

Politics of funding, data and analysis on population- Developing country Experiences

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1. Introduction

Population has played an important role in policy ever since recorded history of man. In modern times, it is known and recognized that population is an integral requirement for planning, policy making and program management and implementation. A new development in population is the play of politics.

In developing countries, demographic statistics are not only scanty but are defective, incomplete, subject to a large amount of uncertainty and even affected by conceptual and definitional problems. Most often, the types of data produced may not be the most relevant or important, but unfortunately they are determined by those who provide the funds and other resources. Also even with the available data, a lot of manipulation are needed to derive measures from the available data and it is quite possible to present results in such a fashion as to show a particular point of view. What concerns a good demographer is to analyze the data without prejudice and try to utilize all of the information to arrive at a set of consistent / convergent results.

This paper is concerned about the type of situations involving significant slant and political bias or interference in the provision of funds in the population field. Also cited are instances where population and related aspects are manipulated or made a tool to support or bring forward specific agendas and policies which may be far from the truth and may not be to the best interests of the people concerned. Most of the illustrations are from the personal experience of the author in dealing with the demographic data from developing countries especially Asian, African and Arab countries. These are supplemented and complemented by experiences from some other sources and situations.

2. Ideological and other influences on population concepts, issues and theories

Even though concepts, terms and terminologies in the population field which are mainly scientific should not normally raise much controversy, there have been recorded instances of heated discussions and disagreements. For example, in 1949 in Geneva, a sub commission of the Demographic Dictionary was functioning side by side with the Population Commission. The words to be included in the dictionary were being debated. The inclusion of purely demographic terms like birth and death rates raised no objection. But when the doctrinal terms were discussed such as 'Malthusianism', 'prevention of birth' etc. the Soviet Representative protested, "we simply cannot allow such abominable words into an official UN Dictionary". Again, in 1950 the question of the statistical definition of the living child came up. The question has been pending ever since the origin of the civil state, and is not without importance for the statistics of birth and especially of infant mortality which are not always comparable from one country to another, at least not without the appropriate corrections. Dr. Pascua representing WHO read out the definition suggested by the Organization. It was precisely worded and contained the terms 'matrix' and 'expulsion'. The Soviet representative was indignant over this 'veterinary style' and strongly

objected to the use of such bestial expressions with regard to the human species.(Sauvy,1961).

Terms like ‘ family ‘, ‘ migrant ‘ ‘ household ‘ ‘ marital status ‘ etc. also are not free from controversies and disputes. The vehement controversies among the three ideological perspectives represented by what are called ‘ crisis environmentalists (Malthusians)’, ‘ family planners (neo Malthusians) and ‘ developmentalists (Marxian) and their theories of population’ are also well known

According to Veatch (1977), “some Roman Catholics, businessmen, Marxists, counterculture representatives and other radical groups in America are not even convinced there is a population problem at all...All of these groups and concerns have their equivalent proponents in other countries, often with the same degree of obvious and articulated polarization. For example, it was noticeable at WPC Bucharest in 1974 that unusual voting blocs of nations were formed on the basis of how they viewed population issues. The Chinese, Algerian, Argentinian and Holy See delegates joined to aggressively define the ‘ problem ‘ providing a definition quite different from that of the US delegation. At the same time, at the non governmental forum, groups of like minded people from an enormous variety of nations were disagreeing with each other in all aspects of population issues. One thing the Bucharest meeting served to reinforce was that public policies can never fully reflect the great diversity of opinions among those for whom they are intended”. It was observed (Finkle,1974)that “UN officials were deterred from seeking a stronger mandate on population issues because of the informal but determined coalition of nations which comprised of Marxist nations, Catholic countries and European industrial capitalist nations.”

Even as recent as 1994 at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), quibbling on terms were rampant resulting in reservations and dilution of some of the action resolutions. For instance, at the insistence of Holy See, there were significant alterations in the language used in the text of the Cairo Plan of Action. Passages on abortion rights originally included in the Conference Draft was , in the end, for the most part deleted from the final document. As a result, abortion related language was severely watered down (Barbera, 1995). Among the many other glaring examples of playing with terminologies is the one from Honduras which stated “ Given that new terminology has been introduced in the document, as well as concepts which should be further analyzed, and that these terms and concepts are expressed in scientific language, social language or public service language, which will have to be understood in terms of their proper context and are not interpreted in a way that could undermine respect for human beings, the delegation of Honduras considers that this terminology can only be understood without prejudice to its national law”(UN , 1995). Again, according to the International Women’s Health Coalition, “Negotiated universally acceptable language in reproduction and sexual health and rights ..were issues among the most contentious at the conference (ICPD) and were resolved by careful definition of terms such as ‘ unsafe abortion’ ‘ fertility regulation (a technical term that includes abortion) , ‘ sexuality and adolescent access to services ‘. This was possible largely because of a negotiating environment in which respect for differences in value and circumstances prevails. Almost every government involved in the negotiation made accommodations to conflicting points of view”(Germain and Kate, 1995).

3. Slant in Demographic Training

The phenomenal rapid growth of population consequent on the drastic reduction of mortality in the late 1940s and early 1950s brought to the attention of the newly independent developing countries the need for scientific study of population and for putting into position effective measures to rein in the escalating growth rate in order not to jeopardize their efforts towards economic and social development. With very little resource and no expertise in the population field, the developing nations realized that they needed international assistance to tackle their problem. At the same time, the developed countries also were aware that such rapid population growth would affect world order but they feared that any proposal for curtailing population growth emanating from their side to the mostly erstwhile colonies would be considered as aiming to reduce the power of these countries and thus would not be acceptable. However, they recognized that the newly independent developing countries had tremendous faith in the United Nations and its bodies and therefore any advice or assistance channeled through such multilateral sources may not face much resistance.

The First World Population Conference at Rome in 1954 deliberated on the issues and since the problem of rapid population growth was most pressing in the Asia and Latin America, Regional meetings to bring forward the specific issues afflicting the countries in these regions were organized. For instance, the Bandung Conference (1955) on population in Asia, (a similar one was held in San Diego, Chile for the Latin American region) keeping in mind that population is a very political and emotional issue, recognized that countries may have least resistance in accepting training in demography and thereby could be sensitized to their population problems and possible solutions. It therefore advised that a core cadre of nationals in each of the countries trained in demography could scientifically address the diverse issues posed by the interrelationship between population and development and play important role in raising the awareness among people and particularly the policy makers This was a bold, brilliant and wise political decision which resulted in the establishment in 1956 of the Demographic Training and Research Centre (DTRC, currently called as the International Institute for Population Sciences IIPS) in Bombay India for the Asian region (ECAFE currently known as ESCAP) The cooperation of the United Nations and the Governments of India in establishing such a centre clearly highlighted the close understanding of the dimension of the population problem not only at the national and regional level but also on the scale of international policy dimension.

Almost simultaneously, a similar centre for Latin America CELADE was established in San Diego de Chile. Even though the association of the UN with these institutes allayed some of the inherent fears in the minds of Member States regarding their purpose and scope, still there were lingering doubts and suspicions that these centres are really another front for the Western countries' attempt to introduce family planning / birth control / population control. In the Asian region, this concern was even much more among Member States like the Philippines, Indonesia, Pakistan and others who were wary of the real purpose and role of the Bombay Centre. To allay the fears and inform countries that the centre was mostly interested in the interrelation between population and development and more for studying the incomplete and defective and scant data and improving the data base, the training program was deliberately heavily slanted towards population-development interrelationship, data evaluation / analysis and utilization in planning and policy making. Moreover, family planning was not even part of the curriculum- rather focus was on physiology of human reproduction, reproductive health, genetics, morbidity, social research, population distribution/ ecology and implication of population on development in line with the

emphasis on planned development aimed at by most of the newly independent countries. An Advisory Council consisting of Member States to determine the curriculum and research priorities was an integral part of the structure of the centre. Most of the research carried out by trainees and staff focused on themes of great concern to these countries like population projections, educational / labor force / housing and other projections, migration, population movements and settlements, mortality and life tables. A sizable quantum of methodological studies specifically were aimed at analyzing and interpreting the defective and incomplete data available and provide suggestions for improving them .

It may be mentioned that even though India was sharing a heavy burden on the running of the institute and was very much interested to train and carry out research on 'family planning', especially for the nationals, with due respect for member states' sentiments, the institute deliberately avoided introducing training or research in family planning for several years in the initial stages. Only when confidence was gained from member states that they would not misconstrue the motives of the centre that in 1960/61 an 'Action Program on Family Planning Research, focused on India' was added to the centre- but at a different physical site. Thus very delicate and deliberate political steps had to be taken not to scare or offend the feelings of some of the countries in the running of the institute. This played very crucial role in the acceptance and spread of the message of population in even the most sensitive countries in the region. Similar steps were taken in the Latin American centre as well!. With confidence thus gained, UN along with host countries established similar institutes in Cairo, Egypt (Cairo Demographic Centre, CDC) in 1962 for Arab and African countries; in Accra, Ghana (Regional Institute for Population Studies, RIPS) in 1971 for Anglophone Africa and in Yaunde, Cameroon(Demographic training and research centre, IFORD) in 1972 for Francophone Africa which served not only their regions and sometimes beyond. The status of demographic training and research in developing countries could attain the present high profile only thanks to these strategic institutions established by the United Nations.

Even though there did not seem to have been much suspicion and resentment to the demographic training centres, there were some murmurs from political / religious and other groups questioning the true motives behind these institutions. For instance, even in India, there was a general feeling that the demographic centre was a front for 'family !planning / population control', especially since India had just announced an official population policy in 1956 (the first developing country in the world to announce an official population policy) wherein the rapid population growth and the need for curtailing the high fertility rates were highlighted . Similar sentiments were raised from some quarters in some of the other Asian countries as well, but they were muted. In Latin America, on the other hand, the outbursts were more virulent. Stycos (1971) quoted editorials in Latin American journals which raised "charges against the international organizations "and condemned ' demography ' as a " new profession created ...to manipulate statistics to prove that the whirlpool of population growth requires birth control". Also the publications jabbed at ECLA (Latin American Economic Commission) stating that "it is clearly under the influence of socialist economists" and termed CELADE (Latin American! Demographic Centre) as a " genocidal centre" Again implicating ' both UNESCO and FAO in the racist plot", the UN was depicted as ' falling into the hands of activists of the socialist left'. There were also some initial murmurs in the African region against the demographic training centres (RIPS and IFORD),because initially the role and purpose of these centres were not understood or appreciated. It was feared that these centres were established to propagate population control. Especially there were statements in some

West African economic and statistical journals questioning the relevance of international UN experts from developed countries or even from other developing countries whose population problem may be different and thus considered irrelevant to African conditions. It was asserted that Africa had no population problem as it has enough land and actually needed further population growth.

4. Political agendas in funding and support of population aspects

Developing countries with their poor economic situations depend on financial and other support from the rich developed countries to carry through their population programmes and other developmental activities. Bilateral and multilateral aid have been provided during the last more than 50 years, but certain biases and preferences have been noticed in the provision of such aid. There have been political, cultural or other kinds of biases or prejudices pertaining to both donor and recipient countries. Such biases have been noted to operate at every level - from the types of topics or areas for study / research chosen or preferred by donors, to the geographic or country/region specific support and the socio – political orientation of the recipient countries.

For instance, as mentioned earlier, the demographic training and research centres were established in the developing regions with the support of UN and other donor nations. It has been admitted that these centres were doing an excellent job and should continue to function for many years beyond the 1980s. Especially the least developed region – Africa- required further training and research in demography and hence deserved continued assistance and support from the international community. Unfortunately, the enthusiasm for supporting the much needed training in the African Region was not given the due financial and technical assistance for a sufficiently long period. For example, whereas the Asian, Latin American and Arab Demographic Centres which became operational in the late 50s and early 60s were fortunate to get substantial support from the UN for more than 20 years, for the African institutes the length of period of support was much shorter. The reason was political because by the early 80s, UNFPA which provided support to the institutes changed its focus from regional to country support activities, since donor countries who were in the Governing Bodies of the UNFPA felt pressure from Member States and at the same time, there was no spokesmen or constituency for regional interests. Moreover, around the middle 80's, perhaps due to pressures from donors, Demographic Training and Research and Statistical Training were not any more the priority of UNFPA and more resources were diverted to issues of fertility / family planning, information, education and communication (IEC), reproductive health, gender issues etc. With this cutting off of funds, the population and related statistical programme at the ECA came to a standstill. The situation worsened when beginning 1992 UNFPA started direct execution of projects which normally fell within the mandates of Regional Commissions. This affected ECA executed training and research projects / programs including CERPOD / IFORD / RIPS. UNFPA and other donor support were withdrawn at a critical time when it was necessary to continue and enhance the momentum that had been created.

When it comes to data collection, the politics is mostly reflected through the biases in funding for specific types of data and orientation of research. For instance, it is known that international funds were available for surveys and studies pertaining to fertility and family planning such as the Knowledge, Attitude and Practice (KAP) surveys, Contraceptive Prevalence Surveys (CPS) and the Fertility Surveys as part of World Fertility Survey (WFS). Only when developing nations

raised the issue of the skewness in data collection and research did one notice that focus slowly shifted to other surveys like Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), Living Standards Surveys (LSS)etc. In fact, if one were to closely study what the developing countries perceived as priority in their country's population problem, as reported in the various Population Enquiries by the UN, one would notice that in Africa it was consistently population distribution, migration and uneven growth of rural and urban localities , but these genuine aspirations and concerns did not receive much attention.

These concerns and consequent frustrations were vividly voiced at a series of regional seminars under the National Academy of Sciences (NAS, 1974) which reported that, "Increasingly however, the attitudes towards foreign funding, particularly bilateral aid, is becoming less enthusiastic. National planning agencies do not understand why funds are readily available for family planning and other related activities but not for sectors or projects that they consider vital to their nations economic progress." Participants from Latin America expressed, "Deep suspicion of both bilateral and multilateral aid in the discussion of the role of foreign agencies in population and related activities. The theory that a dollar spent on birth control is more effective than a dollar invested in development projects was forcefully rejected. International and bilateral assistance must coincide with the priorities a country establishes for itself." The desire of richer countries to keep them in a weak and dependent position was criticized stating that they are ' putting on blinkers and being too narrow in approach and failing to give due attention to recipient countries goals'. They are seen as giving money away, ' according to their own rules'. For instance, participants voiced their suspicion that the ready availability of foreign funds for fertility control in the form of family planning programmes indicated the desire of richer countries to keep them in a weak and dependent position. Multilateral agencies , according to several participants, were ' highly politicized and bureaucratically harmonized.' African participants criticized official aid giving agencies - bilateral and multilateral - for being too rigid and often wrong in propagandizing their pet solutions to African problems. Participants from SE Asia: were highly critical of some aspects of foreign involvement in their country's annual review and the pressures surrounding aid allocation leading to artificial targets with often unquantifiable statistical practices or worse still, a resort to crude methods of achieving goals. Accusations were made of foreign consultants and counterparts, often ending up experimenting with their pet solutions in political and cultural settings about which they have little understanding or knowledge. It was felt that many worthwhile and badly needed studies are not undertaken because local funds are not available, and that priorities are too often decided by the availability of foreign funds. The overriding tendency of donor institutions to offer assistance for fertility limitation while simultaneously appearing to withhold assistance from health programmes or for comprehensive planning for the optimum distribution of population, were deplored. Foreign experts were stated to have been used to challenge each other or to challenge local forces to secure rejection of certain activities or the acceptance of others."

Such bias in funding has been brought out even by developed country researchers. According to Clinton and Godwin, , " the skewness is apparent in another realm with major implications for the type of research being carried out by political scientists – namely funding. Most organizations tend to place severe restrictions on the type of research proposals they would be willing to entertain from political scientists, the most common one being the requirement of a narrow fertility focus". While acknowledging that there is encouragement to be found in the recent increases in government funds for population research, they point out that much remains to be done in

convincing organizations of the counter productiveness of their overly narrow emphasis on fertility and their insistence on immediate payoffs.

A recent illustration of bias in supporting national needs is the case of the 1990 population census of Zambia where government felt the need to include a short module to collect some agricultural statistics aimed at establishing a frame for the forthcoming agricultural census. UNFPA, as a major contributor to the census was not happy and pressurized the statistics office to exclude the module as they feared that it may delay and jeopardize the census and also indirectly hinted that agriculture was the mandate of another agency.(A case of inter agency rivalry). But when government persisted, UNFPA agreed and the census concluded quite successfully.

Wolfson in her study of donors brought out the narrow focus of donors by citing the instance of request for support for the nutrition element in the health package under the family planning programme of India which one major donor turned down since it was alleged that the special feeding programme for pregnant women and nursing mothers might increase fertility(Wolfson, 1978). Another instance of donor preference or insistence on acceptable socio-economic climate is the decision many years ago, by SIDA after long consideration, that the Indian governments approach to the country's population problem was no longer sufficiently in tune with its own ' development approach ' as to warrant further Swedish aid in that sector . Another argument used against the provision of support is the alleged use of coercion , notably in the case of sterilization programme. Political considerations also enter in some countries being excluded for political reasons and others encouraged. In the late 1960s India was excluded from much of international aid because of its non aligned stance in the cold war tussle.

Another illustration is the recent emergence of AIDS and reluctance to provide adequate funding to assess AIDS morbidity and mortality. According to Timaeus (UN 1999), both officials in national statistics offices in Africa and their advisers and consultants have failed to rise to the challenge posed by the HIV epidemic. Equally, little impetus to change has come from donors. The DHS programme is funded by USAID. The only other donor with a major commitment to funding the collection of demographic data in the developing world is UNFPA. In recent years, both agencies have expanded their agenda from family planning to integrate other aspects of reproductive health into their activities including the prevention of HIV infection. However, AIDS mortality and adult mortality more generally do not fit well with their traditional concerns and have not been addressed in the same way. It is also unfortunate that while the US National Academy of Sciences report, " Preventing and managing AIDS in Sub Saharan Africa " emphasizes the need to collect more data on the epidemiology of HIV, it does not recommend the collection of data on the mortality impact of AIDS. As a discipline, demography has not only failed in its moral responsibility to describe one of the more important contemporary events in its field of study, but has been remarkably unconcerned about this failure. While a great deal of intellectual energy has been devoted to modeling AIDS mortality in Africa, far less scientific effort has gone into the development, assessment and application of methods for the measurement of mortality impact.

The real 'opening up' of the scope of population assistance came in the mid 1970s in the wake of the WPC Bucharest with its defiant challenge that, ' Development is the best contraceptive '. After a period of more or less agonizing reappraisal of their population assistance plan, donors came eventually to accept the importance of the ' development approach ' and ' population assistance ' accordingly began to include in addition to family planning and health care, support for a variety

of activities of a social developmental nature intended to tackle the presumed causes of high fertility .

One of the largest donor in the population field is the US. However, 'supply side approach' dominated US population assistance from the mid 1960s for virtually a decade and was pursued with unshakable aggressive salesmanship within developing countries and the international community alike. After WPC Bucharest however, and the shock of the Third World angry repudiation of family planning as the principal form of population assistance, the US together with other aid donors was obliged to reconsider the basic premises of its population assistance. Despite this opening up, the aid was not free from some influences which may not be palatable to developing countries. For instance, the requirement for AID to seek annual aid appropriations makes the aid policies and programmes of USAID particularly sensitive to congressional opinion. The process of obtaining Congressional authorization for the aid programme for the next fiscal year obliges AID each year to defend not only the broad sectors proposed for assistance but also each individual project of any significant size in a series of public hearings before Congress (often embarrassing recipient nations). Added to this, given its sensitive nature, population assistance has not surprisingly been particularly subject to shifting attitudes in Congress reflecting changes in the leading personalities concerned as well as changing current US public opinion. Another setback occurred in the 1980s when in response to concerns of the Vatican and intense local pressure from rightists, the Reagan Administration agreed to alter its foreign aid programme to comply with the church's teaching on birth control which stipulated that USAID should not support abortion or any coercive form of family planning. Further, according to William Wilson, the President's first ambassador to the Vatican, the State Department reluctantly agreed to an outright ban on the use of any US funds by either countries or international health organizations for the promotion of abortion. As a result of this position announced at WPC Mexico 1984 the United States withdrew funding from among others those of the world's largest family planning organization (IPPF) and population programme (UNFPA)

Other types of criticisms pertain to the way the aid is delivered and the pressures the developing countries are subjected to in order to not to displease the donors. For instance, where a country population programme is supported by a large number of different donor agencies, senior government officials concerned often deplore the ' multiplicity of donors to be satisfied' and the consequent likelihood of more people being dissatisfied. Further, governments not infrequently criticize the tendency of donors to make each its own selection of the parts of the programme that it wishes to support. In the words of one leading ministry of health official, ' donors come in like arrows, each aiming at their own particular targets' and irrespective of the governments own priorities.

Another constantly recurring comment that developing country officials make about the various donor agencies that provide them with population assistance is not so much that they are assertive, exacting or even uncomprehending, but that they are impatient. This is not of course, the only criticism of donors attitudes and of the way in which their population assistance is delivered.

There are also preferences or dislikes in choosing the countries to be supported. For instance, the poverty group has tended to be the favorite target for bilateral population assistance partly because , historically the first countries to request population assistance happened to be among the world's poor and partly because the concern for the relief of poverty which became so important a

consideration in aid policies in the mid 1970s conveniently focused donor attention on the very countries most in need of population assistance. Within the poverty group, donors had of course, their own particular clients: USAID had its own mix of economic and political criteria, the United Kingdom giving preference to countries of the Commonwealth, and Sweden assisting only those countries whose political, economic and social policies it broadly approves etc.

A key consideration, for instance, in US population assistance was the development of major countries and maximize progress towards population stability and therefore primary emphasis was placed on the largest and fastest growing developing countries where the imbalance between growing numbers and development potential most severely risked instability, unrest and international tensions as in Bangladesh, Brazil, Columbia, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines and Turkey. However, population assistance for other countries were to be provided to the extent of availability of funds and staff, taking into account such factors as long term US political interest. Other criteria included (a) country contribution to world population (size, growth, demographic transition) (b) extent to which population growth impinged on economic development and financial capacity and (c) imbalance between growing number of people and country capacity to handle problem.

Among donor organizations, IPPF with its principal policy making body (the Central Council) and its funding body (donors) being separate i.e. the fund espouses no particular population policy, made the fund acceptable and non threatening to the developing nations generally, but this compliance was at the cost of having a greater influence on national population policies.

However, for the past several years, IPPF has been receiving a certain amount of funding from some of its donor countries, earmarked for specific projects. In addition, the USAID introduced the practice of ' negative earmarking ' a few years ago by requesting of all recipients of its funds that these should not be used for abortion related activities. Recently Canada followed suit. Another type of tied aid is what is reported by the World Bank which admits " The population sector prompted bank regional staff to talk about population with high level officials when discussing terms for a structural adjustment loan (SAL). As a result, preparation of a population policy statement and action plan became an agreed condition of the release of the third tranche of SAL (Sai and Chester, 1990).

5. Manipulation Of Population- size and characteristics!

Census originated from need for obtaining the basis for taxation. and conscription Where there is disbenefit in numbers as in certain cases where poll tax, head tax, conscription are involved, there is tendency to under report or hide persons as has been suspected in some African and Asian countries in the colonial past. Censuses also served other purposes like providing the basis for apportionment of representation on geographic / socio economic and other considerations. This brought in manipulating the size of a population for various purposes. For instance, there is a tendency for specific ethnic / religious / language / caste / regional groups to ensure that their numbers are large and even sometimes in showing that the size of the others is much smaller, in order to reap maximum benefits for itself. Especially since budgetary allocations, parliamentary seats etc. are based on population size, the concern of each group is to make sure that not only are they fully counted, but at times even exaggerated to get additional advantages.

There are also instances where countries refuse to accept population figures from their censuses because they had expected or wished to have a much higher figure. For instance, Gabon in the 1970s took its first census and when the total population seemed too low, refused to endorse it. UN which had assisted the country in taking the census felt that such type of situation may endanger veracity of census counts.

Similarly, when the 1973 census of Sudan indicated a population which was claimed to be lower than what was anticipated, President Numeiri refused to endorse the figure and threatened to scrap the census. Arguing that Sudan is a very large country (the largest in Africa) he had expected a much higher figure. Even some international organizations like the World Bank were supportive of the claim of such large under count in the census. The larger figure would have another benefit in that in addition to the power and prestige accompanying a large population, it would also entail a lower per capita income thus making it eligible for foreign aid, grants and concessionary loans.

To look into the matter and resolve the issue, UN requested ECA to send an adviser to analyze the census data and arrive at the possible size of the population. RIPS was approached by ECA to assist. I was asked to undertake a mission to Sudan to evaluate the available census and other related data and advice on the reasonableness or otherwise of the claim. In the meanwhile, the Census and Statistics Department had recognized that some of the temporary migrant workers in the Blue Nile and Kassala Provinces had been not enumerated and a recount was undertaken. Analysis of the data also indicated the usual omission of infants and young children. Taking these into consideration, the adjusted final population came out to around 14 million.(Ramachandran, 1975) This figure which was much lower than what was originally claimed was accepted and the census results were analyzed by a team of young Sudanese(who enrolled for the Masters degree at RIPS, University of Ghana).On the basis of these analyses, the results were published as Analytical Report of the 1973 Census of Sudan by the Department of Statistics.

The situation in Nigeria was different. The 1962 census results were canceled after a heated and prolonged controversy which featured charges and counter charges to the effect that certain regions had inflated their figures. A new count was ordered in 1963, but when the figures were made public they were rejected by the governments of the Eastern and Midwestern Regions. The tribal rioting and unstable situation intensified by the inflation of population figures of certain regions, gave vent to the Ibos aspiring for independence and the consequent disastrous civil war. It was hoped by many that with the military administration of the country, the 1973 census would be successful, but the provisional result did not command wide spread acceptance and was subsequently canceled by the then Federal Military Government (Arawolo and Daramola , and NAS, 1991`). Attempts to take a census failed till recently a census was taken in 1991 and results are awaited.

Another classic example of population census getting mired in political squabbles pertains to Pakistan. The 1981 census was disputed by linguistic and religious minorities as having been under represented . Also there was the urban – rural divide where the Assemblies were dominated by feudals who managed to escape taxation and land reforms by their majority in Parliament, based on the censuses showing larger rural population However, given the rapid urbanization, it was feared by the feudals that an accurate count would sharply reduce their power (Husain, 1998). These factors were such that it was not possible to carry out the scheduled 1991 census till 1998. According to reports...” in order to defuse criticism of the ongoing census, the government

recently announced that the results would not affect either the determination of constituencies or the division of assets. This bit of political jugglery sowed further confusion because people asked why the country needs to count its numbers if nothing will change". Even this much delayed census generated heated discussions from linguistic and religious minorities and it is not clear whether official figures of population are yet published.

Even developed countries are not immune to census controversies which in the US goes back to several decades. Census data are usually intended to serve State building, i.e., political purposes. The 1920's debate about census was intensely partisan and is illuminating. However, it was not the first political battle over the census. As the post war decades added the further task of allocation of federal funds based on census results and in the 1960's introduced the notion of social justice to the politics of reapportioning seats in the House of Representatives and ensuring fairness and equity. It is obvious that if the counts are more complete for some groups than for others and when the under counted are racial and ethnic minorities, it is self evident that the politics of representation will become framed as a civil rights issue. Representation, federal fund allocation, and enforcement of non discriminatory elections require that census results are not biased one way or the other. In the US, the censuses have been acknowledged to have missed sizable numbers of minorities, populations of specific geographic areas etc. In 1990, for example, it was admitted that there was a more than 2 percent net under enumeration mostly of the minority groups. In order to ensure a better coverage and avoid criticisms, strenuous efforts are made – both by the census office and the affected groups -in the ongoing census of 2000.

When the representation of ethnic groups in the political system is explicitly based upon numbers, there is often a political struggle over control of the enumerating agency – the census department. Controversies often arise over such issues as which ethnic groups will be employed as enumerators, the reliability of enumerators in finding and counting specific ethnic groups, whether certain social groups have been under enumerated, and the criterion employed for indicating race, religion or language. In the US these considerations have played important role in the recent census (Prewitt, 2000). However, in Nigeria, despite such precaution (each enumerator was accompanied by a military personnel belonging to a different ethnic group) the census of 1973 did not produce acceptable results.

India provides a number of examples of how the census can be employed by government or interested groups to change the numbers of specific social groups as to affect the distribution of political power within the country. A census, for example, has been a major element in the controversy over language policy in India. The 1951 census showed a substantial increase in the number of Hindi and Hindustani speaking people, primarily by grouping under this category languages which had previously not been included (Bose, 1967). Again, after the reorganization of Indian States along linguistic lines, in the District of Belgaum, in northern Mysore State bordering Maharashtra, there has been a dispute between the two major linguistic groups as to whether the entire district should remain in the Kannada speaking State of Mysore or whether the Marathi speaking portion should be transferred to neighbouring Maharashtra. Because the 1951 census in the town of Belgaum was conducted by the Marathi speaking staff of the municipal corporation, Kannada politicians argued that Kannada speakers were under enumerated. The quarrel over numbers became so great in the early 1960's that the Mysore government withheld publication of the 1961 census which included linguistic breakdown in the district.

Another controversy rose when the 1951 census showed a drastic decline in the tribal population of India. The census enumerators argued that in the earlier census, the British had classified many social groups in the sub continent as tribal when they ought to have been classified as caste Hindus. But some critics of the government from tribals argued that the government was under enumerating tribals in an attempt to circumvent the constitutional provisions giving them representation in legislative assemblies and special privileges in appointments and in admissions to schools and colleges. It is interesting to point out that the 1961 census showed a rapid increase in the number of people reporting themselves as members of scheduled tribes – a jump of 33 % from 22.5 million in 1951 to 29.8 million in 1961, perhaps by a different method of classification.

In this vein, it may be mentioned that the latest clamour by some political / community groups to include caste / community in the coming census (2001) has rightly been turned down because it is suspected to create several problems/controversies later

Another important matter which has created political ripples in the wake of family planning and other population control methods pertains to the low growth rate in population of Madras during 1951-61 (11% against All India 21.5%) A number of state politicians expressed concern over the long term position of Madras in the national parliament, in which representation is determined by population. The difference in growth rate seemed largely accounted for by a lower birth rate (34.9 in Madras against 41.7 in India). It was argued that the gap between Madras and other states may increase, since a larger proportion of couples have adopted family planning in Madras in recent years than in all but three other states. To allay these fears and in order not to jeopardize the progress of the family planning programme, the law makers had frozen the number of parliamentary seats for the states based on the 1971 census till 2001. Recently the new population policy document recommended that this provision be further extended till 2026. This will ensure the affected states that their successful planning and management of population will not be punished.

In addition to the size and social , economic , ethnic and geographic characteristics of a population, the age and sex structure also are susceptible for manipulation In fact, some of the inflation/ deflation of the population may come through deliberate or other manipulation of age and sex distribution of a population. Thus, for policy decisions, it should be endeavoured that the distribution of a given population by age and sex is reasonably accurate especially since it is known that in developing countries there are several errors, biases and incompleteness in the data calling for evaluation and adjustment Therefore, when adjustments are made, they should reflect the true situation as far as possible. Any error or bias introduced by the faulty adjustment or manipulation of data (deliberately or otherwise) will have serious economic, social and political implications as illustrated below of a live situation where a wrong judgment on available data could have misled the government and resulted in costly political and socio – economic consequences. Also cited are cases where there were some massive omission of specific age and sex groups perhaps for security or other political reasons.

The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya took a census of its population in 1973 and an international team of manpower experts from ILO at the Manpower Secretariat, analyzed the age – sex distribution and concluded that there was massive under enumeration. This was based on the premise that both the 0-4 and 10-14 age groups were much below the anticipated proportion as compared to the proportion reported as aged 5-9.(Incidentally, based on data from several countries in the 1950s,

UN in Manual III observed, that the enumeration of 5-9 age is more or less complete and adjustments may be made to adjacent ages and especially the 0-4 age group such that the birth rate based on 0-4 age group is equal to the one based on 5-9 age.) In the case of Libya not only the 0-4 age but more so the 10-14 age group looked under enumerated as the birth rate was around 50 based on 0-4 age, 45 for age 10-14 as compared with 60 for the 5-9 age group. Therefore the ILO team recommended to blow up both the 0-4 and 10-14 groups respectively by 20 and 35 percent. This suggested adjustment resulted in (i) a much larger total population and higher intercensal growth rate (ii) increased estimates of birth and death rates (iii) consequent much larger! projected school age, labour force and total populations and above all (iv) implied a huge error in census count, raising doubts about its overall accuracy.

The Manpower Secretariat had accepted these findings and found it as an useful tool to belittle the Census and Statistics Department with whom there were some personal animosities and internal politics.

The Census and Statistics Department (CSD) felt that these findings were not warranted but did not know how to counter act. It was at that stage (1975) that RIPS had sent me on mission to Libya to familiarize the government about the training and research programme of RIPS . CSD wished the data to be looked at and suggest adjustments. Looking at the data it became clear that there was apparent under enumeration at ages 0-4 and 10-14. Even though UN Manual III had indicated that 5-9 age group is usually more completely enumerated, it had been observed in Asian and some African countries in the 1960!s and 1970s that many times there is some shift of children aged under 5 to ages 5 and above because of schooling etc. Therefore, usually the 0-9 age group was considered as more complete. In the case of Libya, even this looked unacceptable as the resulting birth rate seemed too high and was inconsistent with vital rates Apparently the 0-14 age group looked more acceptable. If this is true, then the massive under enumeration will no longer exist and the count would be more or less complete. It was an enigma why the 5-9 age group gained from 10-14 age group. This matter got resolved when the single year of age data was analyzed. There was a massive over reporting at age 9 with corresponding deficiencies at ages 10 and above. Actually preferred digits were 4 and 9 instead of 0 and 5 reported for the earlier census of 1964 in Libya. Remembering that such a high preference for digit 9 had been noticed for the 1969 census of Zambia because of the method used to estimate age, it be!came necessary to investigate the method of age estimation in the 1973 census of Libya. The census distinguished the source of age reporting as (a) estimated by individual or enumerator or(b) through documents / reference dates It was reported that age estimation for a vast majority was based on documents which were issued in 1969 after the revolution. For younger ages the previous census of 1964 became a reference point Since the document was issued in 1969 when age estimation had the usual digit preference for 0 and 5, this got translated into digit preference for 4 and 9 in 1973. Incidentally, for the small minority who estimated their ages, the usual preference for digits 0 and 5 persisted. Also, most children seemed to have been returned as being born in 1964 i.e., the census (reference)year so that their age would be 9 in 1973. (Ramachandran , 1977).On the basis of these findings and minor adjustments for a small under enumeration of infants and young children, the! age distribution was adjusted (which vindicated the census) and projections of the population was carried out resulting in much reduced school age,labour force and total population as compared to what was recommended by the Manpower Team. This was accepted by the government. Further, ECA/RIPS were requested by government to assist in the fuller analysis of the census which was carried out by Mandishona (ECA) and Ramachandran (RIPS). The results

were used for planning.

The important lesson from the above exercise is that adjustment of age – sex data should not be based on one criteria, but should look at the data from several angles in a holistic fashion especially from the consistency point of view with all other information available and accept the result which shows convergency with most observations.

Another case of an apparent massive omission of a specific age-sex group pertained to the Republic of Korea which took a census in 1955 (the first one after the Korean war). Two trainees from Korea at the Demographic Centre, Bombay looked at the data in order to project the population and estimate school and labour force populations for the period 1955-75(Kim and Im ,1960/61).

The first observation was that the sex ratio of the population (male per female) had fallen drastically and this was confined to ages 20-29 or 34. Several factors which might have brought about this were analyzed. Massive male out migration or female in migration was ruled out from known data about the country. Even though the Korean war casualties could be sex selective, it was considered as improbable to have brought about such drastic reduction in male young adults. Also over reporting of females / under reporting of males at these ages did not seem possible, as Korea has a good census history and quality of data has been reasonably accurate. Moreover, the female age distribution seemed acceptable and the female inter censal growth rate and survival ratios between 1948 and 1955 looked reasonably consistent with estimated birth and death rates. Thus the only possibility remained to be omission of males. Three questions arose:- (1) the number of males omitted, (2) who are these persons and (3) why were they omitted?.

Estimation of the missing population was based on (a) sex ratio,(b) age ratio,(c) growth rate, and (d) survival ratio. These estimates ranged between 223 thousand to 630 thousand with a median value around 500000.

The question of explaining who these young men are and why they were omitted suggested that they could be the military population which may have been hidden for security reasons. To verify this, a letter was addressed to Director of Statistics, Korea whose response given below verbatim explains everything:

“ The military population of the Republic of Korea is a top secret. However, your estimate is correct. How did you arrive at it “.

With this clarification, the projection of school population, labour force and total population were completed. If the intention was to deliberately hide the military population, it did not serve the purpose because it could easily be derived. Actually, if the military population had been mixed with the general population , it might have been well nigh impossible to estimate it.

Several years later in 1970/71 while a trainee from Iran was analyzing the 1966 census of Iran, a similar phenomenon of apparent omission of half a million males of young adult age was noticed. (Ali and Ramachandran, 1970). Queries to Director General of Census and Statistics, Iran did not elicit any response. However in 1971 during a personal visit to Teheran a private meeting with the Director General confirmed the conjecture.

6. Doctoring of population growth components

An important factor in the rapid growth of population has been the high birth rate and drastically falling death rates. Both governments and international community have been concerned with such rapid population growth hampering efforts towards economic and social development. There was a feeling among most of the international donor agencies / developed countries that not enough effort was being put into curtailing the rapid growth of population and especially the high birth rates, by developing countries. Therefore there seemed to be a line of thinking that governments needed to be jolted into recognizing the really high fertility rates, if necessary, even by exaggerating it. Since most of the countries did not have direct information on fertility, estimation was through indirect techniques and scope existed for manipulation of fertility estimates to depict rather high levels. For instance, while analyzing the 1980 census of Kenya, there was subtle pressure from some of the international population agencies to estimate fertility higher than what was considered consistent with the data. But, this was resisted as it was felt that such deliberate falsification may actually damage reputation of demographers and thereby lose the confidence of government (Gichohi and Ramachandran, 1984). However, it was agreed that even with the estimated fertility the implications could be highlighted to bring awareness to the country.

If it is exaggerating the level of fertility, in the case of mortality the tendency has been to show a rosier picture by estimating mortality as lower than what really exists. Tendency to report lower infant and other mortality rates, increased expectation of life etc. have been noticed. For instance, when the 1961 preliminary census population figures for India became available, using a very simple but powerful method (Hardy differencing method) the expectation of life at birth between 1951 – 61 was estimated as around 41 years (Ramachandran, 1961). Unfortunately, within a few days, it was announced in the Indian Parliament that the life expectation was 45 years. Even though it was not possible to challenge the estimate, it looked too high. Fortunately, within the next few days, a member of the opposition in the parliament suggested that the estimate of life expectation should form the basis for calculating life insurance premiums. Since life insurance is a government monopoly, this would have implied a tremendous loss in revenue, if the higher estimate is used. Government immediately responded by reducing the figure to 43 and even stating that further studies are required before doing anything on its consequences on life insurance premia etc. (Press reports, 1961). It may be mentioned that in 1962 when detailed life tables for 1951-61 were presented at the First Asian Population Conference in Delhi, the value of life expectation was 41.2 – not very far from the estimate derived by crude methods. What would have happened to estimates of life expectation, if the question of its implication to the economy had not been brought out, is an interesting point to ponder. Certainly, one consequence would have been that in later periods, either similar exaggeration would be required to show reasonable improvement in levels of living or face the prospect of depicting much slower improvement in health and living conditions as illustrated below.

A trainee at RIPS analyzed the 1966 and 1976 censuses of Swaziland (Mabuza, 1981) and noted that the 1966 census analysis had over estimated the expectation of life at birth by about 2 – 3 years. When the analysis was completed and ready for submission to the University of Ghana, it came to our attention that the analytical report of the 1976 census had just been published in which again the life expectation had been over estimated by about a similar 2-3 years. Thus, even though the mortality improvement between 1966-76 was similar in the two studies, (Mabuza and official

1976 census analysis report), the estimates given by the government for both periods seemed to be depicting rosier picture. Incidentally, it happened that the external examiner for Mabuzas thesis was the international expert (Dr. J.G.C. Blacker) who was associated with the Swazi government report of the 1976 census. Naturally the trainee was scared that her estimate which differed from his estimates may create problems. Therefore, the discrepancy between the two sets of estimates were more carefully analyzed and it was clear that her estimates were more consistent and needed no revision excepting that a paragraph or two should be added to the thesis pointing out the observation on the 1966 and 1976 Swaziland official analytical reports. With these modifications, the thesis had no problem with the external examiner who appreciated the honest approach of the trainee.

It was not clear whether the analyst of the 1976 data was tied by the previous higher estimate because otherwise the mortality improvement for the decade would have been very little. It was also not clear whether the exaggeration of life expectation in 1966 was deliberate or not, but certainly countries usually feel happy if their data indicate higher life expectation and better improvements in living conditions.

Another instance where infant mortality was underestimated (though apparently not deliberately but which however had tremendous political implications) occurred in 1992. Data from the 1991 census of Uganda was available and analysis of infant and child mortality indicated that infant mortality rate was around 120.(Ramachandran and Srivastava, 1992) This was discussed with the UNFPA country Director (Mr Teferi Seyoum)who then pointed out that this figure was too high and conflicted with the much lower figure of around 80 publicly announced very recently by the Head of State Mr. Museveni. Therefore, we were advised to check the figures and in any case, it was pointed out that the higher estimates (even higher than what had been estimated almost ten years earlier) would not be politically acceptable.

Questioning the source for the low figure of 80 brought out the fact that it was based on the recently concluded Demographic and Health survey (Uganda, 1989) and another household sample survey carried out by UNICEF and WHO. Since the figures looked too low, the reports and data were examined. These revealed (i) that the UNICEF/WHO study had made an error in the calculation of IMR by equating it as the ratio of deaths among births of last year to total number of births of the year and (ii) the DHS indicated errors in reporting of age at death such that several deaths occurring within a year of birth seemed shifted to higher ages. There was a massive shifting to 12 months as month of death of children

qj Correcting the UNICEF/WHO data for the error in the formula resulted in an IMR of around 120 as obtained by us. Regarding the DHS, whereas the under 5 year mortality (an l_5 equal to .82) seemed quite acceptable, the infant mortality of around 80 (deaths occurring before one year of life) was too low. It was observed that no existing life table could justify such very low infant mortality for the reported under 5 mortality. Basing on available model life tables, the median IMR based on the data would be around 120 - very close to our estimate. These findings were presented to the statisticians, demographers and policy makers in the presence of representatives of US AID, WHO, UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA and other international aid agencies and with the explanations, it was possible to convince government that infant mortality is rather high and has not only not decreased but has actually increased.

One salient feature of this exercise was that it opened the eyes of government and donors and resulted in promises of much larger funding and support for infant, child and maternal mortality programmes which otherwise would not have been available.

An interesting observation on mortality where aside from real difficulties in collecting data in conflicting and hostile situations, a wide range of biases and statistical manipulations also occur given the political nature of monitoring and disclosing war related deaths and disabilities has been reported (Zwi, 1996).

Adetunji brings in an important fact that AIDS related deaths may be exaggerated because of pressure and states that ‘ withdrawal of donor assistance may even help gain a better picture of the actual situation in Sub Saharan Africa by removing the pressure to play up the numbers in order to attract attention and donor aid’ (Adetunji, 1999). In this connection an opposite tendency to under report HIV infection, AIDS! morbidity and mortality has been noted among countries attracting huge number of tourists

In the case of migration the situation is not very clear cut with regard to estimation and reporting. Whereas there is tendency for reporting smaller numbers in situations where out migration especially of the type of expellees is involved, there is tendency to report larger numbers in cases of in migration such as refugees/asylum seekers etc. Since estimation of international migration - expellees and refugees - is a very sensitive issue. and direct information is usually not available or very difficult to obtain, it is only indirect estimates that one has to depend upon and scope for manipulation is quite ample. Again, because of the sensitive nature of the figures, it is very difficult to ensure that the estimates are scientifically based, will be acceptable to all parties and certainly do not offend governments and parties involved. A few instances where estimation was carried out and the resulting experiences given below may be illuminating.

Immediately after partition in 1947 a large number of refugees had arrived in India and were being put up in make shift camps. With the trauma of losing near and dear ones and all material possessions, the mood of the refugees was quite hostile and emotionally charged. Attempts by government to obtain estimates of their numbers for even humanitarian purposes, were met with violent hostility as the refugees suspected that it may be used against them to curtail benefits as it was known that there was some exaggeration of numbers for obtaining additional rations etc. The problem of estimating the number was assigned to the Indian Statistical Institute which used a very ingenious and effective method to arrive at reasonably accurate figures. It was based on a ratio method whereby the average consumption of a staple food requirement which may have very little individual variation (i.e., homogeneous between individual consumption) like common salt was utilized to derive the expected number. This method worked out very well as confirmed by later more scientific counts carried out when situation had become calmer and normal. (News Reports 1948)

However, in yet another situation where an international agency tried to estimate the refugee population (Somalia in the 1980s) and did quite a decent job, government wished a much higher figure because quantum of international assistance is based on number of refugees. The larger the number, the more the aid. Therefore, a smaller figure arrived at by the international experts was not only rejected but when the experts did not agree to adjust the figure upwards, they were declared *persona non grata* and expelled! (Press Reports). It has been reported that even

sometimes the aid organizations themselves exaggerate the numbers in order to attract enhanced financial and other support (Sudan, 1990s).!

A rather delicate experience with estimation of a special type of migration (expellees) occurred in 1972 when a paper on the analysis of the 1971 census of Ghana was prepared. It was to illustrate use of census and related data for a seminar sponsored by ECA and RIPS.

In the analysis of the Ghana 1971 census, the number of those Aliens who left the country in the short period after the promulgation of the Aliens Compliance Order of 1970 was estimated by using a battery of indirect techniques and found to be between 500 to 800 thousand. (de Graft Johnson and Ramachandran, 1972) The government which had another much lower figure of around 200 thousand, felt that the higher estimate would be an embarrassment and wanted the authors (1) to revise the figures in line with the much lower official statistics, (2) prove the figures derived or (3) with draw the paper. An answer was needed within a month.

The matter was looked at very carefully and it was clear that the official figure was too low and would be inconsistent with other information available like alien population in 1960 and 1971, growth rate, birth and death rates, previous census information etc. To withdraw the paper at that stage was difficult as the ECA/RIPS seminar was already announced and was scheduled within the next 3 months and the said paper was a crucial input into the proceedings. To prove the values derived seemed impossible at that stage with very limited time. Fortunately, one of the authors of the paper (Prof. K.T. De Graft Johnson) took up the matter and approached the Directors of statistics of the seven neighbouring countries:- Dahomie, Ivory Coast, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Togo and Upper Volta for data pertaining to entries into their countries during the specific periods from Ghana. Within a few days after we contacted the countries such data was received from five of them. A matching of figures indicated that for every one person reported as having exited the Ghanaian border to that country, there were 2 to 4 reported as having entered that country. A valid explanation of this phenomenon is that under the critical conditions existing in Ghana during the difficult period of the Aliens Compliance Order, the primary focus of the expellees was to get out fast (Most of the borders are quite porous) and not to worry about filling forms etc., but at the point of entry every effort was made to register their names etc. to ensure that they would not face further difficulties. This finding was presented to the government which was accepted. The seminar took place with the Commissioner for Manpower Planning, government of Ghana inaugurating the seminar and the paper was presented. Later the paper was published as RIPS News Letter No. 1 and by ECA as African Population Studies No. 2, 1973.

7. Conclusion and recommendations

The play of politics in the field of population has pervaded each and every aspect including the types of data collected, the research orientation, funding and other support provided and in the presentation and interpretation of results. It has been demonstrated that a trained demographer / statistician can detect some of the deliberate or other types of biases or errors in the data and present the true situation.

One observation brought out by the study is that it is essential that analysis and interpretation of data should be carried out by preferably more than one group of demographers / statisticians and wherever possible, research and training institutions and other independent non governmental

organizations may be fruitfully employed in these exercises. Consistent and convergent sets of estimates may prove to be more reliable than one set of official estimates.

In order to achieve the above objective, it has brought to the fore the need for training in demography and related areas. Especially in developing countries with dearth of material and human resources, the scope for manipulation of data being too high, the imminence of providing training facilities in such countries assumes great importance. United Nations has played a crucial role in this by the establishment of the five Regional Demographic Training and Research Centres covering Asia, Latin America, Arab countries and Anglophone and Francophone African countries. Of late, it has been noticed that not much importance is given for training and research. This is a pity because investment in training has shown immense returns by the role played by these institutions in bringing the awareness of population in the world. At least in the case of the African Region this becomes all the more relevant since it is the one region which has a large proportion of population who are poor and illiterate, where fertility and mortality are still higher than elsewhere and which did not seem to have received even its due share of assistance and support as compared with the other regions

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