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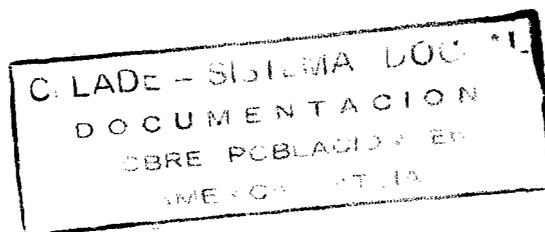
POPULATION POLICY FORMULATION
GUIDELINES FOR THE CARIBBEAN

by

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POPULATION POLICY FORMULATION
THE CARIBBEAN EXPERIENCE

I. INTRODUCTION

The process of formulating and implementing a population policy and the exercise of planning for economic and social development are very closely related. Increasing evidence supports the belief that the size, composition and geographical distribution of a nation's population are largely determined by social and economic variables. Conversely, it is now widely acknowledged that these population characteristics strongly influence the pattern and pace of a country's economic and social development.

These interrelationships were brought into public focus at the World Population Conference in Bucharest in 1974 and reiterated at the 1984 World Population Conference in Mexico City. Of significance is recommendation eleven which repeats the call to governments to formulate population policies as integral components of socio-economic development policies.

It follows, therefore, that if population characteristics are considered to exert an important effect on the process of development, then policy makers who are guiding the development of a country also need to consider trying to modify the social behaviour pattern and other

factors that produce population dynamics. This active consideration of population factors in development plans is more effectively accomplished through the implementation of an explicit national population policy, which would not only establish goals consistent with other national, social and economic objectives, but also identify the mechanisms for successful achievement of these goals.

1. Definitions/Concepts

According to a definition provided by the United Nations Expert Group, a Population Policy is defined as "measures and programmes designed to contribute to the achievement of economic, social, demographic, political and other collective goals through affecting critical demographic variables, namely the size and growth of the population, its geographical distribution and its demographic characteristics."

A population policy normally involves Governments making a clear and definite statement on their perception of the population problem, establishing desirable targets and levels to be attained within a given time frame and identifying the means/measures and programmes of action which should be undertaken to achieve these targets. Also governments often determine the institutions which would implement population policies and programmes.

2. Accommodation versus Influencing Policies

Among these policies a distinction is often made between accommodating versus influencing policies. Population accommodating policies are those in which population inputs are treated mainly as an endogenous factor to the planning and policy making process, that is, data is used for projections, note is taken of size/numbers of people and programmes are designed for accommodating population growth e.g. increase of school enrolment, hospital beds, job creation, water and housing. But this is often viewed as a passive approach in contrast to the formulation of population influencing policies in which programmes are designed with the specific aim to change/influence population trends.

3. Caribbean Experience

In recent years, the concept of the interrelations between population and development planning has taken on greater significance in the Caribbean countries. Governments' realisation that some of the primary social and economic problems may be influenced by the prevailing patterns of population growth, composition and distribution has resulted in their developing a growing interest in the formulation of population policies.

Jamaica was the first country to formulate an explicit national population policy which was tabled and accepted in Parliament in July 1983. The country is currently involved in the implementation process of this policy.

Following on their experience, a population policy for the Caribbean Community was developed as a model, for eight countries by CARICOM in July 1984. These countries are now involved in the task of formulating individual country policies for which population policy task forces have been established through a CARICOM project. St. Lucia has recently completed the first draft of its population policy on this programme.

II. PREREQUISITES FOR POPULATION POLICY FORMULATION

The formulation of a population policy requires a great deal of preparatory work. While there is no such thing as a model population policy since most countries vary in racial, political and cultural conditions, the Caribbean has accumulated a considerable amount of experience over the past few years which this paper intends to discuss in hope that it will serve as a checklist or guidelines to which policy makers can refer when formulating their own national policies.

1. Prerequisite - Awareness Creation

Awareness creation is an essential first step in the process of population policy formulation. Although it is a long road between awareness and actions, an important prerequisite for covering this road is a clear vision on the part of government of the role population factors play in the development process, particularly planning.

Awareness creation will assist governments in clarifying their perception and determine the role governments assign to population policies. The common tendency in approaching population issues has been to adopt population policies that concern solely demographic behaviour such as fertility, mortality and migration. This is clearly reflected in

the family planning population policies developed in the early 1970s. It is, however, essential that governments adopt a comprehensive approach and are able to envisage the various components of population dynamics as an integral part of the development process. In this way, governments would assign the role of population policies to that of helping to resolve critical situations arising from interrelations between population and socio-economic factors.

The latter awareness and knowledge should lead to the realisation of the need to integrate population into development planning and hence the necessity of a population policy to achieve these objectives.

2. Organisational Prerequisite - Task Force

The large amount of preparatory work required for the formulation of a population policy can only be accomplished through the efforts of a strong task force or national population council, well co-ordinated and with clear direction. In all the Caribbean countries, task forces have been established by the governments for the purpose of re-evaluating population trends within the context of the country's social and economic development and to formulate the national policy. Specifically these task forces should be responsible for:

- (i) establishing goals
- (ii) analysing implicit policies identified by the national leadership
- (iii) reviewing and utilising demographic data

- (iv) devising and co-ordinating an implementation plan of activities required for the development of the national population policy
- (v) co-ordinating the involvement of the public and private sector community towards developing strategies for achieving the legal acceptance of the policy.

The comprehensive nature of a population policy as well as the need for it to be linked to all the important aspects of a country's social and economic development requires that the task forces comprise a wide cross section of the public and private sector community such as Ministries of Planning, Health, Education, Social Security, Youth, Agriculture, Statistical Office, Family Planning Association, UWI. The organization of a national Population Policy Development Conference could be a useful vehicle for providing the necessary components for population policy formulation such as background documentation and discussions by a wide variety of experts.

3. Prerequisite - Source/Ingredients for explicit policy

(i) Explicit versus Implicit Policies

Very often a distinction is made between an 'explicit' and an 'implicit' population policy. An 'explicit' policy is usually a statement or document by a national government announcing its intention or plan to influence the country's demographic structure.

In this perspective, population policies have often been confused with family planning or fertility policies. However, a population policy is generally considered as encompassing broader socio-economic and goals including mortality, migration in addition to fertility.

On the other hand, an 'implicit' policy usually refers to laws, regulations, programmes which though not necessarily formulated for the purpose of affecting population growth, composition or distribution, indirectly exert an impact.

(ii) Source of Ingredients

Every government, by its activities, reveals its implicit or explicit population policy. Very often this policy can be found embodied in published documents, development plans, sectoral programmes, or in statements of political leaders. In some cases, it must be deduced from the effect of less publicised speeches and actions of private individuals or organisations (business community, medical profession, university) to promote specific programmes concerned with matters such as education, health, or family planning.

We are therefore starting from the basic premise that each government has some kind of "population policy", even if its policy consists in denial of the existence of a population problem. It also has a policy if it admits to the existence of a population problem but fails to take any measure to deal with them or promotes policies that are inconsistent.

Therefore the basic ingredients required for the formulation of the national population policy should first be sought in the government's actions, speeches, programmes comprising the implicit policy. The basis of the explicit national policy should be considered to be, first, the government's official and informal attitude towards the existence of population problems and, secondly, to its position and action with regards to the various components of population change - migration, rate of population growth, fertility, mortality.

A cursory review of some of the development plans in the Caribbean Region also illustrate the existence of implicit policies indirectly designed to cope with population problems such as

- (a) employment programmes
- (b) education and training programmes with emphasis on youth and women
- (c) rural development programmes
- (d) indirect population redistribution and spatial planning strategies, including community development and sub-urban housing development schemes
- (e) agricultural production policies to meet future demand.

1/ The recognition of the existence of a socio-economic sectoral problem without inferring a causal link to population cannot be considered as governments perception of a population problem. See P. Maxwell Stamper, "Population and Planning in Developing Nations, "The Population Council, New York, 1977.

In addition, most development plans possess a demographic section that includes the results of population projections and an analysis of implications for future social and economic development with respect to areas such as youth, urban-rural migration, continued need for fertility control, repercussions of emigration on potential labour skills.

Thus, in a sense, it could be said that many Caribbean countries have more or less passed through the main stages in the formulation of a population policy, which are

- (i) the perception that a problem exists
- (ii) some analysis of the effects on socio-economic development
- (iii) the consequent setting of objectives and goals
- (iv) the election of means to effect some of these changes
- (v) some attempts at implementation.

What has not yet been achieved is the interrelation of this policy with the national development plan as well as the formal acceptance by the government elevating it to the level of an explicit national policy. This is the context in which the work of the Population Policy Task Force becomes essential.

(iii) Research/Data Collection

The task of raising current population programmes to the level of national law requires increased research activities and improvements in the statistical data collection system.

There is an 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 effective.

The kinds of research required for policy formulation and implementation are wide ranging and must proceed on several fronts 2/:

1. Descriptive - which will provide information on levels, trends and differentials:- fertility, mortality and migration
2. Evaluative - to measure demographic impact of projects and policies
3. Determinants and consequences - to develop sound theoretical frameworks
4. Analysis of political processes through which population policies are arrived at - this includes:
 - (i) the most appropriate kinds of research findings likely to have an effect on policy adoption

2/ Miro C. and Potter J., "Population Policy, Research Priorities in the Developing World", 1980, Frances Printer Ltd, UK.

- (ii) the interest groups and government sectors most likely to respond to research findings
- (iii) the government organizations with the most appropriate skills and political leverage to coordinate the activities related to population policy formulation.

The realisation of this goal would require that efforts be focussed on establishing and sustaining institutions in which the research can be accomplished. There should also be dedication to training additional researchers and policy analysts.

On the other hand, as is well known, improvements in the data base and in knowledge are necessary but not sufficient conditions for their use in formulation and implementation of population policies.

Political, cultural and social factors, insufficient dissemination and diffusion of findings, inadequate translation of research findings into the policy-makers language, lack of opportunity in making the data available, all conspire to keep a gap between the producers and users of demographic knowledge. Furthermore, the process linking data and knowledge production to its use by policy-makers involves a large number of actors (statisticians, researchers, mass-media, academic community) and is multidirectional rather than linear.

It is therefore the responsibility of the task force to recognise the multifarious aspect of the communications component of population

policy formulation and implementation and develop strategies to ensure the successful utilisation and dissemination of data and knowledge.

III OUTLINE OF POPULATION POLICY

The contents of the population policy usually determines the nature of the work and the kinds of decision making required of the task force. The following is therefore an outline based on the experiences of some of the Caribbean countries.

(i) Rationale/Justification

The first section of a population policy ususally contains the rationale or justification for the formulation of the policy. In addition to a description of the process of policy formulation, the governments perspective of the population problem is often presented in the form of an analysis of past and future population trends using projections made under varying assumptions concerning fertility, mortality and migration.

Governments' perception of population problems usually fall into two categories. The first concern those resulting from the interaction of the socioeconomic, political and demographic consequences of their country's development process. The latter include: urbanisation trends and imbalance of regional development; insufficient employment opportunities in relation to population growth and urbanisation; the

exodus of highly skilled personnel; agricultural development trends and their effects on employment, urbanisation, food production.

The problems perceived as resulting in a demand for services generated by population changes include high dependency ratios, and the rapid increase in needs in the areas of education, health services, housing and other facilities related to the trends of population, growth, distribution and structure.

Preparatory work for this section requires a great deal of research and data collection.

(ii) Goals

Following on the presentation of the governments perception and the identification of key problems, the stage is set to define the goals of the policy aimed at resolving the perceived problems.

The goals contained in the policies of Jamaica, St. Lucia and the CARICOM have all been conceived as an integral part of the country's social and economic development process. The policies proceed from a general goal such as improvement of quality of life to specific objectives which include improvement in health and nutritional status, increased opportunities for education and employment, improved housing, water, environmental conditions, improved status of women, balanced

rural/urban development, and better balance between population and resources.

Some goals are quantitative in nature and identify specific demographic targets. For example, the Jamaica policy states that "the population of Jamaica should not exceed 3 million by the year 2000." With regard to mortality, "a minimum goal is to increase average life expectancy at birth from 70 years to 73 years by the year 2000." In order to ensure a continued fertility decline, both the Jamaican and St. Lucian policies advocate that the average number of children per woman should further decline to approximately two children per woman by the year 2000, thereby realising the goal of replacement level fertility.

The setting of quantitative targets has the advantage of facilitating the monitoring and evaluation of implementation activities.

(iv) Measures/Strategies

The successful implementation of the national population policy as outlined by the goals requires the development of measures and strategies to accomplish these goals. Since population policies must involve a broad spectrum of concerns and are multisectoral in dimension, their measures or instruments will usually be found in the sectoral policies and programmes of several institutions. Among the measures utilised by the Jamaican, St. Lucian and CARICOM policies are:-

- (a) Family Planning Services - Strategies aimed at improving the delivery of services and information have been detailed to include activities related to increasing supplies, improving distribution, increasing capacity of clinic services, developing special programmes to serve adolescents and rural areas. Other programmes were related to training of personnel, management and community participation.
- (b) Information/Education Programmes - Population, Family Life - The importance of public education/information campaigns and programmes to increase awareness at all levels about population trends and consequences are emphasised. Activities related to the inclusion of family life and human

sexuality education in school curricula, informal programmes for out-of-school youth, and the training of teachers at all levels are also underlined.

- (c) Improving Health and Nutritional Status - Specific programmes are identified to prolong average length of life and diminish infant mortality with special attention devoted to maternal and child care, delivery of services to rural areas, expansion of primary health care services.
- (d) Status of Women - Particular attention is given to emphasizing the need to devise ways of improving the status of women, especially with respect to education and employment.
- (e) Migration - The issue of emigration is addressed particularly in relation to the loss of skilled labour. Measures to increase new and additional employment opportunities are advocated to reduce the out-migration flow.
- (f) Research and Data Collection - The strengthening of the systems providing statistical data and other information on population matters, improvement in the quality of the data as well as increased research and evaluation activities are identified as important measures in population policy implementation.

- (g) Legal Reforms - A review of laws, policies and regulations which may inadvertently affect population growth is considered necessary to ensure that there are no impediments to the effective implementation of the population policies. Areas in which specific review is being suggested include civil code, labour code, tax code, family code and other areas such as marriage, divorce, abortion, rights of women and illegitimate children and informed consent to contraception.
- (h) Incentives and Disincentives - The St. Lucian policy states that the government will explore the possibility of using these measures to encourage the adoption of the small family norm. This strategy has been the subject of controversy as some countries such as Jamaica and Latin America have emphasised the voluntary nature of fertility regulation programmes.

In general the kinds of measures adopted in other countries include cash payments, tax reductions based on size of family, family benefits related to housing, education of children, and maternity leave.

(v) Institutional Arrangements

The institutional arrangements are important to ensure the successful implementation of the policy. Lessons from Jamaica's experience have shown that a solid institutional network is needed to implement the new population policy. The two main strategies for developing implementation and institutional arrangements comprise:

- (a) the establishment of a national population council and
- (b) the specification of the roles of various institutions involved in carrying out the policy.

A National Population Council - a statutory interministerial body - was created in both St. Lucia and Jamaica for implementation process. It is composed of representatives from a wide range of public and private sector organisations including Ministries of Planning, Health, Education, Agriculture, Youth, Labour, Statistical Office, UWI, Family Planning Association. The council functions as an advisory board to the Prime Minister on all population matters and its responsibilities include: co-ordination of implementation activities; monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes; suggesting modifications in keeping with national development goals; and dissemination of information.

With regard to selection of the most appropriate institutional mechanisms for implementing the activities, a review should be made of the existing population-related activities among the various

organisations involved and care should be taken to ensure that no duplication of efforts is involved.

A recent United Nations inquiry on population policy shows that, among the 81 developing countries that responded, there is a marked positive association between the existence of a specific government agency responsible for population policy formulation or co-ordination and the likelihood that the government will have formulated policies. Furthermore, in accordance with recommendations from the World Population Plan of Action, the creation of a population planning unit within the Ministry of Planning has been found to be an effective implementation mechanism.

As is the case in Jamaica, this population planning unit could function as the Secretariat to the National Population Council and be responsible for co-ordinating and evaluating the implementation of the policy; conducting policy-relevant research in order to develop new policy measures; and providing timely information on how the population policy is being implemented and whether modifications might be needed.

It will be found that, in the process of developing and implementing the new population policy, the network of the country's population-related institutions will be revitalised and strengthened.

^{3/} United Nations, 1984. Concise report on the fifth inquiry among governments: Monitoring of government perceptions and policies on demographic trends and levels in relation to development as of 1982.

CONCLUSION

The Caribbean experience would seem to indicate that the following ingredients are essential for successful development of a national population policy:

- (1) a wide consensus on the importance of the problem and need for the policy
- (2) local political support: Efforts should be made to accommodate groups such as religious organisation or other nationalist groups;
- (3) highly motivated and influential local leadership, who will commit themselves to the cause.

Once these ingredients have been obtained the policy development process can begin.

The first stage is to assemble and organize the available body of theoretical and empirical information on the country's population trends and it is being suggested that this should be assembled in the context of social and economic development. Involvement of a broad cross-section of experts, public servants, politicians and others in workshops and Task Forces should be encouraged. But the work of these bodies should be well prepared, co-ordinated and directed to clear goals if any success is to be achieved.

A complementary network of institutions that can provide data, conduct research, train experts, and provide services is needed. In order to guarantee a relatively smooth functioning of this network, a strong co-ordinating body is required. It is advisable that this Population Policy Co-ordinating Commission be attached to the government's Planning Ministry which is multidisciplinary in nature, operates above all sectors and can establish links with the planning units in sectoral ministries as well as the various levels of local government.

With regard to the implementation of the policy, widespread involvement of numerous yet appropriate institutions within and outside the government is advisable.

Finally, wide dissemination of information concerning population activities, research, policies and other relevant data through a variety of channels, such as the educational system, public and private organizations, and communications media, should prove effective in developing and implementing the national population policy.

4. See Boland, B. "National Population Policy of Jamaica - Development and Implementation," paper prepared for CARICOM meeting on "Regional Population Awareness," St. Lucia, 1984.