

## DEMOGRAPHIC RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES ON THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES. AN EDITORIAL NOTE

Francesco Scalone <sup>1</sup>

*Dipartimento di Scienze Statistiche, Università di Bologna, Bologna, Italia*

We collect and present five research articles on some urgent demographic issues affecting the population in the global south. The studies focus on child mortality, fertility tendencies, migration and the aging process, considering countries such as Egypt (Angeli, Ambrosetti and Novelli), Tanzania (Pirani, Marino and Petrucci) and Bangladesh (Puglisi and Busetta), while one article measures the effects of inequality on early life survival in 79 developing countries.

Despite the international authorities' many efforts to improve living conditions and remove social and economic disparities, at the dawn of the XXI century, too many child and maternal deaths are still registered in many developing countries, and infant and child mortality can still, sadly, be considered an active research field. Following the debate on the effects of inequality, Filippo Temporin investigates the role of poverty on neonatal mortality in 79 developing countries, showing how the absolute material conditions, such as the availability of clean water, matter more than the monetary measures. However, poverty has other dimensions that impact child mortality. As Puglisi and Busetta show using individual data from the Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS), parental education and the mothers' education levels affect under-five mortality in Bangladesh. According to these results, to significantly reduce infant and child mortality in poor settings, economic development needs to be accompanied by a more general improvement in female social conditions.

However, new issues can arise from the demographic transitions that are rapidly reaching the final stages in many countries of the global south and that are quickly changing the age structures. As a result, in the future, a growing increase in the proportion of the older population will significantly affect the fragile health and social systems of these countries that are already suffering from a lack of social services, exacerbating the poor living conditions of the older population. In fact, older people who live alone in precarious material and health conditions will need more care and social assistance. Considering Egypt, the most populous Arab country, Angeli and Novelli explore the tendencies in late-life arrangements, highlighting the association between the household types and the social characteristics of the elderly.

---

<sup>1</sup> E-mail: francesco.scalone@unibo.it

In addition, high fertility levels in overpopulated countries need to be controlled. Even in situations where some degree of birth control is practised, reproductive behaviours still need to be monitored, as fertility trends could be reversed towards pre-transitional levels. From this point of view, a demographic survey on fertility behaviour and intentions could provide useful elements for analysis, as in Angeli, Ambrosetti and Novelli's study, which takes into account the ideal number of children.

Because of the huge impact that climate change will have on the world's population, affecting living standards and migration fluxes, new and perhaps more urgent questions arise, as in Pirani, Marino and Petrucci's study, in which the potential role of environmental changes in migration fluxes in Tanzania is found behind the traditional demographic determinants.

Given the importance of these issues, all these studies provide useful findings with relevant implications for social policy, showing some possible solutions and opening a path that leads from research to action.