

STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

CONRADO LI. LORENZO, JR.

Population and development have been recent issues of global concern and much debate. Last August, the world met in Bucharest to decide on a world population plan of action and reports have it that of all the words written and uttered in the conference the most frequently used was "development." Reports have it also that while most everybody professed belief in development "only a few attempted to explain what it is or what it should be." And yet others, who have criticized the plan of action as "full of compromises, lacking in specific targets and repetitive in content" have argued that the conference strengthened the plan by placing population issues in the context of development strategies. Clearly these issues are complex and confusing. However, I would like to proceed on a premise, which may be considered presumptuous by some, that we are not as confused and perplexed as others would have it appear.

Tonight, the seminar has chosen to examine "Strategies for Development" and I take it my invitation was prompted by the desire to examine the population strategy for development. But more precisely, I was told to examine with you the rationale, philosophies, and programs of a "new structure," a new institution in the population program, the Population Center Foundation (PCF). This I shall proceed to do shortly, after I attempt to clarify some basic concepts on population vis-a-vis development. I feel it is safe to say that most if not all policymakers in the population program are of the belief that the population problem should not be viewed solely as a problem of numbers but in terms of human well-being, a concept some will have us appear not to have accepted. Recent newspaper articles suggest that the population program has been

overly concerned with birth rates and have lost track of the ultimate goal of our program for development. In fact, it could very well be that because most program administrators and policymakers have assumed this concept to be true and undebatable and have found no need to expound the concept further, they have been misunderstood and conceived to be non-believers of this concept. The conventional practice of setting demographic targets to provide indicators of program performance plus the zeal with which administrators try to achieve these targets have led some observers to believe that the population program places little or no value on human well-being. A demographic target while a convenient and practical indicator of program performance admittedly is far from ideal. It does not reflect the achievements of the population program in the context of its ultimate goal, human well-being. But until such a time that social scientists can come up with a better and equally convenient indicator of program performance, I am afraid demographic targets will remain the popular choice. Nevertheless, a closer look at the program will quickly dispel any doubts that our population program places little or no value on human well-being. Much effort and resources have been placed in education; and if education and knowledge are indicators of human well-being, then it must be conceded that the program does place a great value on human well-being. A non-coercive policy that safeguards and respects the religious beliefs and convictions of Filipinos and a program that allows free and voluntary choice of methods have been adopted. If respect for religious beliefs and freedom of choice are considered indicators of human well-being, then the program does place a premium on human well-

being. It is not known to many that the policy and decision makers of our program have courageously withstood the pressures of criticisms from those who would have our program evaluated solely on the basis of cold and impersonal indicators as efficient method mixes, continuation rates, and cost-effective methods of averting births to safeguard the policy of free and voluntary choice. If abortion is averse to our moral and cultural values and if these values are indicators of human well-being, then again, our policymakers cannot be accused of placing little or no value on human well-being.

Coming back to the concept of development, while there are those that view development in terms of industrialization, GNP or whatever else, in its broadest sense, there should be no difficulty in equating development with human well-being. If such is the case, human well-being taken as the ultimate goal of our population program, then population issues are integral and constituent elements of development. Population and development are inter-related and interdependent.

But the real question to be answered, examined, and judged is how we have operationalized these concepts; and while I have been asked to speak only of the PCF, I feel it will be difficult to appreciate its role in the population program without reviewing briefly the national population program.

From the outset, four and a half years ago, government declared as a matter of policy that the Philippines "for the purpose of furthering the national development, increasing the share of each Filipino in the fruits of economic progress and meeting the grave social challenge of a high rate of population growth, a national program of family planning involving both public and private sectors which respect the religious beliefs and values of the individuals involved shall be undertaken." In pursuit of the population program's stated objectives and in keeping with the concept that population issues are integral and constituent elements of development, the Commission on Population adopted a program strategy of "integration and multi-agency participation." Family planning

clinics were established by integrating these services in existing Department of Health clinics and private clinics as well. Integration of population education into the curriculum of the elementary and secondary levels of our educational system was immediately planned, and the program is now well underway. Population information/communication was introduced into the programs of welfare, community development, and other similar organizations in the private sector. Research and training in population was taken up by research institutions and universities and other private voluntary agencies. Today, the program built mainly through a process of integrating population activities into various programs and structures, operates on a broad, diverse, and multi-sectoral base. The necessary elements of a viable program have been identified and the logical premises and foundation have been laid down. But the population program like any other development program has problems and gaps that need to be resolved. The solutions to these problems must be fashioned in the context of our own resources, culture, and sociopolitical structure. Whatever may be said of population strategies of other developing countries, particularly of developed countries, may not always be applicable and effective in our country. It is essential that we adopt strategies that are relevant to our culture and circumstances.

The Population Center Foundation is a response to a need and opportunity of today. Over the past four and a half years there has been a growing awareness of the need for greater involvement of the private sector in the population program. Clearly, the broad and multi-disciplinary problems of our population program require total involvement of society if we are to achieve lasting success. No one institution or even government itself, can do it alone. It has been increasingly evident that the wealth of talent, interest, commitment and institutional resources of our private sector must be harnessed to strengthen the national population program. It is this need and opportunity that gave rise to the creation and establishment of the Population Center Foun-

dation.

The Foundation is primarily a grant-making private institution whose resources are directed mainly to the private sector to initiate and support programs in population that will complement the national program. Evidently, the areas of concern and interest of the foundation and those of the national population program are similar. However, the foundation has identified specific activities that address the gaps in our national program. The current program of the foundation has three main areas of concern: research, innovative programs, and technical assistance.

In research, the Foundation will direct its resources to promote a deeper and wider understanding of the biological, psychological, social, and cultural variables affecting population dynamics, a better appreciation of the dimension and implications of problems of population growth, stabilization and distribution, and an awareness of the multiple options available in population planning. In making its grants, the Foundation will be guided by certain philosophies and principles to effectively strengthen the national population program. The Foundation is not inclined to support research activities that are currently the concern of the Commission on Population. Traditionally, the commission has concerned itself with research activities that have immediate policy and decision-making implication. For the most part it has been involved in evaluative and operational types of research that address the immediate needs of administrators. The Foundation on the other hand encourages research activities that look into mediate and long range needs of the population program. However, it should be emphasized that while the Foundation is less demanding on immediate implications of research findings, it should not be taken to mean that it places little value on the relevance of policy and decision-making. On the contrary, it seeks out problem-solving, decision-oriented, and policy-relevant researches. It will not encourage investigation of favored hypotheses with little decision or policy relevance. It may be of interest to some that the Foundation has recently approved

support of a research project on "population, resources, environment, and the Philippine future." The research project which will be undertaken by the Development Academy of the Philippines, and the University of the Philippines Population Institute and School of Economics will study various determinants of the several dimensions of national welfare by year 2000 in order to identify the policy actions which are needed now in order to secure the best possible future. The Foundation also looks favorably on research proposals that have a strong training and development component for individual young researchers and institutions. While there is a large resource of potential researchers in the country, a good number of them still need additional training and development. Highly-qualified researchers are oftentimes fully committed to their own research or teaching activities and at best can offer only supervisory or consulting services. The Foundation sees the need and benefit of applying its resources to the "almost qualified" researcher.

The Foundation is aware as you are aware that financial assistance for research has been concentrated mainly in the Greater Manila area to the detriment of less developed but potentially qualified researchers and research institutions all over the country. Recognizing the potential and the need to develop these researchers and research institutions, the Foundation is developing a research award program that will allow these researchers and research institutions to avail of the Foundation's resources.

The second major area of interest and concern of the Foundation are innovative programs in population. In these early and formative years of the program, the Commission has been preoccupied with establishing the basic and conventional services and requirements of a population program for the entire country. Needless to say, it will take considerably more time to provide effective coverage of the entire country. In the meantime, there is a need to innovate new and untried family planning delivery systems and information/education/communication strategies. The Foundation

appreciates the benefit of providing seed money or risk money to develop model population programs that respond to current needs and opportunities of the times. The Foundation being a private institution has a considerable edge over government agencies in taking the initiative in this area. Illustrative of this program activity, is the commercial contraceptive marketing program which the Foundation is currently developing. The program calls for trying out commercial marketing channels as vehicles for information/communication and family planning services in contrast to the conventional health and clinic outlets currently being used by most population programs. The Foundation will also be developing a number of other innovative programs in training, communication, and delivery systems. Finally, the Foundation has embarked on a technical assistance program. Its two components, technical services and an information program, again, are responses to long felt needs of the national program. Envisioned as a funding agency that can respond quickly to new opportunities and unforeseen contingencies, the Foundation has developed the capability to provide technical and consultancy services to institutions implementing population programs. Aware of its own limitations to cover all disciplines in population, the Foundation will make available local expertise outside the Foundation to those institutions requiring technical assistance. If

necessary, the Foundation could arrange to make available an entire institution to backstop population programs in need of this type of assistance. The information component of our technical assistance program consists essentially of collection, retrieval, and dissemination of research data in population. A distinctive feature of this library information program that sets it apart from the operations of a conventional library is the fact that it is a technical information center that acts as an interface between researchers on the one hand and practitioners, administrators, and policymakers on the other. Retrieval of research data on a continuing basis provides the information center with a data bank from which an information dissemination program for specific audiences can be launched.

I have reviewed with you the plans and programs of the Population Center Foundation, a very new structure that has joined our intense and massive drive for development. I hope it has given some of you an impetus or at least enough curiosity to work with us in the future. Thank you.

Note

Conrado Ll. Lorenzo is Executive Director of the Population Center Foundation.