

Abstracts

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The Urban Health District in Cameroon: Theory versus Application

Humphrey Ngala Ndi, *Department of Geography, Faculty of Social and Management Sciences, P.O. Box 63, University of Buea, Cameroon (Email: ndihum69@yahoo.com)*, and **Bienvenu Magloire Takem-Mbi**, *National Institute of Cartography, P.O.Box 157, Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation Yaoundé Cameroon*, write on the health district system in Cameroon which was introduced in 1993 as an attempt to decentralise health care to the remotest parts of the country. A health district was thus defined as an administrative area covering a certain minimum population which varies from one country to another, having a local administration to which many authorities are delegated from the central administration. The threshold population for a health district was put at 70,000 and it could get to a maximum of 120,000 inhabitants. Whereas the rural health district functions fairly efficiently because the economy, environment and population are mostly homogenous and no high-order health units exist, it is to the contrary in the urban areas where the environment is cosmopolitan and negatively affects community participation in health care activities. This is the situation prevailing in Biyem-Assi, one of the five health districts in Yaounde. The proximity of many high-order health units (like the University Teaching hospital and the Central Hospital) to the population in Biyem-Assi and to which many people go at the first instance of ill-health equally distorts the expected pattern of referral of patients which is a cornerstone of the district system.

Nuptiality Pattern and its Effect on Fertility among Bangladeshi Women

Sumaiya Abedin and **Md. Mostafizur Rahman**, *Department of Population Science and Human Resource Development, University of Rajshahi, Rajshahi-6205, Bangladesh (emails: abedins_pops@yahoo.com; mos_pshd@yahoo.com)*, discuss nuptiality as an important determinant of observing the pattern and levels of fertility. In order to know the impact of age at first marriage, children ever born and their correlates on fertility differential study on pattern and levels of nuptiality are significant. In this study, an attempt has been made to explore the salient features of nuptiality and its contribution to the fertility of Bangladeshi women. Using the Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey data published by the NIPORT in 2004 the authors investigate the levels and patterns of age at first marriage, fertility differentials and children ever born for Bangladeshi women. Bongaarts and Potter's (1983) procedure to estimate the fertility inhibiting effect of marriage is employed in the analysis. Age specific marital fertility rates explore the reduction in natural marital fertility by age pattern and marriage pattern entwined the reduction of natural marital fertility by around 5.17 per cent whereas widowhood and divorce by 0.185 births.

Some Problems in Measuring the Decentralisation of Political Power

John Moolakkattu, *Gandhi-Luthuli Chair in Peace Studies, School of Politics, University of Kwazulu-Natal, Howard College, Durban 4041, South Africa and the Editor of Gandhi Marg (email: moolakkattu@ukzn.ac.za)* argues that though a number of efforts have been made to measure the decentralisation of political power in different parts of the world, some aspects of decentralisation are easily amenable to quantitative measurement while several others are recalcitrant to such efforts. Since each decentralisation scheme evolves contextually, measurements across contexts is particularly difficult. The indicators of decentralisation identified are generally not of equal importance. If weighting is done according to the relative importance of certain indicators, this has to be based on some kind of judgemental criteria. One author may not agree with another on this, leading to differential rankings. Added to it is that each disciplinary stream tends to focus on spheres that are important to that discipline. The paper seeks to identify some problem-areas in measuring decentralisation. It also concludes that any measurement exercise will have certain strong points, and even if a consensus cannot be reached, such attempts will contribute to the enrichment of the conceptualisation of decentralisation and therefore have a heuristic value.

Social Work Practice in Lesotho

Christopher Chitereka, *Department of Social Anthropology/Sociology and Social Work, The National University of Lesotho, P.O.Roma 180, Roma, Lesotho (email: chitereka@yahoo.co.uk)* believe that social work is a helping profession enabling people to solve their own problems, restore broken relationships and meet human needs. With appropriate training and professional education, social workers engage in activities to assist individuals, groups and communities to identify needs/problems, assess situations and develop appropriate intervention strategies, linking people to resources to effect change. Social work was developed and nurtured in the West, particularly in Britain and the USA. The development of social work in developing countries is closely linked to colonialism. The author highlights the development of the social work profession in Britain, USA and Africa, and then goes on to give a background of Lesotho. The paper then discusses the practice of social work in Lesotho. It argues that for the profession to be taken seriously there is a need for a strong national professional association which will champion the interests of the social workers in Lesotho. Finally, the paper concludes by advocating the establishment of a Social Workers Council which will act as a regulatory body of the profession in the country.

Women's Empowerment in Patriarchal Bangladesh

Md. Golam Mostofa (email: mgm_pops@yahoo.com) and **Md. Morshedul Haque** (email: sumonhrd@yahoo.com), *Department of Population Science and Human Resource Development, University of Rajshahi, Rajshahi 6205, Bangladesh*, attempt to construct the women's empowerment index and identify the plausible relationship between women's empowerment and selected socio-economic and demographic settings. Data from the Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey 2004 is used to explore the level of women's empowerment and its indicators viewed as an outcome and process of three dimensions such as economic decisionmaking, household decision-making and freedom of physical movement among a nationally representative sample of 11,440 ever married women of Bangladesh. Education, a leading indicator of women's empowerment in this study, does not show smooth increase in the

level of women's empowerment with the increase of women's educational level. Women's current age, media exposure and place of residence show a stronger association with their empowerment.

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