

Population Growth and Poverty in Rural South Asia

Edited by Gerry Rodgers

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The relationship between population growth and poverty is very complex and scholars often find it difficult to use empirical data to demonstrate these tangled interlinkages. This volume represents an attempt to examine various demographic components of poverty, interactions between demographic factors and poverty at the micro-level, and corresponding relationships at the macro-level. Such effort was made by bringing together empirical studies of population and poverty in four countries of South Asia, namely, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal.

The book covers a wide range of aspects concerning population growth and poverty. The beginning chapter is an overview of the issue and a summary of major empirical findings from the four country studies. Chapter 2 is a household level analysis based on a survey in the Indian state of Bihar, while Chapter 3 focuses on the household analysis of a national survey of Pakistan. The purpose is to assess the relationships between poverty characteristics of households and their demographic structures. In Chapter 4, several demographic indicators of agricultural labour households are examined using information from census and national surveys of India. Chapter 5 is a micro study using longitudinal data from two villages in Bangladesh to assess the changing impact of population pressure on land-holding. The last chapter deals with Nepal at the national level. The author discusses the issue within a broader context of social relations of production and examining interactions between population pressure, ecological change and patterns of social and economic inequality.

One can gain a great deal of insights from this volume regarding the relationship between population and poverty from both micro and macro perspectives. The volume also contains empirical evidence on the issue from selected nations of South Asia. More importantly, the collected essays offer a wide range of examinations on the interlinkages between demographic factors and poverty indicators. The volume stresses both the direct and indirect effects of population growth on poverty. It also emphasizes the fact that the concept of poverty has many dimensions, including consumption levels, assets, health, and education.

While there is still much more room for future investigation of this complex issue, this book represents an admiring effort to take a bold step in studying the case

of rural South Asia. The findings from this book are undoubtedly useful for similar investigations in other parts of the world where the problems of poverty and population remain evident. I would like to recommend this very important book to scholars, planners and policy-makers who are interested in the issue of population and poverty.

Ching-lung Tsay
Research Fellow
Institute of Economics
Academia Sinica

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