

Issues in Population Management in Nigerian Development

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ABSTRACT---- *The paper analyzes the imperatives of managing population in Nigeria towards achieving sustainable socio-economic development at multi-dimensional levels. Nigeria is acclaimed to be the giant of Africa and a major figure in the world development, but researchers reveal that there is a high fertility, mortality and migration rate which makes it difficult to achieve development. These and other variables if not checked can affect the population, environment and growth or development rate of the nation. The paper reveals that socio-cultural and environmental as well as behavioral activities and attitude of her citizens should be re-oriented towards achieving a manageable family size, which will reflect in the general population management in Nigeria. The paper further reveals that there must be improvement in primary health care services (and accessing of same) facilities and education especially amongst rural dwellers and their cultural belief systems, improved policy formulation and advocacy drives towards family /population control and strengthening of the vital registration process to be able to regularly articulate the population level per time, hence, leading to concrete steps towards the achievement of sustainable development.*

Keywords--- Population, Socio-cultural, Management, Sustainable development, Fertility, Mortality

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the imperatives of population management in Nigeria which is geared towards achieving sustainable development. This is important in view of the realization that a country's development is directly related to the country's population. In other words, the drive to achieve sustainable development must take cognizance of the essential characteristics of the population. In this sense therefore, issues of fertility, mortality, and migration are critical in development policy planning for any country. Hence, it is critical to examine these variables in relation to developmental needs and dynamics in Nigeria.

A thorough knowledge of extant literature reveals that quite a lot of efforts have been made by scholars in examining the nature and dynamics of population issues. However, such efforts have not addressed the direct linkage between population management and sustainable development in Nigeria. For instance, scholars like Okore (2005) have examined the fundamental attributes of social development in relation to population. On the other hand, some other social scientists like Isaac and Irvin (1991) have focused on the population policy and population control in Nigeria. However, in spite of these efforts, there is need to make a direct linkage between population management and sustainable development in Nigeria considering the fact that Nigeria as a developing nation has experimented with different population policies and has not still gotten to the desired level as fertility and mortality have remained high.

The 2006 population census estimated the population of Nigeria at 140,431, 790 and it has remained the most populous country in Africa and the tenth in the world (National Population Commission NPC, 2009). Nigeria's current population projection as at July 2013 is about 171 million and it was noted that it is growing at an alarming rate of 3.2 percent (Online Nigeria, 2013). Obviously, the population of Nigeria is large which makes it a giant compared to other African countries. However, though the population of the nation has continued to grow, the quality of life of the populace have continued to degenerate there by putting at risk the development process of both the present and future generation.

One question that comes to mind is: what are the socio-cultural, economic and demographic issues that encourage this trend in a world and continentally acclaimed giant like Nigeria?

The arguments about the relationship between population and level of development have been generating debates for several centuries. A number of ancient and modern writers have theorized on population issues, some considered high population as a source of political, economic and military strength, while others bought the idea of Thomas Malthus that population when unchecked could be disastrous for a nation. (Sauvy,1968). To this group, population and development are inversely related. In other words, as the number of people in a defined territory increases, the means of providing their basic needs becomes constrained, thus leading to a decline in the standard of living of an average person in that population. This later argument led to the establishment that there is a complex relationship between demographic variables and socio-economic development. This recognition led to calls in various international forums for increased recognition of demographic concerns in planning. In particular, the need to incorporate population factors was recognized in the World Population Plan of Action (WPPA) adopted by the United Nations World Population Conference in Bucharest in 1974 and reaffirmed a decade later in the International Conference on Population held in Mexico city in 1984 (United Nations, 1993).

Following these world conferences, and in response to the pattern of population growth rate and its adverse effect on national development, the Federal Government of Nigeria approved the national policy on population on February 4th 1988 which was later reviewed in 2005 (National Population Commission, 2009). In recognition of the challenges posed by population issues, there have been series of efforts through the national population policy at arriving at strategies for controlling population growth in Nigeria. However, many analysts are of the view that the national population policy is still far from yielding the desired result. Thus, the current population situation of Nigeria has compelled development planners to start canvassing for a manageable population for sustainable development. Hence, Population management as Isaac and Irvin (1991) have observed begins with a justification arising from the need to analyze the three demographic variables (fertility, mortality, and migration) and the problems presented by the current projected population and distribution.

2. CONCEPTUAL OVERVIEW

It is obvious that this paper dwells essentially on the interaction between population management and sustainable development. Therefore, it is only logical that we spend a little time dwelling on how these phenomena are conceptualized in this paper.

Population management can be viewed as a process consisting of planning, directing, and controlling the three demographic variables. It involves taking appropriate decisions about what to do to control the above identified variables. It centers not only on setting policy objectives but also determining strategies and selecting alternative course of action. It lays emphasis on action rather than making lengthy policies without implementation (Musselman and Jackson, 1984). Population management is therefore the strategic efforts by the national government to influence the three demographic variables; fertility, mortality, and migration. According to Isaac and Irvin (1991) population management involves direct and indirect measures put in place by whole range of social institutions, including government, which whether intended or not may influence the size, distribution or composition of human population. It involves making plans and decisions which ensures that all humans receive optimal care to maintain their wellbeing in society. This to a large extent is what could be seen amongst different societies as sustainable developmental process.

Sustainable development on the otherhand is undying. It is a rapidly progressive movement always to a better state. It is that development which not only provides for the present generation but equally do not compromise the ability of the future generation to meet up with their own needs. In other words, sustainable development entails a better quality of life for every one now and for the future generations. According to World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002), sustainable development entails a vision of progress that integrates immediate and long term objectives, local and global action and regard social and economic issues as inseparable and interdependent components of human progress. Sustainable development in Nigeria requires both institutional and attitudinal changes. In other words, it is not only about policy making, rather it borders on the principles guiding our everyday individual choices as members of a society.

3. AN OVERVIEW OF ISSUES IN POPULATION MANAGEMENT

The conventional approach in population studies is to focus on the three main variables indicated in it. These variables are fertility, mortality, and, migration. However, even though these variables are very common in population studies, there is still no arguing the fact that sometimes they are conceptualized in varying degrees by different scholars. Fertility is one of the key demographic variables most responsible for population dynamics. In demographic usage, the term fertility relates to the number of live births a woman has actually had (Newell, 1988). In this paper we will refer to fertility as the ability to produce children. Available statistics shows that fertility has remained high over the years despite all the effort to reduce the rate through the national population policy. According to National Population Commission (2009), the total fertility rate (TFR) was 5.9 births per woman in 1991, and 5.7 births in 2008 respectively. Online Nigeria (2013) observed that the major factor responsible for the rapid increase in Nigeria population is the relatively high fertility level as portrayed by a total fertility rate of about 6.0% to 7.01% live births per a woman. These

rates are relatively very high when compared with the TFR for the developed countries which according to United Nations (1999) was 1.4% and 1.9% births per woman in Europe and Northern America respectively. This situation has led Fisher, Askew, Ndeti, Ndhlovu, and King (1992) in Okebunior (2003) to state that Nigeria will rank the sixth largest country in the world in the year 2025 if the current average fertility rate of 6-7 children per woman is allowed to continue unchecked. Online Nigeria(2013) agree with this when it observed that with the current annual growth rate of 3.2 %, the population is likely to double in no distance time. This demographic situation has serious adverse implications for the nation's economic growth and development

Mortality is as well one of the key demographic variables responsible for population dynamics. The analysis of mortality dates back as far as the work of Graunt in the late seventeenth century and even the Roman times (Newell, 1988). Mortality simply means number of deaths within a defined area. At the global level, the continuing progress in the reduction of mortality achieved in this twenty-first century is remarkable. This is revealed in the increase in life expectancy at birth. However in Africa and particularly in Nigeria mortality rate is higher and the speed of improvements is particularly slow. As a result of this uneven mortality trends, international variations in life expectancy have become more pronounced than they were generations ago (United Nations, 1999). The causes of recent mortality trends at the national level includes a large array of factors which include medical to socio-economic, cultural, religious and political factors.

World Health Organization (2009) observed that malnutrition, maternal and neonatal mortality account for more than 40% of all deaths in Nigeria. There have also been rising rates of mortality because of non-medical causes, including accidents as a result of bad roads. Moreover, Nigeria in recent years have also witnessed a devastating toll from Human Immunodeficiency Virus and Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) an epidemic which has been particularly severe in Sub-Sahara Africa. United Nations (1999) noted that the demographic impact of HIV/AIDS is expected to intensify in the short term future. According to (World Bank, 2000) the HIV/AIDS epidemic is not only the most important public health problem affecting large parts of Sub-Saharan Africa but also an unprecedented threat to the region's development. The high prevalence of HIV/AIDS has led to increase in mortality rate in Nigeria and threatens to wipe out the gains that have been made in life expectancy at birth (Mamman, 2003). Hence the mortality rate in Nigeria needs critical examination and urgent response.

Migration is not just another key demographic variable but it is an interesting and rapidly engaging variable especially in terms of the relationship between the global North and the South. Perhaps because migration involves movement not just within a given territory but significant part of this debate borders on the influx of African migrant to Europe in search of greener pasture. Be that as it may, Migration as one of the key demographic variables has always been an important process leading to population change and population distribution. It is usually defined as a movement of persons or group of persons from one geographical unit to another across an administrative or political border (Bauer, Haisken-Denew, and Schmidts,2005). Given the large economic and demographic disparities existing between the rural and urban areas in Nigeria, there has been a large influx of people from rural to urban areas. Rural-to-urban migration is often viewed as the main cause of urban growth and hence has posed serious challenges for those in charge of planning and formulating economic and social policies.

The increasing rate of migration in developing countries especially Nigeria can be traced to factors such as rising income differentials between the rural and urban areas, lack of basic social amenities in rural areas and other push and pull factors. The major issue however is the impact of migration on the economy and population of both the urban centers as the receiving areas and the rural region as the sending area (Bauer, Haisken-Denew and Schidts, 2005).

Shabu(2010) observed that cities exercise enormous control over national economies, as they provide jobs, access to the best cultural, educational and health facilities and they act as a hub for communication and transport which are necessary conditions for economic development of any nation. However, they noted that cities cluster massive demand for energy, generate large quantities of waste, and concentrate pollution as well as social hardship. Quigley (2007) cited in Okeibunor(2003) noted that the economic and social crises that have enveloped most of the developing countries and particularly Nigeria is as a result of urban growth without proportional economic development. In other words, the continuous increase in the proportion of people living in the cities over rural areas in Nigeria has resulted to large number of slums and deplorable living in cities and in most cases worsened the economic circumstances of urban migrants.

Abumere (1981) indicated that most developing countries now regard the spatial redistribution of their population as a problem and unacceptable, far higher on the list of priorities than population growth rate. He observed that though most countries including Nigeria have adopted policies and measures in order to achieve a more rational distribution of population, adequate measures of population distribution are lacking. Currently according to him, there is no objective way to determine optimal population distribution. Thus, in spite of the fact that fertility, and mortality are core aspect of population studies, contemporary challenge of development shows that managing migration remains one of the daunting challenge for countries all over the world and this is no less the case in Nigeria.

Challenges of population growth in Nigeria:

Large Population as some have argued implies large market for goods and services as well as a large pool of human resources for development. However, Online Nigeria (2013) maintained that the impact of population on development depends not only on the absolute size but also on quality. A wide variety of recent studies have suggested that over population is bad for a Nation's socio- economic growth. Okeibunor (2003) has noted that the demographic situation of Nigeria has adverse implications that range from poor economic growth, worsening quality of life, to environmental degradation, pressure on arable land and social conflict over the increasing resources. In other words, the rate of population increase has serious implications for the social and economic development of the Nigeria Nation as well as the quality of life of its members. UNESCO (1982) noted that Nigeria being a youthful population has high potentialities for a considerable natural expansion of population. This means that the current high rate of natural growth of the population is going to persist for quite some time to come. This in turn brings disequilibrium in the dependency ratio and compounds the poor gross national product (GNP) of the nation (Okeibunor, 2003). World Bank (2000) noted that, rapid population growth continues to undermine efforts to reduce poverty in Africa and Nigeria in particular.

According to Population Media Center (2009), most developing countries including Nigeria are in need of approximately \$1 trillion per year in new infrastructural development (for example, class room) to accommodate the dramatic increase to their population . The center maintained that since this figure is effectively impossible to meet, the continued expansion of human population will result in an increase in the number of people living in poverty, unemployment, and with inadequate health care there by resulting to increase in mortality rate. Hence, there is need for urgent and proper management of Nigeria's population.

4. MANAGING NIGERIA POPULATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Different societies reflect different stages of development in which fertility, mortality, and migration are fundamentally associated with socio-economic aspect of development (Curraise, 2010). The concern about the effect of rapid population growth and high fertility in Nigeria has been the central goal of population policy over the past two decades. For most of the time however, population policy was meant policy to reduce population growth by promoting the use of contraceptives. To achieve this, the national population policy has as one of its targets, to increase contraceptive prevalence rate for modern methods by at least two percentage points per year through the use of family planning (National Population Commission, 2009). However, Magashi (2007) observed that the greatest problem Nigeria has with population matter is not with formulation of policies but rather implementation of these policies which results from people's attitude about fertility. This has made impossible the actualization of targeted goals in population policies. In other words, it has been noted that campaign for the use of modern contraceptives in voluntary fertility in Nigeria has not yielded the desired result as these were considered culturally alien to the people both in concept and in practice (Okeibunor, 2003). This led the World Bank to maintain that developing countries including Nigeria has continue to grow in population despite all efforts. This surge in population as the source observed is the combination of still high fertility rates and the youthful age structures in those countries which result in many more births than deaths. High fertility reflects cultural and social norms supportive of large families as well as preferences for male children (Obikeze, 1988; Nwakeze, 2003). Thus it has been argued that the difficulty in implementing population policy in Nigeria and some other African countries results from the great and inestimable values attached to children (World Bank, 1994). In Nigeria for instance, children are regarded to be of great value, a pride not only to the family but the entire society and so the desire to have a large family could be seen as ideal in virtually all the traditional societies in Nigeria, especially as children are considered to be of great insurance for parents at old age.

Thus, a broader approach is needed for the management of fertility as a population variable in Nigeria. Recent studies have shown that rather than concentrating on only modern methods of family planning, that we should aim at adopting culturally sensitive strategies of managing fertility in Nigeria (Okeibunor, 2003). He identified age-at-first marriage and differential fertility as crucial cultural variables. The National Population Commission (2009) observed that the median age at marriage for women with no formal education was 15.5 years. The report noted the high rate of teenage pregnancy in Nigeria, it observed that, twenty-three percent of young women age 15- 19 have begun childbearing, that is they have given birth or are currently pregnant with their first child. This in addition to the rate at which women are having children outside wedlock which is reinforced by exclusive bio-paternity system as practiced in some parts of the country are contributing significantly to population growth in Nigeria. Exclusive bio-paternity system as a social-cultural factor is institutionalized and deep rooted in patriarchal system, and have some salient issues surrounding it which affects not only population growth but also maternal and child health (Atama, 2011). Thus, it is important to note that marriage patterns are important determinant of fertility levels in a population. While rising age at marriage has contributed substantially to fertility decline in many countries, in Africa the measurement of marriage ages is complex because there are different types of partnership as indicated above and also because entry into partnership may be a long and gradual process rather than a precise event. Thus, postponement of marriage in Nigeria may not have direct consequences for the age pattern of childbearing that are typically found in Asia (Cleland, Onuoha, and Timaus, 1994). These problems of definition and interpretation can be circumvented by a shift to age at first birth rather than age at marriage. Thus, managing Nigeria population will require shifting emphasis to some of these cultural issues including

child spacing and lactation period so as to avert the fertility trend. The mortality level of a society is known to be related to its fertility level. On the basis of a comprehensive review of literature (WHO, 1985) concluded that a secular decline in mortality must eventually produce a decline in fertility and hence was a necessary condition for an effective social policy for reducing fertility. In other words, for there to be any reasonable decline in fertility in Nigeria, there is a serious and urgent need to tackle mortality level particularly infant and child mortality (Prevention of Maternal Mortality Network, 1992).

Managing Nigeria population entails good health for the populace. This means that efforts should be geared toward providing health facilities and health care services in the country. These will go a long way to reduce maternal and child mortality. Moreover, effort should also be geared towards HIV/AIDS preventive rather than curative measures. To effectively tackle the incidence of HIV/AIDS there is need to emphasis strategies that are multi-sectorial. Specific programs aimed at both a reduction of infection and AIDS mortality should be given paramount attention.

Although distinctive social, economic, cultural, and religious conditions make it difficult to envision a good population management in Nigeria, the key issue is more of a political problem. In Nigeria, population issues are usually exploited for one political benefit or the other. For instance, it has been observed that since the history of modern census in the country, some censuses have been rejected on account of irregularities and controversies, while others were accepted with a considerable amount of skepticism (Nelson-Tawakor, 2003). The difficulties in obtaining a reliable census figure have been associated with its use for allocation of revenue and parliamentary seats. Edwor (2008) has noted that rather than seeing census taking as a scientific and technical exercise, it has been regarded largely as a political issue. This has resulted to the inability of the nation to conduct a credible census. Vital registration is another means through which a country can generate adequate population data for the proper management of these population variables, however, in most part of the country, vital registration center is either nonexistence or not functioning well. Obviously, national population policy as we have it in Nigeria will not be able to tackle population issues without the political will to back it up. In other words, putting words into paper is not enough. Managing Nigeria population require serious and urgent political will, and the resources to follow it through.

Another aspect of population that is of paramount importance in Nigeria is its geographical distribution. A number of things have contributed to increase in rural- urban migration in Nigeria as have been noted earlier. The World Bank (1994) observed that natural increase has remained higher in rural areas in most developing countries including Nigeria, thereby leading to population pressure. This has resulted to large influx of rural population to the city with its concomitant effect of pollution, overcrowding, crime, and other social vices. According to Magashi (2007), the rapid urban growth will create concentration of unemployed youths and have some risk factors for civil conflict, increase sexual activities through prostitutions and sexual harassment and these will result to more spread of sexually transmitted infection including HIV/AIDS, unplanned and teenage pregnancies all of which have implications for quality of life and sustainable development. Managing Nigeria population implies taking appropriate measures by the government to provide the basic amenities in the rural areas so as to discourage rural-urban migration and providing adequate measures for proper check at various borders and sea shores. Social security will continue to pose a serious challenge in Nigeria until both in and out-migration is seriously checked. Okore (2003) has also indicated the need for adequate training of experts in population issues. Managing Nigeria population requires trained personnel who can articulate current population problems, discern their implications and proffer practicable solution.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper focused on the imperatives of population management in Nigeria and how these interact with forces that bring about sustainable development. We have tried so far to show that for there to be sustainable development in Nigeria, there is serious and urgent need for a manageable population. Nigeria as have been demonstrated in this paper is still a high fertility, and high mortality country and the implication is that much of her resources are channeled towards consumption activities like education, and provision of other basic amenities for larger proportion of the population who are dependent on those in the labor force thereby constituting a serious economic burden for the nation. Obviously, Nigeria needs a better management of the population which centers basically on both the control of fertility and other demographic variables like mortality and migration. This will help the nation to achieve a higher socio-economic development. Moreover, achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MGDS) will not be possible without proper management of these key demographic variables.

Thus, we recommend that there is need for increase awareness of population issues among the general public so as to appreciate better the linkage between population factors and development issues like health, housing, food, security of life and property.

In other words, there should be cultural reorientation of the people of Nigeria towards family size as the welfare and standard of the living of family members remain paramount.

Government should increase and intensify family planning programs. Most often couples do not adhere to their desired family size because of the imbalance in the sex of their children. Hence, there is need to inculcate in family planning programs information about sex selection so that with such information people could get the sex and number of children they want.

The provision of effective and affordable primary health care services should be intensified as this would reduce child and maternal mortality which is currently at a high rate. Government should ensure that credible and accurate population data is made available through a well-planned census and vital registration system. The vital registration system should be strengthened and equally extended to rural areas so that births and deaths could be registered. Finally, sustainable development which allows the use of resources for both present and future generation of Nigeria should be a national target.

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