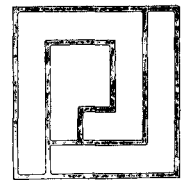


THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT STRUCTURE AND THE POPULATION PROGRAM



Imelda Z. Feranil

ABSTRACT

The article discusses some of the issues related to the realization of population objectives at the local level. This is undertaken by focusing on: a) population policy at the national versus the local level; b) certain guidelines that have bearing on the treatment of population in local development plans; c) the role of the local executive particularly the mayor, in implementing the local population program; and d) various local-level population worker modes. These issues are brought to the fore based on the results of a population KAPS survey which included local executives and a consultative conference for mayors on population and local development.

INTRODUCTION

A growing appreciation of the implications of rapid population growth on scarce resources has led to a government policy that seeks to attain a population level conducive to national welfare and improved quality of life. The Philippine population program was particularly designed to modify high fertility levels. Over time the program has moved from a clinic-based approach towards the inclusion of multi-sectoral and broad-based community approaches.

In 1976, the Commission on Population (POPCOM), in a joint effort with local governments, launched the National Population and Family Planning Outreach Project (Outreach for short) to extend service delivery, particularly to the outlying rural areas. Under the arrangement, POPCOM sets policies on program implementation, manages technical aspects of the project's field operations through the

agency's regional offices, and provides logistic support (POPCOM 1982).

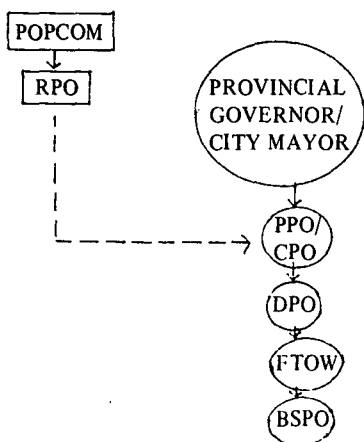
The Outreach structure was conceived to be administered by the local government. Since the *barangay* serves as the basic political unit for the implementation of government programs, projects and activities,¹ the Outreach structure was to have *barangay*-based volunteer workers known as *barangay* supply point officers (BSPOs) who would serve as IEC agents, family planning method suppliers, and referral centers for clinical contraceptives.

In every municipality,² the Outreach Project fielded full-time outreach workers (FTOWs) to monitor and maintain the flow of family planning services. Specifically, the task of FTOWs entails working with the municipal development workers of partner and participating agencies, mobilizing the BSPOs, making referrals to hospitals and clinics, and maintaining population records

using such for inventories and motivation. Supervision of the FTOWs is done by the district population officer (DPO), who is in turn supervised by the provincial population officer (PPO) or the city population officer (CPO). The PPO or CPO directs the planning and implementation of the population program in the province or the city. Governors or city mayors supervise the PPOs and the CPOs, respectively. The structure is given in Figure 1.

Figure 1.

The Outreach Organizational Structure



- RPO – Regional Population Officer
- PPO – Provincial Population Officer
- CPO – City Population Officer
- DPO – District Population Officer
- FTOW – Full-time Outreach Worker
- BSPO – Barangay Supply Point Officer

Reproduced from:

Population Fact Sheets. Commission on Population and Population Center Foundation No. 4. Makati, Metro Manila. 1983.

Outreach, a USAID-funded project, was originally intended for eventual take over by the local governments in terms of funding Outreach personnel. As agreed upon in the early 1980s, the

takeover was to coincide with the end of the USAID-GOP Population Planning III Agreement 1981-86. Even as of late 1985, the FTOW salaries were oftentimes jointly funded by POPCOM and the local governments. In some areas, however, FTOWs drew their salaries in full from either the municipal or the provincial government.

Recent political, social and economic developments have led to questions regarding the administrative structure and the viability of local government implementation of the population program. Some of these developments are given below. It should be noted that some remain to affect or even highlight existing and potential problems of operationalizing the population program at the local level.

Gradual phase-out of Outreach funding was actually planned for a much earlier date, but the financial capability of local governments was often the main issue. The country's economic crisis worsened the financial standing of most local governments. Lower-income class municipalities are expected to have even greater difficulty meeting the financial support required for the local population program.

Moreover, BSPOs took on not only population activities but also other social development activities particularly those related to health and nutrition. This was to be expected since BSPOs recruited for the Outreach project were tapped from among existing community workers or known community leaders in the barangays,

the same people most likely to be tapped for other social development activities. This has resulted in a high turn-over rate from among BSPOs, thus reducing their number. In some areas where the province or the municipality had absorbed Outreach, the FTOW functions became either redefined or expanded as the worker administratively came under the direct supervision of the governor or the mayor. Financial viability and the changing complexion of the Outreach worker, however, are not the only issues affecting the implementation of the population program at the local level.

This paper brings to fore some of the other important points that need to be considered to realize population objectives even at the lowest administrative levels. The first point is existing policies or guidelines. The population-related comments or perceptions of local executives regarding these policies or guidelines are culled from two sources, namely: 1) the issues and recommendations raised during the 1985 series of consultative conferences for mayors entitled "Population, Local Development and Local Administration"; and 2) the 1984-1985 Knowledge, Attitude, Practice and Skills (KAPS)³ Survey of Population Program Professionals, in which selected governors and mayors constituted part of the national sample. Both activities were funded by POPCOM.

The 1985 series of consultative conferences for mayors was a joint undertaking of POPCOM, the National Economic and Development Author-

ity and the Ministry of Local Government.⁴ It was aimed at generating greater appreciation among local executives of the population issue, most especially its implications for local development and, at eliciting the mayors' perceptions of the population program at the local level. The series of conferences held in all 12 regions outside Metro Manila was attended by a total of 282 mayors and 12 local officials.⁴

The KAPS survey had a sample of 734 population professionals at the national, regional and local levels. It sought to determine, among others, their awareness of, and attitude towards population problems, including the local level implementation of the program; and their prevailing utilization of population information.

A large segment of the sample for the KAPS survey was composed of population workers. Governors and mayors were also included as they play dual roles in the program — as program influentials at the provincial or the municipal level, and as the local-level administrative coordinators of the Outreach project.

THE FOCUS

This paper focuses on the following points:

1. population policy at the local level;
2. integration of population into local development plans;
3. role of the local executive in implementing the population program at the local level; and
4. the local level population worker.

It may be noted that the issues raised below overlap, or may be affected by important underlying concerns. For example, as earlier stated, financial viability may have changed the complexion of the municipal level population worker and may have, in turn, changed his role vis-a-vis the local executive. The discussion below is aimed at bringing out some overlapping concerns.

Population Policy: National vs. Local

Population policy is defined as a deliberate intent of government to influence population trends, including the use of economic and social measures to realize such goals (UN 1973). Republic Act 6365 or the Population Act of the Philippines provides, as guiding policy, the belief that the high rate of population growth poses a challenge to development. While the national policy is clear, it is not so at the local level. Provinces, municipalities or cities have varied levels of population growth; some grow at rates that are faster or slower than the national level. There is no defined statement on which to base judgement on whether local population growth rates are high or low. Moreover, the Local Government Code (LGC) uses population size as the basis for the establishment of local government units. The creation of a *barangay*, municipality, city or highly urbanized city requires the attainment of a minimum population size. A *barangay* may be created out of a contiguous territory of at least 1,000 population. The population size cut-

off for the creation of a municipality is 10,000; for a city, it is 100,000; and for highly urbanized cities, it is 150,000 (exact references from the Local Government Code Sections 83, 135, 164 and 166, respectively).

These facts actually indicate conflicting policies. Financial allocations and administrative authority are given on the basis of the type of local unit. Shares in the tax collection that may accrue to the local government unit vary at different administrative government levels. The province has power and authority over component cities, while highly urbanized cities are independent of the provincial government.

It is not surprising that the population problem is perceived as primarily a problem at the national level rather than one that concerns the specific jurisdictions. Findings from the KAPS survey indicated that 45 of the 50 governors and mayors who were interviewed asserted that the country has population problems, yet only 39 among them believed that their areas had any population problem (Feranil et al., 1985). Moreover, one-fifth of those who perceived population problems at the local level viewed the problem in the very limited sense of family planning acceptance rather than in the context of broader development concerns, particularly how rapid population growth constrains the municipality's ability to deliver basic services.

Another policy that runs counter to national goals of reducing population is the use of population size as the basis for internal revenue allotment.

The rationale for a local level population policy therefore appears to be nuclear for many local executives. Local government guidelines even result in strongly favoring large populations.

The Consultative Conferences for Mayors recommended proposals to counter the pro-population bias of the local government administrative and financial guidelines by reviewing and bringing such guidelines in line with the national population policy. Tying up shares in tax allocations on the basis of the local government's ability to lower population growth could be one move supportive of the population program. Some mayors also supported the suggestion of the Ministry of Local Government Director of the Bureau of Local Government Supervision to base allocations on a financial disability principle, where poorer municipalities get more allocations. This can perhaps be further strengthened by a population program performance ratio.

Population in Local Development Planning

Local-level planning is a crucial task in development activities. One basic question from the perspective of population-development planning relates to how population is treated in existing local plans. An examination of the Human Settlements Regulatory Commission's *Town Planning Guidelines* as well as of some municipal development plans reveals that population is treated primarily as a "demand" variable, wherein the expected

number requiring a service is first estimated then multiplied by a standard to obtain the required number of services in a given year.

Planning activities also entail monitoring local government productivity and service performance to insure that present and future needs will be adequately met. The Bureau of Local Government Supervision came up with a listing of established national standards for public services, wherein the key concern was the quantification of the local government's ability to respond to rapidly increasing community needs in the provision of basic government services (BLGS 1984). Standards are provided and then matched against what the local government was able, or prepared, to deliver (for example, the standard for meeting teacher requirements is one teacher for every 40 pupils; for medical personnel, it is one government physician for every 20,000 population). Although the delivery of basic services is, to a certain extent, shared between the national and the local governments, the established standards apply to all local units. Thus, while there are standards of public service delivery that implicitly consider population in terms of increasing demand, there is no defined attempt to put such into a coherent population policy at the local level. As stated above, what compounds the issue is the existence of local government policies that conflict with that of the national population policy. However, efficient planning and implementation hinge on the ability to deliver services to the population.

While resources and population are two key elements in the service standard ratio (e.g., one teacher: 40 pupils), scarce resources demand that the population factor needs to be considered more fully and rationally.

Role of the Local Government in Implementing the Population Program

The structure as defined above indicates that the Outreach structure is administratively under the local government. The municipal-level Outreach workers, operating along with other municipal development workers of partner/participating agencies, are supervised by district population officers. The latter are under provincial or city population officers who are in turn supervised by governors and city mayors, respectively.

The 1985 consultative conferences for mayors stressed the need for mayors to be made responsible for the implementation of the population program at the local level. Mayors also attended the conference and were convinced of the importance of the population program. They even went as far as recommending a more vigorous role for themselves, including a stronger role in the implementation of laws on population to the extent of developing their own population polices, e.g., requirement of a certificate attesting to attendance at a family planning seminar prior to employment. The local governments have oftentimes relied on the national government to develop policies or specific legislations which address the pop-

ulation issue. According to the mayors, policies can be formulated at the local level, taking into account the unique cultural characteristics of their own areas.

Two main issues raised with regard to the local government's role were: (a) the mayors' lack of control over government workers, including those providing population-related services, and, (b) constraints regarding the local government's ability to generate funds for social development projects including population-related ones.

Lack of control over local development workers including the local population workers may have stemmed from initial conditions where funding even for salaries came primarily from the USAID and the national government. Supervision of population Outreach workers was done through provincial and city population officers. Even when funding was shared between the central and the local governments, the municipal executives contended that they performed a very minimal coordinative role in terms of the Outreach workers. The same observation was made regarding other development workers providing population-related services at the municipal level.

One suggestion to improve coordination of population activities at the municipal level was the creation of a municipal population committee within the municipal development council. Other mayors recommended population coordinating committees at all local government levels, much like the regional population committees of

regional development councils.

Assuming that local governments will play an even bigger role in coordinating population activities, one major constraint is their inability to generate funds and use such for development-related activities including those for population. For example, existing guidelines specify that municipal earnings be remitted to the national and the provincial governments. While such are needed to help support the national government and province-wide services, the mayors called for reexamination of the existing guidelines.

Mayors from all the regions strongly encouraged local fiscal reform. They argued for the revision of the Local Government Code, the Local Tax Code and guidelines for the local development fund to empower local governments to collect additional service charges or have a greater share in existing tax collections and other funds for local development concerns.

Financial constraints are particularly pronounced for less developed municipalities and a restructuring of allotments is required particularly for fourth to sixth class municipalities. Some mayors even called for cost-sharing across municipalities wherein better off municipal governments assume the population program expenditures of the less developed municipalities.

The Local Level Population Worker

The discussion in the earlier part of the paper described in brief the barangay- or municipal-level workers

of the population program. Gradual implementation of local government takeover of Outreach activities brought to the fore the fiscal positions of local governments, and the need to implement the population program vigorously at all levels.

The 1985 consultative conferences for mayors brought up possible worker modes to ensure stronger implementation of the local population program along with some discussions on funding possibilities. This author put together the various recommendations and presents four modes⁵ for discussion.

1. Retention of the FTOW or a similar population worker

Assuming that alternative sources of funding can be obtained by the local government particularly for the lower class municipalities, the FTOW or a person performing similar activities can be retained. Many mayors, however, contend that if they would be made primarily responsible for the local implementation and coordination of population activities, the mayor should have a hand in the worker's appointment, with the municipal rather than the provincial government paying the worker directly. The FTOW then becomes "the mayor's man", integrating the different population-related programs at the municipality level.

The KAPS project attempted to ascertain attitudes toward local government takeover of Outreach. Nearly 70 percent of all population program workers were in favor of the takeover

Table 1. Program Professionals by Attitude on the Local Government's Take Over on FP Program

Program Professionals	In Favor of LG Take Over		Total Cases
	Yes	No	
POPCOM Central	90.7	9.3	43
POPCOM Regional	80.0	20.0	55
Provincial Population Workers	85.7	14.3	49
Partner Agencies	75.9	24.1	79
Governors/Mayors	68.0	32.0	50
FTOWs	63.7	36.3	124
BSPOs	66.1	33.9	115
Clinic Worker	51.0	49.0	104
Non-Clinic Worker	65.5	34.5	87
TOTAL	68.6	31.4	706^a

Total respondents = 734; excludes those who did not know of the takeover.

Source: KAPS Survey, Table 10 in Feranil, I.Z. et al. 1985.

(Table 1). The responses of those favoring the takeover emphasized local government responsibility and potentials for better coordination, considering that local governments know their constituencies well (Feranil, et al., 1985).

In comparison, the governors and mayors who are actually affected by the takeover manifested less enthusiasm, with one-third even expressing strong dissent to the local government's assumption of responsibility over Outreach operations. Such governors and mayors were concerned primarily about their area's resources or financial standing.

Most of the respondents from the other echelons of workers who dis-

agreed with the proposed takeover perceived the decline of family planning services and supplies as the foremost adverse effect if POPCOM relinquishes responsibility for Outreach services. The withdrawal of POPCOM is also viewed by many as the beginning of program failure. BSPOs and rural clinic workers particularly feared contraceptive supply problems once the takeover pushes through. Other workers were apprehensive that the local officials may only use population workers for political purposes.

2. Developing the municipal outreach worker into a population-development worker

This suggestion was made during the 1985 consultative conferences by mayors who asserted that the FTOW at present is too engrossed with contraception. This bias on the part of the FTOW was also noted in the KAPS survey where many Outreach workers saw the population problem as simply one of having very few acceptors: family welfare as only a matter of using contraception (Feranil et al., 1985). These findings call for a reexamination of the training given to population field workers.

One proposal made by the mayors in the 1985 conferences was to require the municipal-level Outreach workers to have a strong population-development orientation. Hence, the workers would not only be concerned with family planning activities but would be in a position to see the population problems of the area and the socio-economic implications of

rapid population change in a broader perspective for the municipality. The Outreach worker should be able to advise the mayor on population-development concerns of the municipality particularly in the near future.

3. Assigning the duties of the FTOW to an existing municipal officer

While the first two suggestions entail the existence of a full-time municipal level population worker, the problem of providing funding for such a worker may signal the need to assign his duties to an existing municipal officer. The specific officers cited by mayors include a number of development workers like the municipal information officer, the municipal development officer or especially the municipal development coordinator. This has similarity to the second proposal given above on an FTOW-cum-population and development worker. Such an officer may have a good vantage point of the different socio-economic concerns and activities of the area and may easily appreciate population-development interrelationships. Past interactions with various municipal development workers also provide potentials for linkages.

The proposal has merits but the implications for training are very substantial. The person has to be trained on population-development perspectives as well as the standard FTOW training needed for monitoring population activities, motivation, and recording. One has also to consider that the FTOW's job is rather heavy

and actually too substantial to be dumped on just one person who also has other duties to perform.

4. Integration of population activities into the various activities of community development workers

In lieu of a single person doing the job of the FTOW, some mayors proposed tapping and efficiently utilizing alternative persons or groups already performing related functions or with potentials for integrating population program concerns into their activities. Aside from social workers and rural health workers, other community development personnel and even private groups perform family planning service delivery or IEC work.

The integrated approach entails that the mayors' group together and coordinate all workers from private and government agencies at the municipal and *barangay* level. Family planning services will form part of the services provided by these workers in addition to their health or social welfare activities. The main mechanism for coordination can be the municipal development council (1985 consultative conference issues). From the population program's perspective, this council could ensure that all activities previously earmarked as duties of the FTOW, including community surveys and monitoring, will be performed by identified workers or bodies.

The KAPS survey cited the following as the advantage of integration: easier entry point of family planning if introduced along with the provision

of other services like health, nutrition or income-generating projects. Family welfare activities can be more meaningfully delivered if given in a socio-economic package rather than in isolation.

Those who disagreed with integration argued that family planning may not be given the necessary attention it deserves. Integration after all is very difficult to operationalize. Others contended that the task of family planning IEC, motivation, service delivery and monitoring, especially at the community level, is very demanding and different, thus requiring full-time workers (Feranil et al., 1985).

CONCLUSION

This paper brings out some of the important issues that need to be considered regarding the local government structure and the population program. Most of the points raised call for a reexamination of existing local government guidelines as well as the implementation of the population program at the local level. Such a reexamination would be very timely considering the new government's efforts to ensure that the administration functions smoothly at all levels to attain development goals.

NOTES

¹For description of the overall local government system, the reader is referred to the Local Government Code, special supplement to the January 1983 issue of the *Local Government Forum*.

²A municipality, which is composed of a group of barangays, coordinates and delivers basic regular and direct services to people under its jurisdiction, according to the Local Government Code.

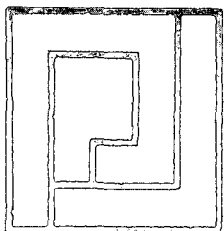
³The survey was undertaken by the Demographic Research and Development Foundation, Inc.

⁴The project was conducted by the Population Center Foundation.

⁵These four population worker modes are based on the analysis of the proceedings of the 1985 consultative conferences for Mayors and do not represent the view of the entire technical working committee or that of the sponsoring agencies of the conferences.

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