Country Statement: Bangladesh

27 Nov 2018

**Agenda Item 3 (a) Population dynamics and inequality in Bangladesh**

Mr. Chair, Distinguished Delegates and the Audiences,
Good morning! It is my great pleasure to address on Population dynamics and inequality in Bangladesh.

Mr. Chair,
Currently Bangladesh is a country of 162.1 million population with 1.32% annual growth rate whereas the density of population (per sq. km) is 1,103 persons. The country is in the third stage of the demographic transition model - low birth rate and low death rate.

Here the demographic transition is made possible by successful efforts in family planning, advancing educational attainment and gender equality, and reducing infant mortality and poverty. In Bangladesh both fertility and mortality have declined considerably, driven mainly socioeconomic development, especially rising levels of education and health improvements.

Bangladesh is very close to replacement level of fertility with variations among the regions in the country. Differences in fertility decline among population sub-groups reveal the extent of inequality between wealth quintiles, educational attainment, rural and urban locations. Despite impressive fertility decline (TFR= 6.4 in 1974, 2.3 in 2014) further reduction to TFR and increasing contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR, 62.1% in 2014) will be required to reach to the replacement level of fertility. *Unmet need for family planning has also declined from 21.6% in 1993-1994 to 12.5% in 2014.*

The working age population (aged 15-59) is expected to increase rapidly. The significant population of young people in Bangladesh, where approximately 30% fall between the ages of 10-24 years is a potential asset for the country. Bangladesh is now in the golden period, known as the
demographic window of opportunity, to reap a demographic dividend. Importantly, for this to become a reality the Government of Bangladesh will need to make the necessary investments in addressing the education, health and employment needs of young people. However, two shifts are also taking place in the country’s demography: while population ageing is increasing (8%), the working aged population is also increasing (62.7%).

To ensure employment opportunities for the working age population including the youth population is one of the key area to give emphasis by the Government. To address the vulnerabilities and risks of elderly population, the Government of Bangladesh is providing old age allowance to these people, whereas the coverage has increased. Life cycle approach and generational National Transfer of Accounts (NTA), ageing, investment in young people, the social safety-ness programme of the Government etc. are becoming the key concerns.

Early adolescent childbearing of 113 live births per 1000 women aged 15-19 years, is prevalent in the country owing mainly to early marriage (59%). Child marriage represents intersecting inequalities related, inter alia, to age, gender, education that are rooted in patriarchy and structural inequalities. Government is committed to halt the practice of child marriage and introduced ‘Child Marriage Restraint Act-2017’.

Bangladesh is experiencing growing inequality even while registering impressive socio-economic growth and poverty reduction. Here it can be noted that inequality is more complex than merely a lopsided distribution of wealth and income which is the representative of various forms of disparity between sexes, age groups, rural-urban households, ethnicity, etc.

In Bangladesh, mortality has fallen significantly owing to improvement in economic and social advancement as well as public health interventions. The life expectancy at birth has increased to 72 years. Infant mortality has also declined significantly (38 per 1000 live births) although there is a variation among neo-natal and post-neonatal mortality. Despite impressive gains in the reduction of maternal mortality with variations in rural and urban setting further reduction of MMR to achieve SDG by 2030 has become a challenge.
Although the facility delivery at birth has increased more skilled birth attendance (currently 42.1%) during delivery are needed.

Another important driver of demographic change is migration- internal and international in Bangladesh. Here rural to urban migration is common which has increased in volumes in the past decades. There has also been unprecedented urbanization as a result of combination of natural population increase, rural-urban migration and reclassification.

International migration is another megatrend in Bangladesh, owing to its size, complexity, scale and impact. The economy Bangladesh is heavily contributed by the remittances of the migrant workers. Migrants are also vulnerable to coercion, discrimination, and exploitations. The human rights of the migrant workers, including the sexual and reproductive health services should be recognized in destination countries.

Bangladesh has reduced gender inequalities, has done progress greatly. Gender parity in primary and secondary education has improved. However, dropout rate at secondary level is a challenge. Girls cannot complete their schooling because of child marriage, poverty, gender norms and other sociocultural reasons. Labor force participation by female has increased but still there is wide gap between male and female.

To address the SDGs and ICPD PoA the Government of Bangladesh is committed to monitor the progress in terms of population dynamics- fertility, mortality, migration (internal and international) and reproductive health and rights, gender equality and women’s empowerment, adolescents and youth, education, employment, poverty, population aging, urbanization, population and sustainable development.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.
Thank you everyone!