

Asian and African Parliamentarians' Capacity Development on the Integration of Population Issues into National Development Frameworks - Part III

Keynote address

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1. Introduction

On this occasion, I wish to offer my sincere thanks to you for permitting me to take part in this “Asian and African Parliamentarians' Capacity Development on the Integration of Population Issues into National Development Frameworks – Part III”, held jointly by the JFPF-APDA and the Zambia All Party Parliamentary Group on Population and Development (ZAPPD). I represent the Japan Parliamentarians Federation for Population (JFPF), which is the parliamentary forum on population and development in Japan, and the Asian Population and Development Association (APDA), and I will be speaking on their behalf.

Parliamentary work on population and sustainable development commenced in Japan. The JFPF was established in 1974 as the world's first cross-party parliamentary federation dealing with population issues. The JFPF is this year celebrating its 40th anniversary.

As part of our work, the Asian Forum of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AFPPD) and Inter American Parliamentary Group on Population and Development (IAPG) were established in 1982. In 1994, the International Conference of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (ICPPD) was held in conjunction with the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, Egypt.

Under the Chairmanship of Hon. Lavu Mulimba, former Minister of State for Finance and Planning of Zambia, the Africa and Middle East Committee of Parliamentarians on Population and Development (AMECPPD) was established. The ICPPD was formed by all regional fora and became a truly international conference, building a great momentum to the efforts of parliamentarians on population and development.

Succeeding to the AMECPPD, the Forum of African and Arab Parliamentarians on Population and Development (FAAPPD) was established in 1997. The African Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development (APF) was newly established in 2012, chaired by Dr. Chris Baryomunsi, and a new Arab regional parliamentary forum was established in 2014, to better further the special natures of the regions.

I understand that our host, ZAPPD, was established in conjunction with the ICPD-ICPPD. I would first like to say I am most grateful for the fact that Zambia has taken the lead in Africa

in parliamentary work on population and development. Both the JFPF and I are proud of our direct and indirect involvement with this work.

I would now like to again offer some thoughts on why we are all gathered here today, for the opening of this meeting.

2. Why are politicians concerned with population issues?

Why are politicians like myself concerned with population issues? We aimed to be politicians because we love the nature and cultures of our lands that bore and nurtured us, and we wish to build societies in which the inhabitants of these lands can live happily.

Some people still do not have a proper understanding of the population issue. However I believe that all of us gathered here share the conviction that addressing population issue is the foundation for preserving nature and our cultures and building the well-being of the people who live amongst them. In other words, our involvement in the population issue does indeed begin with our intentions as politicians.

I believe that the question why we as parliamentarians are involved with the population issue will naturally shape how we should become involved with it.

3. The role of parliamentarians in the population issue

It is in fact national governments that govern, and bureaucrats actually perform the implementation on the basis of political decision-making. Support from UN organizations is provided in conjunction with governments. Therefore, at a superficial level, people tend to think that issues can be solved if governments get involved and mobilize funds and programs from international communities.

However, when we consider the nature of the population issue, we know that this is not enough. It goes without saying that the population issue concerns individual perceptions of values and lifestyles, and indeed human life itself; it is not an issue on which we can impose solutions on individuals. At the same time, population is the very foundation of nations and the international community as well. It is in the nature of populations that, if they exceed the ecological capacity to support them, there will be grave effects on the nation as a whole, and then on global society.

The government may implement policies within its authority in economic and other such policies because everyone will benefit and people accept them, but this may not be the case for population issues.

We here, who are involved in the affairs of state, as representatives of the people, are involved in the population issue in a very real sense. As representatives of the people, we are in a position to hear them directly day to day. In this role we can reflect what we hear of the daily lives of individuals in the program.

With our roots in society, we are in a position to describe our dreams to the people, to build the ideal society. We who share a common ideal can work together to go beyond the limitations of government departments, and on occasion beyond nation states themselves, and deal with the issue from a long-term perspective.

It is in the nature of the population issue that it requires dual approach: from a perspective of the highly individual lives of individuals, and from a broader perspective of the future of all of us who live on this planet. Neither lends itself to administrative solution.

In this sense, we in our role as parliamentarians must complement the functions of governments which we deal with directly in our daily work, and at the same time it is absolutely vital that we act for the long-term, general benefit – something governments cannot conceive of. This is the true meaning of the work of parliamentarians.

How then should we allocate the roles between ourselves and governments? Let me look at this question more specifically.

4. Roles of governments and parliamentarians

I believe that we as politicians, and bureaucrats also, put our hearts and souls into working for the people of our nations. However, there is a great difference between politicians and bureaucrats.

Bureaucrats follow the rule and regulations that have been set down. As the nature of bureaucracy, their obligation is restricted by the rule and regulations. However, politicians are always held liable for the consequences. No matter how we try our best, we lose our seats at the next election if the voters do not accept what we do.

This naturally shows up the differences in the roles of the politician and bureaucrat. In the final analysis, bureaucrats are instruments for the implementation of public policy; it is for the politicians to take accountability for the consequences. Clausewitz wrote in his famous *On War* that “failures of strategy cannot be repaired by tactics”.

The relationship between policy and strategy is similar. The policies adopted by government are supreme, but if they do not point in the correct direction, they cannot produce good outcomes. I consider that the same relationship applies between strategy and policy. Our role is to build policy through consultation. So what is required of us when we formulate policy?

Parliamentarians are rarely specialists like bureaucrats. We have limited skills in the art of implementing policy. Parliamentarians can have a hand in national policies if they have the support of the electorate. This is in fact our *raison d'être*.

Given the nature of parliamentarians, our role is to go beyond the way bureaucrats must work, bound by formal rules. I believe our role is to use our profound powers of

discernment, or to find amid the realities of life, those things that people desire and that are vital to human happiness. We should then use the capacities of the bureaucracy to transmute them into specific policies, mobilize the resources required, and enact them as laws. That is the grave responsibility we bear.

Population policies may differ from political party to party and government to government. However, I believe we share common views on the population issue.

Just as Japan's JPPF was established as a cross-party group, parliamentary groups all over the world involved in population issues stand above party political views. We aim for improving individual well-being and building a society which respects human dignity; we believe these can only be achieved within a framework of a global environment and harmonious and sustainable development. In other words, we transcend party politics and we share the principle of working for a common objective.

As I pointed out earlier, it is in the nature of involvement with the population issue that it cannot be covered by government alone, whether at the micro or the macro level. For that reason, we as parliamentarians must play a positive role.

Over the last 40 years, the JPPF has existed to support the work of parliamentarians from around the world on population and development and progress the growth of networking. The involvement of parliamentarians in the issues of population and development improves the welfare of the people in the areas they represent, and at the same time involves the parliamentarians in these questions on a global scale, transcending national interests, through cooperation with other parliamentarians who share the same hopes.

Looking back over the tasks we face, it is my hope that we will all be able to genuinely agree on the points I have raised.

5. Specific roles

Looking back over these points, what specific roles should we be playing through our involvement in the population issue? It goes without saying that it is of primary importance to mobilize the laws and budgets which will be required to implement all the different kinds of programs to prevent unwanted pregnancies.

However, I believe that the part we have to play does not stop there. As I have pointed out, in my view we should make use of our special positions as parliamentarians to ensure that ultimately we bring about good results, which is the important point of the population issue. In order to bring about good results, we must be clear about the objectives of population programs, whether they are implemented by governments or international organizations, and how they contribute to the development plans and long-term benefit of respective countries.

By making the objectives of programs clear, we can clarify how they will benefit people and how they can contribute to global sustainable development. This will allow us to investigate the suitability of programs.

Let us suppose that an investigation shows that a program is deficient from our point of view as parliamentarians. If we have proposals and ideas based on the objectives of our activities, we should then become more positively involved than normal in putting the proposals to the government and international organizations, in collaboration with the local committee.

Thus if we play such a role and go one step further and propose ideas on the basis of our roles, we can achieve development plans with population programs at their heart, while at the same time meeting the demands of suitability by achieving good governance, transparency and accountability.

Government usually undertakes a project according to a range of tasks and duties, and these tasks and duties continue to pile up. From a policy perspective, each project is a means to achieve that policy, not an objective. However, sometimes the means becomes the objective, and the original objective is lost to view.

We parliamentarians are responsible for the outcomes. Our role is to reconfirm the principles and to suggest corrections from the point of view of the overarching objectives. When we look at projects from this point of view, our role also is to properly confirm whether those objectives are being achieved.

By properly fulfilling our roles as parliamentarians, we can explain our actions to the constituents and accept the moral responsibility for programs.

6. The present program and our roles as parliamentarians

Looked at in this way, then, what is the significance of the present program?

In fact, the present program began six years ago. In 2007, the German Bundestag and the European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development (EPF) held a G8 International Parliamentarians' Conference on Population and Development in Berlin, in conjunction with the G8 Summit at Heiligendamm in Germany. On that occasion, the African parliamentarians claimed that there had been virtually no explanation of the official development assistance (ODA) received by their governments, and that they as parliamentarians had been unable to explain it to the voters.

A mere six years ago, parliamentarians were in fact unable to fulfil their role in the area of the implementation of ODA projects.

We took these opinions seriously and drew up programs with the assistance of the Secretariat. As parliamentarians, we consulted over three years on whether good governance, transparency and accountability had been achieved in ODA programs relating to the population and development issues.

These three years of consultations were very fruitful. We started from developing the policy and theory and made use of our positions as parliamentarians, and networking among parliamentarians, to show how these objectives might be achieved.

The projects two years ago in Cambodia, and in February this year in Uganda, were carried out to confirm these theoretical studies and reviews in the places where ODA was actually being implemented. The objective of the programs was to explore the role of parliamentarians which is vital in achieving progress in people's welfare.

I have good news to report to all of you. The Secretariat circulated a questionnaire on ODA at the conference held in Uganda in February, and virtually none of the African participants expressed dissatisfaction with it. Given these results of our efforts, I am confident that APDA-JPPF will make serious contributions to furthering our activities as parliamentarians with the assistance of all of you from Asia and Africa.

7. Conclusion: Objectives of the Zambia meeting

This year will be an important occasion. We can clarify the results of six years of work and conduct a new review of the next steps we will take in our role as parliamentarians.

You will already have the prior report on the results of our work. At this meeting, I hope you will all give us feedback on our work so far, and that you will consider the ideas that all of you have provided on how we might make our work more effective in future.

In this meeting, I expect that we will review and confirm our own roles as parliamentarians, and I expect Japan will provide every assistance in more thoroughly performing our roles as parliamentarians.

I am confident that this meeting in Zambia will be an important occasion for a significant step forward into new activities as parliamentarians.

Thank you all for listening to me.