ratio of dependent population in Pakistan is also placing a burden on the housing sector. Overall, it has caused inflation in this sector and a large part of the population is unable to afford reasonable housing facilities.
- Increase in the elderly and under-5 population is exerting pressure on health facilities in Pakistan, which has further increased the demand for health care/medicines. Since Pakistan is largely dependent upon imported medicines especially for lifesaving, it has to spend a large amount of foreign exchange on medicines and health care.

Pakistan currently has a large workforce and huge youth bulge. How can these be optimally employed to overcome the adverse effects of increasing populations?

Pakistan has one of the youngest work force in the world. It has a massive 100 million population below the age of 30. Demographic projections show that the 'youth bulge' will continue to dominate the population for another 30–35 years.

Pakistan is committed to addressing this situation through major investment in youth for training and skills development; opportunities for self-employment and national integration. Youth in Pakistan face problems in accessing sexual and reproductive health information and services. They are rarely included in provincial population policies and health strategies, sexual and reproductive health education and youth friendly health services are rarely provided. Life skills-based education initiatives have received recognition in the country.

This potential of workforce can be optimally utilized largely through the initiatives of self employment. The present government of Pakistan has this realization and is focusing on youth loan schemes, self employment schemes, etc. There is dire need to encourage foreign investors to invest in Pakistan in the industrial sector particularly. The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is also providing job opportunities to the youth and economic zones are being setup along with CPEC which will provide a great number of employment opportunities for the youth.

How have population trends had an impact upon the overall productivity of cities?

Pakistan's urban population is expanding rapidly and has risen from 32.5 percent in 1998 to 36.4 percent in 2017. National Population Policy estimates that if current trends of rural to urban migration continue, this share will reach 40 percent in 2025. Currently, 10 cities in Pakistan have populations exceeding 1 million each, while 75 cities have populations between 100,000 and 1 million. If the internal migration trend continues, the number of mega cities (10 million and above population) will be around 12 by 2025.

The Vision 2025 document notes that in Pakistan, a 1 percent increase in urbanization leads to a 1.1 percent increase in the economic growth rate. The document also notes that all large cities in Pakistan have witnessed an increase in slums or squatter areas where even basic amenities including sewerage facilities are not available. Pakistan recognizes the challenges of rapid urbanization, and the emergence of these slums widens the disparities between rural and urban development. Migrant settlements end up as marginalized areas as the slum areas do not fall in the development plans of urban development authorities and normally miss out in the provision of education, health, transport, and housing for the dwellers. Even though these areas provide cheap labour to urban dwellers, poverty and ill-health concentrates among the dwellers due to lack of proper amenities. APMD seeks commitment to improving the quality of human settlements, including the living

and working conditions of both urban and rural dwellers in the context of poverty eradication.

Rapid urban growth has encroached into massive use of agricultural land for housing schemes, thereby, Pakistan is losing prime lands for non-productive usage reflecting unplanned and haphazard urbanization growth. This is a threat to sustainable agricultural practices alone. Effective urban planning supported by adequate zoning laws is needed to make urbanization an important driver of growth. Urban planners must identify regions and areas for new cities or areas of expansion that do not engulf prime agricultural land.

What policies and plans are required to move forward in managing and combating population growth in Pakistan?

At Pakistan's current population rate, its population will double in the next 30 years, compared with an average doubling time of 60 years for other South Asian countries. The population of the country is projected to increase to 285 million by 2030.

Such a high level of population growth is unsustainable and has already eaten into the modest gains made in terms of socio-economic development. The rapidly growing population has direct negative implications for adverse climate change, environment degradation, deforestation and above all, the decline in water availability per-capita, thereby putting Pakistan in a water stress situation. It will exacerbate food security and threaten the country's sustainable development prospects.

Realizing the alarming population growth rate, the government constituted a Task Force for preparing recommendations to control population growth rate in Pakistan. The Task Force, while keeping in view the challenges faced by Pakistan, has prepared a set of recommendations aiming at accelerating the efforts of the government to reduce Population Growth Rate (PGR), lower Total Fertility Rate (TFR) and increase Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (CPR). These recommendations are in line with provincial population policies and recognize the redefined overall role of the federal government, for coordination, facilitation and support, and international/bilateral commitments, etc. The federal government retains the fostering role of sharing vision/guidelines for advancing the national development perspective. These recommendations are focused on the following areas:

1. Establish National and Provincial Task Forces for steering, providing oversight and taking critical decisions to reduce population growth rate, lower TFR and increase CPR;
2. Ensure universal access to family planning and reproductive healthcare services;
3. Increased financial allocations by the provincial and federal governments;
4. Legislation(s): Family Planning and Reproductive Rights Bill, Child Marriage Restraint Act, Premarital Counseling, etc.;
5. Advocacy and Communication: National narrative, behavioral change communication and mass media movement to call of action;
6. Training and Curriculum: Include Population Studies and Population Dynamics in educational curricula;
7. Ensure contraceptives commodity security and strengthen supply chain management system; and,
8. Seek Support of 'Ulema' (Religious scholars): Training courses on family planning for 'Ulemas' and 'Khatheeb's'.

Are there any examples of development models in the global community capable of absorbing the population increase, which can be replicated in Pakistan?

There are a number of countries which have successful development models capable of absorbing the population increase; however, these countries have their own socio-economic and political dynamics.

Pakistan, a country with one of the largest youth bulge in the world, has its own socio-economic and political dynamics. Considering this fact, the government of Pakistan has introduced a number of programs to tap the potential of the youth bulge and uplift the marginalized population.

The Prime Minister's Youth Programme is a revolutionary programme for the socio-economic development of youth, in a bid to combat soaring unemployment in the country. It has a broad canvas of schemes aimed at enabling youth and poor segments of the population to receive good employment opportunities, secure economic empowerment, acquire skills needed for gainful employment, have access to higher education and I.T. tools and, access to on-the-job training/internship for young graduates to improve the probability of getting a productive job.

On March 27 2019, the Prime Minister of Pakistan launched the "Ehsaas" program, the objective of which is to reduce inequality, invest in people, and lift lagging districts.

Ehsaas is about the creation of a 'welfare state' by countering elite capture and leveraging 21st century tools-such as using data and technology to create precision safety nets; promoting financial inclusion and access to digital services; supporting the economic empowerment of women; focusing on the central role of human capital formation for poverty eradication, economic growth and sustainable development; and overcoming financial barriers to accessing health and post-secondary education.

The program's principles and approaches also center on tapping a whole-of-government multi sectoral collaboration for solutions; ensuring joint federal-provincial leadership; and mainstreaming the role of the private sector through an approach which will provide a level playing field on one hand and foster locally-relevant innovation on the other, to create jobs and promote livelihood in quick-win areas. The program's premise is grounded in the importance of strengthening institutions, transparency and good governance.

The program is for the extreme poor, orphans, widows, the homeless, the disabled, those who risk medical impoverishment, for the jobless, for poor farmers, for labourers, for the sick and undernourished; for students from low-income backgrounds and for poor women and elderly citizens. This plan is also about lifting lagging areas where poverty is higher.

Regarding models for population control, we understand that the models of China, India, Bangladesh, Indonesia and Iran are greatly successful. Therefore, the recommendations of the Council of Common Interests (CCI) reflect these models up to an extent, in one way or the other. Noticing the success of the population control models in these countries, the honourable Supreme Court of Pakistan has recorded in its judgment dated 3rd January, 2019 in Human Rights Case No.17599 of 2018, regarding alarming high population growth rate in the country:

"Adopting an approach similar to that of Iran, and focusing on the main impediment to the cause of population planning, these recommendations involve increasing the demand and utilization of contraceptives for which a mass movement is suggested taking on board political leaders, ulema and clerics, the corporate sector, academia, executive, judiciary, media, intelligential and youth. The Ulema and Islamic scholars must also be urged to promote Islamic

teachings in the context of controlled birth so that each child may be assured an enlightened and prosperous life. For this national cause, the Pakistan Electronic Media and Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) should allocate free airtime for family planning messages on all radio and television channels in prime time. Adopting the community-based approach of Bangladesh, these recommendations include the mandatory delivery of family planning services by all public health facilities and hospitals, as part of the essential service package, as well as the mandatory provision of family planning counseling, information and services by all registered private sector practitioners and hospitals. After thorough training, the lady health workers and the current cadre of male mobilizers are suggested to be reactivated targeting the women and men of each family and ensuring active and accountable counseling for them. More crucially, it has been recommended that Federal and Provincial Governments introduce conditional cash transfer schemes for adoption of family planning services and institutionalized birth delivery and financial support programs such as the Benazir Income

Support which should be linked with population planning initiatives. Moreover, it has been recommended that the Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) and the Pakistan Nursing Council (PNC) should include mandatory modules on Family Planning and Reproductive Health so we may rope in our future doctors and nurses to this national crusade. Obviously, the general cooperation of our NGOs and civil society is also expected and requested for this national cause. The Federal and Provincial Governments should also consider incentivizing the local production of contraceptives by investors and pharmaceutical companies to increase their supply and accessibility and consider pooled procurement of contraceptives. The executive must play an active role in ensuring effective implementation of such laws. The Federal and Provincial Governments have agreed to allocate a sustainable amount of funds for this urgent cause, which will be a commitment that they must stick to in order to achieve any success in this population control campaign."

Interview



Azra Aziz

Director
Research, Survey and Evaluation
National Institute of Population Studies

How do dependency and non-dependency ratios impact upon economic growth in Pakistan?

High dependency ratio implies higher number of dependent population (0-14 years and 65+ years) relative to an economically active population (15-64 years). Dependency ratios have declined from 88.9 percent (in 1988) to 64.7 percent (in 2017). This trend delineates rapid changes in the younger age population demographic (0-14 years).

Such demographic processes have dire repercussions for the country's economy. High ratio implies an increased use of resources for consumption with decreased focus on human development and employment creation, which are non-sustainable trends.

However, not all repercussions are negative. One potentially positive aspect of this phenomenon is 'the demographic dividend'—a window of opportunity offered by the steady decline in fertility and resultant changing population structure, where a shrinking of dependency ratios allows for an increase in investment in human capital and skill development. This is when there are more people in the productive and working age groups (15-64 years), as compared to the dependent population, including older people (65 years and above) or children (< 15 years). Pakistan's dependency ratio is still high and not sustainable for economic growth scenarios.

Pakistan currently has a large workforce and huge youth bulge. How can these be optimally employed to overcome the adverse effects of increasing populations?

Increasing investment in human development as a ratio to the gross domestic product (GDP) is essential to align with emerging national development scenarios. According to the UNDP National Human Development Report, declining fertility over the past coupled with a rapidly growing adolescent and youth population, deems it important to generate enough employment opportunities for productive engagement. Pakistan needs to generate 1.3 million additional jobs on average every year, as the youth population size is expected to grow to 5 million by 2035. Pakistan is challenged by high child and youth dependency. Therefore, building young people's technological capabilities, stimulating productive investment and strengthening linkages within and across sectors at national and local levels, is critical.

A multi-pronged strategy is needed to create synergies between social, economic, environmental and cultural sectors for absorbing the growing number of youth population towards poverty reduction, promoting entrepreneurship, services and tourism, all of which

say that again

"...Changing demographics require a dynamic approach to address rising population growth in Pakistan."

will also create opportunities for small and local suppliers of goods and services. Overall, with the rapidly growing services sector becoming a major source of jobs, Pakistan must ensure that this sector provides the youth with a chance at long-term career progression.

Furthermore, due investment and attention is also needed to prioritize agricultural development, trade, physical infrastructure and the quality of work environment. An integrated policy approach encompassing national policies, to promote sustainable growth, to improve their beneficial participation and to accomplish substantial poverty reduction and mass improvements in human well-being, can overcome the adverse effects of increasing populations.

How have population trends had an impact upon the overall productivity of cities?

Urban growth has been quite rapid in Pakistan since the 1980s—a process complemented by massive internal migration to cities and international migration. More than a third (36 percent) of Pakistanis reside in large urban dwellings, some of which are growing at 4 percent annually. Migration to urban areas is basically redistribution of population—mostly younger energetic population—most of whom are educated and look for employment opportunities.

Pakistan faces a pressing challenge of absorbing the growing population for achievement of sustainable development goals. It needs to address the links between development and rapid population change. Urbanization is a powerful driver of development and a high population density can enable national and local governments to more easily provide infrastructure and services at relatively low cost per capita. Livable and sustainable cities have effects in terms of providing rural populations with greater access to services such as education and healthcare, while also empowering them economically.

Cities are hubs for education and skill development, as well as job opportunities for a larger pool which can ultimately lead to poverty eradication. At the same time, rapid population growth adds pressure to the resource utilization, and increases demand for energy, water, and sanitation, as well as for public services, health, education, training and the well-being of the people. Absence of effective urban policies and management has witnessed a series of problems emerging from urban areas including water shortages, housing shortages, infrastructure breakdown, vanishing public places/parks and play grounds, air and water pollution, congestion, waste disposal and urban cleanliness.

In Pakistan, rapid urbanization and increasing population trends call for additional resources and capacity development of local governments. Integrated policy frameworks for sustainable development of urban areas are required to address employment, land-use issues, transportation, food security, infrastructure development, biodiversity conservation, water conservation, renewable energy sourcing, waste and recycling management, and the provision of education, health care and housing. It also requires multilevel cooperation among local and national governments, and partnerships to mobilize public and private resources to increase the productivity of cities. Relocation of industries and establishment of export promotion zones along the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) route are critical for long term growth.

What policies and plans are required to move forward in managing and combating population growth in Pakistan?

Changing demographics require a dynamic approach to address rising population growth in Pakistan.

Functional integration is a sensible and practical approach which brings together various organizations providing similar services. Integrating youth in reproductive health awareness and service networks is essential to enable them to make informed decisions. Integrated policies to strengthen the formation of human capital throughout life, with a particular focus on health, including sexual and reproductive health and rights; education, including comprehensive sexuality education; and poverty reduction, decent work and social protection; as well as a particular emphasis on human

rights, non-discrimination, equal opportunities, women's empowerment and youth participation.

A commitment to investment in human capital is also important. Development plans should cater to the creation of equitable, livable and sustainable cities, which have the capacity to accommodate increased demands for livelihoods and services. Leveraging the advantages of agglomeration and managing urban growth as part of their respective development strategies, central governments and local authorities can address the challenges of population growth. Harnessing the opportunities offered by population dynamics and demographic changes will need to rely on more effective and stronger global, regional and national partnerships, with an emphasis on knowledge sharing, and on technical and financial assistance that will enable Pakistan to adopt evidence and rights-based policies and programmes guided by population data and research.

Are there any examples of development models in the global community that have been effective in population management?

Bangladesh has significantly decreased fertility rate in the last two decades and ensured the health, education and wellbeing of the people. Bangladesh, although still a poor country, is now one of the emerging economies and its success is credited with overall human development. Lowering population growth rate has been a catalytic factor towards improvement in human development and economic growth.

Youth Voices

What is your opinion on population control in Pakistan?



23 years

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It goes without saying that the increasing population is a rising challenge in Pakistan. Among other reasons, a key reason is the lack of awareness, especially amongst the youth. There is a dearth of 'population programs' or studies in universities as a result of which timely education and awareness is not created on the subject.

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In order to address an issue, it is important to look at international examples to deduce from. For instance, China's one child policy, in the end, did not yield the results it was forecasted to. In fact, it ended up creating a huge discrepancy in the dependency and non-dependency ratios. Each country's dynamics are very different. Pakistan is a fairly young nation with just over 70 years since independence. It actually requires more human resource to feed into improving the economy. The question of how to then effectively utilize this human resource, is the real question that the government must look into.

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28 years



26 years

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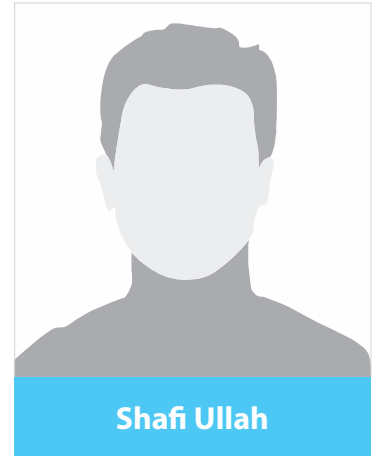
With rising populations, increased pressure is being exerted on already scant resources leading to havoc in the system. We need to start thinking more practically and less emotionally. Whatever happened to being responsible citizens?

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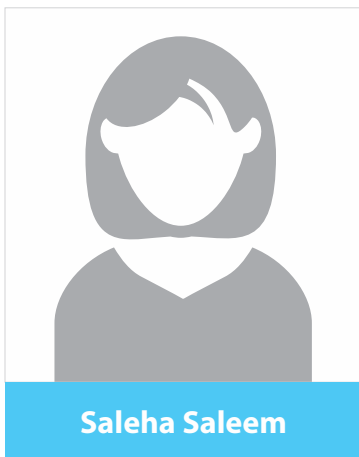
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Population control is not an issue in my opinion. The reason for the current huge youth population who can actively work towards replenishing the economy could not have been possible had stringent population control programs been in place. It really depends from individual to individual and their available resources.

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27 years



29 years

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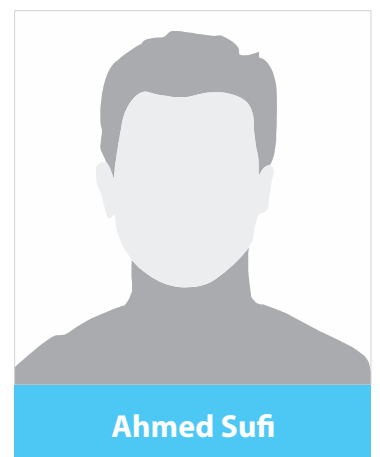
Population control is a gravely sidelined topic in Pakistan. A major reason for growing populations is the compulsion to adhere to 'cultural' definitions. While worrying about such unnecessary things, focus is easily taken off from the real issue at hand.

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Population control requires immediate attention and management by the government. A one or two child family will be better able to educate and bring up their children as opposed to a 3/4 child family. Practicality is completely lost in this nation.

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29 years

DEVELOPMENT ADVOCATE
PAKISTAN