

Subject: GS report of the 44th Annual Conference of IASP at Rourkela, Odisha: Valedictory session

Dear Shri Abanikanta Sahoo, Chairperson, Odisha State Food Commission, **Prof. Umakant Dash**, Director, Institute of Rural Management Anand (IRMA), Gujarat, Prof. Rohan Dhiman, Registrar NIT, Rourkela, Prof Suresh Sharma, distinguished invitees, participants, colleagues and the future demographers, my dear students, ladies and gentlemen, HELLO and Namaste. So here we are after 3 –days of enriching academic deliberations with brilliant of the minds in the very divine campus of the NIT Rourkela to participate in the 44th Annual Conference of the IASP. These three days have truly been so full of insightful learning from a variety of stakeholders who individually and collaboratively have responsibility to help the country improve well-being of its people in particularly matters of population and health.

Without taking much of your time I will very briefly provide a summary of what happened over the past three days. As mentioned, in response to our call of abstract for the conference we received an overwhelming response from the researchers across the country. Over 85 research papers were presented in 14 technical sessions and close to 50 in two poster sessions. The papers presented covered all aspects of the theme conference, that is, **'1.4 Billion Aspirations, One Sustainable Future: Unfolding India's Path to Development'**.

The researchers debated on range of topics starting from population dynamics and demographic transition, ageing, mortality, longevity, morbidity, Nuptiality, fertility, infertility, abortion, family planning, public health, nutrition, reproductive and sexual health and rights, migration, urbanization, adolescent health, health and gender inequalities and demographic data and methods as well as data quality.

The conference started with inaugural session at 9.30 AM on November 8, 2022. Prof. Jalandhar Pradhan, Professor, Dept. of Humanities and Social Sciences, NIT Rourkela and convener of the conference welcomed the participants. Prof. Narayan Sethi, HoD, Dept. of Humanities and Social Sciences, NIT Rourkela addressed the conference participants. This followed by presidential address by Prof. Suresh Sharma, President IASP.

Prof. K. Umamaheshwar Rao, Director, NIT Rourkela extended warm welcome to the participants of the conference and wished the conference a

grand success.

Mr. William Hanlon Jr, Chief of Field Office, UNICEF, Odisha addressed the participants. Mr. Sriram Haridass, Deputy Representative, UNFPA India delivered the key note address. Mr. Hanlon congratulated the department for organizing the conference and said, "With great optimism and hope I put up my concern about Climate Changes, Resource Depletion and Environmental Degradation, which are compromising on the world for the future generation. To face these challenges, we must harness the power of innovation and technology. India has already shown tremendous strides in renewable energy, biotechnology and Information Technology. By investing in research and development we can create solutions that will only address the global fight against environmental degradation. We must also invest in a robust healthcare system recognizing the basic development of human existence."

The chief Guest of the session, Padma Shri (Prof.) Digambar Behera, Former Dean (Research) and Head of Pulmonary Medicine Department, PGIMER, Chandigarh highlighted the importance of the conference and congratulated the organizers for selecting a theme that is extremely topical and needed a debate to come up with future strategies to address the growing concerns of sustainable development.

The Chief Guest, Padma Shri (Prof.) Digambar Behera highlighted crucial aspects of public health and nutrition with regard to the conference's topic 'India's Path to Development' with a particular focus on tuberculosis (TB). He said, "India has a goal for eliminating TB before 2025, five years ahead of the WHO's set target for 2030. Malnutrition emerged as one of the primary contributors to the TB epidemic, so it is important to integrate social sciences and medical sciences to achieve the crucial goals of zero hunger, universal access to nutritious food, and the elimination of TB. India's commendable performance during the COVID-19 pandemic, becoming a producer of vaccines and PPE kits, and extending support beyond its borders was acknowledged globally. This has emphasized the necessity of collaborating on robust healthcare systems, economic development, housing for all, and quality education etc. aiming for a brighter and sustainable future working together to build a prosperous world." The challenges of population are -managing rapid urbanization, ensuring inclusive growth, eradicating poverty and inequality and providing access to education, healthcare and basic amenities. However, this population growth also brings opportunities for economic growth,

innovation and social progress by adopting sustainable development strategies, India can harness the demographic dividend, promote environmental sustainability, prioritize social inclusion and create a prosperous and equitable future for all citizens.

prof. Usha Ram, General Secretary, IASP announced the winners of the Prof. KB Pathak and Prof. K Srinivasan awards and gave concluding remarks. She mentioned that India's socio-demographic, economic and cultural heterogeneity is an asset. However, it becomes a huge challenge for the policy and program managers to provide universal access to affordable quality of the health care services to enhance population health and well-being. Dr. Jeetendra K Yadav proposed vote of thanks.

The first plenary session on day one had a panel of six distinguished speakers, Prof. Sanghamitra Acharya, Dr. Santosh Jain Passi, Dr. Alok Ranjan Chaurasia, and Dr. Rajiv Acharya spoke on Data Gaps and Methodological Challenges in Addressing Public Health Nutrition Issues in the Context of SDGs. The session was chaired by Mr. Sourav Bhattacharjee, Nutrition Specialist, UNICEF, Bhubaneswar, Odisha and Dr. Jalandhar Pradhan was the moderator.

The second plenary session was on "**Innovations in Maternal Newborn Child Health (MNCH)**" and had a panel of from development partners, government representatives, field levels organizations and the grassroots level workers. The speakers were Mr. Vaibhao Ambhore, chief of party, USAID-SAKSHAM Project PATH, Dr. Jitesh Kuwatada, *National Program Officer, JHPIEGI*, Ms. Nirmala Mishra, Senior Director Programs and Lead Health System Strengthening, Piramal Swasthya Management Research Institute, Dr. R N Panda, NHM Odisha and Frontline Worker Core Group Member. The session was chaired by Prof F Ram and moderated by Prof. Sanghmitra Acharya.

Prof. Sudesh Nangia, Former Prof. CSRD, JNU, New Delhi and Former President, IASP delivered the **George Simmons Memorial Oration on Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in India: Status and Challenges**. I am proud to say that this is the first time in the IASP history that we have a female guest speaker for the Simmons memorial oration. Prof. Suresh Sharma chaired the oration and Dr. Bhaswati Das was the moderator.

The technical and poster sessions:

Besides plenary session, the three-day conference had 14 technical sessions and two poster sessions covering range of specific themes. The details of the technical sessions and poster session along with the papers presented is available in the annexure at the end of the report with detailed program schedule. Additionally, essay competition was organized among young researchers. The winners of various awards were presented with certificates and prize money in the valedictory session on the last day of the conference. Senior demographers were felicitated on day two of the conference.

The papers presented covered a wide range of themes. For example, papers in sessions discussing family planning, great emphasis was on spacing methods including oral pills. The papers explored to understand barriers in usage, among minority populations, urban populations, association with infertility, STI preventions, fertility. The papers presented in the conference used quantitative as well as qualitative research approaches. Nearly two-thirds of all presenters were young research scholars and early career researchers.

The second set of papers discussed by the researchers was understanding population dynamics and demographic changes happening in India, nationally and subrationally. Six papers researched on role of WASH indicators and their implications on population health and other needs and their relation with chronic diseases.

Over 20 research papers discussed issues around mortality, longevity and morbidity. The core issues addressed how life style changes and NCDs are interlinked and how they impact life longevity and the morbidity patterns and how are they changing for India and its sub-populations, and how artificial intelligence could be helpful in predicting morbidity and risk factors. Several papers investigated on issues of maternal and child health as well as cause of death.

Two sessions were dedicated to issues of urbanization and its impact on health. The papers investigated on how urbanization impacts socio-economic compositions of the population and its association with poverty and income inequalities and health access and utilization. A few papers highlighted on how poverty determines malnutrition and in turn the health comes.

Two sessions had papers on ageing and the demography of aging. SRH and SRH needs of the adolescents and the status of MNCH services in India and its sub-regions. Teenage pregnancy, unsafe abortions, socio-cultural barriers in accessing RMNCH including family planning service access and utilization were addressed in several research papers presented during the conference.

The issues of migration, refugees and left behind people were discussed in a session dedicated to this. These papers investigated on challenges of social assimilation, living arrangements, vulnerabilities at both place of origin and destination among the migrant population.

One technical session discussed research on issues of public health and nutrition in which researchers shared their work on how nutrition is the key concern for health and well-being improvements and what/how various programs can help address these concerns in India. Additionally, several papers discussed on need for advancements in demographic data, their quality, access for research and modelling in enhancing understanding of complex demographic phenomenon for evidence-based future policies and programs. One session had papers that discussed about how COVID19 has influenced the lives including health and other behaviors including use of internet and virtual platforms for enhancing knowledge and service provisions as well as monitoring of the programs and services. They also discussed about issues of occupational toxicity and factors associated with substance use and migration.

Felicitation of the Senior Demographers:

Keeping in the tradition, The IASP – EC this year recommended felicitating four senior demographers Dr. Pradeep Mishra, Dr. Alok Ranjan Chaurasia, Dr. R J Yadav, and Dr. Santosh Jain Passi for their outstanding contribution to the discipline.

Valedictory Session:

The valedictory session began with a formal welcome address by the IASP president Prof S Sharma. The General Secretary IASP in her concluding remarks summarized the key messages emerging from the deliberations and debates in the conference for future research. She summarized the conference deliberations in brief. This was followed by the presentation of awards to the winners in various categories as listed below:

Prof K B Pathak award: is presented for the best paper by a young and mid-career scholar in the field of 'Demography/ Population and Health' published in peer reviewed journals. The Expert Panel recommended the paper entitled "Multivariate decomposition of gender differentials in successful aging among adults in India Published in BMJ Geriatrics in 2023" authored by Shobhit Srivastava, T Muhhamad, Ronak Paul and K Amir Khan.

Prof. K. Srinivasan award: presented for the two best research – one each in **Technical and Substantive field** by a young and mid-career scholar Published in **Demography India, an IASP Journal**. The Panel of Expert recommended the paper entitled "**Household, individual and episodic incidences of illness, hospitalization and health spending in India, 2017-18**" authored by Udaya S Mishra, Sanjay K Mohanty and Umakanta Sahoo as the **best technical paper** published in **DEOMGRAPHY INDIA** for the year 2023 for Prof K Srinivasan award. The Panel of Expert recommended the paper entitled "**Migration through aspiration: A model based investigation**" authored by Ardhendu Banerjee, Arindam Gupta and Asis Kumar Chattopadhyay as the **best Substantive paper** published in **DEOMGRAPHY INDIA** for the year 2023 for Prof K Srinivasan award.

Dr Chandrasekharan Award Papers: Dr Chandrasekharan Award session is scheduled on second day of the conference. The Dr Chandrasekharan award for the year 2023 was awarded to Ms. Abna A. She presented on "Effect of elimination of cardio vascular diseases on the life expectancy and disability free life expectancy among elderly in India"

Dr S N Singh Award: Dr. SN Singh was awarded for best posters.

Poster session 1: The evaluation committee identified the best First poster session one to Ms. Harleen Kaur Gulati for her paper "Unravelling the impact of nutrition intake: Predicting anemia among children with machine learning and explainable AI".

Poster session 2: The evaluation committee identified the best First poster session two to Mr. Pawan Kumar Yadav for his paper on "Fitting model life tables to pair of estimates of under-five and adult mortality and estimation of life expectancy at national and subnational level: Evidence from NFHS and SRS"

Essay competition: Continuing with the new initiation of the current IASP

team, the IASP **organized an** essay competition for young researchers on the theme **Rising population and its environmental impact**. Huge number of young social scientist from all parts of the country took part in the online competition. The winning essays are: **First prize:** Ms. Saumya Chauhan, Central University of TN Thituvapur; **Second prize:** Ms. Devikrishna N B, IIPS Mumbai; and **Third prize:** Ms. Varsha Rani, IIPS Mumbai.

Conference Delegates

Besides faculties and students of the NIT Rourkela, more than 350 participants from nearly 40 organizations, institutions and associations located in various part of the country attended the 3-day conference. This included academicians, researchers, students, administrators, development practitioners, NGO representatives, et al. More than 250 attendees registered for the conference.

One of the highlight of this conference was overwhelming presence of the female researchers. The female presenters outnumbered male presenters; 50 of the 85 presenters were females. In the poster sessions too, half of the presenters were females. All three presenters for the Chandrasekharan awards were females. A total of 85 oral presentations and 50 posters were presented during the conference in various sessions. The participants represented - IIPS (Mumbai), JNU (New Delhi), BHU (Varanasi), Kerala university, Annamalai university, Allahabad university, Delhi university, IGNOU, TISS (Mumbai), University of Gujarat, ICRW (New Delhi), Population Council (New Delhi), UNFPA (New Delhi), NHSRC (New Delhi), IHAT (Lucknow), USAID-Swati (New Delhi), IEG (New Delhi), Piramal Swasthya (Hyderabad), Path India (New Delhi), JHPIEGO (New Delhi), KHPT (Bengaluru), UNICEF (New Delhi), MLS University (Udaipur), Population Research Centres, Ministry of petroleum and natural gas, Central University of Himachal Pradesh, NIHFW (New Delhi), Shanti Niketan (Kolkata), Puducherry University, Representatives of NGOs/Govt. Departments from Assam, Manipur, ICMR institutions, AIIMS, NIITs, Asia Foundation, GS College (Jabalpur) etc.

The organizing committee of the 44th annual conference of the IASP consisted of following:

- Prof Usha Ram, Chairperson
- Dr. Anil Chandran, Member
- Dr. Ajay K Singh, Member Secretary