

XXXI Annual Conference of the Indian Association for the Study of Population

REPORT

OVERVIEW

The XXXI Annual Conference of the Indian Association for the Study of Population (IASP) was held at Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati during Nov 3-5, 2009. The theme of the conference was population and disease burden with sub-themes being (1) Methodological Issues related to Large scale sample Surveys (2) Research on Disease Burden (3) Epidemiological Transition (4) Infectious Diseases (5) Disease Burden and Health Policies (6) Adult and Adolescent Health and Nutrition (7) Child Health, Nutrition and Care (8) Reproductive Health and (9) Sexual Health and HIV/AIDS.

The conference began with the President's address by Prof Arvind Pandey President, IASP, key note address by Dr. Nesim Tumkaya, UNFPA Country Representative to India and Chairman's remarks by Prof N. Prabhakar Rao, Vice Chancellor, Sri Venkateswara University, Tirupati. The inaugural session was attended by over 300 researchers, teachers, policy and programme managers and programme officers from various organizations such as UNICEF, UNFPA, ICRW, AIIMS, IIPS, Intra health, ISEC, TISS, BHU, JNU, SV University faculty and students etc.

The IASP felicitated six senior demographers including Prof P.C. Saxena, Prof U.P. Sinha, Prof P.H. Reddy, Prof L.B. Venkatarangan, Prof S. Krishnamoorthy and Sri K.S. Natarajan. Prof. K. Srinivasan Award was given to two best papers (one technical and another substitutive respectively to (1) N.P. Das and R.M. Patel, and (2) Shampa Kundu, Sushil Kumar Halder and Dubesh Chakraborty) published in 2008 volume of IASP's peer reviewed Journal "Demography India". Prof KB Pathak award for best published paper in the field of population and health was presented to Dr. Sanjay Kumar Mohanty.

There were two memorial lectures during the conference - (1) Mari Bhat Memorial Oration by Prof Krishnan Namboodiri, Ohio University, USA, on the topic and (2) George Simmons Memorial Lecture delivered by Prof S Parasuraman, Director, Tata Institute of Social Sciences Mumbai on the topic "Economic Liberalization, Informalization of Labour and Social Protection in India".

The proceedings of the 30th Annual Conference in the form of a published book "Population, Gender and Health in India: Methods, Processes and Policies" edited by K.S. James, Arvind Pandey, Dhananjay W. Bansod & Lekha Subaiya,

Academic Foundation, New Delhi was released during the conference. The book by TV Sekher & Neelambar Haldi entitled "Unwanted Daughters: Gender Discrimination in Modern India" was also released.

PROCEEDINGS

In all, the conference had 3 plenary sessions of invited presentations, 1 panel discussion, 16 technical and 3 poster sessions of the contributed papers. The abstract of the papers presented in technical and poster session are given in the Abstracts-cum-Souvenir of the conference under sections (1) Research on Disease Burden - Methodological Issues (2) Disease Burden- Health Policies (3) Epidemiological Transition (4) RCH -Contraception (5) RCH-Maternal Health/Mortality (6) Reproductive Health (7) Adult Health and Nutrition (8) Adult Health Seeking Behaviour (9) Sexual and Reproductive Health (10) STI/HIV Risk Behaviour (11) Adolescent Health (12) Child Nutrition, Immunisation and Care (13) Child Nutrition (14) Child Morbidity/Care (15) Sampling Issues in Large Scale Surveys and (16) Miscellaneous.

Panel Discussion

The panel discussion on Methodological Issues related to Large Scale Sample Surveys had presentations by seven panelists. The points highlighted by the panelists include:

- Sampling design need not be same for successive rounds;
- The sampling design adopted by NSSO and NCAER are more efficient in terms of design effect;
- There seems to be relation between money spent for field work and quality of data;
- There is a need to constitute a national committee to recommend study design for large scale surveys including variables and their comparability;
- As length of questionnaires determines the quality of data, attention must be paid to this. Towards this, the researchers must decide what information has to be collected through quantitative and qualitative components of the study;
- Professional competency of the research agencies also needs attention as it affects the quality of data and research outcome;

- Non availability of sampling frame for studies on sexual health such as BSS and IBBA is an issue as accuracy and completeness of mapping data used for generating sampling frame are of concern;

Plenary Sessions

The three plenary sessions covered (1) Disease Burden-Research, Health Policy Issues, Disease Pattern and Linkages (2) Dissemination of DLHS 3 Findings - National Scenario and (3) Dissemination of DLHS 3 Findings - Andhra Pradesh

The first plenary session had three presentations. The points that emerge in the session are listed below:

- India has the burden of both communicable and non communicable diseases;
- There is a need to identify cost effective programmes and alternative strategies for health care financing with focus on poor;
- Non-utilization of the allotted funds is also an issue that needs attention;
- Need huge investment to meet the requirements as specified by the National Committee on Macro Economics of Health in terms of human resources and infrastructure. One option is to target only the poor while the other option is to target all by securing additional funding;
- We need to understand feasibility of models adopted in other countries eg China's model of health care financing;
- Other options available include user fee, risk pooling and subsidies to the poor;
- There is a need to study the relation between nutrition and public health inputs and outcome;
- Estimation of disease burden needs more focus with more clinical and action research directed towards promotion of health /public health;
- Need to document the system failure so that steps can be initiated to improve public health;
- Though the National Population Policy and National Health Policy address most of the public health problems, implementation plan is lacking;

- We also need cost effective public health initiatives including provision of potable water to all the people;
- Need to focus on low cost initiatives;
- Demographers need to play active role of social scientists in policy and programme planning.

The second and third plenary sessions on DLHS-3 had five papers as part of dissemination of the findings at national and state level for Andhra Pradesh. The DLHS provides information on STIs, RTIs, HIV, and infertility for married and unmarried available at district level. The DLHS also provides new dimensions related to family planning, e.g. rights based approach.

The DLHS-3 findings for Andhra Pradesh indicate several interesting findings. For instance, increase in demand for traditional methods of family planning and increase in delivery practices. We need to understand the reasons for increasing popularity of traditional methods of family planning and role of JSY in delivery practices.

Technical Sessions

There were 16 technical sessions in the three day conference. They are (1) Research on Disease Burden –Methodological Issues (2) Disease Burden-Health Policies (3) Epidemiological Transition (4) RCH-Contraception (5) RCH-Maternal Health/Mortality (6) Reproductive Health (7) Adult Health and Nutrition (8) Adult Health Seeking Behaviour (9) Sexual and Reproductive Health (10) STI/RTI Risk Behaviour (11) Adolescent Health (12) Child Immunisation and Care (13) Child Nutrition (14) Child Morbidity/Care (15) Sampling Issues in Large Scale Surveys and (16) Miscellaneous.

The first technical session on research on disease burden –methodological issues had three papers. The inverse sampling method used for estimating new cases of leprosy seems to be effective in terms of efficiency of the estimates besides less time and cost involved.

The second technical session on disease burden and health policies had three papers. The emerging issues are listed below:

- Emergence of cancer and cardiovascular diseases as major cause of death in Kerala
- There is a need to reduce deaths due to accidents
- Hepatitis affects quality of life through loss of vitality

The third technical session on epidemiological transition had three papers. The summary of the presentations is as follows:

- Shift from infectious to non infectious diseases;
- Increase in life expectancy and cardiovascular diseases.

The fourth technical session on contraception had two papers. The papers indicate that breast feeding beyond PPA can be more advantageous over traditional methods of FP and also the effect of maternal nutrition and reproductive morbidity on waiting time to next conception.

The fifth and sixth technical sessions on maternal health/mortality and reproductive health had seven papers. The presentations indicate that utilization of health services is a function of Availability and Accessibility of the health services/facilities and Affordability to utilize the same. Thus these aspects need attention to improve the maternal health status. Some efforts have been made by the authors to estimate Maternal Mortality Rate at state and Dist level using regression models. These can further be modified by ensuring inclusion of right kind of variables in the model.

The seventh and eighth technical sessions on adult health and nutrition and health seeking behaviour had nine papers.

- Change in pattern of ASDR(from U to J shape) due to increase in adult and accidental deaths and decline in child mortality;
- Health related problems and constraints of migrant workers need attention from programme point of view;
- TB incidence is closely associated with life style - smoking and alcohol consumption directly and with poverty and illiteracy indirectly;
- Need strategies to improve, prevent, detect and treat hypertension and pre hypertension;
- India has the distinction of having both the extremes namely obesity and mal nutrition. The former is more closely associated with the life style and food habits;
- Wealth status emerges as the important determinant of nutritional status of adult men and women in India;
- Use of vignettes to measure health and functional status of adults seems to be yielding results closer to the reality than the reported status;
- Women still prefer traditional healers and quacks for seeking treatment in case of sickness;

- Health needs of the elderly disabled need attention;
- Poor utilization of MCH services by (tribal) women;
- Higher malnutrition among tribal women.

The ninth and tenth technical sessions on sexual and reproductive health and behaviours had 6 papers. The outcome of the presentations can be summarized as follows:

- The high risk sexual behaviour of the youth in India, indicates the need for specific interventions so as to prevent STIs and HIV/AIDS;
- Though there are indications regarding high risk sexual behaviour of the migrants and mobile population across the Indian states, more specific analysis of data on HIV prevalence is needed to make meaningful conclusions;

The eleventh technical session on adolescent health had 5 papers. The key findings are:

- Chronic energy deficiency among adolescent boys and girls is an issue that needs attention;
- Clinical identification of anaemia in adolescent girls using 18 clinical signs seems to be effective;
- Early marriage and low knowledge of reproductive health among adolescents highlight the need for policies and programmes to address their needs;
- There is a need to understand the investments made to improve adolescent health at various levels;
- Girls should be encouraged to go beyond primary school so as to prevent adolescent marriage and child bearing;

The twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth technical sessions on child immunization, morbidity/care and nutrition had 11 papers with following key points:

- There is no significant impact of ICDS on nutrition status of children as mere presence of ICDS would not suffice. Duration of existence and implementation of the same matter most;
- There seems to be positive impact of ICDS food fortification on anaemia and nutritional status of children;

- Perhaps the NFHS data might have some limitations to study the impact of ICDS on the nutrition status of children and we need to analyze data from specific studies on ICDS;
- Child immunization is still an issue in many of the Indian states as the immunization coverage has not improved in the recent past significantly;
- Higher malnutrition among tribal children.

The fifteenth technical session on sampling issues in large scale surveys had 4 papers with the following issues emerging:

- Length of questionnaires, data that can be collected from quantitative and qualitative studies need enough attention and thought before launching the study as these would determine the data quality;
- The time and money allocated for the study by the agencies would have bearing on quality of the data elicited;
- Capture- recapture method can be used for mapping the hidden groups.

The papers in the sixteenth technical session on miscellaneous issues discussed the relation between social interaction and fertility behaviour and migration in the Ladakh valley.

Poster Sessions

The theme of the poster presentations included (1) Disease burden, epidemiological transition, adolescent and general health and sampling issues (2) Adult health, sexual health and RCH and (3) Child health/care and miscellaneous.

Memorial Lectures

Two memorial lectures were organized as part of the conference. On the first day of the conference, Prof P N Mari Bhat Memorial Oration was delivered by Prof Krishnan Namboodiri, Ohio University, USA. The George Simmons Memorial Lecture was delivered by Prof S Parasuraman, Director, Tata Institute of Social Sciences Mumbai on the topic "Economic Liberalization, Informalization of Labour and Social Protection in India" on the second day.

Awards

On the last day of the conference, Dr. C. Chandrasekharan Memorial Award presentation was organized as commonly done in the IASP conferences. There

were four papers presented for the Dr. C. Chandrasekharan award by the young scholars in the field of demography. Evaluators selected two papers for the award. They were: Santosh Kumar Singh for his paper *“Estimation of Maternal Mortality Ratio using Regression Approach: A Study of India, its States and Districts”* and Dr. Shiv Shekar Dutta for his paper *“Determinants of child health in tribal area: conceptual analysis of qualitative findings”*

The best posters were given Dr. S.N. Singh award. The winners of the best posters were: Rachna Patel, Anup Kumar and Arpita Das.

Valedictory Session

The valedictory session of the conference was held in the afternoon of 5th November 2009. In general participants appreciated the organization of the conference.

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