

Making the numbers count

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What should be the angle of my piece? I asked myself. "Should I justify the relevance of population dynamics for development, or present the current state of affairs of population dynamics? Playing these questions in mind several times, I decided to do both, because my readings of many literatures gave me that direction. Moreover, the relationship between population dynamics and the development priorities is constantly changing as the development process roles forward through time. Population and development are composite concepts by nature and population issues do not exist in isolation. People in a society are both producers as well as consumers.

The Global Leadership Meeting (took place in Dhaka in 2013) engaged in a thematic consultation on population dynamics and the Post-2015 development agenda. The meeting recognised linkages between population dynamics and development challenges and opportunities, and their implications for development strategies, goals and policies. The leaders noted that mega population trends—population growth, migration, urbanisation and



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tion; reduction in maternal & child mortality with biasness towards urban, educated and rich; a growing elderly population with a broken link; and rapid urban growth with growing urban poverty, vulnerability and exclusion.

Population growth trends in Bangladesh show that Bangladesh is well into third phase of demographic transition, having shifted from a high mortality-high fertility regime to a low mortality-low fertility one. As a result of declining population growth and consequent changes in age structure, the proportion of working-age population increases, offering a window of opportunity, referred to as the 'demographic dividend'.

This demographic dividend offers an opportunity for potential economic benefit, when there is an increase in working age population and an associated decline in the dependent population. An increasing proportion of working-age individuals in a population enhance overall productivity, with improved skill level of the workers contributing to it. However, it is worth noting that demographic dividend is a time specific window of opportunity, and is not going to last forever. It is a transitory phenomenon—a 'window of opportunity'.

The 'demographic dividend' leads to opportunities for growth in output per capita in two principal ways. One, there is an age-structure impact on total GDP due to increasing proportion of working-age group in total population, increasing the ratio of producers to consumers. Two, there are "behavioural effects" of changing age structure. An increasing proportion of working-age individuals in a population enhance overall productivity,

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population ageing—constitute important development challenges.

In the Concept Note of the Global Leadership Meeting on Population Dynamics, it was clearly stated that "population dynamics affect economic, development, employment, income distribution, poverty, social protection and pensions. Population dynamics affect efforts to ensure universal access to health, education, housing, sanitation, water, food and energy. It also influences the sustainability of cities and rural areas, environmental conditions and climate change. These link-

ages influence, and are influenced by, the realisation of human rights and gender equality".

The leaders thus declared (Dhaka Declaration 2013) their commitment to address and integrate population dynamics into the Post-2015 development agenda, since people lie at the centre of the development process, causing changes and being changed by those changes. Therefore, any development process should consider the demographics of population, i.e., its structure, composition, distribution, behaviour pattern, attitude, values,

norms, beliefs, practices and the whole life-style pattern. The number of people, the speed of growth, the quality of life, the pressures on them, etc. are influenced by environmental, economic, political and social conditions. This is not a one way process. People influence these conditions by the decisions they take.

Mega population trends in Bangladesh is characterised by a large population with high density and a built in population momentum; declining fertility with regional variations and considerable contraceptive discontinua-



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