

Population and Development  
*in*

# North East India

*Edited by*

**Bimal J. Deb**



This compendium of 28 papers attempt to examine the population dynamics and development pattern in North-East India. Taking a close look at the population of agricultural workers and their work participation, it discusses at length the population growth and changes in demographic structure in the region, forest degradation, and the qualitative as well as quantitative dimensions of population dynamics.

The contributors also deliberate on the quality of women's life, polemics of migration, socio economic implications of population growth, urbanization and growth of slums, the trend of multi-culturalism, religious minorities and communal harmony.

**Bimal J. Deb** is Professor and Head, Department of Political Science, North Eastern Hill University, Shillong, He is also the President of North-East India Council for Social Science Research.

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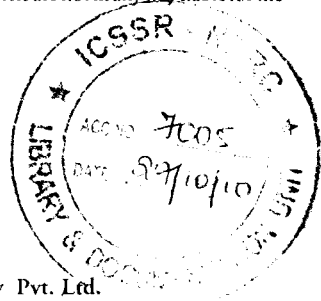
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# **I** Introduction

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It has long been recognized that population issue should not be seen in isolation, but within the larger context of sustainable development of the planet for the betterment of humankind. The perimeter of this approach includes within its fold economic activity that increases the quality of life for all people through curbing excessive consumption and generating productive growth, alleviating poverty, achieving sustainable agricultural and industrial production and improving health care and access to education. At the same time, population issues need to be resolved in such a way that cultural identity, values and tradition are not in stake. The empowerment of women and the improvement of their political, social, economic and health status are highly important ends in themselves. The Cairo Declaration on Population and Development way back in 1994 had underlined the strategy of fully integrating population issues in all development planning policies and programmes encompassing environment, human rights, social development and role of women. It is, therefore, essential that population and development problems are resolved keeping in view the formulation of new and wide-ranging economic policies supportive of sustainable development. The issue of reproductive health and family planning may also be addressed by national governments and constituent units keeping in view national and cultural identity, values and tradition. At the same time, efforts must also be directed to provide universal access to family planning information and services. It has also long been recognized globally that human development cannot be sustained unless women are guaranteed equal rights and equal status with men. As Cairo Declaration mentions :

“In this process, women should be seen not merely as the

beneficiaries of change but as the agents of change as well". Education was rightly viewed as the single most important element on the road to equality and empowerment of women. Equally, disparities in health conditions and mortality risks widely prevalent in developing countries need to be reduced by means of global commitment. As a matter of fact, the elected representatives of the people have a great role to play in translating public support for population and development activities into "the most beneficial distribution of budgetary, human and administrative resources". It goes without saying that international consensus on the need to mobilize significant domestic and external financial resources and proper implementation thereafter will hold the key in strengthening population and development programmes. While emphasizing allocation of adequate financial resources in the implementation of population policies and programme, one cannot but mention the non-performance of the role the parliamentarians had undertaken around the world to monitor and evaluate the progress in the fields of legislation, policy making and global commitment. What is needed is greater awareness among policy makers and the general public alike about population and development issues, within the global context of sustainable development.

In this book, as many as twenty eight papers cover the various dimensions of population dynamics in North East India which will strengthen our understanding of population and sustainable development and facilitate adoption of corrective measures aimed at improving the quality of life.