

Population Policy

Research Priorities in the Developing World

prepared by

Carmen A. Miro and Joseph E. Potter

Report of the International Review Group of
Social Science Research on Population & Development

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Report of the International Review Group of Social Science Research on Population and Development

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In Memory of Bernard Berelson

When this report was about to go to press, IRG's secretariat received the sad news of Bernard Berelson's death. Without claiming that Barney, as his friends called him, shared all the points of view and recommendations contained in the report, there is no doubt that from the inception of the Group he had a major influence on the manner in which IRG's work was organized and contributed significantly to its various activities. The report "Social Science Research for Population Policy", published as Appendix 1 is but a small reflection of the important contribution made by Barney to the Group's work.

It is with great regret that we faced the brutal fact that we would not have the benefit of Barney's criticism of this final version of IRG's report. To the extent that the report will contribute to guide future efforts to solve the many population-related problems to which Bernard Berelson untiringly devoted so many years of his life, the group would like to offer it as a tribute to his memory.

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Copies may be obtained from *Books on Demand*, University Microfilms International, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106.

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PREFACE

The International Review Group of Social Science Research on Population and Development (IRG) was constituted in 1976 and entrusted with the task of making recommendations for future research that would contribute to the formulation and improvement of population policies in the developing countries. The establishment of IRG had its origin in discussions between representatives of donor agencies and scholars from Africa, Asia, and Latin America which came to the conclusion that although several surveys of the state of knowledge on aspects of the population-development link were available, there was a need for a broader perspective that only a systematic interdisciplinary evaluation could provide.

The IRG received financial support over a period of approximately two years from a group of nine governmental, inter-governmental, and nongovernmental organizations composed of the Ford Foundation, the International Development Research Centre, the Norwegian Agency for International Development, the Population Council, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Swedish International Development Authority, the United Kingdom Ministry of Overseas Development, the United Nations Fund for Population Activities, and the World Bank.

Organized as an *ad hoc* body, the Group's members were: Bernard Berelson of the Population Council, John Caldwell of the Australia National University, P. B. Desai of the Institute of Economic Growth (Delhi), José Encarnación of the University of the Philippines, Akin Mabogunje of the University of Ibadan, Riad Tabbarah of the U.N. Economic Commission for Western Asia, and Raúl Urzúa of the Latin American Demographic Centre. Carmen Miró served as IRG's President and Joseph Potter as her Associate in the project's Secretariat, located at El Colegio de México.

During the course of the project, the President convened four meetings of the Group. The first two (México City, 4-6 October 1976; Princeton, New Jersey, 25-27 January 1977) served to delineate the primary area of concern — those issues perceived by policymakers as population-related problems, particularly in areas amenable to modification through policy intervention within a ten-year period — and the nature of the regional reviews and other documents to be prepared by the members and consultants. Preliminary versions of these papers were presented and discussed at the Group's third meeting (México City, 1-4 August 1977) while the

final meeting (New York, 4-8 December 1978) was devoted to the revision of this Report.

The basic background papers for the project were the regional reviews of the state of knowledge on population and development, major gaps therein and possible ways of filling such gaps prepared for Middle South Asia (Desai), East and South-East Asia (Jones), Arab countries (Tabbarah, Mamish and Gemayel), Sub-Saharan Africa (Mabogunje and Arowolo, and Ware), Latin America (Urzúa), and the developing world in general (Berelson). In addition, papers referring to the population policies and the institutional research and training capacity of most of the regions were produced. These 13 documents appear as separate appendices to this Report.

During 1978, the IRG organized three regional Workshops on Research Priorities for Population Policy (Colombo, Sri Lanka, 26-28 April; México City, 28-30 June; Nairobi, Kenya, 6-8 September). These were co-sponsored, respectively, by the Marga Institute, El Colegio de México and CELADE, and the Population Studies and Research Institute of the University of Nairobi. The Workshops were intended as a forum in which government officials responsible for policy decisions bearing on population problems, well-known scholars in the population field, and personnel from donor agencies could exchange views as to the gaps in knowledge relevant to policy design. For discussion at the Workshops, the Group either prepared or commissioned a series of position papers on research needs on mortality, fertility, family planning, internal and international migration, the titles of which are included in the list of selected documents appearing at the end of this volume.

In preparing the final Report for the project, the IRG Secretariat's primary concern was to distill what had been learned from the Workshops and from the regional reviews and other documents prepared for the project. The Report reflects the views of the members as expressed in the Group's Meetings and in their comments on a draft version of the Report, but the members cannot be held individually responsible for all of the conclusions and recommendations expressed herein.

A task such as that carried out by IRG is made possible thanks to the collaboration of many institutions and persons. Included at the end of the Report, is a list of persons that participated in the activities organized by the Group and who contributed ideas, suggestions and recommendations useful in the preparation of this Report.

Special mention should be made of El Colegio de México. The facilities and support provided by El Colegio made it possible for the Secretariat to work in a pleasant and rewarding atmosphere and contributed greatly to the success of two of the Group's Meetings and the Latin American regional Workshop. El Colegio's President, Victor Urquidí, was always sympathetic to our needs and followed with interest the development of IRG's activities.

Gavin Jones, of the Australia National University, who prepared the review of the status of knowledge and research for South-East and East Asia (appendix 3) and who collaborated for a period with the Group's Secretariat in México City also deserves recognition.

The Secretariat staff, though small, was dedicated and conscientious. Rose María González, Laura Holland, Gail Mummert, and Teresa Ulloa merit a special note of thanks from the Group. This is particularly true in the case of Linda Lumley, our editor, who handled the arduous task of introducing clarity into texts which, in many cases, were written by persons for whom English was a second language.

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INTRODUCTION

Public and governmental concern for fertility, mortality, migration, and the characteristics of a population that they in turn determine — its rate of growth, age structure, and spatial distribution — are usually prompted by a variety of factors. It seems clear that demographic outcomes can do much to either promote or frustrate a country's uppermost development objectives, whether these be in the realm of eliminating poverty, achieving economic growth, maintaining internal security, or securing freedom from foreign domination. But, on the other hand, often at issue are such basic human prerogatives as the rights to a long and healthy life, to move from one place to another without interference, and to have the number of children one desires. Reproduction and migration are central to the strategies that families and individuals adopt for survival and, when possible, the enjoyment of life; and the attainment of longevity and the forestallment of death has always been one of mankind's primary goals.

Population policies may either impinge on or promote the basic freedoms just mentioned. Those that work by way of limiting such freedoms are clearly of extreme consequence and can only be justified by convincing evidence that such interventions will yield tangible benefits for the society as a whole. In addition to promoting or curtailing liberty, population policies are likely to have immediate effects on the welfare of individuals, families, groups, and organizations, while constituting direct financial costs and administrative burdens for the state. To cite just a few examples: the provision of free health and family planning services, or the establishment of location incentives for industry, resettlement benefits for migrants, or repatriation benefits for nationals living abroad all entail quickly felt consequences of these sorts.

At present there is a readily apparent movement towards activism in population policy in the Third World. In recent years, not only have a large number of developing countries adopted initial policies to accomplish such objectives as the reduction of fertility, the lessening of rural-to-urban migration, and the elimination of mortality differentials, but in many parts of the world measures are now being considered or adopted that are considerably more forceful than those that were being contemplated a decade ago. Some of the most well-known examples are the mobilization of powerful administrative mechanisms to reduce fertility in China, the 'ujamaa' programme of villagization in Tanzania, the arrangements for controlling international migration and restricting the rights of foreign, as

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compared to native, workers in countries such as Kuwait and Singapore, and the wide variety of primary health care schemes that are being advocated by the WHO and international forums such as the Alma Ata Conference. In these circumstances there is an obvious and urgent need for information and knowledge that will enable governments to design and implement policies in such a way that they attain their ultimate objectives. Ideally, the knowledge base should help policy-makers to distinguish the range of options that are available to them, and also to understand what concomitant changes in economic and social structure may be required to ensure that the policies adopted will be both effective and conducive to a true and lasting increase in welfare.

At the present time, the findings of social science research are sometimes but not always utilized in the design and formulation of the wide variety of population policies being implemented in the developing world. This situation could be improved by a shift in the orientation of research toward questions that have a greater bearing on policy, by assembling and organizing existing knowledge in such a way that it is accessible to policy-makers, and by doing research that facilitates population policy-making within a relatively short time. On the other hand, for social science research on population and development to advance to the point where evaluation and prediction can be carried out with a reasonable degree of certitude, considerable progress needs to be made in theory building and the verification of causal mechanisms.

In the past 20 years, considerable progress has been achieved in discovering the nature of the relations between population and development. Perhaps most noteworthy are the number of major misconceptions that have been disproved. The present state of knowledge on the determinants and consequences of demographic behaviour is, however, somewhat uneven: Important areas remain where no central paradigm has emerged and where several different views or schools of thought compete with one another. Disagreement on questions such as the determinants of fertility decline or the consequences of rapid urbanization persist not so much for lack of attention, but rather because the issues are complex and resist simplification.

In order to increase the usefulness of social science research on population and development, and to ensure progress on the critical questions that remain before the field, work must proceed at an increased pace on several fronts:

1. *Descriptive research that will provide information on levels, trends, and differentials in fertility, mortality, and migration.* Besides the importance of descriptive knowledge of demographic behaviour as a foundation for much of the research mentioned below, it is also of direct use to policy-makers.

2. *Evaluative research that will attempt to measure the demographic impact of development projects and policies.* The need for more and better

evaluation extends from those programmes and projects with immediate demographic objectives, such as family planning programmes and specific public-health measures, to those thought to be strongly linked to population but without specific demographic objectives such as education, nutrition, and rural development programmes.

3. *The development of sound theoretical frameworks for the analysis of determinants and consequences of demographic behaviour.* At the heart of most controversies over population and development issues are some of the most difficult questions facing the social sciences. There appear to be promising ways of tackling most of them, but the effort required is a sustained one whose contribution to improved policy may lie several years in the future.

4. *Analysis of the political processes through which population policies are arrived at.* Better knowledge of the politics of population policy-making would provide criteria for determining (a) the kinds of research findings most likely to have an effect on policy adoption, (b) the interest groups and sectors of government most likely to utilize research, and (c) the government organizations best able to take on the responsibility for both developing and advocating policy options.

5. *Research on the relations between development style, population processes, and population policies.* It is often asserted that the larger developmental context — and the political structure and policy options behind it — places severe limits on the kinds of population policies that may be successfully implemented, but the questions of just where these limits lie and what are the forces determining them in individual countries have received relatively little attention in the past and should constitute a priority topic for future research.

While researchers in developed countries and in international organizations may make important contributions towards fulfilling this research agenda, the bulk of the work can and should be done by social scientists in the individual developing countries. For this goal to be realized, however, significant and focused efforts will have to be dedicated to training the additional researchers and policy analysts that the task requires, and to developing and sustaining the institutions in which the work is to be done.

These are among the principal conclusions of the evaluation of the current state of social science research on issues perceived as population-related problems in the developing world conducted by the International Review Group of Social Science Research on Population and Development (IRG). Established in 1975 with the financial support of nine private, governmental, and non-governmental international organizations, the IRG undertook the task of reviewing social science knowledge on population and development and formulating recommendations to guide research and the over-all allocation of research resources over the next ten years by means of staff meetings, the commissioning of over sixty regionally

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based documents, and three regional workshops which brought scholars, policy-makers, and donors together to decide on research priorities for population policy. The main conclusions reached by the IRG in the course of its two and one-half year review and evaluation are presented in this Report. In addition, thirteen documents prepared by IRG members and consultants have been selected for publication as appendices to this Report and appear as separate volumes.

Some Particular Characteristics of the IRG Review

There are several distinctive characteristics of the task that the IRG set for itself that made its mission somewhat different from that of other review efforts that have been completed recently on the subject of population and development.¹

The first of these is the intention to speak directly to policy considerations. The 'final goal' of the project, as defined at the first meeting of the Group, is 'to recommend directions for research and for resource allocation to research that will contribute to the formulation and to the improvement of population policies in the developing countries'. Population policies, as understood by the IRG, are those measures aimed at affecting demographic variables directly, as well as changes in the direction of broader development policy that are taken for the purpose of modifying population trends. The policy relevance of research on a particular issue is usually determined by the degree to which it helps to answer whether, in fact, there exists a problem that warrants governmental intervention, and if so, what can or should be done about it. The IRG's task involved both identifying the issues and, ultimately selecting, from among all the different topics that could be researched in the future, those that would be particularly likely to facilitate better policies. The time horizon adopted was approximately 10 years. Thus, the Group's attention was not confined to applied research that could have an effect within a year or two, but extended to more fundamental work that could be expected to have an impact on policy within a decade.

The second distinctive feature of the IRG's review is that it was approached on a regional basis: issues were identified as they were perceived in the several regions and subregions of the developing world, and the state of knowledge of population and development was assessed on a region-by-region basis. This approach is exemplified by both the six regional reviews of social-science research on population and development prepared for the IRG and the regional workshops undertaken by the Group.

The third characteristic particular to the IRG's effort is that the scope

¹ See, for example, Birdsall, 1977; Bilsborrow, 1976; Cassen, 1976; and Ridker, 1976.

of its review extended to such matters as the role that political processes and institutional arrangements play in the adoption and implementation of population policy, the utilization of research findings in policy-making, possible mechanisms to increase research input to policy design, and especially, the institutional and human resource capacities existing in the different regions.

Content of the Report

In the course of its work the IRG took into consideration regional patterns and trends in demographic dynamics and the social and economic framework within which these have been operating, the main population issues that have been defined in the countries of the different regions, the positions of governments on these issues, and the policies that have been adopted to affect demographic processes. Background information on these topics is provided, in a highly condensed manner, in Part I of the Report, organized according to the five regions and subregions with which the IRG has dealt: Africa South of the Sahara, the Arab countries, Middle South Asia, Latin America, and East and South-East Asia. Also included in the chapters on each region is a broad overview of the status of population research in the regions, the coverage and reliability of the data base, and the availability of institutional and human resources that could be mobilized to undertake demographic and related social-science research.

In nearly all phases of the project, the Group devoted considerable attention to assessing the state of knowledge on each of the demographic variables — mortality, fertility, internal migration, and international migration. Evaluating the state of this knowledge for each of the regions and subregions was one of the objectives of the regional reviews prepared for the IRG. Also, the Group had at its disposal, and considered, a number of reviews of the literature on the demographic variables that have been published in recent years. The three regional workshops took up the implications for policy of the results of both previous and prospective research on population and development. The first four chapters of Part II present a summary evaluation of the state of knowledge of each of the primary demographic variables, examine the policy relevance of this knowledge, and set forth some concrete recommendations for the 'variable specific' research that the Group feels would be most likely to facilitate and influence policy formulation and implementation in the next decade. The last chapter in Part II dispenses with the preceding variable-specific format to discuss six general types of analysis that apply to all, or nearly all, of the demographic processes and that the IRG feels are worthy of emphasis in future research.

Part III of the Report addresses the important issue of improving

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institutional and human resource capacities for social-science research on population and development in the developing countries. Drawing on the summary review of research capacity for each of the regions contained in Part I, it begins with an overview of the present situation and an assessment of the most pressing needs for training and institutional development. A brief analysis of the factors that have determined the size and structure of the current pool of resources is taken up next. There follows a discussion of what the IRG considers to be major issues concerning the amount and direction of future support for both research and training in population and development. Considered are such questions as project v. institutional grant mechanisms, the kinds of institutions best suited to undertake policy-relevant research, the role of local v. foreign resources, and which countries deserve the greatest priority. Part III concludes with four general guidelines for future support of the field.

The concluding chapter of the Report sets out what the Group believes are the procedural implications of its report for each of the three audiences to which it is addressed: (1) the social-science community throughout the world, (2) policy-makers in the developing countries, and (3) the donor community.

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PART I THE REGIONS: BACKGROUND FOR THE DEFINITION OF RESEARCH PRIORITIES

Introduction

The three workshops conducted by the IRG in fulfilment of its task served, among other things, to underscore the soundness of the decision — taken at the Group's inception — to undertake the review of the state of social science knowledge on the relation of population and development by regions of the developing world.

While a rather comprehensive outline of recommended research in that extensive field could probably be laid down in a general manner for the developing world as a whole, any attempt to define research priorities more attuned to the situation of the different groups of countries should be preceded by a consideration, even if in a broad manner, of their demographic dynamics and the social and economic setting in which these have been operating, the main population issues that have been identified in these countries, and the position of their governments regarding the adoption of policies to affect demographic variables. It is also indispensable to have a broad overview of the current status of population research, of the coverage and reliability of the data base, and of the availability of institutional and human resources that could be mobilized to undertake demographic and related social research. This is attempted in the following five chapters, albeit in a very succinct manner, for the five developing regions with which the IRG has dealt.

Inputs to prepare this section were drawn from the six regional reviews and other papers contributed by the Group's members as well as from other sources. The statistical information cited here does not always represent the latest estimates; nor are the data equally valid. For the sake of preserving a certain degree of comparability among regions, for certain types of data the same source has been used throughout, even when more recent estimates (as in the case of demographic data) were available for certain regions or countries.

The Group recognizes that when defining research intended to be of direct policy relevance to a specific country, the conditions of that country must help determine what knowledge is required. For the type of broad recommendations that the IRG necessarily has to make, an examination of the regions' main characteristics should provide an adequate basis. It should be borne in mind, however, that the characterizations that follow may — and in some cases do indeed — ignore some of the subtleties of certain specific situations.