50 Years of Pakistan's Population Program: Setting Strategic Priorities & Program Direction for Vision 2025

Fifteenth Annual Conference

November 18 - 19, 2014
In Collaboration with Bahria University, Islamabad-Pakistan

Population Association of Pakistan
Table of Contents
Preface .................................................................................................................................................. i
About Population Association of Pakistan (PAP) .............................................................................. iii
Introduction .......................................................................................................................................... 1
Background .......................................................................................................................................... 1
The Demographic Dividend & Pakistan ............................................................................................... 3
Pakistan’s Situation ............................................................................................................................... 4
Inaugural Session ................................................................................................................................. 7
Plenary Session 1: Synergizing FP2020 and Vision 2025 ................................................................. 24
  Federal & Provincial Programs and Initiatives .................................................................................. 25
Plenary Session II: Investing in FP2020 and Seeking Partnerships .............................................. 29
  Development Partners Support and Contribution ......................................................................... 33
Plenary Session III: Pakistan’s Commitment at ICPD + 20 ............................................................ 38
  Panel Responses ............................................................................................................................... 39
Plenary Session IV: Health, Population & Nutrition: Post Devolution Challenges .................. 43
Plenary Session V: Interactive Session with Youth Representatives and Opinion Shapers .... 53
Concluding Session ............................................................................................................................. 59
Recommendations ............................................................................................................................... 65
Picture Gallery .................................................................................................................................... 67
Preface

The Population Association of Pakistan (PAP) in collaboration with the Bahria University (BU), Islamabad held its 15th Annual Population Conference in the Federal Capital from November 18-19, 2014. The Conference continued PAP’s rich tradition of partnering with academic institutions and fostering appreciation of population and demography as important fields of study.

While this year’s Conference is a milestone for the PAP, denoted by its title “50 years of Pakistan’s Population Program”, it also coincides with important developments in the government of Pakistan’s policies. An increasing awareness of the significance of population and demography to development as well as the recognition that the demographic dividend remains to be harnessed is lending impetus to new population-centric developmental policies in Pakistan. By bringing together key policy makers and researchers, the Conference was superbly placed to stimulate discussion and generate specific recommendations for such policy initiatives.

After taking stock of the 20 years since ICPD 1994 in Cairo, there is a consensus that Pakistan continues to face a challenging scenario of unsustainable rates of high population growth. Despite progress in terms of indicators, Pakistan’s population growth remains higher than regional averages. This expanding population base, if uncontrolled, will place demands on resources that will be difficult to meet. The inability of successive governments to keep pace with the requirements of a rapidly expanding population in terms of services, education and economic opportunities also illustrates the poor focus on population and human centric developmental paradigms. These difficulties have potentially significant implications for the socioeconomic development of the country which is already halfway through its demographic transition. Furthermore, the opportunities represented by the “demographic dividend” that this transition offers also remain to be harnessed.

Titled “50 Years of Pakistan’s Population Program: Setting Strategic Priorities and Program Direction for Vision 2025”, the Conference sought to bring current research findings to the forefront of policy discourse. For governments’ concerned with the perceived threat of the “population bomb”, the paradigms of ICPD offer evidence based policy recommendations that address the diverse drivers of development including population. Over five plenary sessions, the
The forum explored relevant policy directions and areas of alignment between population and development policies in Pakistan. The following topics were discussed in the Plenary Sessions:

- Synergizing FP2020 and Vision 2025
- Investing in FP2020 & Seeking Partnerships
- Pakistan’s Commitment at ICPD + 20
- Health Population & Nutrition: Post Devolution Challenges
- Interactive Session with Youth Representatives & Opinion Shapers

The participants in these sessions included senior policy makers, legislators, bureaucrats, development partners and academia as well as professionals engaged in implementation. The relevance of the Conference was further underscored by the presence of H. E. President of Pakistan Mr. Mamnoon Hussain at the inaugural session. The President called for “ijtihad” and encouraged the conference organizers and participants to provide concrete policy recommendations.

PAP has risen to the occasion by drawing attention to the explosive issue of population growth and its implications for Pakistan’s social, political, and economic development.

I would also like to compliment the PAP Executive Council and team for the success of this important event and wish them continued progress in their future endeavors.

Shahnaz Wazir Ali
President,
Population Association of Pakistan
About Population Association of Pakistan (PAP)

Population Association of Pakistan (PAP) is a non-profit, professional, and academic organization established in 2000 with the main objective to promote and strengthen the population sector by providing a forum to subject experts for sharing, scientific knowledge and experiences in the different disciplines of population.

During the past 14 years PAP has generated tremendous interest in issues pertaining to population in all aspects of development. The organization has an impressive membership of experts in the field of demography, public health and social sciences. Moreover, more than 30 organizations/institutions and above 1000 individuals including national and international experts are the members of the Population Association of Pakistan.

It is worth mentioning that Population Association of Pakistan (PAP) is the only professional association in Pakistan that brings together a whole spectrum of professionals that are concerned with the major challenges facing Pakistan in the area of Population Dynamics. These include Academics, Researchers, Policy Makers and Practitioners who work on different aspects of Population and Development issues.

Each year the Association holds an annual research conference in collaboration with a leading University of the country to encourage research within educational institutions and to introduce population as an important discipline to the student community. The conference also provides an opportunity for policy makers, researchers and our development partners to deliberate upon issues that have a bearing on the overall development of the country.

PAP Mission

To promote and strengthen the discipline of population by providing a forum to subject experts for sharing their technical knowledge in the field of population, facilitating their professional development, and sharing their expertise in fields related to population and development.

PAP Objectives

- Bring members of the Association together periodically in a multidisciplinary environment to engage in exchange of professional knowledge and ideas and also share expertise with population professionals from other countries.
- Arrange conferences, lectures, meetings by recognized national/international scholars to present scientific and technical papers and have related discussions.
- Facilitate research, offer advice on critical policy issues, and encourage research in different disciplines related to population and development.
• Build capacity and train young professionals/students by identifying courses/training in population at the national and international level, and by arranging funds for scholarships.

• Publish journals, newsletters or any other scientific publications; under the direction of an Editorial Board appointed by the Executive Council.

• Confer awards on scholars for outstanding contributions in the field of population studies.

• Collaborate with other national and international organizations pursuing similar goals, and do such things as are conducive to the attainment of the above objectives.

Accomplishments of the Association
• PAP provides a forum for presenting scientific research through annual research conferences, workshops seminars and discussion groups.

• Fifteen Annual Research Conferences have been organized in collaboration with academic institutions in major cities of the country.

• Fourteen Regional Seminars on different population related issues have been arranged in all provinces of the country.

• PAP has more than 1000 members including student, life & honorary members.

• The association successfully initiated a discussion on the Population Policy 2002.

• Interaction between key policy makers and researchers has been facilitated.

• Workshops have been arranged on abstract writing skills for students and professionals.

• PAP has assisted with the preparation of Ministry of Population Welfare’s Perspective plan 2012.

• Regular Conference Proceedings are published and circulated.

• The association also publishes informative booklets and other materials including member’s directories.

• Guest lectures by eminent national and international scholars are regularly organized.

• Two 3-days training courses for capacity building of social scientists in qualitative/quantitative research and professionals working in social sector.
PAP Award:

PAP publishes conference proceedings and disseminates these to a wider audience. In recognition of PAP’s Publications the Library of Congress awarded a Shield to Population Association of Pakistan on 24th October 2013. Mr. Zakir Hussain, Head of Acquisition, Library of Congress presented a Shield to President PAP Ms. Shahnaz Wazir Ali.

Composition of the Executive Council (2013-2014)

President:
- Ms. Shahnaz Wazir Ali, Chairperson Polio eradication campaign and former Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Social Sectors

Vice President:
- Dr. Ali M. Mir, Director Programs, Population Council Islamabad

Secretary General:
- Mrs. Seemin Ashfaq, Deputy Director Programs, Population Council Islamabad

Joint Secretary:
- Dr. Rashida Panezai, Chairperson, Mahec Trust Quetta

Treasurer:
- Mr. Abdul Wasay, Former Director Finance & Grants Administration, FALAH, Population Council, Islamabad

Executive Council:
- Ms. Shahida Azfar, Former Director UNFPA CST for South and Central Asia, Former acting Regional Director, UNICEF, Middle East and North Africa Region (MENA)
- Dr. Shaikh Tanveer Ahmed, Chief Executive, HANDS, Karachi
- Syed Kamal Shah, Chief Executive Officer, Rahnuma - Family Planning Association of Pakistan (FPAP), Lahore
- Mr. Minhaj ul Haque, Social Protection Economist, South Asia Human Development Sector, The World Bank, Islamabad
- Dr. Samia Rizwan, Health Specialist – Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Care, UNICEF-Pakistan, Islamabad
- Dr. Muhammad Sarwat Mirza, Chief Research and Development Executive, HANDS, Islamabad
- Mr. Tahir Ahmed Qureshi, Executive Officer, PAP.


Introduction

The Population Association of Pakistan (PAP) recently concluded its 15th Annual Conference titled “50 Years of Pakistan's Population Program: Setting Strategic Priorities and Program Directions for Vision 2025”. The conference was attended by representatives from all the provinces including policy makers, legislators, bureaucrats, development partners, media, academia and professionals working in the field of population welfare and health. The level of government commitment to addressing the very real and immediate issue of population welfare can be ascertained by the presence of the President of Pakistan, the honorable Mr. Mamnoon Hussain at the inaugural session.

In the tradition of PAP’s previous conferences, the event was hosted in conjunction with a leading academic institution, Bahria University Islamabad. Students comprise a valued demographic which needs to be sensitized to the issues of population. The choice of venue also helped to raise awareness of the contemporary relevance of demography, population and development as an academic subject. It provided an important platform for the sharing of research findings and current trends in population & development and promoted much-needed dialogue among stakeholders.

During the conference sessions participants discussed policy initiatives and made recommendations to address the hurdles in meeting Pakistan's international commitments for achieving the FP2020 goals.

Background

Traditionally population welfare and family planning have been primarily considered as health issues concerned mainly with numbers, with rampant population growth seen as a hurdle to national development. However, a seminal event in the evolution of family planning, the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo in 1994, shifted this paradigm to a rights-based approach to reproductive health by firmly linking a country’s development to population outcomes. Not only did it
emphasize the empowerment of women with respect to reproductive rights, it also laid the foundation for enshrining ‘access to and choice of’ modern contraceptive methods and safe, affordable family planning as a means for realizing this right.

Further impetus was given to this notion by the growing evidence of the consequences of population dynamics and demographic changes and their contribution to the “demographic dividend”. This “demographic dividend” occurs when a decline in the birth and mortality rates leads to changes in the age structure of a population, with a relatively larger proportion falling in the working age bracket i.e. 15 to 65 year old (Figure 1). This population dynamic has a bearing on the dependency ratio i.e. ratio of dependents in a population (those over 65 and under 15 years of age) to the working age population. It also has significant implications for rapid economic development and national progress. Research on the East Asian economic prosperity in particular, as seen in countries such as South Korea, illustrates this phenomenon.

The 20 year ICPD Program of Action (ICPD PoA) which resulted from the ICPD conference in Cairo continues to serve as a guide to people-centric development policies around the world. The ICPD PoA also lent considerable impetus to Pakistan’s own family planning (FP) efforts which saw the launch of the Lady Health Worker Program (LHWs) in 1994 and the decline in fertility as a result.
The more recent London Summit on Family Planning in 2012 sought to address ICPD’s unfinished agenda of increasing access to family planning by launching the FP2020 Global Partnership (FP2020). Under the FP2020 plan, the Government of Pakistan has committed to universal access to reproductive health care by 2020, an increase in the Contraceptive Prevalence Rate to 55%, as well as service delivery, financing and logistical commitments. The focus on family planning is due to its success as an intervention which impacts not just population, but also affects other related domains. Globally, FP2020 seeks to make FP accessible to a further 120 million women and girls; Pakistani women represent 7-10 million of this target.

The Demographic Dividend & Pakistan

![Figure 2 - Timing & Duration of Pakistan's Demographic Dividend (Durr-e-Nayab, PIDE 2006)](image)

The seminal work “Demographic Dividend or Demographic Threat” (Durr-e-Nayab, 2006) identified the changing age structure representing the beginning of this transition for Pakistan in the early 1980s. Although astute national planners prepared and pointed out the advent of such a transition, Pakistan has been slow to grasp the opportunities offered in harnessing this “dividend” which is expected to last till 2045-50. Over two decades of this phenomenon have already passed (Figure 2). The need of the hour is coordinated action on the part of the Government of Pakistan and the provinces to make population a significant feature of development policies. It is critical to maximize the potential of the dividend before the window of opportunity closes in 2045-50 and to prevent this dividend from becoming a threat. Incorporating a FP focus in such policies
offers a means for managing the expected demographic changes and the needs they will generate.

**Pakistan’s Situation**

![Fertility in Central and South Asia](chart)

*Average number of births per woman*

- Pakistan: 3.8 (2012-13), 3.8 (2012), 3.6 (Kyrgyz Republic 2012), 2.6 (Nepal 2011), 2.3 (Bangladesh 2011)

![Total Fertility Rate by Region](chart)

- Births per woman for the 3 years prior to the survey
  - ≤3.0
  - 3.1-3.9
  - >4.0

- Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: 3.9
- Sindh: 3.9

![Use of Modern Methods of Family Planning](chart)

- Percent of married women age 15-49 who are using a modern method of family planning
  - ≤20%
  - 21%-40%
  - >41%

- Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: 20%
- Sindh: 25%
- ICT Islamabad: 44%
- Pakistan: 26%
Countries with economic and health indicators comparable to Pakistan or those which share its developmental problems are better placed due to a smaller rate of population growth. This is reflected in Pakistan’s low Human Development Indicators (HDIs) which correlate to sub-Saharan Africa levels belying its middle income country economic indicators. In an increasingly resource constrained world, the burden of providing an ever expanding population its due in terms of health and education amongst other services, is an economically unsustainable proposition.

The momentum of the early days of the LHW program in the wake of ICPD Cairo is now spent and the Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (CPR) has remained largely stagnant with a low annual rate of decline. Pakistan’s fertility rate remains higher than regional countries with a slow annual rate of decline (Figure 3). The CPR (any method) is 35% but the use of modern methods is limited to 25%. There is an unmet need for contraception which is greater in the lower income quintiles which also correlates with low educational status, rural residence and province. Similarly, differentials in education show that a significant proportion of women are uneducated. This has negative implications for both fertility and likelihood of FP use. The uneducated population in the
working age group is also excluded from the possibility of engaging in productive activity and the potential of the demographic dividend is hampered. The unmet need also denotes an overall demand for FP services - Pakistan wants smaller families.

Figure 4 - Differentials in Contraceptive Use, Education, Pakistan 2012-2013 (PDHS 2012-2013)
Inaugural Session
(Day 1, 10.30am – 11.55am)

Welcome Remarks:
Vice Admiral Shahid Iqbal HI (M) (Retd), Rector Bahria University

Opening Remarks:
Ms. Shahnaz Wazir Ali, President, Population Association of Pakistan

Keynote Address:

Inaugural Address:
H. E. Mr. Mamnoon Hussain, President, Islamic Republic of Pakistan

The inaugural session of the 15th Annual Conference of the Population Association of Pakistan commenced with remarks by the rector of Bahria University; Vice Admiral Shahid Iqbal (Retd), who lauded the visionary leadership of the present Government for highlighting issues related to population. He thanked the Population Association of Pakistan and other international organizations on behalf of his university on the “wonderful initiative they have taken for creating a collaborative network by providing this forum to the policy makers, researchers, politicians, religious scholars, media, civil society and students for setting strategic priorities and program direction” for the future development of Pakistan. According to the rector, “the efforts undertaken by the Population Association in highlighting population related issues are remarkable and indeed commendable.”

Citing the relevance of population growth to policies concerning education, health and economy, he thanked the Chief Guest, the President of Pakistan, for his patronage and guidance in this endeavor. He singled out the development of Vision 2025 which “will prove to be a stepping stone in devising long term policy strategic objectives for addressing the problem of population by the present Government of Pakistan.” This will reduce failure of policy implementation and steer the country toward positive change.
Mr. Iqbal spoke of his university which “in merely over a decade of its establishment has developed itself into one of the leading and reputable universities of Pakistan.” He indicated with pride his university’s endeavors to inculcate in students a sense of responsibility and commitment to serve the community; “every student enrolled in the undergraduate program is required to serve the community at least for 40 hours.” The rector concluded by inviting the audience to work with Bahria University for the development of the country since “joint, consolidated efforts are the need of the time.”

Addressing the inaugural session at the 15th Annual Research Conference of the Population Association of Pakistan, the president of the association, Ms. Shahnaz Wazir Ali introduced PAP as a non-profit, nonpolitical and scientific association working toward the promotion and strengthening of the discipline of population. The PAP has provided a forum for the professional development of experts to share scientific knowledge and experiences. Its current membership comprises professionals from a wide range of disciplines including demographers, sociologists, statisticians, reproductive health experts, environmentalists, economists, public health personnel and civil society activists.
Ms. Wazir Ali presented the latest population statistics according to PDHS 2012-14, PSLMS 2012-13 and the National Economic Survey 2013-14. Evidence from these studies have shown that “while some of our RH indicators have been improving, such as coverage of skilled birth attendants from 39% to 52%, facility based deliveries from 34% to 48% and life expectancy increasing to 67 years for females and 65 years for males, yet these improvements can be best described as modest and far from satisfactory.” Pakistan’s contraceptive prevalence rate has only marginally increased from 27% in 2006-07 to 35% in 2012-13. In addition, the country’s total fertility rate (TFR) is one birth more than India and Bangladesh and two births more than Iran. High neonatal mortality rates persist, showing, according to Ms. Wazir Ali, “an unfortunate resilience to change.” In fact, 60% of Pakistan’s population is living below the poverty line.

The president of PAP reminded her audience of the stark reality confronting Pakistan – if the current trends are to continue, Pakistan’s population will increase to 275 million by the year 2050. Moreover, if the current fertility rates prevail, this figure is expected to soar to 380 million. Currently, Pakistan is a country with the largest youth bulge: 48% of the population is between the ages of 15-49 while 56% (ages 15-64) is in the productive age group. In view of such alarming figures, “if business as usual continues, we will fail in meeting our international commitments; for instance, Pakistan is not poised to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and perhaps even the commitment we have made at the FP2020 Summit in 2012.” Ms. Wazir Ali hoped that these stark realities would be extensively discussed on the PAP forum so that by the end of the conference, “we hope to come up with cogent practical recommendations, so that we can move the discourse from rhetoric to action.”
Pakistan’s growing population also poses a significant threat to food insecurity. According to a recent National Nutrition Survey, approximately 60% of the country’s total population is facing food insecurity. In these households, 50% of the women and children have been found to be malnourished. Moreover, an estimated 35% of all deaths under the age of 5 have been linked to malnutrition.

According to most economists, higher population growth rates negatively affect economies preventing improved living standards in terms of higher per capita incomes. As stated by Ms. Wazir Ali, “an expanding population base requires huge amounts of resources for investment in physical and human capital.” These resources can neither be easily generated internally, nor raised or borrowed externally, thus limiting socioeconomic development with ensuing unsatisfactory indicators.

Ms. Wazir Ali elaborated the many opportunities that Pakistan can draw on to address these challenges. She noted that “Pakistan is mid-way through its demographic transition, as more and more young people enter the workforce. This “Demographic Dividend” first became available in the 1990s. Pakistan’s current age structure is such that it has the largest ever cohort of adolescents and youth. To ensure that young people contribute towards economic and social prosperity in their adulthood, it is necessary to invest in future generations of Pakistanis by developing sound education and employment policies as well as focusing on human resource development and women’s empowerment. This will ensure that we capitalize on the demographic dividend which has enabled several countries in East Asia to prosper. The window of opportunity will close around 2045, by which time the society will be ageing rapidly.” Ms. Wazir Ali also cautioned that if the country’s youth bulge is not properly educated so that many remain unemployed, and if the fertility rates are not reduced, then “the nation’s existing problems will likely deepen. National resource shortages could become scarcities; teeming cities could collapse from a lack of services and security; and legions of disillusioned and unemployed young people could add to the already swelling ranks of extremists.”

According to the PAP president, the benefits of the demographic bonus can be maximized through five steps including, “continued and expanded investment in family
planning information and services; getting the macroeconomics right; increased investment in economy. Without investing in family planning and reducing fertility levels, we will never be able to benefit from the demographic dividend as scarce resources that are needed for human resource development will be directed to meet the basic needs of an ever growing population. This is exactly what is happening today and we are lagging behind in benefitting from the favorable age structure of our population.”

Pointing out an important challenge highlighted by Dr. Zeba Sathar, Ms. Wazir Ali quoted the eminent demographer, “while everyone is well aware of the challenges of an ever increasing population in terms of numbers, their distribution, and the implications they hold for the country’s development, politics, and ultimate stability, but unfortunately the gravity of the issue has not yet entered into the public discourse and no one is talking about it.” Addressing the President of Pakistan and the general audience, Ms. Wazir Ali further elucidated, “Since 1998, there has been no census in Pakistan. Additionally, it is unfortunate that the routinely collected information and research evidence that is available seldom makes its way into policy development and setting programmatic direction. What we need is that at the federal level, the Ministries of Planning & Development and National Health Services sit together and come up with overarching, broad evidence based and strategically focused National Population and Developmental Policy Framework that outlines guiding principles. At the provincial level, the departments of health and population welfare and allied departments must develop provincial policies that are more attuned to ground realities. Policies should eschew traditional top-down models and instead embrace more participatory efforts built around actual needs and the situation on the ground. The policies should be focused on people rather than on figures and statistics, thus valuing and emphasizing choice, social values, human rights and gender equality. Concomitantly, it is important that provincial and federal authorities demonstrate their full commitment through sustained and prioritized allocation of additional resources to family planning services and commodities.”
Ms. Wazir Ali iterated that “policies are meaningless unless they are translated into short term and strategic objectives. These objectives can be achieved if programs planned practically and developed accordingly. Post devolution, the time has come when we need to seriously rethink the structure of our existing population programs. Population programs must be conceptualized as pro-poor, community-based service delivery oriented programs that involve all key stakeholders including religious leaders, menfolk and opinion makers and are facilitated by an open and uninhibited use of media in the promotion of population welfare messages. For programs, sustained political support, along with realistic budgetary allocations are of paramount importance for programs to be successful. Hiring qualified and trained staff, and institutionalizing a strong monitoring and evaluation system that would ensure accountability at all levels, are essential elements for the success of a population program.”

Ms. Wazir Ali lauded the role of conferences such as the 15th Annual PAP Conference which play an important role in raising awareness among policy makers as well as the general public. Such forums highlight the exigency of dealing with problems caused by and exacerbated by growing numbers. She hoped that the evidence presented at the conference would be noted by policy makers contributing to “a greater political will and a sustained political commitment towards dealing with the issues, in the same manner as demonstrated by governments in most Muslim countries such as Turkey, Malaysia, Indonesia, Bangladesh etc.” According to her, the population issue deserved the same urgent attention and cross-party support as that given to other key concerns such as national security, the Kashmir cause, the energy crisis and Pakistan’s defense capability.

Ms. Wazir Ali noted that during the two day conference, five panel discussions had been organized bringing together policy makers, researchers, civil society representatives and Pakistan’s development partners. During these sessions, she hoped that “we would dilate upon the necessity and need for focusing the government’s undivided attention to this important subject and devising a strategic direction to be followed at the federal and provincial levels for improving the wellbeing of the people and our overall development prospects.” Moreover, in these sessions policy makers would also discuss how the commitment made by the Government of Pakistan at the London Summit may be
incorporated into the Vision 2050 document in order to achieve FP 2020 goals. According to the PAP president, “Pakistan’s current challenge is to expand access to high quality, voluntary family planning and reproductive health services so that individuals and couples can meet their desires for smaller families, while also improving women’s standing within families and society. We shall also be taking stock of the progress we have made since the ICPD conference in 1994 where Pakistan pledged to implement the Plan of Action adopted at the conference. We will also be discussing the post devolution challenges confronting the Health and Population Welfare Departments as they work towards developing a modus vivendi for synergizing and accelerating their efforts to optimally provide family planning services.” In her view, the conference would also provide an opportunity to youth representatives to share their perspectives and raise their queries and concerns with subject experts, religious scholars and opinion makers.

Ms. Wazir Ali elaborated on the failure of successive governments in providing the necessary infrastructure to support a rapidly increasing population. This has resulted in “abysmal school enrolment figures; widespread lack of access to family planning services; a struggling labor economy; a poor security situation; and poor reproductive health indicators translating into loss of precious lives of our mothers and infants. Pakistan is also beset by critical resource shortages. Water bodies are drying up, electrical power outages are rife and arable land is fast disappearing.” She emphasized the importance of synergy between the government, civil society, the corporate sector and development partners who must work together to address the demographic pressure and its challenges that Pakistan is facing today. In this regard she pointed out that, “the annual PAP conference can provide a forum for this accountability for all. Every year, when we assemble we must recount and report the efforts we have made and the results of these efforts. The conference should be the basis of a commitment and pledge we make today to our youth and out future generations as to what we promise to do for making their tomorrow better.”
In conclusion, Ms. Wazir Ali asked her audience to make a solemn pledge to do everything in their power to work for the population cause “in order to make Pakistan a prosperous, vibrant, progressive, tolerant and healthy society.” She thanked the President of Pakistan for his gracious presence at the conference. She also expressed her gratitude toward the Rector and the entire faculty of Bahria University for collaborating with the Population Association of Pakistan in arranging the conference. Last but not the least, the president of PAP thanked PAP’s development partners including UNFPA, UNICEF, Population Council, Packard Foundation and HANDS for their generous support and contribution in organizing the conference.

In her keynote address, Ms. Ann Keeling, the Country Director of UNFPA, presented key highlights of UNFPA’s flagship publication, *The State of World Population 2014: The Power of 1.8 Billion: Adolescent, Youth and the Transformation of the Future*. She began by alerting the audience to the fact that out of the 7 billion people comprising the world’s population, a quarter i.e. 1.8 billion are young people. Countries with the youngest populations tend to be poor and face significant developmental challenges, with nine out of ten people aged 10-24 years. Pakistan is one of these countries -- 63% of the total population is under the age of 24 years. Such a significant youth bulge constitutes a major work force.

A demographic dividend is realized when young people are healthy and educated, resources are available for effective investment, and poverty levels are reduced. As mortality and fertility rates of a country are successfully lowered, a dynamic working age population emerges which can greatly propel the economy.

The demographic dividend afforded by an overwhelmingly young population can be properly harnessed provided the right investments are made at the right time. Ms. Keeling maintained that for a country like Pakistan categorized as mid to late transition,
it is important to invest in reducing child mortality. Once this is achieved - and maintained at a low level - the country’s key investment must be directed toward the empowerment of girls, investing in their secondary education and Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH). Furthermore, ease of access to SRH information and services such as provision of contraceptives should be promoted. This, she said, will create a more educated population resulting in declining fertility rates. Once mortality and fertility rates have fallen, there will be a change in the country’s age structure with a higher proportion of working age population contributing to the economic prosperity of the country.

In the context of the demographic transition, countries can be classified into three categories: (a) those with a largely young population (age 0-14 years) with high mortality and fertility, (b) those with reduced mortality, falling fertility, and (c) countries with reduced mortality, low fertility. According to Ms. Keeling, Pakistan fits into the second category since here, young people have largely moved beyond the age where they are dependent on parents. They are old enough and ready to acquire appropriate skills and join the work force. Today’s youth is the key to a productive future.

She posed the question: Considering a country like Pakistan and looking towards the future, what would happen if the population reaches an intimidating 200 million? How will Pakistan feed and educate its children?

There is a need for an action plan inclusive of all stakeholders, built on the needs of the community, aligned at the provincial level and consolidated comprehensively at the national level. Such a plan should have concrete, measurable progress indicators ensuring accountability and transparency.

Ann Keeling, Country Representative UNFPA

Ms. Keeling noted that Pakistan is positioned at crossroads today. With a low Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (CPR) of 35% and an unmet need of 20%, urgent action is mandatory. The situation is compounded by the fact that 60% of the households are food insecure resulting in malnourished children. In fact, 45% of the children below 5 years of age are stunted. Widespread poverty ensures that 25 million children have no access to proper schooling/education. Moreover, the hazardous impact of rapid
urbanization and climate change cannot be underestimated. All these factors contribute to runaway population growth which is posing serious developmental challenges to the country. To drive home her point, Ms. Keeling cited Prof. Ahsan Iqbal, Minister of Planning (2014); “Pakistan is adding people equivalent to the population of New Zealand every year.”

However, Ms. Keeling emphasized that this situation can be reversed if we target achieving a CPR of 55% by the year 2020 and take appropriate measures. It is important to direct attention toward evidence-based solutions or steps to curb population growth. These include utilizing human resources in the form of Lady Health Workers; family planning commodity security; moving from traditional to modern contraceptive methods; mobile health clinics; functional integration i.e. health and population welfare departments working together; provincial ownership; birth spacing not birth control; reliable data including a census; educating and creating awareness among young people and focusing on adolescent girls.

Another crucial point the UNFPA representative made was the need to ensure a broad-based, inclusive, cross party coalition encompassing NGOs, provinces and the private sector in order to control population growth. She concluded by reminding the gathering that restricting runaway population growth is everybody’s issue since it concerns everybody’s future.
These themes were reaffirmed by the **President of Pakistan, His Excellency Mr. Mamnoon Hussain**, who expressed his pleasure and encouragement at the gathering of planners, policy makers, researchers, development professionals and academics discussing a topic of the greatest significance for the country. According to the President, Pakistan’s growing population constitutes an “enormous challenge” impacting every aspect of our individual and collective lives. Since independence, the population has grown six fold; Pakistan today is the sixth most populous country in the world. If this state of affairs is allowed to continue, Pakistan would become the fifth largest country (population-wise) by the year 2050.

Considering the massive scale of the problem, the President requested the religious leadership of the country to strive toward the reduction of maternal and newborn mortality rates and to meet challenges posed by an increasing population. He recalled ancient and contemporary thinkers who have advocated family planning for countries with large populations. He reiterated that nations with increasing populations and limited resources are not able to handle the challenges confronting them. He cited the example of Bangladesh, a country that has taken unprecedented steps with regard to curbing population growth.
According to the President, the main issue “is not the enormity of our population but more importantly, how we plan to balance numbers and the country's resources equitably and prudently.” It is important to remember that resources are finite and at the same time, we must make sure that “the population rises to its full potential in terms of what they contribute to society.” Underscoring the importance of this point, he cited a number of reasons Firstly, in the country’s current stage of demographic transition; the population is mostly comprised of young people on the threshold of marital and family life eager to acquire skills, or jobs, thereby contributing to society. Secondly, due to the transition resulting from the 18th amendment, provinces have increased responsibility to provide education, health and employment. The third reason, as mentioned by the President, is that we are living in trying times -- the youth of the country is facing threats to security and uncertainty with regards to the future. Lastly, despite myriad efforts, health indicators have not been improving. More mothers and children are dying in Pakistan than in other regional countries.

The President stated that “it is possible to invest wisely even within our dwindling resources, in the right type of jobs, the right type of educational facilities that focus on developing the right kind of skills which can in turn help in rebuilding and strengthening our economy and ensuring continued prosperity for future generations. This is possible because we know that these investments will produce returns that will double or treble, or more, with the passage of time.”

The President stressed the importance of inculcating optimism in our youth by providing them with concrete opportunities and creating a positive force as a challenge to threats of terrorism and extremism, “Inherently, our youth and young population is in search of positive avenues and we only have to provide them with these opportunities to channelize their energies into nation building activities.” His Excellency highlighted the role of the demographic transition in offering opportunities to women in public and economic life, “I have full faith that this country has the potential for another turnaround by giving its young girls and women a full chance of realizing their potential. . . Let us focus on the women and girls of this country and give them a full chance. Let this be the our pledge today, in the private sector and in the public sector that we will create
opportunities for employment for both young men and women, and also ensure they have the skills to match these jobs.”

According to the President, "in order to benefit from the recent shifts in age structure and the balance of dependent to working age adults, fertility decline at a fairly rapid speed is essential. We have abundant evidence from East Asia and elsewhere that rapid fertility decline yield benefits such as economic growth. Investments in health and family planning are essential requisites for the demographic dividend to materialize at all.” He reminded the audience that the rate of fertility decline in Pakistan has remained largely stagnant. Despite investment in family planning programs, this rate remains low in comparison to our neighbors, Iran, India and Bangladesh. The President stressed that the momentum of fertility decline achieved in the 90s when the fertility transition first began should be resumed. He called for provinces to prioritize family planning initiatives by ensuring adequate funding for programs. Since resources are limited, it is important that funding be channeled into programs that have yielded concrete results in the past such as the Lady Health Worker (LHW) program, “Our research evidence shows that a quarter of women in the reproductive age want to plan their families according to their resources but are unable to do so due to a variety of reasons, the
most important being lack of access. . . The lady health worker program has, in the past, and can continue in the future to be [the] link in helping families achieve their fertility aspirations.” This program needs to be supported and its coverage enhanced. We need to ensure that LHWs are focused on their "core responsibility" of providing family planning services. The President reiterated the necessity of adequate funding for family planning programs especially in smaller provinces so that these have "sufficient funds to prioritize family planning services.” He assured the gathering that “the current government is fully committed to propel the country on to a path of prosperity and development, ensuring for our people the highest standard of living, the best quality of life in an environment of peace and stability, equal opportunity and justice.”

The President also emphasized the importance of women’s rights in Islamic teachings. “Even the rights of the child have been enshrined when the Quran calls for mothers to breastfeed their child for two whole years. The Quran enjoins to pray for wives and progeny who are a source of comfort to the eyes - a joy to behold.” He questioned if this was possible when “14,000 women in Pakistan die each year just because of pregnancy related causes”. Laying the blame for the latter on repeated, closely spaced, and unintended pregnancies, he also cited these issues as being a major contributor to infant mortality. The President noted that Pakistan’s current Population Growth Rate is 1.95% which is noticeably higher than other Muslim nations such as Malaysia, Morocco, Turkey, Iran and Bangladesh. On average, Pakistani women are having more children as compared to other Islamic countries such as Indonesia, Bangladesh, Turkey and Iran. As a result, Pakistan is one of six countries that accounts for more than 50% of the world's maternal deaths, while the country also has the highest rate of first day deaths of newborns.
H.E. Mr. Mamnoon Hussain, President of Pakistan calls on the conference participants to suggest concrete actions to address population challenges in the spirit of ‘Ijtihad’

The President called for a collective consensus from all political parties to reaffirm Pakistan’s commitments and deal with the population issue on a “war footing and declare it as a national emergency.” He enumerated steps that need to be outlined including development of national guidelines providing a framework for provincial plans to deal with current and future demographic pressures; revamping of the educational system; revitalizing the health system to incorporate mandatory family planning services, eradicate preventable diseases and reduce morbidity and mortality of women and infants; introduction of pro-poor schemes enabling the poor to seek livelihood opportunities and plan families resulting in improved standards and quality of living; instituting “accountability measures at all levels and tiers of the government system so as to eradicate corruption, systemic inertia and help in removing mistrust of the system among the people.” The President called for the introduction of “a set of revolutionary steps for the betterment of our people. These will undoubtedly have implications for the future prosperity of our country.”

Nearing the end of his address, the President announced the creation of the “President’s Initiative for Population Development” to be managed by the Population
Association of Pakistan which will “provide seed money to Public Sector Universities to help students research the various dimensions of this important topic and disseminate their findings so as to influence public discourse.” The President allocated a sum of PKR 2 million for the initiative, expressing his hope that philanthropists and corporate sector representatives will follow suit in expanding its resource base as part of their social responsibilities.

The President expressed his confidence that Pakistan would attain its place among nations as a vibrant democracy with a prosperous economy and a healthy population. He hoped that the conference would yield useful results helping to better “the future policy and programmatic direction of the country.” Toward this end, he wished the conference organizers success in their endeavors.

Ms. Shahnaz Wazir Ali, President PAP Presenting Souvenir to H.E. Mr. Mamnoon Hussain, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.
(Front Row, L to R) Ms. Ann Keeling, Country Representative UNFPA, Federal Minister for Planning Prof Ahsan Iqbal, H.E. Mr. Mamnoon Hussain, President of Pakistan, Ms. Shahnaz Wazir Ali, President PAP and Vice Admiral Shahid Iqbal, Rector Bahria University are flanked by the PAP Executive Council Members and BU Key Faculty Members at the inaugural session.
Plenary Session 1: Synergizing FP2020 and Vision 2025
(November 18, 2014 - 12.20pm-1.45pm)

Chair:
Prof. Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Reforms, Government of Pakistan

Co-Chair:
Dr. Mehr Taj Roghani, Advisor to Chief Minister on Social Welfare & Women’s Empowerment, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Key Note Speaker:
Dr. Zeba Sathar, Country Director, Population Council

Comments:
Mr. Kahliq Nazir Kiani, Secretary Population Welfare Department, Government of Baluchistan
Mr. Altaf Ezid Khan, Secretary, Department of Population Welfare, Government of Punjab
Mr. Muhammad Saleem Raza, Secretary Population Welfare Government of Sindh

Moderator:
Dr. Farid Midhet, Country Director, JHPIEGO

In her keynote address Dr. Zeba Sathar, the Country Director of Population Council, discussed the broad impact and benefits that would accrue from implementing Pakistan’s commitments under FP2020. She emphasized that limiting the rate of population growth through FP would ease financial pressure on development budgets, address unmet need and unwanted fertility, and reduce maternal and child mortality. Dr. Sathar pointed out that complementary investment in health interventions such as Skilled Birth Attendants (SBAs)/LHWs and education would not only help in the above, it would also ensure a healthy, educated and skilled workforce that could contribute to realizing the demographic dividend.

She further explained that with the school age population currently stabilizing, education spending can be rationalized and utilized more efficiently. Focusing on girls education would keep them in schools longer, providing a means of delaying early marriage and empowering them to make educated choices regarding fertility. The trend of increasing female participation in the workforce is encouraging as working women tend to have fewer children and higher CPR.
Dr. Sathar noted that poverty reduction and economic growth can also be addressed through family planning programs, since studies have shown that large family sizes correlate with chronic poverty in Pakistan. It is relevant to note that the economic projections of per capita income based on the expected demographic dividend shrink in unrestricted fertility scenarios, with an increasing number of dependents. Rapid fertility decline scenarios suggest a greater impact of the demographic dividend. This has policy implications for Pakistan in view of its present favorable dependency ratio. A continued increase in population could erode any accrued economic benefits. On the other hand, judiciously managed fertility levels may increase economic benefits considerably.

**Federal & Provincial Programs and Initiatives**

The above scenarios and projections stimulated provincial consultations which yielded FP2020 targets for individual provinces:

**Mr. Khaliq Nazir Kiani** confirmed that Baluchistan has committed to raising CPR to 32%. However, he cited a lack of political will in expanding the program to cover the entire province. He also added that local social mores and attitudes which contribute to large families in rural and traditional societies need to be accounted for in designing services.

**Mr. Altaf Ezid Khan** Secretary, Department of Population Welfare, expressed Punjab’s commitment to increasing its CPR to 55%. He also acknowledged that in view of Punjab’s unmet need, the CPR target should be raised to 59%. He mentioned that Punjab has allocated funds to the population welfare department directly from the Annual Development Program for the first time and has also approved social sector schemes worth PKR 1 billion. However, he noted that the coordination between the
population department and the LHW program is weak. This issue is compounded by the LHW’s large and increasing work load related to health services, as a result of which their role in delivering FP services is marginalized.

**Mr. Muhammad Saleem Raza**, Secretary Population Welfare (Sindh) confirmed Sindh’s commitment to a 45% increase in CPR. He elaborated on this figure by mentioning that a higher value would have meant doubling the current rate which would not be possible considering historical trends or the experience of other provinces. Sindh has had extensive support from USAID over the years in the form of the Deliver project focusing on contraceptive security. While this project is set to close, the Sindh Government has planned financial outlays of up to PKR 5 billion for continuity of contraceptive procurement and supply, with PKR 700 million to be spent on procurement in this fiscal year alone. However, he cited the issue of delayed disbursement of sanctioned funds as an implementation hurdle.

In the absence of the Secretary Population, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Dr. Zeba Sathar informed the gathering that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) has committed to a CPR of 42% as its FP2020 target in recent meetings. **Dr. Mehr Taj Roghani** then provided some context for the challenges in implementing FP program activities in KP, particularly the role of education in changing attitudes in such highly traditional societies. Drawing on her extensive experience, she also emphasized the need to provide access to reproductive health services at the community’s “doorstep”. This, she said, was the key factor in ensuring the uptake of FP practices in KP’s experience.

In response to a question from the floor from a former Additional Secretary (Population, KP) regarding the slow rate of progress with respect to population indicators, Dr. Mehr reiterated that there are no simple answers. Population indicators are impacted by many factors and improvements must therefore result from a multipronged approach. In her opinion, one such factor is the poor focus on women’s education. In KP, for example, since only 25-30% of women are educated, this is continuing to hamper efforts to change fertility profiles in the province. She elucidated that educated women are better informed and empowered, thus they can exercise their right to have fewer children. This positively impacts the health of women and their children. Consequently children can
be healthier and are also more likely to be educated due to lesser competition for household resources.

Dr. Roghani also highlighted the ‘territorial’ or ‘turf’ rivalry between the health and population departments as a contributing factor for the slow progress of controlling population growth. In her opinion, the two departments are complementary and should be interlinked, while any existing friction should be resolved expeditiously. Another critical point raised by her concerned the acclaimed LHW program. While initially focusing on FP matters, she questioned the subsequent overloading of LHWs with an increasing numbers of tasks related to other programs as well as the planning process which has led to this situation.

**Federal Government**

Professor Ahsan Iqbal, the **Federal Minister for Planning Development & Reforms** presented the Government of Pakistan’s (GoP) view of the situation and proposed the Vision 2025 developmental plan as a model for addressing the issues highlighted. He emphasized that the Vision 2025 document has the endorsement of all provinces; however the quality of its implementation will depend on the conscious collaboration of the government, civil society, private sector, academia and the diaspora.

The minister pointed to the changed economic landscape where precepts of the industrial age have been replaced by those of a new information age. Today’s world is geared more towards the harnessing of ‘brain power’ than industrialization. Thus the quality of human resources that a country can produce will determine the degree of its success in these times. The minister questioned the current quality of human resources noting the high percentage of children stunted due to malnutrition (45%) cited in the
inaugural session. Thus the GoP’s Vision 2025 plan centers itself around the first of its 7 defined “Pillars” or action areas i.e. Social & Human Capital Development. He assured the audience that adequate funding has been made available through the PSDP to social sector development initiatives in order to ensure that this plan does not remain limited to projections and “bar charts”. Such budgetary allocations, he said, should be seen as reflective of the commitment of the government to the people to bring to Pakistan decent standards of development. In this context, he recalled Dr. Zeba Sathar’s presentation which demonstrated the dichotomy between Pakistan’s middle income country economic indicators and African levels of social indicators. In his view, this scenario is not conducive to sustainable growth and the Vision 2025 plan seeks to redress this imbalance.

Professor Ahsan Iqbal endorsed the view that issues of population, health and poverty cannot be addressed in isolation, citing examples of their interconnectivity within the context of our social norms. He emphasized that these matters are being considered in conjunction with each other so that action in one area is not negated by inactivity in another.
Panelists: (Left to Right) Panelists: Dr. Farid Midhet, Country Director, Jhpiego, Mr. Muhammad Saleem Raza, Secretary Population Welfare Govt. of Sindh, Dr. Zeba Sathar, Country Director, Population Council, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister for P&D and Reforms, GoP, Dr. Mehr Taj Roghani, Advisor to Chief Minister on Social Welfare & Women’s Empowerment, KPK, Mr. Altaf Ezid Khan, Secretary, Department of Population Welfare, Government of Punjab, Mr. Kahliq Nazir Kiani, Secretary Population Welfare Department, Government of Baluchistan

Prof. Ahsan Iqbal emphasized the role of modern technologies in empowering citizens and how it has broadened the horizon of people who can now compare standards of living and then can rightly question their own rate of progress. Relating Pakistan’s earlier history, he remarked that this slow rate of progress was not always so. He especially stressed the role of political stability in realizing any developmental plan, citing the example of South Korea. The latter country, he said, has expressed repeated gratitude to Pakistan for providing it with developmental paradigms which were essential to its evident success after the Korean War. This he said should give us pause to consider why those paradigms which were developed here did not result in success for this country as they did in South Korea. Alongside social justice, he reiterated the need for political stability and policy continuity. These he said were important enablers for any development policy including population welfare.
The Minister stressed that the Vision 2025 document is based on a national agenda and vision; it does not propagate the agenda of any single political party. If stability is maintained, Pakistan stands to achieve in a decade what has taken other countries much longer. Prof Iqbal also clarified that the population stabilization plan is not the responsibility of the Federal Government alone. He called on the provinces to work together in realizing the goals for the betterment of all Pakistanis and announced the GoP’s intention to convene a National Social Summit to define and develop a new social framework in the wake of the 18th Amendment. In his view, disruptions in implementation resulting from the 18th Amendment mandated devolution, could be handled better. To his credit, the Minister acknowledged the lack of adequate linkages and coordination mechanisms between the center and the provinces.
Plenary Session II: Investing in FP2020 and Seeking Partnerships
(Day 1, 2.45pm – 4.15pm)

Chair:
Dr. Waqar Masood, Federal Secretary Finance, Government of Pakistan

Co-Chair:
Prof. Dr Tariq Mahmood, Advisor Research & Development, Higher Education Commission

Key Note Speaker:
Dr. Minhaj-ul-Haq, Social Protection Economist, The World Bank

Panelists:
Dr. Yasmin Sabeeh Qazi, Sr. Country Advisor, Population Program, David & Lucile Packard Foundation
Dr Chris Athayde, Head of Health & Nutrition Team, DFID-Pakistan
Ms. Monica Villanueva, MCH Team Leader, USAID Pakistan
Dr Ruth Hildebrandt, Principal Advisor, Health Sector Support Programme Pakistan, GIZ, Islamabad

Moderator:
Ms. Shahida Azfar, Former Director UNFPA CST for South & Central Asia and Former Regional Director, UNICEF for East & Southern Africa

In his presentation Dr Minhaj-ul-Haq, the Social Protection Economist for the World Bank noted that the key ingredient to meeting any of the international commitments the GoP has made with respect to health or population, is the proper allocation of funds. He elucidated that in Pakistan, budgetary allocations to health and population have historically been very small. In recent years, the fiscal space for these areas has been increasingly constrained due to the combined effects of natural disasters, local intensity military conflicts and global recession. However, neglect in the present will necessarily create much larger problems in the future. While international development partners and donor agencies have stepped in to pick up the slack in terms of financing, this support is time bound. In Dr. Haq’s view, programs need local ownership to be sustainable and this is reflected in financial allocations in budgets and timely disbursements.
In this context, Dr. Haque’s analysis of public sector expenditures (Figure 5) was highly instructive. The annual rate of increase in CPR is very low at 0.5% and this correlates with the associated spending pattern (low inputs). Nevertheless, public sector spending remains the dominant source of family planning. However, expenditure in Sindh and Baluchistan increased in the post devolution period indicating greater fiscal space available for FP in the wake of the 18th Amendment. However, this rate of expenditure in Baluchistan has since fallen off, while Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab’s allocations exhibited no change from their prior trends. He said that this paints a mixed picture of the priority being given to the population issue by provincial and federal governments. His analysis further demonstrated that if current trends persist, actual outlays for population will shrink when seen as a proportion of provincial budgets (presently 0.07% of Provincial GDP). An increase in budgets accompanied by operational and allocative efficiency is required to achieve sustained CPR growth. According to Dr Minhaj, in order to increase CPR to 50 percent, a minimum of PKR 3.2 billion are required. He also stressed that commitments made at the FP2020 Summit in July 2012 will remain mere intentions and would not be implemented unless provincial budgets are allocated appropriately.
Development Partners Support and Contribution

Representatives from major development partners who are working closely with the GoP also provided their perspectives on where they are focusing their efforts.

Country Director, **David & Lucile Packard Foundation, Dr Yasmin Qazi**, drew upon her organization’s extensive experience with the public sector and pointed out that problems often begin with the budget itself which needs to be balanced and aligned to specific goals. Release of allocated funds is another issue which hampers program implementation and budget utilization. She noted that plans (inputs, process, targets) to which donors and partners may align themselves need to be defined by the government. This would encourage allocative efficiency in donor support and remove redundancies, a desired GoP goal. She also pointed out that donors would be willing to increase their financial input if proper accountability mechanisms could be included within the costs of implementation plans. She highlighted Packard Foundation’s recent project in conjunction with the NGO Aman Foundation which targets urban slums. Dr.
Qazi cited this project as an example of capitalizing on private sector efficiencies in managing quick roll out and scale-up of interventions.

Dr Chris Athayde described DFID-Pakistan’s focus on Maternal Neonatal & Child Health (MNCH) with interventions in Sindh, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA. DFID has recently funded a new project worth GBP 30 Million to provide FP services to 500,000 additional families in these areas. He mentioned DFID’s support over a number of years for the national MNCH program as an example of the UK Government’s commitment to maternal health and family planning. Dr Athayde described the severe issues DFID has encountered in the wake of the 18th Amendment mandated decentralization, particularly since there is no single point of coordination. According to him, maintaining separate channels to manage 7 provinces and regions has proved to be very difficult.

 Currently, DFID programs focusing on Health & Nutrition are being implemented in Punjab and KP. He pointed out that although DFID currently has a more limited scope
of action compared to the MNCH program; it has allowed them to diversify their focus. Also, in lieu of MNCH program which has been completed, DFID is covering funding for LHWs which also allows routine immunization improvements.

He also highlighted the fact that Pakistan spends very little of its GDP on health as a bottleneck. Dr Athayde pointed out the imbalance in the allocated budget between salaries where spending further constricts fiscal space. Outreach activities have also become difficult to implement in the wake of the 18th Amendment and decentralization. There is no mechanism for coordination. He also suggested that the absence of a body to review national and international targets is an issue that needs to be addressed. Similarly, the frequent changes in senior health managers is also affecting continuity and slowing existing implementation plans.

**USAID's MCH Team Leader, Ms. Monica Villanueva**, spoke about her organization’s long association with Pakistan and its particular focus on strengthening human resource, improving logistics and contraceptives supplies, supporting the use of data for decision-making and encouraging accountability. She spoke of the launch of USAID’s Maternal & Child Health Program in 2012 which encompasses service delivery (both public & private), health system strengthening, health communication and supply chain management components. In line with global evidence, the focus is on the community and effective implementation of MCH; this is expected to show real movement in the CPR. She strongly emphasized the possibility of strengthening district focus by linking the district implementation plans and key activities to the budget. Ms. Villaneuva highlighted LHWs as the implementation cadre with the most potential and worthy of support. They serve as the point of contact with the community for multiple interventions activities and should be expanded and revived as an appropriately funded program.
**GIZ’s** Principal Advisor, Health Sector Support Programme **Dr. Ruth Hildebrandt** acknowledged the German Development Corporation’s long and successful engagement with Pakistan. She pointed out the different paradigm adopted by Germany with 2 different organizations working in Pakistan in the development sector; the **KfW Development Bank** and GIZ. The KfW Development Bank is investing in supporting FP programs in Pakistan, particularly in KP and Gilgit Baltistan while GIZ is currently supporting the government of KP and Punjab in health system strengthening. Dr. Hildebrandt also contrasted GIZ’s approach to system strengthening to that of other developmental partners. GIZ supports any GoP effort which is focused on delivering services efficiently and effectively including FP and MNCH focused interventions. She mentioned that an FP/MNCH specific intervention, would be launched in two districts of KP in the next year, but that this would be a limited effort. Dr Hildebrandt felt that international technical expertise, as represented by the development partners present at the conference, was being insufficiently utilized to assist the federal and provincial governments.

**Prof. Dr. Tariq Mahmood**, Advisor (R&D) HEC, apprised the session participants of the practical implications of the 18th Amendment and acknowledged the lack of an established mechanism for coordination between the federal and provincial levels. According to him, if this was not properly defined, then fragmentation in the health sector and other issues resulting from devolution may persist and wreak havoc with Pakistan’s development plans. He also pointed out that the provincial focused approach of development partners may well be symptomatic of the lack of a national agenda with respect to health policy. Dr. Mahmood stated that policy formulation itself had become difficult in the post 18th Amendment scenario resulting in further
complications and emphasized the greater need for research based inputs in this process.

**Dr. Waqar Masood**, Federal Secretary for Finance, spoke of the need for greater clarity in budgets, especially with regard to donor inflows which are not currently reflected in outlays. An appropriate accounting of government and partners’ investments would lead to a correct assessment of the resources being mobilized for different health or developmental plans. The Secretary was of the view that it would not be problematic, nor present a fiscal challenge to allocate the figures that Dr Minhaj had presented earlier in order to raise the CPR to desired levels. In his words, “...on behalf of the Federal Government, I reassure this conference that our focus on Population is solid and that we will continue to provide necessary resources.” He cited the recent regularization of LHWs as an example of this commitment to social development. He expressed confidence in the upcoming NFC award negotiations where the Federal Government will be able to duly incentivize the provinces to keep their social sector spending intact and even increase it over the years.
Plenary Session III: Pakistan’s Commitment at ICPD + 20
(Day 1, 4.30pm-5.30pm)

Chair:

Panelists:
Dr Attiya Inayatullah, Former Federal Minister Population Planning/Chairperson, Rahnuma Group
Mr. Muzzafar Mahmood Qureshi, Resident Director, Greenstar Social Marketing
Dr. Tabinda Sarosh, Director Shirkat Gah, Karachi
Mr. Abdul Ghaflar Khan, Director General (Population), Ministry of National Health Services, Regulation & Coordination, Government of Pakistan
Dr. Arshad Mahmood, Director Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E/DHIS), USAID Health System Strengthening Project, JSI Training & Research Institute, Islamabad

Moderator:
Dr Shaikh Tanveer Ahmed, Chief Executive, HANDS

Mr. Abdul Ghaflar, Director General (Population), representing the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulation & Coordination (NHSRC), presented relevant information from the 29th Special Session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) on ICPD beyond 2014. This session’s objectives had included taking stock of the progress under ICP-PoA after 20 years of implementation, seeking extension of the ICPD-PoA and identifying key actions beyond 2014 while establishing a mechanism of following up on progress. According to Mr. Ghaflar, “dignity and human resources will be placed at the centre stage of sustainable development”.

He highlighted four issues which remain unfulfilled including gender equality, education, sexual rights and urbanization. However positive outcomes

- To reduce the unmet need up to 5% by 2020
- To increase the CPR to 55% by 2020
- To complete the unfinished agenda of the MDGs
- To ensure women’s access to reproductive health services
- To address reproductive and maternal health needs of communities affected by natural disasters
- Increase FP funding to $200 million by 2020

Pakistan’s renewed commitments to ICPD-PoA
such as the successful shift of focus within population welfare from numbers to rights, millions raised out of poverty, fewer maternal deaths, and increasing gender parity in primary education and within the workforce cannot be denied. He also pointed to key concerns after 20 years of struggle which suggest future areas of focus. Mr. Ghaffar noted that the world has grown increasingly unequal, especially for women. Moreover, environmental degradation and climate change as a result of overuse/misuse of finite resources (by developed countries) is being exacerbated by overpopulation (in developing countries). Countries have no sustainable development plans in place, nor are they prepared to harness the youth demographic, the largest the world has seen. The Director General iterated that despite commitment, universal reproductive rights have not yet been realized for all with an estimated 200 million women whose FP needs are not addressed. Furthermore, gender based violence and discrimination remains the reality for many women around the world. He reported that although no plan was forthcoming at the end of the 29th Special Session, it gave Pakistan an opportunity to reaffirm its commitment (See Box above) to the objectives of the ICPD-PoA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Change</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contraceptive Prevalence Rate (CPR)</td>
<td>↑ 11.8% (1990) to 35% (2013)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Fertility Rate (TFR)</td>
<td>↓ 5.3 (1990) to 3.8 (2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR)</td>
<td>↓ 490 (1990) to 276 (2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population Growth Rate</td>
<td>↓ 2.6% (1990) to 1.95% (2013)</td>
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**Panel Responses**

While progress has been made over the years with the adoption of a National Reproductive Health Package and the launch of the LHW program, the rate of change in indicators has been relatively sluggish (Table 1). Representatives from Rahnuma, Greenstar Social Marketing and Shirkat Gah elaborated on the results of ICPD and the gaps persisting in the Pakistani context.
Dr Attiya Inayatullah of Rahnuma spoke at length about the centrality of reproductive health to key social issues, including gender based violence. Citing the Human Security Commission Report she informed the gathering that each year about 1 million women are trafficked across borders for forced labor, domestic servitude or sex exploitation. She also highlighted the poor profile of women in our society who face not only cross-border but internal trafficking. Dr. Inayatullah emphasized the urgent need to address the root causes of this scenario by promoting Gender & Social Justice. She also linked gender based violence to unproductive health outcomes and recommended that domestic violence be criminalized.

In her view, the essence of social and reproductive rights for Pakistani women and children should entail a situation, “where every pregnancy is wanted, every child birth is safe and every young person’s potential is fulfilled.”

Mr. Muzzafar Mahmood Qureshi of Greenstar Social Marketing recalled the inception of the ICPD with its paradigm shifting agenda and huge mandate. During the intervening years, the importance of connecting with the community has grown worldwide. According to Mr. Qureshi, in the light of further commitments since inception, including those made in 2012, increasing service utilization would be difficult in the absence of service providers within the community who are willing to communicate and counsel. The LHWs, he explained, are the cadre that serves this function but receive very limited supplies or information to carry out their roles. With respect to counseling, unfortunately, Pakistan has still not designed a reliable and viable plan for building capacity in counseling services. In Mr. Qureshi’s opinion, there is a stereotype of religion being a barrier to family planning which under-emphasizes the role counseling can play. He stressed the need for external independent monitoring of programs providing reliable statistics since programs lack the capacity to “call a spade a spade”. He mentioned the importance of accountability suggesting that a “leader” be announced by the provinces to ensure this.
Panelists (from L-R): Dr Tabinda Sarosh, Director, Shirakat Gah; Dr Shaikh Tanveer Ahmed, Chief Executive, HANDS; Dr Arshad Mahmood, Director M&E/DHIS, JSI; Mr. Muzzafar Mahmood Qureshi, Resident Director, Greenstar Social Marketing; Ms. Ann Keeling, Country Representative, UNFPA; Dr Attiya Inayatullah, Former Federal Minister Population Planning/Chairperson, Rahnuma Group and Mr. Abdul Ghaffar Khan, Director General (Population), Ministry of National Health Services, Regulation & Coordination, Government of Pakistan.

Dr. Tabinda Sarosh of Shirakat Gah reaffirmed the rights based agenda of ICPD that the other speakers had mentioned. She noted the importance of this agenda in the context of Pakistan’s commitments to other international paradigms such as the Convention for Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). Thus, although the GoP has reiterated its commitments to the ICP-PoA, it will have to be translated into concrete action addressing critical areas such as health systems, governance, renewed focus on adolescents including legislation on preventing early age/forced marriage and the social determinants of health relating to women. In her view, the latter would be particularly important due to the disproportionate effect of poverty on women - the so called feminization of poverty. Additionally, the long overdue Census needs to be conducted to frame the scale of the problems and provide context for the reported maternal deaths.

Another key point raised by the speakers pertained to issues relating to the LHW program. The release of funds/supplies to the LHWs is not regular and their counseling
component remains weak and under developed. This cadre is the point of implementation for multiple interventions and is well positioned to implement the ICPD/FP 2020/Vision 2025 targets. The importance of LHWs should thus be reflected in the GoP’s allocations and plans.

**Dr. Arshad Mahmood of USAID/JSI** referenced Ms. Ann Keeling’s earlier presentation and the way forward she had elaborated. The current status of Pakistan discussed in the conference and the population figures presented by all the speakers are largely the same and they are not good numbers even after 50 years of efforts. The actions Ms. Keeling had highlighted however offer an opportunity to take Pakistan from where it is now to a state which would be good for the country.
Plenary Session IV: Health, Population & Nutrition: Post Devolution Challenges
(Day 2, 9.30am-11.00am)

Chair:
Mrs. Saira Afzal Tarrar, Minister of State for National Health Services, Regulation & Coordination

Co-Chair:
Ms. Angela Kearney, Country Representative, UNICEF Pakistan

Panelists:
H.E. Mr. Richard Olsen, Ambassador, Embassy of the United States of America, Islamabad
Mr. Javed Jabbar, Former Senator & Former Federal Minister for Information & Media Development
Mr. Muhammad Ejaz Chaudary, Secretary, Ministry of Inter-Provincial Coordination, Islamabad
Mr. Shaukat Yousafzai, Member Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly

Presenter:
Ms. Tania Goldner, Chief Health, UNICEF Islamabad

Moderator:
Dr. Naushin Mahmood, Former President, Population Association of Pakistan and Chief of Research Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE)

Currently, there is a growing understanding of the complementary nature of the subjects of health, nutrition and population. A consensus on integration of service delivery with a Primary Health Care (PHC) focus is already emerging as reflected in the provincial Health Sector Reform agendas. While devolution has presented many difficulties as evidenced over the previous sessions, possibilities do exist to improve matters either through increased fiscal space or reallocating existing budgets in a more coordinated manner. This session explored these themes and others within the context of the challenging political and administrative conditions post devolution.

H.E. Richard Olson, Ambassador of the United States to Pakistan commended the Population Association of Pakistan for its leadership in bringing together policy makers leaders, subject matter experts and development partners to make strategic decisions. According to His Excellency, “By providing this platform and presenting the most current research and information available you give Pakistan’s leadership the ability to develop policies that are based on current information and best practices worldwide.” Addressing the session, the Ambassador emphasized the broad implications of the country’s rapidly expanding population to the issues confronting the average Pakistani
citizen. In his view, all significant issues whether related to maternal and child health, education, investing in girls, food security or pertaining to how Pakistan can position itself for economic growth, countering unemployment, crime and violent extremism can be addressed through meeting Pakistan’s population challenge.

Ambassador Olson appreciated the effort in reining the CPR from 6% in the 1960s to 35% today. However, with the population continuing to grow by 4 million per year, “challenges of providing quality education, health for all children, access to safe and clean drinking water, reliable sources of electricity and adequate food and nutrition are greatly increased.” He commended the GoP’s 2012 decision to commit to the FP2020 Global Partnership including the pledge to increase funding to $200 million by 2020. He also cited Pakistan’s developmental plan Vision2025’s intent to raise health spending to 3% as an encouraging sign which may increase likelihood of implementation. His Excellency commended the increased budgetary outlays for FP by the Sindh, Punjab and KP and assured the session that his country would do its best to support these initiatives of the GoP. He iterated the United States commitment to continuing to work with the federal and provincial governments as well as development partners focusing on health service delivery. This would be carried out through training and support for health workers and outreach services.

Ambassador Olson noted that investing in reproductive health “strengthens families and communities, helps develop a healthy work force and encourages prosperity and human development.” He expressed the opinion that accelerating the progress of FP programs in all provinces is critical to Pakistan achieving its short and medium term goals. He assured US support for the efforts of the Pakistani leadership in implementing cost effective population programs across Pakistan.
The **UNICEF Chief of Health Services, Ms. Tania Goldner** presented the “Every Newborn Action Plan” (ENAP) as a means of addressing the integrative requirements in Pakistan. This plan, a part of “Every Woman, Every Child Initiative”, has been devised in response to the request from countries facing the likelihood of failure to meet MDGs 4 & 5. According to her, ENAP not only falls within the reproductive rights paradigm of the ICPD agenda, but reducing child mortality is also seen as a trigger for demographic changes.

Going into detail, Ms. Goldner presented Pakistan’s statistic; the Under 5 Mortality Rate (U5MR) is 89/1000 live births (slow decrease) and the Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) is at 74/1000 live births (slow decrease). More critically, she highlighted the fact that the Neonatal Mortality Rate has remained stagnant for almost 40 years with 62% of under five deaths resulting from neonatal causes (Figure 7). With only 48% deliveries taking place at health facilities and 52% skilled provider attended deliveries the static NMR is not surprising. This, she said, suggests the need for ENAP implementation in Pakistan.
According to Ms. Goldner, ENAP falls within the continuum of care approach to Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) strategies. RMNCAH envisages a lifecycle approach to reproductive health and as such benefits from an integrative approach. A newborn centric health strategy’s advantage lies in its potential for allowing just such harmonization and collaboration between vertical programs and interventions. She noted that avenues for collaboration are possible in the areas of nutrition, immunization, WASH and prevention of HIV/malaria. Research evidence already provides proven, low cost strategies to limit preventable newborn and stillbirth deaths. These strategies focus on increasing coverage of services, improving quality of care and strengthened reporting. Ms. Goldner noted that a “bottleneck analysis” of Pakistan’s health system for implementing ENAP has yielded 9 critical MNCH interventions and 2 critical health system areas to strengthen (See Box). She urged the finalization of cost action plans along with the mobilization of resources to hasten implementation.

The perspective of current and former senior state representatives on devolution’s administrative and political challenges as well as its implications for implementation was illuminating. Former Senator Mr. Javed Jabbar articulated his stance on devolution from a political perspective. According to Mr. Jabbar, while the evidence is conclusive, acting on it is not the domain of any specialized field but of people wielding political power and
who see these issues as a political priority. In order to achieve this, he said, “…we need to devolve to evolve…” Senator Jabbar recalled the “overnight” creation of Pakistan and its conglomerative composition at the time. He said that out of this milieu, “…we will become a Pakistani ethnic, holistic nation over the next two to three hundred years…” He reminded the audience of Pakistan’s early history as a young country born in unprecedented insecurity - a country of two wings geographically separated by 1000 miles of hostile territory. Despite these challenges, Pakistan managed to survive in its original form till 1971. The confluence of such factors have powered Pakistan’s search for security and have influenced the process of devolution. Hence, the various ways in which improvements can be expected to occur will necessarily be evolutionary. Mr. Jabbar, citing an “inconvenient truth” gave credit to the military government which has seen the entry of women into the Parliament. In his view, this had already begun to effect change in political circles. He emphasized the presence of the State Minister as exemplifying this evolution. Exploring the dynamics of the Federation, he highlighted disparities between provinces and the population mechanism that allows Punjab to dominate the lion’s share of national resources. Mr. Jabbar cited the need for a directly elected Senate to address the challenges of building consensus and ensuring equity in a pluralistic and diverse society such as Pakistan. He suggested that as societies become even more diversified, especially in major cities of Pakistan, health as a common need may play a unifying role.

The former Senator expressed hope that devolution may bring about the contextualized, client centered, rural focus to services in provinces precipitating rapid change. Devolution offers opportunities for reform and reorganization of administrative and organizational aspects of health systems. This opportunity should be grasped to bring complementary areas like health, nutrition, population into closer coordination.

**Mr. Ejaz Chaudary**, Secretary of the Ministry of Inter-Provincial Coordination, addressing perceptions in the post devolution era, acknowledged that services were not equally devolved. Challenges of implementation are still present and have affected family planning efforts. With regard to the latter, the Secretary communicated his respect for the efforts of PAP in the community, identifying them as crucial to realizing
population related goals. He expressed his great interest in the different speakers’ comments and assured that recommendations from the conference would be carried forward to the council of common interests. He also seconded the earlier suggestion by Mr. Javed Jabbar that devolution needs to reach the grass roots. From the perspective of reproductive health, he identified the Basic Health Unit (BHU) as the place where services need to reach.

**Mr. Shaukat Yusufzai**, Member Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly struck a similar theme when he questioned the issue of distribution of unregulated population growth: is it predominantly rural or urban? He expressed concern that if the issue is rural then an overt urban focus needs to be revised. He stressed the need for services in remote areas where opportunities are limited and there is a lack of educational institutions, hospitals and recreation facilities. These factors affecting communities contribute to the limited success of population planning efforts in such settings. Mr. Yusufzai also emphasized the significance of these facilities in rural communities allowing them to connect to social goals. Policy makers need to consider the centrality of this important issue and fund it appropriately. He identified increasingly restricted water availability and lack of employment as additional factors being impacted by population growth. He called upon the organizers to hold similar conferences and seminars in places like Swat and Shangla where rampant growth exists as the urban areas are now considerably aware of FP practices. He lauded the Minister of State, National Health Services & Regulations, Mrs. Saira Tarrar, for her inclusive and cooperative management style in interacting with the provinces. He questioned the absence from the conference, of other provincial ministers dealing with population. He highlighted some of the initiatives in KP addressing maternal and child health such as cash support as well as the new Breast Feeding Law encouraging nursing for 2 years and criminalizing the prescription of
supplemental milk. While recounting the success in KP regarding polio vaccinations, he stressed that these challenges, especially population, cannot be viewed as separate from issues of national concern and must be addressed through planning and coordination.

*Dr. Attiya Inayatullah,* former minister and president of PAP reaffirmed the importance of focusing on neonatal health and the nutrition status of the mother and child. Dr. Inayatullah thanked Ms. Goldner for her enlightening presentation which clearly defined the link between newborn health and maternal mortality. She thanked Mr. Shaukat Yusufzai for correctly identifying the core issues affecting rural populations where FP services are desperately required. Dr. Inayatullah stated that by and large, no communication gap exists between husband and wife amongst the masses in Pakistan concerning family size. According to her the figures for unmet need reflect the lack of services available or accessibility issues. The response should address the dire need of trained community midwives at the union council level.

Dr. Inayatullah highlighted the importance of inculcating male responsibility at the communal level and working toward the needed shift in society’s patriarchal mindset. She emphasized communication between spouses on aspects regarding family planning and empowerment of women. With respect to the devolution challenges highlighted in the session, she pointed out that intensive discussion on the needed organizational structure to address population was also taking place before the 18th Amendment. She nevertheless appreciated the Vision2025 initiative of the GoP, noting was a macro-level responsibility of the state to ensure effective family planning practices and an act of good governance to do so efficiently. She proposed that the subjects of health and population be merged into a single organizational structure. Dr. Inayatullah also informed the audience that through detailed discussions in the year 2000, it had been proposed that each province was to have one Secretary overseeing both Health and Population and two Director Generals, one for Health and another for Population. It had been unanimously agreed that the local government system and its actions were extremely important since it empowered the community. She hoped the recommendations of the conference would be taken up by the ministries of IPC and
NHSRC and taken to the provinces who in turn could issue plans detailing the how, what, where and when implementation is to proceed.

In her brief remarks, Ms. Angela Kearney, the Country Representative UNICEF Pakistan stressed the importance of not only educating ourselves and knowing what is happening, but also ensuring that this information reaches partners and the community. Ms. Kearney cautioned against viewing the community as being “up there”. According to her, community is the key to everything. She emphasized that we must become part of the community and work with them to address their real issues particularly in order to address the critical matter of newborn and maternal mortality. She also stated that all must work within the post devolution parameters which will necessitate cooperation between the provinces, ministries and civil servants. She called for a renewed focus on adolescents, particularly adolescent girls, to give them the knowledge and power to make their own decisions regarding family planning. Touching on the issue of service delivery, Ms. Kearney pointed out that it has to be of high quality and always available where needed. She reiterated the need for educating girls, boys and communities and called upon all stakeholders to come together to realize the need of the hour.

Mrs. Saira Afzal Tarrar, Minister of State for National Health Services Regulation & Coordination expressed great appreciation for the organizers for holding this important conference in an educational institution. She commended the enthusiasm and courage of the younger generation, calling them our “last hope”. According to the Minister, the rate of population growth is alarming and the recommendation being generated at the conference serves as a clear call to action. She assured the gathering that the GoP is not only cognizant of the enormity of challenges posed by Pakistan’s rapidly growing population, it is fully committed to tackling this
issue. The Minister said that Pakistan is already the world’s 6th largest country by population and without urgent action could soon be the 5th largest.

Mrs. Tarrar questioned the tendency to bracket concerns including health issues within the context of Islam. She suggested that efforts should be made to change the narrative but expressed concern that it may well be an extremely difficult task in Pakistan. She highlighted the existence of huge disparities within our society and the gulf between religious awareness and the role of religious scholars. She expounded the need to alter mindsets at all levels emphasizing education as the key to bringing about this change. She also identified a key failing in efforts to increase women empowerment - we can educate and empower women but without giving them an enabling environment where they can utilize what they have gained, the situation is made worse. The honorable Minister drew on her own experience of belonging to a rural area where she was one of the first of her gender to contest elections in that location. She recounted her father’s difficult decision to support her efforts in that conservative setting. Mrs. Tarrar emphasized that in the Pakistani context, women need support from their male relations, their fathers, sons or in-laws.

Mrs. Saira Tarrar also highlighted the dismal situation regarding newborn health in the country, recounting her experience from Tharparkar where a large proportion of newborn deaths occur due to poor maternal health. The decreasing trend of breast feeding in Pakistan which contrasts with global trends is indicative of social fads or fashions. In her opinion, all these matters make it necessary that grass root level problems be revisited.

Mrs. Tarrar stated that while legislation dealing with domestic violence and women’s rights exists on paper, the question as to who is going to implement it at the grass roots level remains elusive. She challenged the gathering to name one person who has been prosecuted under these laws and acknowledged the need to change the prevailing mindset regarding it as primarily the responsibility of the government. However, according to the Minister, while the government may address the problems of fund allocation and governance, the onus of addressing intolerance lies with everyone.
The Minister went on to assure the audience that the Federal Government stands ready to assist wherever it is needed, but people need to be aware that in the post devolution era, implementation is a provincial responsibility. She noted that implementation has indeed improved post 18th Amendment but consolidation and collation of data is deficient. She elaborated that a system to address this is currently being created at the federal level. In conclusion, she hoped action plans would be forthcoming from the provinces and the GoP was ready to provide any liaison or assistance requested of it.
Plenary Session V: Interactive Session with Youth Representatives and Opinion Shapers
(Day 2, 11.30am-12.30pm)

Chair:
Mr. Javed Jabbar, Former Senator & Former Federal Minister for Information & Media Development

Co-Chair:
Rear Admiral Saleem Akhtar SI(M) HI (Retd), Pro-Rector Bahria University

Discussants:
Mr. Ali Raza Khan, Chief Executive Officer, Youth Engagement Services (YES) Network Pakistan
Mr. Musa Asif Khan, Student Bahria University
Mr. Fazal Nabi Khan, Secretary, Population Welfare Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
Allama Qari Mahmood Ahmed Qasmi, Religious Leader, Rajanpur
Mr. Agha Masood Hussain, Editor-in-Chief, export Trend Magazine & Columnist, Daily Dunya, Karachi
Syed Bilal Qutb, Intellectual & Sufi Scholar, TV Anchor, Lahore

Moderator:
Ms. Katrina Hussain, TV Personality

To obtain their perceptions concerning the critical issue of population, a unique and lively session was conducted with youth, media personalities, youth based organizations and a religious representative. Much was said throughout the conference about harnessing the youth to benefit from the demographic dividend and providing them with employment opportunities since they are the future of this country. With over 60% of the population under 30 years of age, the youth should be part of the present. However, the speakers described a less hopeful situation.

Mr. Ali Raza Khan, Chief Executive of the YES network related his experience in over 12 years of working in the area of youth entrepreneurship - deprivation, hopelessness and helplessness. With no opportunities to express their energy towards a productive end, there is an overall disengagement of youth from the issues of civic life. The way forward has to encompass youth engagement, he said. Mr. Khan suggested an organized and systematic process for engaging youth in problem solving. According to him, youth engagement is a win-win approach for everyone. It helps society by providing more workers at less expense, while also improving the character of young people by helping them to grow in profound ways. In Mr. Khan’s view the most striking
feature of the youth engagement approach is its ability to mobilize young people to carry out local missions without funding.

Mr. Khan iterated that the need to engage youth in productive service to the country should be self-evident, especially after an unprecedented increase in youth-led terrorism activities. He elaborated further, saying that no matter how many policies and programs are launched by the federal or provincial governments, they will suffer if the process of implementation does not include young people in an organized manner. He warned of the consequences of not engaging the youth, especially when it is common knowledge that there are not enough resources to provide gainful employment for all. Mr. Khan maintained that the role of internships and youth skill development programs must be gauged for long term gain rather than short term goals such as job placement or a minimal increase in earning. He emphasized that young people be given a chance to serve society rather than to be served. This would allow every young person to be treated as a national resource and developed accordingly.

Mr. Khan noted that although the media is free, it has failed to highlight youth issues such as growing suicide rates. The youth of Pakistan needs to feel that they have a stake in this country and that they have to be taken seriously by the society at large. Mr. Khan questioned why the youth continue to be seen as future leaders. According to him, their energy and sense of adventure needs to be harnessed in the present. Without such changes, obstacles posed to the realization of the demographic dividend are increased. He concluded by saying, “We must see every young person as a resource to build a prosperous Pakistan. We must go beyond quick fixes or crisis response programs. We must see youth as change makers/agents. We must focus on All Youth”.

Mr. Ali Reza Khan (YES Network) speaking passionately about youth issues in Pakistan
The moderator Ms. Katrina Husain seconded this view, describing the limited opportunities available for young people in Pakistan. She cited figures from the Federal Bureau of Statistics that only 4 out of 10 graduates will find jobs upon graduating.

Mr. Musa Asif Khan, a young student from Bahria University provided a young person’s perspective of the issues raised in the conference. In his opinion, the multiple problems besetting Pakistan could be linked to over-population. He stressed the importance of education, saying that “…without education nothing can be done in this world…I am a development student and I know that education is the most important”. He also laid emphasis on women’s empowerment and on ensuring their reproductive rights as a way to address the population growth issue. He further elaborated that since responsible parenthood is not only the duty of the mother but the father as well, they should be included in counseling efforts.

Mr. Fazal Nabi Khan, Secretary Population Welfare Department, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa addressed the gathering acknowledging that 60% of Pakistan’s population is under 30 years of age. This he said, represents a demographic dividend that comes but once in the life of a nation. This phenomenon which began in the 1980s will last till 2045. Whether this becomes a threat or an asset will depend on planners and implementers. Mr. Hameed Khan asserted that if the youth of the country are educated and supported, they will be an asset and this will bring positive results. He warned that if this is not done, the current state will persist. He informed the gathering of initiatives that have been taken in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa such as the appointment of a fulltime population advisor, a policy covering Population and a draft youth policy. He announced that the proposed Reproductive Health Care & Rights Bill is currently with the Law Department in KP and when tabled in the provincial assembly will make Pakhtunhwa the first province to pass such legislation. He also highlighted that his department is providing SRH services for the youth including adolescents.

Allama Qari Mahmood Ahmed Qasmi, a religious leader from Rajanpur next addressed the conference providing an important perspective on the role of Islam in birth spacing. He stressed that Islam places no bar on how many children a couple can have, but it does offer advice for the nurturing of the child and health of the mother.
There exists a religious basis for birth spacing, he said, tying it to the breast feeding interval. He further endorsed spacing saying it is necessary for the mother to recover and be healthy in order to nurture her child, as opposed to another pregnancy. He also expressed gratitude to the Population Association of Pakistan for the work they are doing in Rajanpur. He particularly spoke highly of the effort to involve the ulama and take them to the community to address the latter’s concerns.

**Mr. Agha Masood** raised the question of the effectiveness of Pakistan’s population management. He said that there has been a population explosion and it has multiplied to six times since the 1951 census levels. He warned that while economic opportunities have remained stagnant, the population is expected to rise to 30 million by 2050. He pointed out the weak medical infrastructure contributing to the 14,000 maternal deaths annually and the high child mortality seen in the country. He also spoke on the issue of youth integration, asserting that market saturation had given birth to high unemployment and massive international migration. These are considerable challenges which need to be addressed through an inclusive policy and an appropriate implementation mechanism. Mr. Masood drew attention to the need of achieving this goal with the integration of diverse opinions within the problem solving debate.

**Syed Bilal Qutb**, spoke of the need to change “mindsets” as there is a tendency in the country to find a religiously endorsed solution to an issue. While this implies a good sentiment, this tendency is counterproductive as the plurality of views hinders consensus. The second point he raised questioned the tone of pity generally adopted toward women’s issues. He referenced the life of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and highlighted the deference shown by Him (PBUH) to Syeda Fatima (RAA) as an exemplar of the status of women in Islam. He emphasized that when societal realities are no longer reflective of this deference to women, it is evident that we have collectively failed somewhere. Addressing the
importance of youth in society, he again referenced the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and the love he expressed for children.

In the subsequent interactive session, responding to a question concerning specific Islamic views on family planning, Allama Qari Mahmood Ahmed Qasmi clearly enunciated that Islam does not disallow it. He stressed upon the fact that if a woman tells her husband that she is not ready for another child soon after birth, he must respect her wishes. A couple may space their children for 2, 3 or 4 years as they see fit. Mr. Bilal Qutb emphasized that the understanding of theology and religious injunctions requires study and is not something that can be undertaken by lay persons. In order to absorb religious concepts, one needs an evolved understanding that is often missing in those who claim authority of discourse. He stated that the features of a nation that evoke divine ire are related to character not to ritualistic symbols such as the length of a beard or “shalwars”. In his view, two key institutions - the pulpit and schools have not been active in changing mindsets. The former is failing to inculcate Islamic values of tolerance while the latter is losing its indigenous character.

Responding to a question regarding the role of the media in addressing youth issues, Mr. Agha Masood considered rampant unemployment and corruption as factors contributing to the disengagement of youth today. In his view, this disconnect is contributing to brain drain or the international migration of local talent. However, Mr. Ali Raza Khan disagreed, saying that no real attempt has been made by the media to highlight the issues plaguing the youth. He recalled no programs questioning suicides amongst youth or what is missing in their lives. His experience, he said, is that they have no sense of usefulness, no connection or sense of ownership and belonging. He claimed that humiliation in an unjust system is driving the youth to militancy not merely indoctrination. Mr. Qutb also cautioned against over-reliance on the media alone to change mindsets, questioning the institution of parenting. He stressed that the acquisition of knowledge and educating oneself need to be understood not only as a virtue, but also as a prerequisite for a better understanding of Islam.
In conclusion, the chair, Senator Javed Jabbar reiterated that population itself is not a problem; it is the quality of life that is at stake. Rigid traditionalism can no longer be a reason to persist in outdated paradigms when the world is changing rapidly. While a system can have its constraints, constant reform is the mark of progressive countries which seek a better future. As to changing mindsets, reason must temper faith, only with this synthesis will respect for all human beings regardless of creed be inculcated in society. He also questioned the lack of comprehensive coverage of this important event which had been graced by the President of Pakistan who called on the participants for “Ijtihad” or reasoned consensus building to address the important issue under discussion. He cited countries in the region which can serve as benchmarks to measure our own progress.
Concluding Session
(Day 2, 12.30pm-1.30pm)

Welcome Remarks:
Vice Admiral Shahid Iqbal HI (M) (Retd), Rector Bahria University

Conference Highlights:
Ms. Shahnaz Wazir Ali, President, Population Association of Pakistan

Address by Chief Guest:
H.E. Mr. Muhammad Khan Achakzai, Governor Baluchistan, Government of Baluchistan

Vote of thanks:
Ms. Seemin Ashfaq, Secretary General, Population Association of Pakistan

Vice Admiral Shahid Iqbal addressing the concluding session expressed his pleasure and pride at having co-hosted the 15th Annual Conference of the Population Association of Pakistan. He said that it was a tremendous experience for Bahria University entirely in line with its vision of contributing to the country at large. According to the rector, apart from academic and research functions, the university has been involved in Community Support Programs as well as underdeveloped areas of the country. He announced that a quota of two seats was being established at Bahria for Baluch students at their medical college in Karachi, as a part of his institution’s initiative to improve the capacity of people living in the coastal belt of Pakistan. The rector regarded the two day conference as being of great academic value to the students of Bahria University. He stressed that his institution valued opportunities to work with policy makers, experts and academics in many areas especially health. Furthermore, the content of the material presented in the different sessions had made the conference a great success.

In his address at the concluding session of the 15th Annual Research Council of the Population Association of Pakistan, His Excellency Mr. Muhammad Khan Achakzai Governor Baluchistan congratulated the Association for bringing together experts contributing to evidence-based, comprehensive policy dialogue. He mentioned ‘population’ as a cross-cutting issue underlying all developmental endeavors such as Vision 2025 which has prioritized social development, institutional and governance reforms while focusing on youth empowerment and poverty reduction.
According to Mr. Achakzai, some key areas of focus have emerged as a result of the conference including the need to invest in the youth of our country to build their skills and to provide opportunities to women which will in turn boost the national economy. It is important to work toward improving women’s health by giving them choices which would enable them to plan families according to their individual preferences.

In Mr. Achakzai’s view, according to conventional wisdom, the destiny of a nation is defined by its geography and history. However, “as Pakistan’s population clocks ticks away, with the addition of 8 people per minute, we must add demography to that definition.” The population statistics in Pakistan are sobering. According to Mr. Achakzai, “Pakistan is now the sixth largest population in the world growing at a rate of 1.9% a year, the equivalent of adding the entire population of New Zealand every year or [that of] Australia every five years. Pakistan’s population, at the current growth rate, is expected to reach nearly 350 million by 2050. According to the latest Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey, our fertility rate stands at 3.8, considerably higher than the South Asian average. Despite a significant decrease, Pakistan will unfortunately not meet the MDG target of 2.1 births per woman by the end of 2015.”

Mr. Achakzai highlighted the urgent need for bridging gaps between issues such as “energy, employment, revitalizing the economy, curbing militancy and sectarian strife, and population growth trends.” He felt that the implications of Pakistan’s alarming demographic statistics impact all domains of national life. He was pleased with the way the conference had broken with past trends “by relocating the population debate within a wider context.” In addition to highlighting issues such as birth spacing, choice of contraceptive methods, age at marriage, secondary schooling for girls and access to maternal and child health services, the conference had successfully managed to draw
attention to important areas of concern such as security, women’s empowerment, youth and labor, migration, and the role of media, ulema and civil society in population planning.

According to Mr. Achakzai, the national and provincial leadership of Pakistan is currently grappling with serious events. These are “testing times and call for extraordinary resolve, clarity and courage…Pakistan is in need of a national consensus on flammable issues.” He pointed out that the conference, through long and detailed deliberation on the part of researchers, national and international experts and institutional leaders from government and non-governmental family planning programs, had clearly articulated key recommendations for the consideration of policy makers.

Mr. Achakzai stated that though demographic pressures vary from province to province, they combine to form a major force, the effects of which are felt equally in all parts of the country, “high parity and its consequences are equally affecting households in all provinces.” He stressed the need for an urgent focus on Baluchistan where the maternal mortality ratio is exceptionally high. The need for family planning services is felt to be highest in this province as shown by the latest Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey 2012-13. According to him, “each of the four provinces will have to identify their own priority areas to help the people to improve their health status and standard of living.”

Approaching the end of his address, he iterated that the country’s population problem depends on leadership decisions, the quality of national consensus and the capacity of the country to implement a plan faithfully over the next few years. He emphasized “the importance of evidence-based research for informed policy making especially those related to population dynamics” and felt that institutions like the Population Association of Pakistan play a crucial role in encouraging research and debate as well as holding decision makers accountable for their policies.
Secretary General PAP, Mrs. Seemin Ashfaq delivered the Vote of Thanks at the concluding session of the Conference. She expressed deep gratitude to the worthy President of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Honorable Mr. Mamnoon Hussain for sparing his precious time from his busy schedule to grace us with his presence and open the conference. His presence was a matter of immense pride for all of us as it clearly reflects the seriousness and priority with which the present government regards this issue of national importance.
While extending her remarks the Secretary General said that “We are deeply indebted and wish to express our deep gratitude to His Excellency Mr. Muhammad Khan Achakzai, Governor of Baluchistan for his presence as the Chief Guest at the closing session. The Secretary General also acknowledged the financial support of the development partners including, UNFPA, UNICEF, Higher Education Commission, HANDS, Rahnuma-FPAP, Packard Foundation, RSPN and Population Council for their continued commitment to fund the activities of the Population Association of Pakistan, especially its annual conferences. In addition, their continued support is indeed a reaffirmation of their commitment to the cause of Population in Pakistan. She acknowledged that this Conference at Bahria University was one of the best conferences that PAP had ever held, and particularly lauded the quality of the panelists and the speakers.

She thanked the President PAP, Madam Shahnaz Wazir Ali for her brilliant leadership and guidance has been the real inspiration behind the conference from articulating the theme till putting it into forceful sessions of the two days conference. Mrs. Ashfaq appreciated the coordination efforts of the PAP Executive Council in making this conference a big success and also recognized the financial and technical support of all EC members and their organizations.

The Secretary General also acknowledged and thanked the Population Council's staff who worked tirelessly in the days preceding the event to assist PAP organizers to formulate the Program, invite all the relevant population professionals, and make arrangements for the Conference and make the logistical arrangements for the conference. She especially thanked Dr. Zeba Sathar, Country Director, Population Council, for her incessant support and generosity in permitting the Population Council's staff, logistics and services to be utilized for this event.
Mrs. Ashfaq acknowledged that the success of the conference was a team effort and it would be difficult to acknowledge many of the individual contributions. However, there is always a person who acts as a linchpin to make things going smoothly and efficiently. I must acknowledge the immense contribution of Mr. Tahir Ahmed Qureshi, Executive Officer, PAP, for fulfilling this role successfully. He was fully supported by Mr. Shahzad Ahmad and Mr. Ali Abbas, who worked tirelessly to ensure the event took place.

The PAP Executive Council and conference organizers thank the distinguished participants, provincial political leadership, government dignitaries, population professionals, researchers, and all those who have attended this conference for their time and participation in this conference.
Recommendations

Several issues were highlighted in the discussions which took place in the different conference sessions, based on which several recommendations were formulated to urgently address the population and development concerns of Pakistan. These are listed below:

1. The Government should constitute a National Commission on Population and Development which has provincial representation. This may serve as a coordinating mechanism to provide strategic direction, track and assess progress while identifying successful family planning initiatives to scale up through increased funding and state ownership. In addition, this body will make recommendations to the Federal and Provincial Governments for achieving the FP2020 Goals.

2. The Government should set up a Tripartite Fund, financed annually by the Federal and Provincial governments as well as development partners to fund district governments and thus enable the launch of district level initiatives for family planning.

3. FP2020 goals and targets ought to be included in the post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals that are being formulated by the Government of Pakistan.

4. Federal and Provincial Governments should ensure the availability of safe and accessible client centered family planning services at all health facilities (from BHUs to tertiary hospitals).

5. National and provincial governments should focus on the following:
   - Birth spacing
   - Provision of long-term contraceptive methods
   - Increased client access to Skilled Birth Attendants
   - Increased deployment of Community Midwives
6. FP2020 goals should be aligned with Pakistan’s development agenda such as Vision 2025 and poverty alleviation programs.

7. Male participation in the family planning and maternal health agenda should be sought through Behavior Change Communication including male focused service delivery.

8. Full coverage (by district and province) should be ensured through a coordination mechanism of all donor supported and government programs concerned with family planning.

9. A situation analysis should be conducted at the Federal level to assess growing inequities, runaway population growth and impact of climate change on population dynamics.

10. To avail the potential demographic dividend of the youth, it is important to ensure their employability and productive engagement through skill development. In addition, women’s participation in income generation and development activities should also be encouraged.

11. Family planning programs should address the needs of marginalized groups, minorities, remote communities and internally displaced populations.
Picture Gallery

15th Annual Conference
of the
Population Association of Pakistan

“50 Years of Pakistan’s Population Program:
Setting Strategic Priorities and Program Direction for Vision 2025”

November 18-19, 2014
Bahria University, Islamabad
Fifteenth Annual Population Conference
50 Years of Pakistan's Population Program:
Setting Strategic Priorities & Program Direction for Vision 2025
In Collaboration with Bahria University
November 18-19, 2014, Islamabad-Pakistan

Group Photo with H.E. Muhammad Khan Achakzai, Governor of Baluchistan