Overpopulation in India

Samyukta Ranganathan

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The Basic Discussion

• Present day statistics - World and India
• Brief History
• What is happening in India?
  – Economics
  – Education
• What are the consequences?
• Can we come up with a policy?
Present Day Stats

- The year is 2003
- India covers only 2.4% of the world’s surface area
- One person out of every 6 is Indian
- Consider Growth Rates...
Present Day Stats (contd.)

- Even if India and US have similar growth rates the fact is a much larger base is producing the next generation.
- Density Issues - India 10 times as dense as US
The History

• Pre-Independence
  – Fairly stable
  – High Birth rates balanced by high Death rates

• After independence (1947)
  – Sudden increase in numbers
  – Mortality rates dropped without a matching drop in Birth rates

• Birth rates continually dropping since 1966 and yet doesn’t show that it’s enough to deal with the problem
The Economics

• Urban Poor – contribute most to population
• Urban Poor – maximum production of labour force
• Low income = more children; an inverse relationship
• Desire for male children
  – Security when parents get older
  – Female children considered a liability
Perception of the Child

• Quantity of children versus Quality of children
• When production of a child becomes more of a source of an income rather than an investment.
Producing to Compensate

- High child and infant mortality pre-independence
- Relatively high now but lower than survival rate.
- Fear of communicable diseases and child death
The Economy’s Role

- Economy is growing and has been for a while
- Growth in labour force due to previous generation.
- Kind of labour generated- unskilled/children
- Whom does it serve?
- Reinforcing the problem of population indirectly - a positive feedback mechanism
Necessity of Education

- Awareness
  - Contraceptives
  - Job opportunities
  - Medical services

- 2 ways of education
  - Women
  - Children
Women’s Education

- Delay’s marriage reduces childbearing lifespan
- Acquisition of information
- Access to mass media
- Desire to move up in the economy
- Employment opportunities
- Removes perception of children’s economic utility
Women’s Education (contd.)

• Reduces infant and child mortality—knowledge of medical services
• Self-efficacy
• Media to learn about family planning
Children’s Education

- Education of children is financially taxing on the family
- Forces the child to become an investment rather than a source of income
- Incentive for families to pursue this?
  - Old age security
  - Tradition of children taking care of old parents made better because of better jobs and a better long term income
The stats to support this?

- Kerala has the highest literacy rate in the state- 90% also accompanied by the lowest child mortality rate and lowest growth rate
- Uttar Pradesh has one of the lowest literacy rates and the highest growth rates along with the highest mortality rates
Consequences of Overpopulation

- India can’t afford to have 1.5 billion people by 2040- we will still be only 2.4% of the world’s surface- Space!
- Resources- e.g.: food
  - Distribution versus Availability
  - Snowball effect due economic inequality
- Urbanisation- Mutual Poisoning
Complications

• Traditions
• Communication gap caused by the rift between social classes
• Communication within families
• The fact that India has a gradually decreasing growth rate does NOT help
• Where is the economy focused and what is that doing?
• Unequal allocation of resources
Complications of Policy/planning and implementation

• Methods have not been very successful
• Do we want Sanjay Gandhi’s method?
• Do we want a forceful/coercive one-child policy?
• Catering to grass root levels
• Undemocratic, discriminating plans
Policy/Solution

- My theoretical solution - from E.F. Schumacher’s “Small is Beautiful”
  - Intermediate technology
    - Local materials, local skills, local labour
  - Reinforce need for local skill and therefore education
  - Prevents mutual poisoning
  - Helps build grass roots economy
Discussion

• Policy that takes into account
  – Traditions
  – Economy
  – Rift between social classes
  – Need for education