

Population and Development Linkages – the Experience of Asian Countries¹

Gavin W. Jones

Introduction

There has been a vast literature on population and development, from the time of Malthus (and even before), to the publications of Kuznets (1967) and the United Nations Population Division (1953; 1973), and many more recent studies. There was relative consensus around the 1960s that rapid population growth caused by high fertility in poor countries was detrimental to economic and social development, but there was certainly not complete unanimity, either about whether it was detrimental at all, or about how seriously detrimental it was, compared with other factors holding back development. The “positivist” approach to the relationship between population and economic growth is exemplified by Simon, 1981. The more mainline assessment was represented by the very detailed study of the United Nations (1973) which noted that the lack of a clear-cut association between the growth of population and that of income had led several writers to conclude that population factors are not predominant as determinants of economic growth. This, however (the report argued), does not imply that population variables are not important, “but that the relations between population and economic growth are part of a whole complex of interrelations and interactions, which suggest that under different configurations of factors and conditions, the impact on economic factors may vary”. For the less developed countries, the evidence suggested that rapid population growth, while it had not prevented the growth in income, “has held back the increase of levels of income and, probably, the whole process of development in these countries to a considerable degree” (United Nations Population Division, 1973: 556).

The very cautious conclusions of the US National Academy of Sciences report in 1986 (US NRC 1986)² probably represented the nadir of academic consensus that rapid population growth in poorer countries was detrimental to economic development. By the end of the 1990s, accumulating evidence drawing on longer time series and more recent data on the economic performance of countries in multi-country studies gave stronger grounds for concluding that countries with higher rates of population growth have tended to experience less economic growth (Kelley and Schmidt, 2001). At the same time, the case for stressing the benefits of the age structure changes consequent on fertility decline – the so-called demographic bonus or demographic window of opportunity – was gaining prominence, being touted by many as a new development although it closely mirrored the much earlier arguments of Coale and Hoover (1958). But the economic historians like Williamson did claim to measure the positive quantitative impact of fertility decline. Williamson and Higgins (2001) argued that the high and rising saving and investment rates that fuelled the economic miracle in East Asian countries were associated with the low dependency rates resulting from rapid declines in fertility. In East Asia, the decline in youth dependency led to an impressive increase in savings and investment rates and enabled the region to kick the habit of foreign capital dependency. “Individual Northeast Asian countries’ experiences retell the aggregate regional story with remarkably little deviance” (p. 146).

¹ Paper prepared for National Conference on Population and Development , Kuala Lumpur, 26 June 2014

² The report stated: “On balance, we reach the qualitative conclusion that slower population growth would be beneficial for economic development for most developing countries. A rigorous quantitative assessment of these benefits is difficult and context-dependent”.

The intellectual arguments in the 1970s and 1980s were taking place in a situation in which national governments in Asian countries were dealing with population growth rates in the 2-3% range. For example, in Thailand, when I went there in 1968 to assist the NESDB (then NEDB) in developing a proposal on population policy to submit to the Cabinet, the rate was thought to be 3%; such a rate would double a population in 23 years.

I made a case for policy to lower population growth, stressing things like the greater ease of raising educational enrolment ratios and of improving health when fertility declines, and of age structures more favourable to development. After submitting a draft to the Secretary General of NESDB, I was surprised when he said that the arguments are good, but that two things were ignored that the government (which then, as now, was a military government) would be worried about: (1) if the birth rate falls, will there be enough soldiers? (2) Is the ethnic Chinese population growing faster than the rest of the population?³ It was easy to put those concerns to rest in a revised version of the draft. But I hadn't ever expected that they would be concerns. I learned a lot from that experience: there is a need to be politically savvy, not just intellectually sound, in making a case.

In the early 1960s, the Population Council, the International Planned Parenthood Federation and the Swedish government were giving assistance to family planning programs. But neither the United States government, the World Bank nor the United Nations family had come fully on side. This happened in the late 1960s (Seltzer, 2002). After that, there was strong international pressure to adopt policies to reduce population growth.

In Southeast Asia, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines all adopted policies to reduce fertility within the same year - 1970. Academic attention to the issues of population and development in the region was given a boost by the ASEAN-Australian Population Program in the late 1970s and early 1980s. An important component of this program was the project: Population and Development Dynamics and the Man/Resource Balance. A summary publication from this program - "Population and Development in ASEAN – a Status Report" (Herrin et al, 1981) is well worth reviewing with the benefit of over 30 years hindsight.⁴

What did the report say? It noted the wide differences in the demographic situation in the five countries covered by the report – Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, Indonesia and Singapore. Mortality decline had proceeded well in these countries, and fertility was also declining. Though some observers attributed the fertility decline to the influence of family planning programs, the report noted that it was difficult to separate the influence of the family planning program from the effect of rapid socio-economic development in these countries. For example, in Singapore and Malaysia, the most economically developed countries of the five, "the impact of development on fertility was first manifested in changes in nuptiality patterns and later on in marital fertility. Underlying this decline in marital fertility is the changing structure of costs and benefits of children and greater use of contraception, the latter being effectively facilitated by a vigorous family planning program." (Herrin et al., 1981: 15).

³ The latter issue used to be constantly raised in Indonesia as well, and in a different form in Sri Lanka – are Tamils growing faster than Sinhalese?

⁴ A more detailed study on Malaysia alone was prepared by Lim, 1983.

The report noted that patterns of fertility decline were rather different in Thailand and Indonesia. In both countries, age at marriage was not changing much (though actually it was changing more than the authors realized), and it attributed fertility decline in these countries more to the influence of the family planning program “and perhaps to specific elements of development and social structure in these countries rather than to broad-based economic transformation and urbanization” (p. 16).

The report went on to deal with regional development, spatial distribution and employment, recognizing that in all these countries, inter-regional and rural-rural migration played an important role, along with rural-urban migration. In Thailand and the Philippines, the importance of females in the rural-urban migration stream was recognized. It was also recognized that with the vanishing of the land frontier in Thailand and the Philippines, patterns of migration were likely to change, being increasingly tied to the nature and location of industrial activities.

Since that time, remarkable progress has been made in reaching or moving towards middle income country status in all these countries. Table 1 summarizes some of the key changes. It shows that these countries have made remarkable progress in raising income levels, expanding secondary

Table 1. ASEAN 5 Countries –Demographic Indicators, 1980-2010.

	Population growth rate	Total Fertility Rate	Infant Mortality Rate	Per capita GNP*	Secondary School E.R.	% urban
Malaysia 1980	2.3	3.9	28	1820	46	42
Malaysia 2010	1.8	2.1	5	8150	67	72
Thailand 1980	2.3	3.9	54	710	28	27
Thailand 2010	0.3	1.5	12	4320	84	34
Philippines 1980	2.8	5.5	62	700	65	38
Philippines 2010	1.7	3.3	23	2060	85	49
Indonesia 1980	2.4	4.7	84	510	29	22
Indonesia 2010	1.4	2.5	29	2500	78	50
Singapore 1980	1.3	1.8	13	4920	n.a.	100
Singapore 2010	2.4	1.3	2	43980	n.a.	100

Note:

* GNP is based on GNI per capita – Atlas Method, (current US\$)- <http://data.worldbank.org/about/country-classifications/world-bank-atlas-method>

Sources:

Population Growth Rate, Total Fertility Rate and Infant Mortality Rate -

Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations

Secretariat, <http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/index.htm>

Per Capita GNP –

World Development Indicators, World Bank,

<http://databank.worldbank.org/data/views/reports/tableview.aspx?isshared=true>

Secondary School Enrolment rate –

Data for 1980 was gathered from World Bank, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.SEC.ENRR/countries?page=6>

Data for 2010 was gathered from UNESCO,

<http://www.uis.unesco.org/DataCentre/Pages/country-profile.aspx?code=IDN®ioncode=40515>

Percentage of Urban Population –

World Urbanization Prospects,

http://esa.un.org/unup/unup/index_panel1.html

education, and in moving from predominantly rural to predominantly urban societies.⁵ Singapore is now the third wealthiest country on earth. Progress has been slower in the Philippines, which has fallen far behind Thailand, and even behind Indonesia, in per capita GNP, but growth has been picking up pace in recent years.

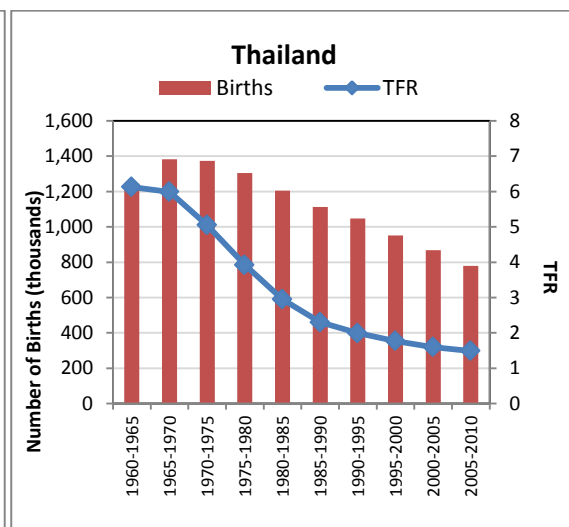
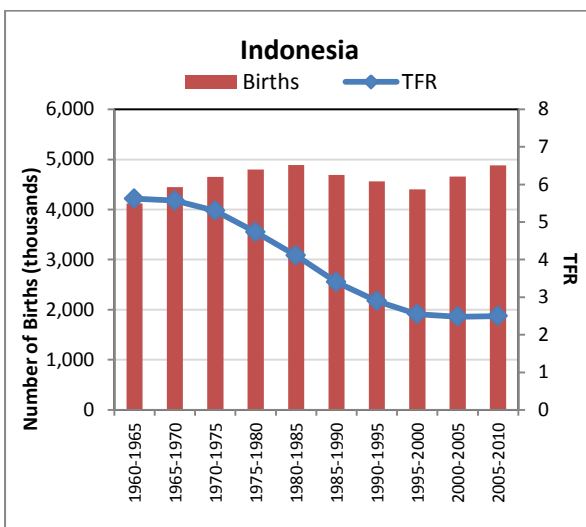
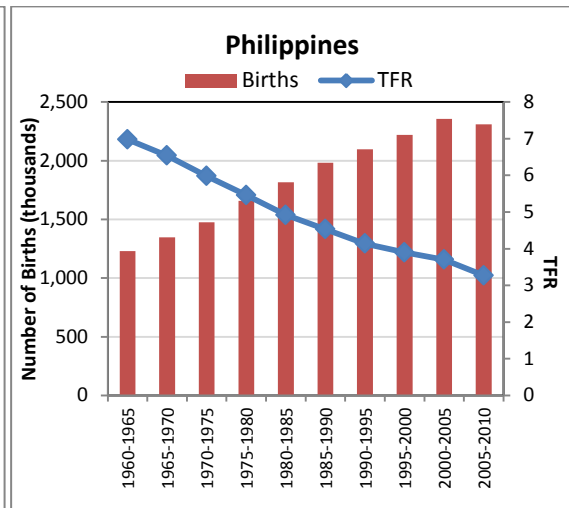
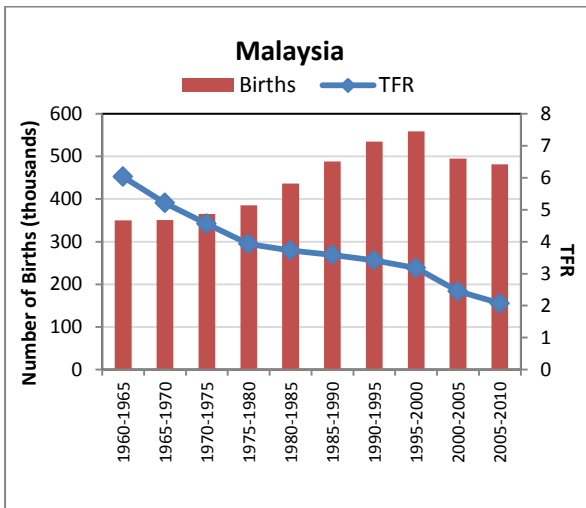
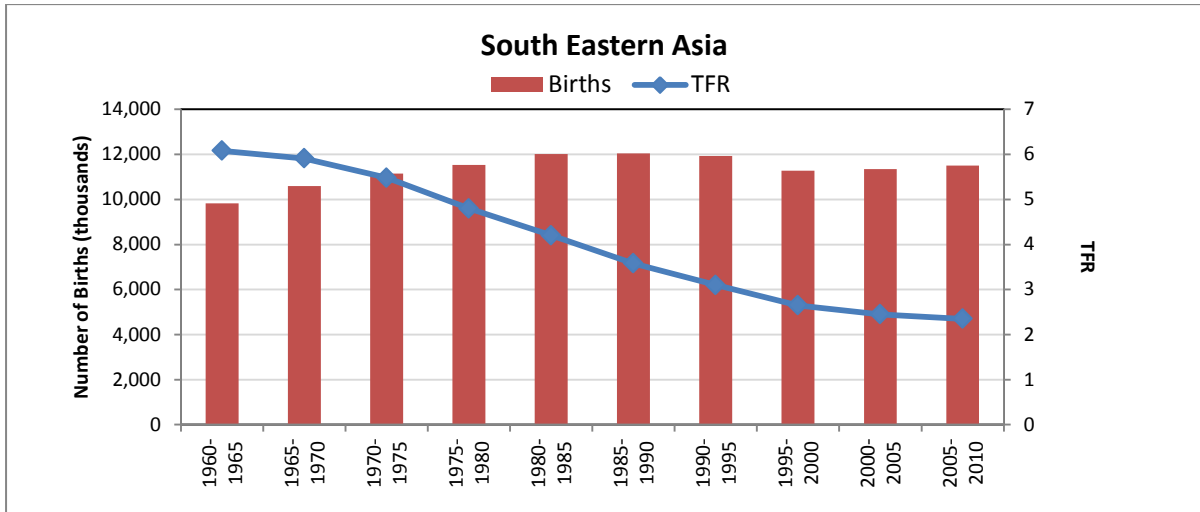
Since 1980 the region has also made remarkable progress in proceeding through the demographic transition – that is, in moving towards a stabilization of population size at low levels of fertility and mortality. In Southeast Asia as a whole, between 1980 and 2010, IMR has fallen from 70 to 25, and TFR has fallen from 4.5 to 2.3. Malaysia has been an impressive part of this trend – IMR has fallen from 28 to 5 and TFR from 3.9 to 2.1. These trends in economic growth and demographic transition are not independent of each other. A ‘virtuous circle’ has been in operation; as education levels rise and urbanization takes place, the tendency for better educated, urban dwellers to be healthier and to have fewer children than their less educated, rural counterparts leads to lower mortality and fertility levels; and the lower mortality and fertility levels contribute to the faster economic growth and rise in human capital that in turn, foster further demographic transition.

However, although the trends in economic and demographic development were certainly related, it must be recognized that the relationship is not a simple one of cause and effect. The demographic and economic changes occurred in a broader context of patterns of governance and of economic policymaking. As argued by Mason (2001: 4), the potential benefits of reduced fertility can be realized “only if countries adopt sound development policies that encourage innovation, saving and investment, the efficient allocation of labour, rapid growth in industrial and manufacturing employment, investment in human resources, and the elimination of gender bias”. Factors such as sound governance, rule of law, and lack of corruption are all important in underpinning rapid economic growth, though it is very difficult to say what factors are essential for such growth to take place. (For example, if absence of corruption was essential, few countries among the group of strong performers would be there).

Fertility came down steadily everywhere in Southeast and East Asia. Figure 1 shows that for Southeast Asia as a whole, the TFR dropped from 6 in 1960-65 to 2.35 in 2005-2010 – barely above replacement level. Some countries still had fertility well above replacement level, but with the major exception of the Philippines, these were all small countries (Timor Leste, Lao PDR, and Cambodia). Figure 1 shows another important trend as well – that of the absolute number of births, which is a crucial variable for planning purposes. Interestingly, for Southeast Asia as a whole, the annual number of births has changed little since the early 1980s, and is indeed slightly lower now than it was then. For the region as a whole, this would appear to have provided a stable platform for health and education planning for an almost unchanging population of children. However, at the individual country level, which is the level at which planning actually takes place, stability in births is not so apparent. In the Philippines, annual births have climbed steadily until very recently; in Indonesia, they declined from the early 1980s, but have been increasing again over the past decade; in Thailand, annual births have declined steadily over three decades; and in Malaysia, they rose steadily until the beginning of the new millennium, but have been declining since then.

⁵ The recorded level of urbanization in Thailand in 2010 is unrealistically low, as a result of a conservative procedure for awarding urban status to localities in Thailand – see Jones, 2004.

Figure 1. Total Fertility Rate and Number of Births (in thousands) in Various Southeast Asian Countries, 1960-2010.



Source: United Nations Population Division, 2012

Family planning programs tended to claim responsibility for the success in lowering fertility rates, though in reality many other factors were at work. Key references on the debate over the role of family planning programs in the fertility decline are Pritchett, 1994 and Bongaarts, 1997. However, it is not worth dwelling on this debate in the present context, because the academic arguments about the benefits of fertility decline, irrespective of its causes, have now become irrelevant in East Asia and are becoming less relevant in Southeast Asia. It is primarily in the small countries – Timor Leste and Lao PDR - that fertility remains high, – though it is important to note that arguments about the benefits of fertility decline remain highly relevant in the Philippines, where fertility remains one child per woman above replacement level, and somewhat surprisingly, still relevant in Indonesia. I say “surprisingly” because earlier expectations were that by now, fertility in Indonesia would have reached replacement level, but in fact, because of the stall in fertility, it remains at a level almost half a child per woman above replacement level.

The age structure trends that are strongly affected by trends in fertility have been of great benefit to socio-economic development in these countries. Just to show how fundamentally their age structure has changed, Figure 2 shows the changes in Thailand between 1970 and 2010. The changes in both the shape of the age pyramid and in the absolute numbers are extraordinary. At every age from 15 upwards, numbers are vastly larger than they were in 1970. The most striking increases are at the elderly ages and in the mature working ages – 30 and above. At the same time, the number of children was substantially lower in 2010 than it had been in 1970. The shape, then, went from that of a pyramid to that of the bottle trees found in parts of Africa and Australia.

Figure 2. Thailand's Age Structure, 1970 and 2010 (Numbers in Millions).

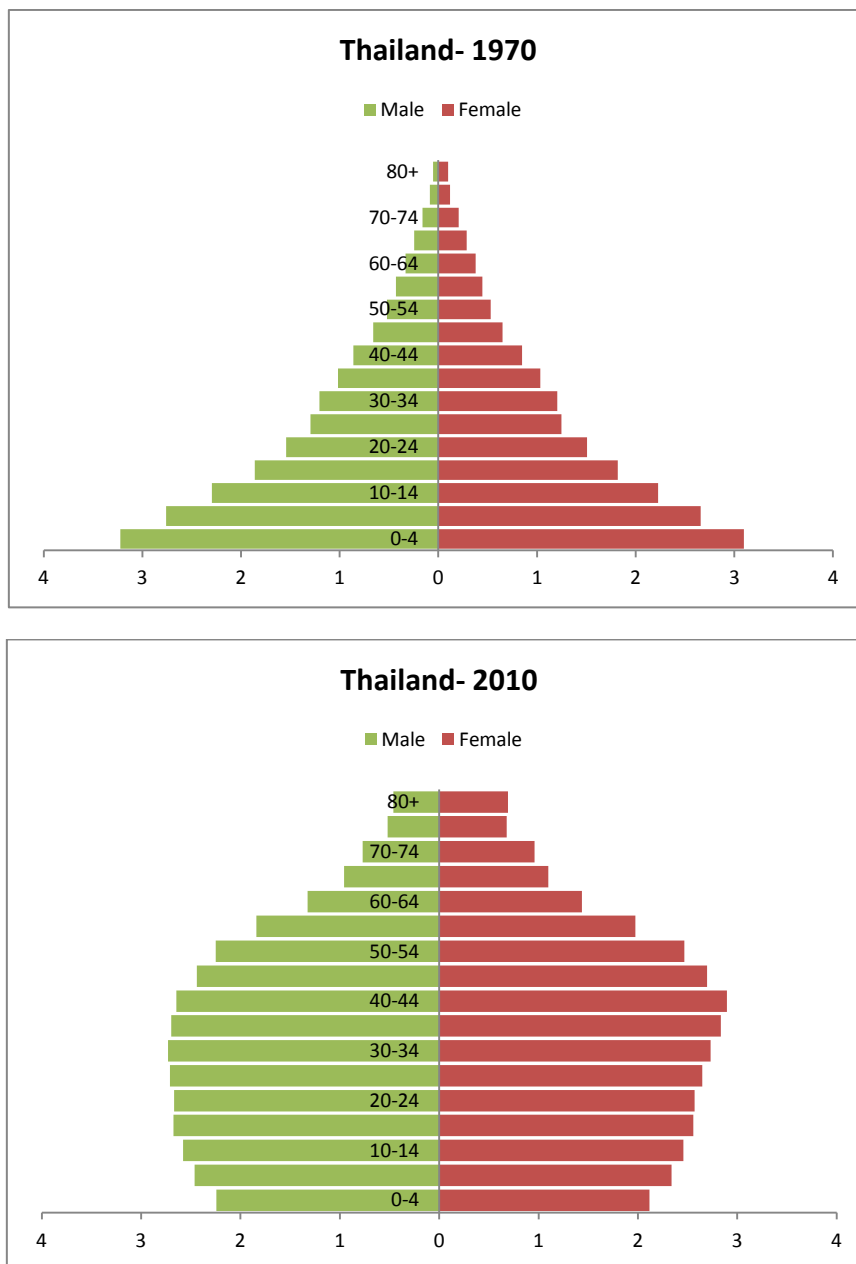
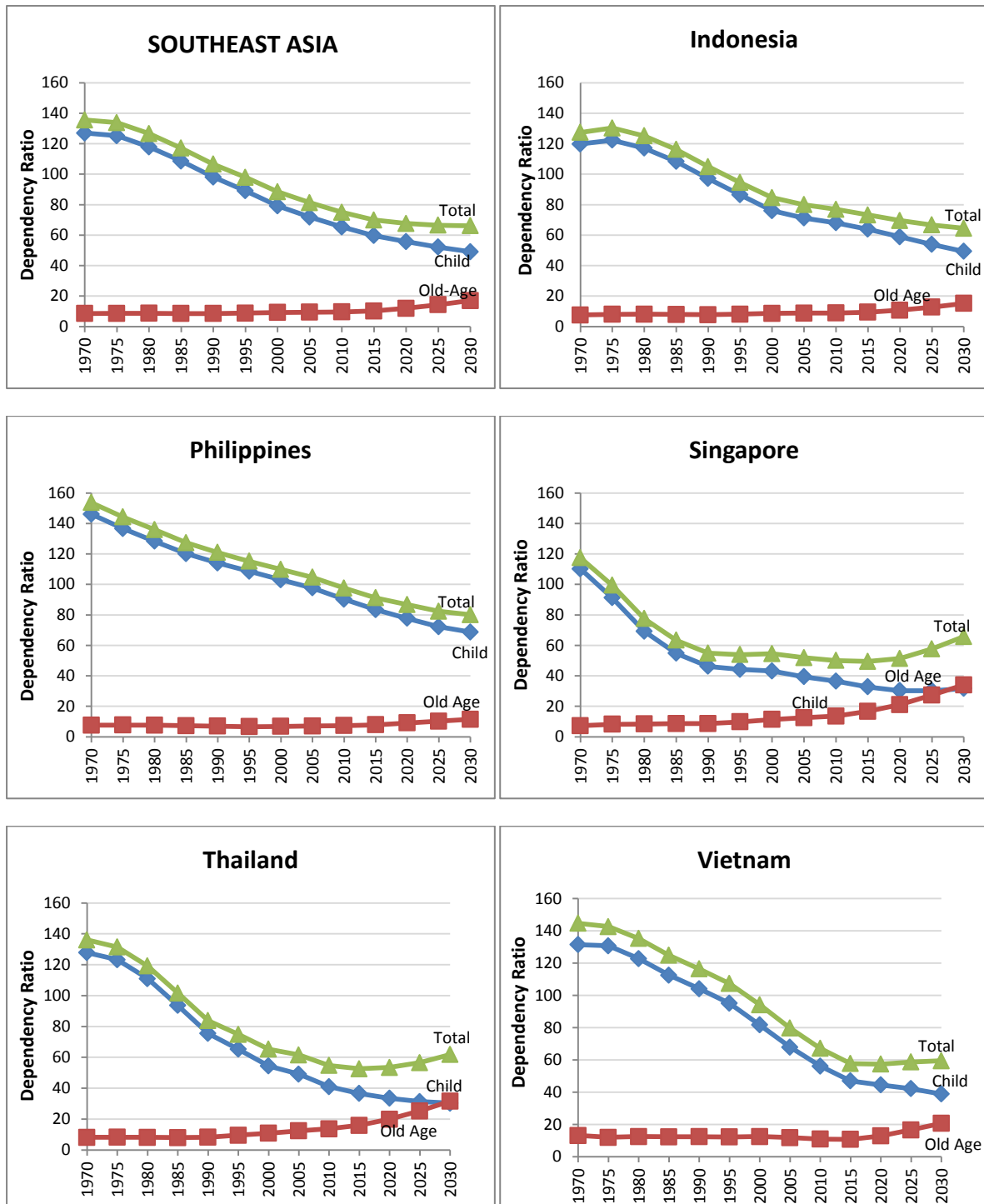


Figure 3 shows the trends in dependency ratios in selected Southeast Asian countries. Although this measure is only a crude way of showing the relationship between the dependant and the productive population, because the age markers of 15 and 65 do not clearly distinguish between those who are in the workforce or out of it, it does show the general trends. These trends have been unambiguously positive. Dependency ratios, while levelling out, are doing so at a low level. And while they are about to start rising in Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam, the rise will be modest up to

Figure 3. Trends in Dependency Ratios, Southeast Asian Countries, 1970-2040



Source: United Nations Population Division, 2012, Medium Projection.

2030, though it will accelerate after that. The rise is, of course, the result of population ageing. While population ageing is generally lamented, it is wise to keep three points in mind: (1) an ageing population is actually a key sign of success in stabilizing population size at low levels of mortality and fertility; such success inevitably results in population ageing; (2) For a number of decades, the low dependency ratios resulting from fertility decline provide a context facilitating economic development. Taking appropriate advantage of this “window of opportunity” should enable a strong

economy to be developed, which can provide the resources for income support and health programs for the elderly during the phase of population ageing; (3) with the right mix of policies, an ageing population can be seen as a resource rather than a burden.

Much has been written about the demographic window of opportunity, lasting for decades, opened up by fertility decline from high levels. It cannot be stressed too much that the “opportunity” is just that - an opportunity. Not all opportunities are taken advantage of. For example, the countries of the Middle East and North Africa (the MENA countries) have not benefited as much as hoped from fertility decline, because they have not managed to expand job opportunities rapidly enough for the still rapidly growing labour force age groups (Jones, 2012).

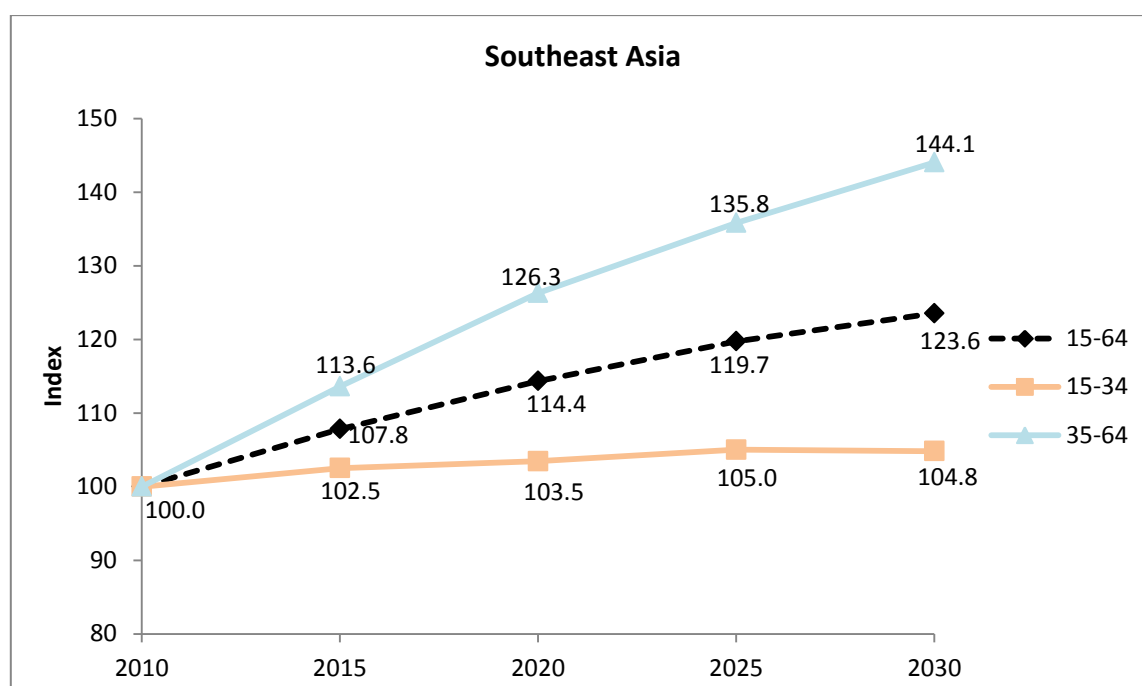
This issue is not irrelevant for Southeast Asian countries, either. Indonesia, for example, has done quite well in raising secondary school enrolment ratios, but less well in raising educational quality, giving rise to concerns about its international competitiveness (Suryadarma and Jones, 2013). Fertility decline takes time to influence the growth of the working-age population, and when it does, it selectively affects different segments of that population. In Southeast Asia, between 1980 and 1990, the population aged 15-29 grew by 29%, whereas the population aged 30-64 grew by 38 per cent. Both groups were growing rapidly, because the sharp declines in fertility that had taken place were too recent to greatly affect even the younger working-age population. However, from the 1990s onwards, the growth of the two age groups began to diverge significantly, as shown in Table 2. By the early 2000s, the age group 30-64 was growing more than three times as rapidly as the 15-29 age group, and by the second decade of the 2000s, growth of the younger segment had almost ceased, whereas that of the older segment had barely started to slow. In analysis of labour markets, this disaggregation of the growth of the working-age population into its component age groups is very much needed if appropriate policy responses are to be found.

Table 2. Southeast Asia: % growth of younger and older working-age population since 1980

	1980-85	1990-95	2000-05	2010-15
Aged 15-29	15.6	8.0	4.1	0.4
Aged 30-64	16.4	17.2	14.3	12.8
Aged 15-64	16.0	12.7	9.8	7.8

Figure 4 carries this analysis forward beyond 2010, using slightly different age groups – 15-34 for the young segment, and 35-64 for the older segment. In Southeast Asia as a whole, growth of the younger segment had, to all intents and purposes, ceased by 2010. But the growth of the older segment, while gradually slowing, will continue unabated, up to and well beyond 2030. The result is that Southeast Asia’s working age population as a whole will continue to grow, adding roughly one quarter over the 20-year period 2010-2030.

**Figure 4. Index of Projected Population Growth in Different Working Age Groups
2010-2030 - UN Medium Projections**



Source: United Nations Population Division, 2012, Medium Projection.

The issue of ultra-low fertility

Southeast Asia needs to take careful stock of what has happened to population in East Asian countries. Not that the two regions can be neatly separated in terms of demographic trends. Singapore and Thailand could well be included in East Asia for this purpose. Over the period of great concern about rapid population growth, the general belief of most governments in the region was that the ideal was to bring fertility down to replacement level. Not much thought was given to what might happen after that; there was somehow a belief that almost magically, fertility would level out once replacement level was reached, and UN projections, which indeed assumed that fertility levels would converge on replacement level, served to strengthen the belief.

What actually happened was that in many countries (e.g. South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, Thailand), fertility continued right on down after reaching replacement level. This is also true for the non-bumiputera in Malaysia. But the Malaysian situation is complicated by the divergent trends for the different ethnic groups, and the maintenance over a long period of a difference of one child in the TFR between Malays (2.7 in 2010-2012), Chinese and Indians (1.6 in 2010-2012), with other bumiputera in between.⁶

In Asian countries, there were considerable delays in modifying anti-natalist policies after reaching a TFR of 2.1 (NRR of 1). This is shown to be the case for all countries included in Table 1. There were probably a number of reasons for this delay. The first is uncertainty for a time about whether the figures were correct. The second is that population was still growing considerably as a result of

⁶ The figures given are 3-year averages for the years 2010-2012, in order to smooth out year-to-year fluctuations.

population momentum. The third was unawareness about the longer-term implications of below-replacement fertility. The fourth was a vested interest in maintaining a family planning program on the part of those whose career was in this field. This is thought to be a major reason for China to maintain its one-child policy; 800,000 jobs in the State Family Planning Commission would be lost if it were to be disbanded.

Table 3. Delays in modifying population policy after reaching replacement level

Country	Year in which replacement fertility was reached	Year in which anti-natalist policy was reversed	Number of years elapsed	% below replacement when policy reversed	Comments
Singapore	1975	1984	9	25	Selective pro-natalist policies for highly educated.
Singapore	1975	1987	12	25	More general pro-natalist measures.
South Korea	1984	1996	12	20	Very mildly pro-natalist policies
South Korea	1984	2004	20	50	More serious pro-natalist measures
Taiwan	1984	1992	8	20	Pro-natalist statement but no measures.
Taiwan	1984	2006	22	47	Specific pro-natalist measures under consideration
Japan	1973[1]	1990	17	25	Mildly pro-natalist measures
Japan	1973	1994	21	32	Angel plan was introduced in 1994, then revised in 1999 – More forceful pro-natalist measures.
China	1992 (?)	No reversal	22 (+)		25-30% below replacement in 2013; policy modified to allow only child to have 2 children after marrying.

Malaysia shows up in a very interesting light in this context. It modified its policy to eliminate the goal of reducing fertility long before replacement level fertility was reached. The policy shift appears to be vindicated by past events. Fertility gradually sank anyway – as a natural outcome of economic and social development and availability of good quality reproductive health services.

Other ASEAN countries are facing interesting issues of population policy. Singapore has long been trying to raise its fertility rate, without much success. Thailand, faced with fertility well below replacement level, has recently taken steps in a pro-natalist direction. Fertility in Vietnam has been below replacement level for some time, and the government is at a very interesting point in deciding on its policy with regard to fertility in its soon-to-be-announced new Population Law. On the other hand, Indonesia is concerned about the stalling of fertility decline over the past decade, and is trying to revive the family planning program, which has lost its direction since *otonomi daerah*.

Some key population-development linkages affecting Southeast Asia

We might briefly consider a few key elements in the relationship between population trends and socio-economic development as they affect Southeast Asian countries. I will consider the issue of population density; environmental issues; the role of education and human capital; ageing; and urbanization and migration.

Population density

The extensive margin of cultivation was reached at different points in different countries. The Philippines is much more densely populated overall than Thailand or Malaysia, and the extensive margin of cultivation was reached earlier (generally agreed in the 1960s). Population increase in Thailand in the 1970s and 1980s was still being accommodated through migration to more lightly populated provinces in areas bordering Myanmar and Laos. Malaysia, too, still had land available for settlement at that time. Was the closing of the land frontier in the Philippines one reason why its economy made only laborious headway in the face of rapid population growth? A case could certainly be made. But the Philippines' development problems need to be seen in a much more nuanced way than just comparing its rural population density with other countries. Its long-standing, more feudal agricultural relations are deeply involved in its problems of rural poverty.

In other circumstances, dense rural populations can lend themselves to high agricultural productivity, especially when a symbiotic relationship exists with nearby urban areas, as the historical experience of Japan, Korea and Taiwan illustrate. It would be hard to sustain an argument that a more favourable ratio of population to agricultural and mineral resources will necessarily lead to faster development. The examples of Singapore and Korea perhaps illustrate how the very absence of such resources can lead to development successes based on the awareness of scarce resources, development of human capital and exploitation of locational advantages.

Population and environment

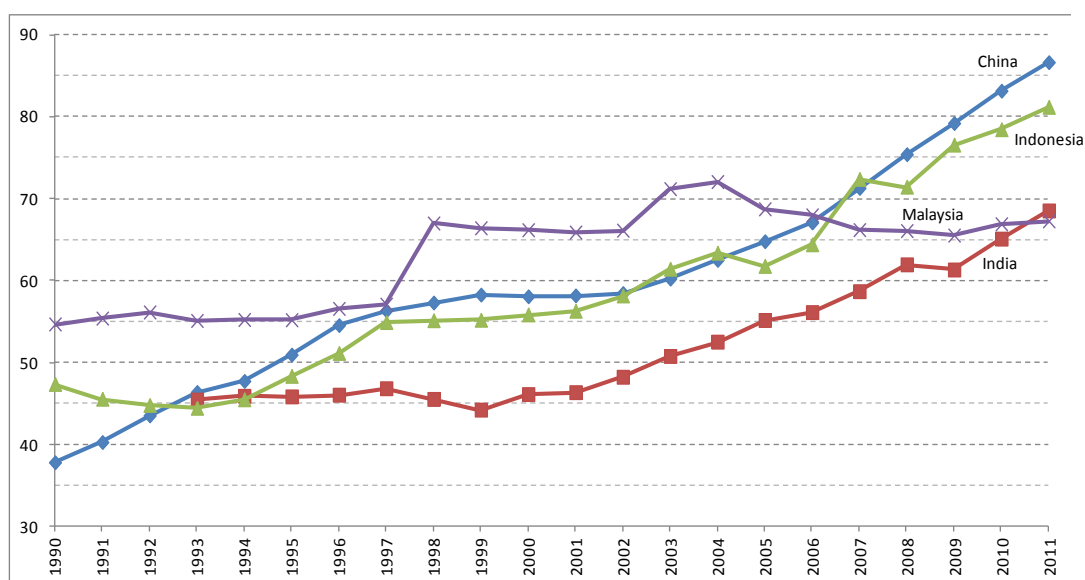
The development-environment trade-off is well illustrated by the case of China. When highly skilled people are seriously considering leaving cities such as Beijing and Hong Kong because of the perceived risks pollution poses to their children's health, it is clear that the environmental costs of rapid economic growth are not inconsequential. The fact that the environmental implications of current patterns of development are finally being accorded more attention is very positive. Our concern here, though, is with how populations are affected by environmental change, and how demographic change affects the environment. Very large populations in Southeast Asia are highly vulnerable to any sea level rises (McGranahan, Balk and Anderson, 2008), which are widely anticipated as a result of climate change. Thus it is crucial that the human dimensions of climate change are taken more seriously into account (Hayes et al., 2012). However, the role of population in environmental deterioration, climate change, etc. is a complex matter to study. While wealthy individuals and wealthy countries are the great polluters, a key political issue is that the bulk of population growth expected over the next 50 years will be in poor countries whose populations will understandably expect a share in the material benefits of development.

Education and population

The relationship between education and population trends has been much written about, as a 2-way relationship. First, fertility decline assists in meeting educational goals in developing countries. Second, the education of the population is a major influence on fertility levels, since study after study has shown that fertility is negatively associated with education (but see Basu, 2010).

The speed with which educational enrolment ratios can be raised is greatly affected by demography when fertility rates are high and numbers of school-age children are expanding by some 30 per cent each decade. This is no longer the situation in most Asian countries; indeed, school-aged population is steady or declining in many countries. However, the challenge of raising enrolment ratios remains, especially at the secondary level, where costs per student are much higher than at the primary level. Figure 5 shows trends in gross enrolment ratios at the secondary school level in China, India, Indonesia and Malaysia. China, India and Indonesia have all made substantial gains since 2000, but remain well behind countries such as Korea. India remains well behind the others. The trends for Malaysia are surprising; the Malaysian ratio has fallen both absolutely and in relative terms, from ahead of the other three countries in 2004 to behind them all (even India) in 2011. This is hard to believe, and suggests some problems with the data. In any case, what is important is that the educational attainment of the population takes time to modify (see Jones and Ramchand, 2013, Figure 4), and even in 2030, a substantial adult population without any education at all will remain in India, particularly among women, holding back the productivity of the Indian workforce. The timing of educational expansion is crucial, since any delay consigns children who will still be in the workforce half a century from now to a future of low productivity and low income.

**Figure 5. Secondary School Enrolment Ratio (% gross)
China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia**



Source: World Bank database.

Ageing

Ageing will be high on the priority list of social policy issues for all Southeast Asian countries over the next two decades. While ageing proportions will remain well below those in Japan and Korea, the proportion aged 65 and over is expected to increase over the next two decades as shown in Table 4.

The increases are quite startling – from 8.9% to 19.5% in Thailand, from 4.8% to 9.7% in Malaysia. Such figures are often viewed with alarm, especially with regard to the ability of families to continue as the first line of support for their elderly, and the ability of the state to devise adequate income maintenance policies, once a contracting labour force is supporting a rapidly expanding pool of elderly. It is wise to keep in mind that even in 2030, the proportion of elderly population in Thailand and Singapore will still be well below its current level in Japan, and much lower still in Malaysia. Also, policies to extend retirement ages according to different ways of viewing ageing could lessen the extent of the crisis (Sanderson and Scherbov, 2005; 2010).

Table 4. Trends in % of population aged 65+

	1990	2000	2010	2020	2030
Singapore	5.6	7.3	9.0	13.9	20.5
Thailand	4.5	6.6	8.9	13.0	19.5
Vietnam	5.7	6.4	6.5	8.2	12.9
Malaysia	3.6	3.8	4.8	6.9	9.7
Indonesia	3.8	4.7	5.0	6.3	9.2
Philippines	3.1	3.2	3.7	4.9	6.3
SE ASIA	4.1	4.9	5.5	7.1	10.3

Source: United Nations Population Division 2012

Urbanization and migration

In the new demographic situation facing Southeast Asia, migration will inevitably play an even greater role than in the past. A similar point has been made about China, where the population of provinces with ultra-low fertility, such as Shanghai and Guangzhou, has nevertheless been growing much more rapidly than that of provinces with higher fertility, such as Sichuan, Guizhou and Hubei. As noted by Gu (2014: 2), by the end of the demographic transition, “both mortality and fertility are at low levels and become less influential, and population migration tends to come to the fore to play a pivotal role in determining the population situation. All in all, it is clear that China has entered a period in which demographic dynamics becomes dominated by migration rather than mortality or fertility”.

Just as in China, migration looms large in Malaysia these days as an influence of population trends. This can be illustrated by comparing the changes in the relative populations of the different states. Trends in the shares of Selangor and Perak in Malaysia’s total population are shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Trends in % of Malaysia’s population – Selangor and Perak

Year	Selangor	Perak
1970	9.4	15.0
1980	10.9	13.3
1990	13.1	10.7
2000	18.0	8.8
2010	19.3	8.3

Selangor’s share has doubled over this 40-year period; Perak’s has nearly halved. This is a remarkable turnaround in the situation of the two states, and has almost nothing to do with fertility

or mortality. Rather, it has to do with the collapse of the tin mining industry in Perak, leading to a steady outflow of migrants, and to the overflow of Kuala Lumpur's population into neighbouring Selangor state, which has drawn migrants not only from Kuala Lumpur's suburbanization process, but from all parts of Malaysia, drawn to the Klang Valley mega-urban region.

Migration's role is not just in altering the relative population of different regions, but also in strongly influencing labour force dynamics, population ageing and the gender balance of the population. For example, in China, the concern about ageing has usually focused on the urban population, because fertility rates are higher in rural areas. However, the reality is that with the exodus of so many young people from the rural areas, the thousand-year mechanism of old-age support by the next generation is breaking down in rural areas, posing enormous difficulties for social security policy.

Geographical differences in ageing in Malaysia show a somewhat similar pattern to those in China. Despite their lower fertility rates, the cities have lower proportions of elderly, because of high levels of in-migration of young people. Thus the proportion of population aged over 65 is 4.6% in KL and 3.5% in Selangor, compared with 7.7% in Perak.

The role of the United Nations in population policy leadership

The role of the International Population Conferences held by the United Nations has been very important in keeping population issues in the spotlight. These of course are highly political conferences.⁷ The Cairo ICPD in 1994 led to a major shift in approaches to population policy. The new agenda, stressing reproductive health and reproductive rights, was appropriate for the countries of Southeast Asia, though its result of diverting attention from the goal of reducing population growth rates, and a slackening of international interest in funding family planning/reproductive health programs, may not have been the best outcome for Africa, where fertility rates remained very high and mortality in some countries rose as a result of HIV/AIDS. As argued by Gillespie, 2004 and Cleland et al, 2006, the international community had moved away from family planning at a time when too much unfinished business remained. The high level of success in publicizing the issues of HIV/AIDS led to too much of the limited resources going to HIV/AIDS, and too little to reproductive health.

Recently, the private sector has been showing the lead in re-igniting support for family planning and reproductive health – in particular, in the form of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. In July 2012, a summit on family planning was held in London, called by the British Government and the Gates Foundation, at which promises of \$4.6 billion were secured from donors to meet unmet need for family planning.

Meanwhile, the United Nations continues to press for an agenda flowing from the Programme of Action of the ICPD. A recent document proposing follow-up actions beyond 2014 (United Nations 2014), acknowledges the increasingly inequitable distribution of the fruits of economic development, and emphasizes that the framework for population and development beyond 2014 should rest on five thematic pillars: dignity and human rights, health, place and mobility, governance and accountability, and sustainability. It argues that "because the respect, protection, promotion and fulfilment of human rights are *necessary preconditions* for realizing all of the unfulfilled

⁷ On the politics of earlier UN Population Conferences, see Jones, 1977; Finkle and Crane, 1975; 1985.

objectives of the Programme of Action, the elaboration and fulfilment of human rights are a critical metric for determining whether, for whom, and to what extent, aspirations have been achieved". It can be hoped that a human rights emphasis will help in moving forward in controversial areas such as adolescent reproductive health, access to abortion, issues of gender-based violence, and improving the conditions of migrants, especially undocumented migrants.

Conclusion

Taking the world as a whole, economic growth is continuing (albeit with unfortunate distributional trends and worrisome environmental impacts) and the demographic situation is increasingly under control. However, people live in particular countries and particular locations within those countries, and what is happening in the world as a whole may not be of much interest to them. In many parts of Africa and South Asia, the population and development situation remains problematic. Maternal mortality rates, for example, remain very high in many of these countries, and MDG goals will not be met; yet at the same time, they face complex issues resulting from excessively high population growth. If we focus on unemployment among young adults, the situation in many countries across the world is not good.

By contrast, in Southeast Asia, on the whole, there is much more reason for optimism. Things have changed dramatically in the course of one person's working life. Between the time I worked in Thailand in 1966-69 and the time I returned to be involved in the preparation of the report *Impact of Demographic Change in Thailand* (Jones and Im-Em (eds), 2011), Thailand had proceeded through the demographic transition, from high to below-replacement fertility, and had moved from being a poor country into the ranks of middle-income countries. Likewise, Malaysia's demographic and economic situation has changed remarkably between the time I was there for PhD fieldwork in 1964 and today. But there is great diversity within Southeast Asia. Malaysia and Thailand are comparatively wealthy, and to this observer, at least, the issue of whether they will avoid the middle-income trap is less important than the issue of whether Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam will be able to establish themselves firmly within the middle-income country camp.

Demographic factors remain very important in the overall development equation, but the meaning of development remains contested, the increasing inequality in many countries' income distribution provides a fundamental challenge to current economic systems, and the sustainability of what we have achieved remains in question. The United Nations has issued a challenge to academics and planners by claiming that the framework for population and development beyond 2014 should rest on the five thematic pillars of dignity and human rights, health, place and mobility, governance and accountability, and sustainability. Integrating population policy into overall development policy will continue to require both good analytical abilities and a broader vision of what the goals are.

References

Basu, Alaka, 2010, "Mass schooling, empowerment and demographic and economic outcomes: a note of dissent", *Vienna Yearbook of Population Research*, Vol. 8, pp. 25-29.

Birdsall, Nancy, Allen C. Kelley and Steven Sinding, 2001, *Population Matters: Demographic Change, Economic Growth and Poverty in the Developing World*, Oxford.

- Bongaarts, John, 1997, "The role of family planning programs in contemporary fertility transitions", in Gavin W. Jones, Robert M. Douglas, John C. Caldwell and Rennie M. D'Souza (eds), *The Continuing Demographic Transition*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Cleland, J., S. Bernstein, A. Ezeh, A. Faundes, A. Glasier, J. Innis, 2006, "Family planning: the unfinished agenda", *The Lancet*, 1368: 1810-1827.
- Coale, Ansley J. and Edgar M. Hoover, 1958, *Population Growth and Economic Development in Low-Income Countries*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Demeny, Paul, 1975, "Population policy: the role of national governments", *Population and Development Review*, 1(1): 147-161.
- Finkle, Jason L. and Barbara B. Crane, 1975, "The politics of Bucharest: Population, development and the new international economic order", *Population and Development Review*, 1(1): 87-114.
- Finkle, Jason L. and Barbara B. Crane, 1985, "Ideology and politics at Mexico City: The United States at the 1984 International Conference on Population", *Population and Development Review*, 11(1): 1-28.
- Gillespie, Duff G. , 2004, "Whatever happened to family planning and, for that matter, to reproductive health?" *International Family Planning Perspectives*, 30(1): 34-38.
- Gu, Baochang, 2014, "Internal migration dominates population dynamics in China", *Asian Population Studies*, 10(1): 1-3.
- Herrin, Alejandro N., Henry Pardoko, Lim Lin Lian and Chira Hongladarom, 1981, "Population and development in ASEAN: a status report", ASEAN-Australia Population Project: Population and Development Dynamics and the Man/Resource Balance.
- Jones, Gavin W., 1977, "Population and development: Fact, fancy and politics", *Australian Outlook*, 31(2): 241-252.
- Jones, Gavin W., 2004, "Urbanization trends in Asia: the conceptual and definitional challenges", in Tony Champion and Graeme Hugo (eds), *New Forms of Urbanization: Beyond the Urban-Rural Dichotomy*, Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Jones, Gavin W., 2012, "Where are all the jobs? Capturing the demographic dividend in Islamic countries", in Hans Groth and Alfonso Souza-Poza, *Demographic Challenges in Islamic Countries*, Springer.
- Jones, Gavin W. and Wassana Im-Em (eds), 2011, *Impact of Demographic Change in Thailand*, Bangkok: NESDB and UNFPA.
- Jones, Gavin W. and Divya Ramchand, 2013, "Education and human capital development in the giants of Asia", *Asian-Pacific Economic Literature*, 27(1): 40-61.
- Kantner, John F. and Andrew Kantner, 2004, *Paradigm Lost: The Uncertain Future of International Population Assistance*, unpublished manuscript.

Kelley, Allen C. And Robert M. Schmidt, 2001, "Economic and demographic change: a synthesis of models, findings and perspectives" in Nancy Birdsall, Allen C. Kelley and Steven Sinding (eds), *Population Matters: Demographic Change, Economic Growth and Poverty in the Developing World*, Oxford.

Kuznets, Simon, 1967, "Population and Economic Growth", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 3: 190-192

Lim Lin Lean, 1983, *Population and Development: Theory and Empirical Evidence, The Malaysian Case*, Petaling Jaya: International Book Service.

Malaysia: The Millennium Development Goals at 2010, Economic Planning Unit, Prime Ministers Department and United Nations Country Team, Malaysia.

Mason, Andrew, 2001, "Population and economic growth in East Asia", in Andrew Mason (ed), *Population Change and Economic Development in East Asia: Challenges Met, Opportunities Seized*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Pritchett, L.H., 1994, "Desired fertility and the impact of population policies", *Population and Development Review*, 20(1): 1-55.

Sanderson, W.C. and S. Scherbov, 2005, "Average remaining lifetimes can increase as human populations age", *Nature*, 435: 811-813.

Sanderson, W.C. and S. Scherbov, 2010, "Remeasuring Aging", *Science*, 329: 1287-1288.

Seltzer, Judith R., 2002, *The Origins and Evolution of Family Planning Programs in Developing Countries*, Santa Monica: RAND.

Simon, Julian L., 1981, *The Ultimate Resource*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Suryadarma, Daniel and Gavin W. Jones (eds), 2013, *Education in Indonesia*, Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies.

United Nations Population Division, 1953, *The Determinants and Consequences of Population Trends*, New York: United Nations.

United Nations Population Division, 1973, *The Determinants and Consequences of Population Trends: New Summary of Findings on Interaction of Demographic, Economic and Social Factors*, New York: United Nations.

United Nations, forthcoming, "Framework of Actions for the follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development beyond 2014",

Williamson, Jeffrey G. and Matthew Higgins, 2001, "The accumulation and demography connection in East Asia", in Andrew Mason (ed), *Population Change and Economic Development in East Asia: Challenges Met, Opportunities Seized*, Stanford: Stanford University Press.