

Demographic analysis needed for planning

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MOHAMMED ABUL KALAM

PLANNING requires analysis of more or less the entire spectrum of population development, although some variables are of direct relevance to the formulation of plan, while others are indispensable for understanding the population process. Because of this, demographic analysis should be as comprehensive as feasible. It must encompass the following topics: the size and growth of population and its components, the age-sex structure, the spatial distribution and redistribution, and the socio-economic structures of the population. In a program of demographic analysis, the following aspects must be taken into consideration: (a) the characteristics of the past trends and current demographic situation; (b) the character of plan for which the analysis is prepared, e.g. comprehensive or sectoral, medium or long term plan, and the like; (c) the scope of planning, i.e. whether for the entire country, a single region, a large city, etc.; and (d) the kind of procedure pursued in planning with special regard to the projection mechanism used.

While the objective is always the same -- to explore the demographic process and integrate a set of population

variables with a set of socio-economic variables -- the analysis direction and emphasis would substantially vary depending on the scope, character and procedure of a plan. Thus, for example, if population variables were to be used externally for the purposes of micro-economic planning, the analysis and product would be a set of exogenous demographic rates applicable to individual demographic projection, which as such would be applied to macro-economic models.

On the other hand, analysis undertaken within a framework of constructing a demographic-economic model would follow its own logic. A major aim would be to explore interactions of demographic and socio-economic variables and thus work out an endogenous projection mechanism or parts of it, as appropriate.

Similarly, approaches would differ in the case of sectoral demographic projection and sectoral models, respectively, yet emphasis would be placed on those population variables that are important to the sector concerned. But, irrespective of differences, demographic analysis for planning, by definition, relies on methods and procedures developed within demography, such as the cohort component

method, differential fertility rates, life tables, labour force participation rates, and the like.

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One of the analysis objectives should be to establish how the size and growth of population interact with economic and social phenomena such as production, consumption, savings, health, education and the like.

Owing to long-term effect on, and direct connection with, a variety of social and economic factors, the age-sex structure should be accorded a significant place in demographic analysis undertaken for the purposes of planning. The objective is to reveal the intensity and direction of change in this structure, to single out sub-populations formed on the basis of functions pertaining to individual sex-age groups, so as to establish a demographic framework of reference relative to social and economic development.

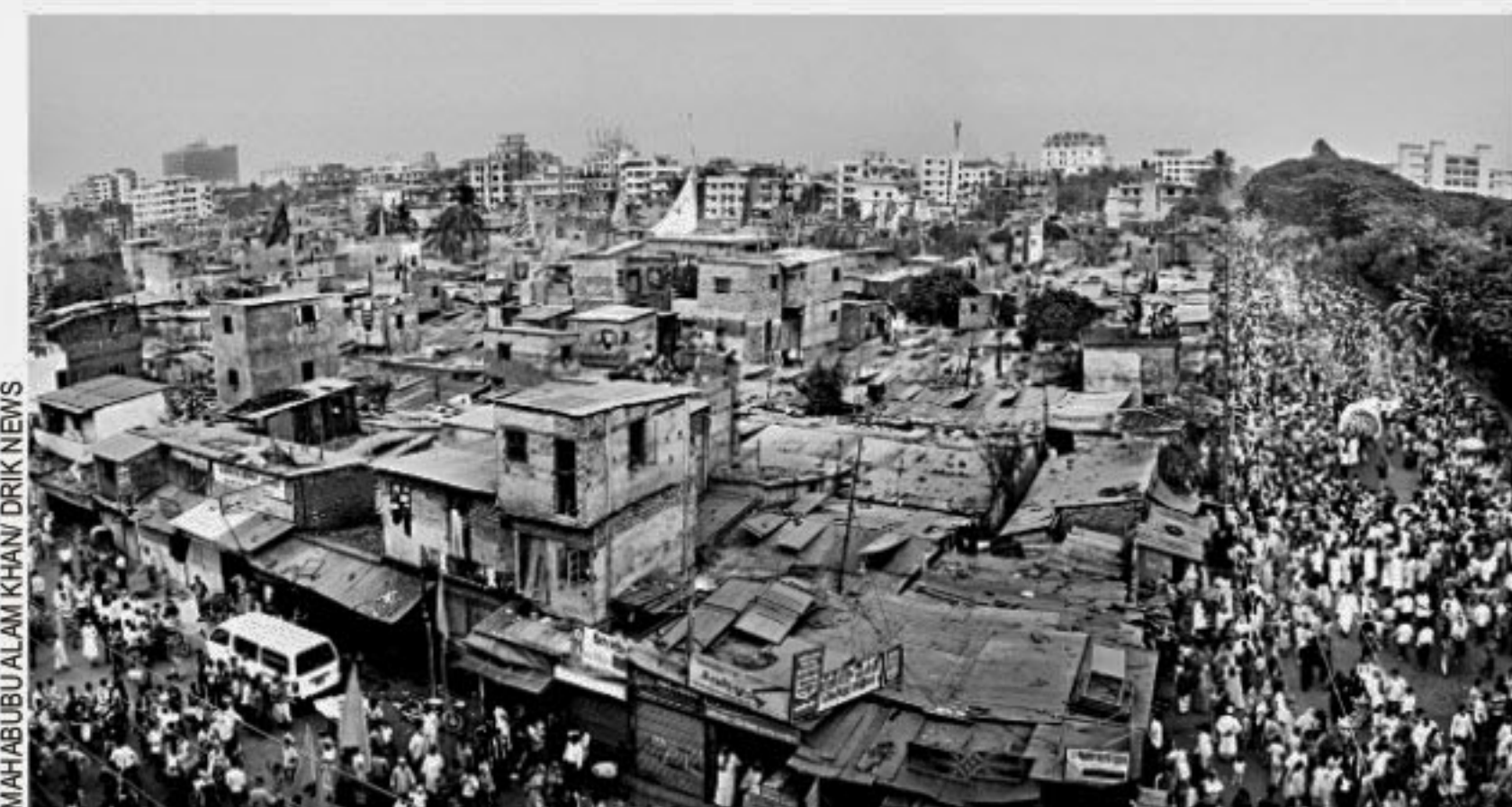
Some important functional age-sex groups of the population appear to be: (a) pre-school population; (b) school-age population; (c) population of reproductive age; (d) working-age population; and (e) the elderly group. Besides analysis for the total population, the characteristics of the age-sex structure in urban and rural areas and in the agricultural and non-

agricultural populations should be examined separately.

Development theory postulates that the economically active population or the labour force, together with the capital assets or equipment available to it, plays a central role in social and economic development. Accordingly, the economic activity and the pace of economic development depend, to a great extent, on the size and qualitative features of labour force, such as educational levels, skills, state of health, experience and more particularly, pattern of employment.

Within the broad area of labour force study, it is essential to examine the effects of demographic, social and other factors on its size and structure. In this regard, it is important to determine how the size and growth of labour force is affected by change in population growth and the age-sex structure, by transfers from agricultural to non-agricultural industries, by the development of the school system and social insurance as well as other development policies.

All these factors are to be properly studied with a view to estimating the sex and age specific labour force participation rates. In societies which are developing, the economic activities of women appear to change over time, and female employment seems to be an important aspect of labour force formation. Consequently, labour force analysis ought not to neglect investigation of the factors determining the level of female economic activity, such as their reproductive role, marital status, and central factors related to the status



of women in the society and the family.

The results and findings of demographic analysis should serve as groundwork in defining the ways of, and means for, an adequate utilisation of human resources, a meaningful socio-economic development and a rational population development in the future. In fact, the current and perspective demographic situations are to be taken into account not only in the course of formulating population policies and measures, but also in the course of adopting the main economic and social objectives and targets.

We may only speculate that it would imply a different pattern of socio-economic development, particularly in Bangladesh, focused on the authentic human needs and requirements, production of essential goods and services, education, higher levels of living, equal opportunity and the like, rather than a higher rate of economic growth.

Similar to those needed for planning, yet produced for a different purpose are demographic projections and

models designed for exploring possible implications of future population change. Such models may be constructed within an objective of studying economic and social consequences of alternative demographic trends.

They may be used for the purpose of discussing and testing interdisciplinary policies in the complex area of population, economic growth and environment. Long-term projection may account for possible biomedical discovery or change in human behaviour with an intention of training alternative paths of fertility and population growth to provide a ground for re-examination of their economic and social implications. Other studies may concentrate on public expenditure, urbanisation, agricultural development or other important aspects of human concern that may be of interest to development planning as well.

Mohammed Abul Kalam, PhD, Principal Scientific Officer & Head, Department of Medical Sociology, Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control & Research (IEDCR).

Eradicating poverty among slum dwellers

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MD ABDUL BATEN AND TOFAIL AZAD

DHAKA is one of the most densely populated and rapidly expanding mega cities in the world. Over 30 million people live in various cities in Bangladesh, which is roughly around 24% of the total population. It is estimated that this number will increase to about 68 million by 2015.

About 49% of the total population of Bangladesh is poor, destitute, vulnerable and living inhuman lives. 20 million people are extremely poor, which is 7% of the total population.

As poor people become desperate for a way to make a living, they rush towards the city lights. It is estimated that 300,000 to 400,000 new migrants come to Dhaka every year. The population of Dhaka doubles every ten

years. Unfortunately, the expansion and growth of our cities are not well planned, leaving those searching for new opportunities in a sad situation.

These new migrants often try to look for a roof over their heads in one of the 4,966 slums of Dhaka city, where they may squeeze their bedding down next to one of the 5 million people living below the radar. With almost half the city's population living in slums, it's crucial that we explore ways to develop the means of livelihoods of slum dwellers in order to ensure growth, equity and achievement of the millennium development goals by 2015.

Most slum people come from disaster prone, river eroded and monsoon affected areas, such as northern chars, haors, and coastal belts. They quickly become an integral part

of our source of economic power, contributing to the major work force in the garments, transportation, construction, land development, domestic help, small industries and businesses and waste management sectors. We rely on them, exploit them, grow prosperous on their backs, but we continue to neglect them.

Slum people live in unhealthy and inhuman conditions and face continuous threat of eviction, unemployment, under-employment, hunger, malnutrition, disease, polluted water, lack of safe water supply and sanitation facilities, and harassment from the local power structures.

Although a number of initiatives have been launched by the government, non-government and UN agencies, and though poverty has also been reduced significantly in terms of percentages, the number of poor people is still increasing.

Despite the funds and programmes to alleviate poverty, many extreme poor households remain unassisted. It is an unexpected reality that urban extreme poor have no access to government safety net programmes such as VGD, VGF, old aged pension scheme and 100 days work scheme that are

available to the rural poor.

Considering the overall situation, Dushtha Shasthya Kendra (DSK) is implementing a project targeting extreme poor slum dwellers in Dhaka city, with the support from the three project (Economic Empowerment Project) funded by UKaid and the government of Bangladesh.

DSK is working on 10,000 households in two slums -- Korail and Kamrangirchar. This project hopes to increase the livelihoods of extreme poor slum dwellers through asset transfers (for example, sewing machines), start-up capital, capacity building for small businesses and other income generating initiatives.

The people in the slums are very entrepreneurial and hard working, and we believe, given the opportunity, they will be able to do well, economically and socially. However, the extreme poor require more than just start-up capital to climb out of poverty. They require forward and backward linkages (markets) for their products. They require a safe home at night. They require primary health care services, safe water and sanitation facilities.

DSK would like to place a strong argument to the government of



Bangladesh and development partners for formulating pro-poor development policies, expanding the social safety net programmes, and providing land ownerships to the urban extreme poor households/slum dwellers besides the other development initiatives. Also, the private sector can get involved to help extreme poor people become part of the formal sector by providing market support.

Urban slum dwellers are contributing significantly to Dhaka's economic growth as they are providing the labour necessary for manufacturing, services and other sectors. So, it is important to bring them into the mainstream economy and to provide support to lift them out of poverty.

Dr. Tofail Md. Alamgir Azad is Project Director E-mail: (tofail.azad@dskbangladesh.org) and Md. Abdul Baten is Coordinator-Research, DSK-Shree Project. E-mail: baten@dskbangladesh.org.

Myanmar's election charade

It may be recalled that after a massive political uprising in 1988, general elections were held in Myanmar in May 1990. The National League for Democracy (NLD) led by charismatic Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi won a landslide with 392 seats in the parliament of 485. The military regime never recognised the results of that election and no civilian democratic government was allowed to be formed.

MAHMOOD HASAN

MYANMAR will hold multi-party national parliamentary elections on November 7. The hope is that the majority party in the parliament will form a civilian "democratic" government.

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Nothing much has changed in the political landscape of Myanmar over the past two decades. The military junta calling itself State Peace and

Development Council (SPDC) continues to harass and intimidate pro-democracy activists. Commander-in-Chief Gen Than Shwe is the chairman of SPDC and head of state of Myanmar.

The imposed 2008 Constitution provides for a bicameral house, which will be elected at the centre by 27 million registered voters out of a population of 57 million. In the lower house "Pyithu Hluttaw" (People's Parliament) elections will be held for 330 seats, and in the upper house "Amyotha Hluttaw" (Nationalities Parliament) elections will be held for 168 seats. Elections will also be held in the 14 states and divisions, which will have a total of 665 seats. In all there are 1,163 seats.

Interestingly, the upper house will have 56 reserved seats for the military, raising the total to 224. The lower chamber will have 110 seats reserved for the military, making it a 440-seat house.

Chairman of SPDC Gen Than Shwe will nominate the military officers for these two houses.

In March, the SPDC promulgated five laws that shall govern the elections, and parties were asked to register by May 7. Political parties have viewed these laws as extremely restrictive and totally undemocratic.

For instance, the laws prohibit persons serving prison sentence -- meaning Aung San Suu Kyi and more than 2,000 political prisoners -- from being electoral candidates. Party registration also was made extremely cumbersome. Many of the 37 parties registered to contest the elections cannot field candidates because of the hefty registration fee (\$500) for each contesting candidate -- which is financially impossible for most parties.

Besides, the time for organising party activities is too short. The election dates were announced in August and two weeks were given for registration of the candidates.

Aung San Suu Kyi rejected the 2008 Constitution as it was imposed through trickery, called for a review of the statute, and demanded the release of all political prisoners. She also rejected the unjust and undemocratic Political Party Registration Law.

NLD had, therefore, decided not to participate in the elections and requested all political parties to boycott the elections. When NLD did not apply for regis-

tration, the Election Commission quickly deregistered the party and then the SPDC proceeded to ban it. Suu Kyi, who continues to be under house arrest, did not accept that NLD was abolished. The sad part is that some senior NLD leaders quit the party and floated National Democratic Front.

While the junta conspired to outlaw NLD, it was actively propping up two formidable political outfits. The Union Solidarity Development Party (USDP) led by Prime Minister Gen Thein Sein, who recently shed his uniform, has the full support of the military. Several cabinet ministers also hung up their uniforms and joined the party to contest the elections. Financially strong USDP will field candidates in all the constituencies. With the backing of the army USDP has been able to coerce well-known town elders and village leaders to join the party and contest the elections.

National Unity Party (NUP), successor of the erstwhile Myanmar Socialist Program Party founded by the redoubtable Gen Ne Win, has come out of the closet after its severe drubbing in the 1990 elections. NUP also enjoys the backing of the junta and is led by Htun Yi, a former military man. Organisationally strong NUP will also contest in almost all the seats.

As the election field has been strongly tilted in favour of USDP, analysts say that

the result of the election is a foregone conclusion. USDP will win majority of the seats in both the houses. And with the reserved seats the military will monopolise the newly "elected" parliament. Whether it will be "democratic" as we understand it is another debate. How many seats NUP will win and what role it will play will be interesting to watch.

The junta has made sure that its protégé USDP will come out with flying colours. The young voters, who had never before seen elections, will go to the polling booths out of curiosity, if not for anything else. It is unlikely that the elections will be rigged. However, no foreign election-monitoring agency will be allowed to observe the elections.

In Myanmar, political parties believe that democracy means fighting violent street battles with the military. What is amazing is that the registered parties have failed to unite for the upcoming elections. They have neither been able to form a coalition to contest the elections nor an electoral front to boycott the elections. That is because political parties were not allowed to grow and mature. Politically inclined people have been systematically intimidated and incarcerated by the military.

It is regrettable that the media and the international community have depicted the NLD as an "opposition" political party. The nomenclature pitched the NLD

against the junta. It, thus, failed to earn the trust of the military. There is a massive gap between their perceptions on how to govern the nation.

The military has all through behaved like a monolithic political party for the past fifty years, ever since the late dictator Ne Win seized power in 1962. People fear the junta, and the military fears the people.

In the words of Aung San Suu Kyi: "It is not power that corrupts but fear. Fear of losing power corrupts those who wield it, and fear of the scourge of power corrupts those who are subject to it."

One wonders how the military sustains itself, despite being so unpopular. What boggles the minds of observers is how does the junta attract the educated young generation to serve the military? The answer lies in the military's firepower and weak, inexperienced political parties. Young people apparently shun political parties because they see that serving the military not only brings enormous material gains but also power.

The election may go off smoothly but its credibility will be questioned repeatedly. Myanmar will have a military government with a "civilian façade," but "democracy" will be buried once again, as it happened in 1990.

Mahmood Hasan is a former Ambassador and Secretary and Policy Adviser, Center for Foreign Affairs Studies.