

34th Annual Conference of IASP at GIPE, Pune, Dec 13-15, 2012

Report of the Rapporteur General

The 34th Annual Conference of the Indian Association for the Study of Population (IASP) was held at Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics (GIPE), Pune during Dec 13- 15, 2012. About 200 participants representing universities, research institutions, Population Research Centers, NGOs, international donor agencies and government officials participated in the conference.

The inaugural session was held on December 13th morning at Kale Hall of GIPE. Dr. R. Nagarajan, the Local Organizing Secretary welcomed the participants. Prof. Rajas Parchure, Director of GIPE, in his welcome address emphasized the need for more collaborative and interdisciplinary research between demographers and social scientists, particularly economists. He offered possible financial and institutional support towards this direction.

Prof. F. Ram, President of the IASP, in his presidential address elaborated on the nature, scope and future of demography as a discipline in India. He mentioned that the Demographic research across the world is closely linked with various stages of demographic transition the countries are experiencing at a given point of time. He outlined the emerging challenges for Demographers in our country and posed a question – “Are we prepared to face it?”. His presidential address argued for a strong component of “Public Demography” in our empirical research.

The Key note address of the conference was delivered by Dr. Anders Thomsen, Deputy Country Representative, UNFPA India. He emphasized the felt need for more policy oriented research. Dr. Thomsen also expressed the commitment of UNFPA to facilitate population and development activities in India. According to him, the demographic research in India need to learn lessons from the experiences and developments happening across the globe, both in developed and developing countries.

Prof. Kumudini Dandekar, a doyen among the Indian Demographers, was present at the inaugural session. She recollected the work done by the GIPE,

both at the research and field levels, to promote family planning in early 50s and 60s. She stated the crucial role played by the GIPE in understanding the demographic behavior of our population through surveys at a time when Demography as a discipline was practically non-existent in India.

IASP felicitated six eminent demographers in this conference for their significant contributions to the teaching and research in Population Studies. They include Prof. Leela Visaria, Prof. Sudesh Nangia, Prof. P. Krishnan, Prof. K. N. S. Yadava, Prof. K. Balasubramanian and Dr. Sanjeevaneer Mulay.

Dr. U. V. Somayajulu, General Secretary of the Association announced the winners of the two awards. Prof. K. Srinivasan Award for best paper published in Demography India (Journal of IASP) during the last one year was presented to Prof. D. P. Singh of Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai. Prof. K. B. Pathak Award for the best research paper published in the areas of Population and Health Sciences was presented to Dr. Aparajita Chattopadhyay of IIPS, Mumbai. Prof. Sayeed Unisa, Treasurer of IASP, proposed the vote of thanks. She thanked UNFPA, UNICEF, ICRW, Asian Population Association, Central Statistical Organization, IIPS, and Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics for their support in organizing this conference.

Dr. George Simmons Memorial Lecture is an important event of the Conference. This year, distinguished Demographer and Statistician, Prof. Arvind Pandey (Director, National Institute of Medical Statistics, New Delhi) delivered the lecture on " HIV Estimation in India: Methods and Results". In his scholarly presentation, Prof. Pandey discussed in details the history of HIV/ AIDS in India, the sentinel surveillance and estimates, methodological evolution over the years, and recent estimates. The latest analysis indicates that about 2.4 million people in India are living with HIV/ AIDS, only next to South Africa and Nigeria. Some of the Indian states which are considered to be 'high risk' areas are showing a declining trend whereas some other states are experiencing raising trends in HIV incidence. Drawing from various data sets, appropriate methodologies and estimation procedures, Prof. Pandey illustrated the existing scenario and its future implications. Prof. K. Srinivasan and Prof. F. Ram jointly chaired the session.

This conference had two plenary sessions. The first plenary session held on December 13th with three presentations was chaired by Shri. A. R Nanda and Prof. T. K. Roy. Prof. K. Srinivasan talked about the rise and fall of family planning program in India. He elaborated upon the evolution of the family planning program since independence and also suggested measures to reposition the birth control program, to make it inclusive and sustainable. Prof. Leela Visaria discussed the history of population policy making in our country. She highlighted the contributions made by Bhore Committee, Shah Committee and others. According to her, the donors and international agencies played a significant role in shaping the population policies over the years. Dr. Shireen Jejeebhoy of Population Council portrayed the scenario of sexual and reproductive health of youth in India. She mainly addressed two concerns – Whether the commitment we made to the youth were translated into reality? Are our young people are successful in their transition to adulthood in a globalised and fast changing century?

The second plenary session held on 14th December with four presentations was jointly chaired by Prof. P. C. Saxena and Prof. S. C. Gulati. Dr. Rajesh Dixit of Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai, in his presentation on “Cancer Morbidity in India “discussed the low prevalence of certain types of cancer amongst some social groups. He reiterated the need for better facilities and services for cancer detection and treatment, and provision of health education programs. Dr. K. M. Sathyanarayana (UNFPA) talked about “Demographic Trends and Alternative Pathways to Fertility Transition in Bihar”. The state has recorded high unmet need for family planning and also has considerable inter-district variation. He also argued for adopting the method-mix approach in contraceptive services. Prof. K. Balasubramanian talked about the name-based tracking of women and children for antenatal care, immunization and institutional delivery. He felt that it is important to have a strong data base and good tracking system for the efficient implementation of any program. He also shared his experiences from Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan. The last presentation in this plenary session was from Dr. A. R. Risbud from National AIDS Research Institute (NARI), Pune. His presentation focused on the “HIV/ AIDS scenario in India and the emerging challenges”. He illustrated with data how the epidemic has gained momentum over the years and its prevalence among adults and children. It is necessary to have sustained action and effective IEC campaigns to face this challenge.

About 80 papers were presented in various parallel technical sessions by experienced Demographers and young Ph. D scholars. Most of the papers were pertaining to fertility, RCH, Health status, NRHM, HMIS, Sexual Health/HIV/AIDS, Ageing, Technical Demography and Migration. Few papers also dealt with methodological issues, sustainable development, program evaluation and policy implications. Most of these papers utilized the available and recent data from Census, NFHS, DLHS, NSSO, IHDS and other sources. Few papers were based on micro level studies carried out in villages and towns. As evident from the rapporteur reports of technical sessions, the discussions touched upon the need for evolving new methodologies, concern over the quality and reliability of data sets, ethical issues in data collection and field work, need for more inter-disciplinary research and collaboration, and under utilization of existing data sets at the national and state levels.

The conference had three poster sessions with about 60 posters displayed, mostly by Ph.D scholars. The authors of three best posters selected by a committee were presented the Prof. S. N. Singh Poster Award in the valedictory session of the conference on 15th December.

Every year, IASP conducts a competition for young Demographers for the prestigious Dr. C. Chandrasekaran Award. This year, six young scholars presented their research papers. A committee consisting of Prof. Arvind Pandey, Prof. Sudesh Nangia and Prof. K. S. James evaluated the presentations. Dr. Chandrasekaran Award was given to Ms. Shilpi Tanti of Benaras Hindu University, Varanasi in the valedictory session of the conference on 15th December.

The General Body Meeting of the Association was held on the evening of 14th Dec, which was chaired by Prof. F. Ram, President. Dr. U V Somayajulu, General Secretary presented the General Secretary's report with details relating to various activities undertaken by IASP during the last one year. He informed the members about the final settlement of court case which was pending for a long time. Prof. Sayeed Unisa, Treasurer, presented the Balance Sheet for 2011-12 which was approved by the members. Prof. P. M. Kulkarni, Chairman of the Electoral Reforms Committee presented the important recommendations of the committee, which will be implemented in due course. The General Body also deliberated upon various measures, including mobilization of resources, to strengthen the activities of the Association.

The valedictory session of the conference held on December 15th was chaired by Prof. F. Ram, President of IASP. Prof. Ramesh Paranjape, Director, National AIDS Research Institute (NARI), Pune delivered the valedictory address. He stressed upon the need for more collaboration and interaction between and Demographers and Medical professionals. Prof. Rajas Parchure, Director of GIPE, offered his support in bringing out a special issue of good quality papers of the conference in their journal " Arthavigyana". Dr. U. V. Somayajulu, General Secretary of IASP and Dr. R. Nagarajan, Local Organizing Secretary, proposed vote of thanks.

The conference provided an opportunity for interaction between Demographers, Social Scientists, Program managers, and NGOs to deliberate upon various issues concerning population, health, gender and development. It also provided an ideal platform for the young Demographers and research scholars to present their study findings to a wider audience to seek suggestions.

Prepared by Dr.T.V. Sekher, Joint Secretary, IASP