

## Slow Demographic Transition in Maharashtra: The Role of Regional Disparities in Development

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*Maharashtra is one of the advanced states in the country in terms of income, industry, urbanisation, female literacy, infant survival, primary health infrastructure and family planning acceptance. But none of these advantages have helped the state to achieve the desired demographic transition: the state continues to have a relatively high fertility compared to southern states despite its advantages over many decades. The experience of Maharashtra reveals that economic development alone is not sufficient to achieve the lower population growth rate. The objectives of the paper are: (i) to analyse the regional differentials in population and other related development indicators within Maharashtra; (ii) to find out the extent of regional disparity in Maharashtra in comparison with some of the other states which have made considerable progress towards the population stabilisation in recent years and (iii) to assess the role of regional disparities in development on fertility transition in Maharashtra. The data for the study were mainly drawn from Census 2001, Rapid Household Survey on Reproductive and Child Health (RCH-RHS) and National Family Health Survey (NFHS-1&2). The analysis exhibits the striking regional differences in demographic parameters in Maharashtra. Analysis also shows that not only the regional disparities are higher in Maharashtra it is also higher compared to the other states, which have made considerable progress towards demographic transition.*

### Introduction

The International Conference on Population and Development, held at Cairo in September 1994, gave a fresh direction to population and development strategies and goals. A growing body of evidence and the consensus achieved in Cairo suggested that India's old system of centrally administered and family planning oriented population policies would not help in achieving desired population goals. The international consensus developed at the Cairo Conference strongly recommended the integration of population policies with other social and economic development issues. In accordance with the Cairo consensus, Government of India announced the National Population Policy (NPP) in the year 2000 calling for all round development of the social sector, especially family health, primary education, women development, basic amenities (sanitation, safe drinking water, and housing) and transport and communications (Government of India, 2000).

In India, till recently; state governments' policies on population have been guided by central government. Over the past few years many state governments have formulated

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