

KARNATAKA

POPULATION, FAMILY PLANNING AND WOMEN'S HEALTH

by

DR. SHIRDI PRASAD TEKUR,

M.B.B.S., D.C.H.

Coordinator,

Community Health Cell,

Society for Community Health Awareness, Research and Action,

No.326, 5th Main,
Koramangala, 1st Block,
Bangalore - 560 034.

KARNATAKA

POPULATION, FAMILY PLANNING AND WOMEN'S HEALTH

Karnataka occupies the eighth position among States in India in terms of population and land area. We occupy 5.84% of land area, with 5.31% of the Indian Population, with an average of 234 people per Sq. Km. This compares well with the National averages and the surrounding states, except Kerala and Tamilnadu, where more people live on less land.

The rate at which this population is growing over the last decade (1981-91) is 20.7%, a decrease from the earlier decade (1971-81 - 26.8%). The rate of decrease is more than in the surrounding states and the country as a whole. Which means, our population is growing at a slower rate.

Population size and growth is related to the status of women in society, socio-economic status, literacy, employment opportunities, and several other issues of development other than Medical and Health services in an area. Family Planning efforts make a marginal impact, though specifically designed to control population growth.

Family Planning has been on the National agenda since before Independence, and Karnataka has been one of the earliest to appreciate and adopt policies meant for the same. The details of the evolution and modification of these programmes is beyond the present purview.

Nature favours the survival of the female in any species, including the human. This is seen in the fact that more female children are born than male, especially in a growing population like ours. They do not seem to survive well, if we look at statistics given below :-

Females per 1000 males

	INDIA	KAR.	A.P.	T.N.	KER.	MAH.
	-----	---	---	---	---	---
1991 -	929	961	973	972	1040	935
1981 -	934	963	975	977	1032	937

There are less females per 1000 males in Karnataka than the surrounding states except Maharashtra, though we are better than National averages.

The woman in Karnataka survives less better, meaning that she suffers from more inequalities than her sisters in the neighbouring states. The situation is worsening too, except in Kerala.

What is this related to? Literacy, Employment, Urbanisation, Health Services, Poverty, or whatever - let's have a look at the situation in Karnataka's districts.

Females per 1000 male population : District-wise

District	1981	1991	District	1981	1991
Bellary	973	957	Chickmagalur	953	977
Bidar	968	953	Kodagu	933	989
Bijapur	982	965	D. Kannada	1059	1063
Gulbarga	981	962	Hassan	987	1000
Kolar	971	962	Shimoga	947	961
Raichur	988	978	U. Kannada	958	967

In the districts listed on the left, we see a worsening survival for women, while it is improving with those listed on the right. Why and how this difference?

One of the major factors cited is, literacy among females. Excepting Andhra Pradesh, the Karnataka woman is not as literate as in the neighbouring states. We are of course better than the National average.

Karnataka - Total literacy - 56% of population
Female literacy - 44.3% of females

Let us see this factor when we look again at the districts listed earlier for female literacy.

District	Rural	Urban	District	Rural	Urban
Bellary	19.50%	42.13%	Chickmagalur	40.39%	62.13%
Bidar	19.66%	46.48%	Kodagu	49.98%	67.05%
Bijapur	29.58%	46.70%	D. Kannada	55.45%	68.84%
Gulbarga	12.94%	43.05%	Hassan	33.83%	65.62%
Kolar	29.56%	56.74%	Shimoga	37.16%	61.26%
Raichur	13.16%	35.79%	U. Kannada	43.27%	63.42%

In the above figures, the differences in literacy of the rural woman is more striking than in the urban.

The urban woman appears to be more literate, but faces all the problems of urbanisation from congested living spaces to pollution and the crunch of resources to unequal competition.

How many people do live in cities and towns, and how fast is this problem increasing?

Ratio of Urban Population to Total (%)

	INDIA -----	KAR. ---	A.P. ---	T.N. ---	KER. ---	MAH. ---
1991	25.7	30.9	26.8	34.2	26.4	38.7
Increase (%) during 81-91	36.2	29.1	42.6	19.3	60.9	38.7

Three out of ten people live in cities and towns, in Karnataka, and it is increasing at the same rate (i.e., three more are added to ten already in the city/town) over the last decade.

Which are these rapidly growing urban areas in Karnataka? What is the health status of women here?

Place -----	Population ('000s) -----	Decennial growth rate -----
Bangalore	4,087	39.9%
Belgaum	402	33.7%
Hubli-Dharwad	648	22.9%
Mangalore	426	39.1%
Mysore	652	36.2%

Wherever the people live, poverty is a major factor to be considered, and for people living in villages, their ability to reach places in the state for employment, health care etc., is important.

Let us see how Karnataka fares in these aspects :-

	INDIA -----	KAR. ---	A.P. ---	T.N. ---	KER. ---	MAH. ---
Population below poverty line (as%) of total (1987- 88)	29.9	32.1	31.7	32.8	17.0	29.2
% Villages (1987-88) Connected by fairweather Roads	40.7	32.9	43.0	63.2	100	52.9

We seem to be as poor as our neighbouring states except Kerala, while the villages of Karnataka are less well connected by fairweather roads than all of them, even by National standards!

Since a majority of mobile population is male, the Karnataka woman has even less opportunity to do so in this situation compared to her sisters.

This means that the Karnataka woman has lesser chances of reaching facilities away from her village, whether for health or employment.

When we consider the participation rate of Female workers in employment, the Karnataka woman is marginally less well off than in neighbouring states. Karnataka as such provides lesser opportunities for "main" employment too! Also, 70% of main work is done by males in the country.

The 'marginal' sector of employment, where a person has work for less than 180 days per year (less than 1/2 the time in a year) is what we need to focus on, since 10% of all employment available is in this category.

Nine out of ten 'marginal' workers are women, with the attendant insecurity and impact on survival.

Does the status of Women's Health depend on Hospital facilities. Yes, at least for disease care and public health measures. Where do we stand on this in Karnataka?

	Hospitals		Beds ('000s)		Population
	Total -----	Govt. -----	Total -----	Govt. -----	Per Bed -----
India	15,067	8,290	645.9	462.8	1316
Karnataka	288	237	34.5	27.1	1299
Andhrapradesh	615	349	36.4	25.3	1613
Tamilnadu	408	289	48.8	38.4	1136
Kerala	2,924	137	70.3	26.5	413
Maharashtra	2,104	785	111.4	73.6	667

Needless to point out that we are worse off than our neighbours, except marginally better than Andhra Pradesh.

The Family Welfare Programme in Karnataka has been consistently meeting most of the 'targets' laid down for it, and has been 'successful' in that aspect. The burden of this is borne by the woman, since the 'targets' are,

- Sterilization - where the number of women undergoing tubectomy fifteen times the number of men undergoing vasectomy.
- I.U.D. insertion - it is the woman again
- Birth control pills - and again
- Medical Termination of Pregnancy - and again.

Injectable contraceptives have now been cleared by the Government for use on women, and the implantable ones (Norplant) have completed their 'trials' for use. This focus is on the woman, where we know that more than half suffer from anaemia, while the morbidity due to gynaecological problems are not even well studied or quantified. On the one who utilizes all her earnings for the benefit of the family, if and when she can earn. On the one who has little access to health care facilities and has to struggle against many odds for mere survival.

It is clear that unless factors affecting the survival of women change, family planning measures are an additional imposition on her life.

I hope I have outlined some of these factors which will help your discussions and decisions over the next two days.

REFERENCES :

1. Statistical outline of India 1992-93 - Tata Services Limited, Department of Economics and Statistics.
2. "District Census Figures 1991 and their implications" Seminar paper - 28th October, 1992 - presented by Dr. R. Indira, Deptt. of Studies in Sociology, University of Mysore.

=====