Dear colleagues,

The current issue of the PRC Newsletter is a special issue related to the research oriented symposium on “Population and Health” organized on the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the Population Research Centre, November 9, 2006.

Next to some general impressions of the symposium, summaries of the presentations of the three keynote speakers Dr. Ties Boerma (World Health Organization, Geneva), Dr. Shireen Jejeebhoy (Population Council, New Delhi), and Prof. dr. Paul Boyle (University of St. Andrews, Scotland) are provided by Ganesh Sharnngadharan, Ajay Bailey, and Karen Haandrikman.

We enjoyed very much to celebrate our anniversary in this way and we would like to express once more our gratitude to the three keynote speakers and to all the participants. Also we would like to thank for the numerous congratulations we received per letter and email.

We look forward to the next five years of the Population Research Centre, and will continue reporting about our teaching and research activities through this Newsletter.

For now, we would like to wish you all a nice Christmas Holiday and all the best for 2007!

Kind regards,
Fanny Janssen (Chief Editor)
Research oriented Symposium on “Population and Health”

Thursday afternoon November 9, 2006, PRC organized, together with the Netherlands Demographic Society (NVD), a research-oriented symposium on “Population and Health”. Occasion was the 15th anniversary of PRC. The theme, “Population and Health”, has close links to the research programme of the Population Research Centre, i.e. Population, Health, Society, Space.

Prof.dr. Inge Hutter opened the symposium and welcomed the 70 participants from many different institutes and disciplines. After this short welcome, she gave the floor to Prof.dr. Clara Mulder (Amsterdam University), chair of the Netherlands Demographic Society (NVD). Clara Mulder gave a short introduction to the NVD and recommended everyone to become a member. She stressed the importance of the Population Research Centre as the one and single institute in the Netherlands where students can receive a Master in Demography.

Before giving the floor to the three keynote speakers, Inge Hutter spend some time introducing the Population Research Centre to the audience. Next to its members, she introduced the double mission of the PRC including both research and training. She demonstrated the clear links between research and training by presenting the topics of the master theses and the topics of the current PhDs. She furthermore emphasised the major changes PRC went through in the previous 15 years. She felt that now the new team is ready for a fresh start.

To officially start the celebration, the founder of the PRC, Prof.dr. Frans Willekens, was invited to blow the 15 candles on the birthday cake that was brought for this event.

The keynote addresses by Dr. Ties Boerma (World Health Organization, Geneva), Dr. Shireen Jejeebhoy (Population Council, New Delhi), and Prof. dr. Paul Boyle (University of St. Andrews, Scotland) proved very interesting, stimulating, and fuelled the discussion. Summaries of the keynote addresses can be found below.

On behalf of the participants to the symposium, 750 euros was donated to War Child.

Lies, damn lies and health statistics

**Dr. Ties Boerma**
Director Measurement and Health Information Systems
World Health Organization, Geneva

In his presentation, Dr. Boerma elicited anomalies in measuring, presenting and using health statistics.

First, Boerma emphasised the use or misuse of health statistics for the purpose of funding. He illustrated this with three examples. Malaria is one of the “big diseases” that “bring big money”. Estimates suggest that malaria kills about 1.2 to 3 million people worldwide. Often, however, the upper limit of 3 million is quoted, which includes all the worst possible scenarios and all possible indirect causes. For tuberculosis (TB), the resources available are also increasing. However, the increasing trend in estimated deaths due to TB might be because of the inclusion of HIV infected cases. The resources available for AIDS increased tremendously over the last ten years. While the prevalence rates of the HIV infection are on the decline, the increasing number of people living with HIV/AIDS is often emphasized. The use of these cumulative numbers gives a distorted picture of the situation. A more transparent dissemination of health indicators is clearly needed.

Boerma also emphasised the importance of good health indicators to monitor the health situation of a population. However, the estimation of these health indicators is hampered by the lack of a vital registration system in many Asian and African countries. The indirect techniques being used instead often result in estimates that are largely incomparable. Boerma suggested that the strengthening and standardisation of the data collection process is a necessary base for good health indicators. Promising tools are GIS, PDA and internet, and the collection of blood samples.

Boerma also stressed the need for transparency and comparability in the estimation of health indicators. Over the past few years a multitude of health indicators and targets evolved for monitoring and evaluating the health situations of populations. Boerma is critical about these many indicators and their purpose. Summary measures or index measures for health, like the DALY (Disability Adjusted Life Years), are to be preferred over single measures. However, Boerma stresses the need for a much simpler and more straightforward measure.

All in all, Boerma emphasised the importance of the generation of good quality data, transparency and comparability in the estimation of health indicators, and a proper usage of the indicators.

Ganesh Sharnngadharan
Early marriage and the risk of HIV/AIDS among young women: Evidence from India

Dr. Shireen J. Jejeebhoy
Senior Program Associate
Population Council, New Delhi, India

The presentation by Dr. Jejeebhoy highlighted the sparse available evidence on the links between early marriage and HIV related vulnerabilities of young women in India. In India, 31% of the population is aged 10-24. Among the reported cases of HIV/AIDS, 35% are aged 15-24. Jejeebhoy finds that young women seem more at risk due to regular exposure to unprotected sex. Furthermore, larger inter-spousal age difference leads to young women often being unable to deny sex. Presenting results from an ongoing study in two states in India, Jejeebhoy states that provider’s perceptions on the sexual and reproductive health (SRH) needs of women also contribute to increasing the vulnerability of HIV/AIDS.

She thus concludes that early marriage poses significant risks to young women of acquiring infection from their husbands, while at the same time limiting their awareness and ability to negotiate safe and wanted sexual relations within marriage. She suggests that programs for the about-to-be-married and the newly-married should aim to appraise them about HIV, the adoption of safe sex practices and the use of HIV prevention services. At the community level intervention should focus on increasing awareness of links between early marriage and HIV and promoting voluntary counselling and testing of about-to-be-married couples. Young women’s lack of agency and negotiating power need to be addressed by providing livelihood training and by development of negotiation skills for the unmarried and the newly married.

In the second part of her presentation Jejeebhoy informed us about the activities by the Population Council (PC) in India directed towards young people. The PC focuses on three main activities, i.e. building evidence through formative research, intervention research to assess feasibility of different intervention models, and documenting and synthesizing evidence and facilitating networking. The formative research by PC has dwelled on formations of partnerships, perspectives on early marriage, understanding and addressing the SRH and HIV risks among young people. It has also explored pathways to abortion among unmarried women and intergenerational dialogue on sexuality and HIV/AIDS.

Intervention research of the PC has included projects on building self-efficacy and livelihood skills among young girls in Gujarat and at the national level integrating adolescent livelihood activities within a reproductive health programme for urban slum dwellers.

Ajay Bailey

Population and Health Research: Some Reflections

Prof. dr. Paul Boyle
Professor
School of Geography and Geosciences
University of St. Andrews, Scotland

Prof. Paul Boyle reflected on research at the interface of demography and epidemiology, and what geography can add to the understanding of population health. He presented three examples from research he is currently working on.

The first example concerned health inequalities in Scotland. Overall mortality rates in Scotland are significantly higher than those in England and Wales, and the health and mortality gap between the most and the least deprived has recently widened within Scotland.

Boyle showed that this divide is not only caused by composition (people) but also by context (geography). Geography was also found to matter in the prevalence of suicide in Scotland. Boyle et al. investigated whether suicide is a contagious process. East Glasgow was found to form a significant cluster, but when controlling for deprivation, no clusters turned out to be significant. Suicide was found to be strongly related to deprivation.

The second example focused on the linkages between population change, migration and health. A longitudinal analysis of health-selective migration in England and Wales demonstrated the complicated relationships between health and migration. In 20 years time, the largest absolute flow of migrants has consisted of relatively healthy migrants moving away from more deprived areas to less deprived areas.

This has resulted in an increase in health inequalities. According to Boyle, accounting for selective migration in the widening gap in health inequalities is at the heart of what population geography is about.

The last example dealt with demographic restructuring and health. Changes brought about by the Second Demographic Transition, such as decreasing proportions of people marrying, and the increase of step parenting, may affect health status. As is widely known, marriage is both beneficial for health and life expectancy, especially for men. However, Boyle et al. found that it is not being unmarried per se, but living alone that is worsening health. Boyle also showed that lone parents and partners of step parents had significantly worse health.

Boyle concluded that demographic restructuring may have significant health implications. Moreover, ignoring migration is a fundamental flaw in many epidemiology studies. Geographers provide a contextual understanding which gives insight into underlying causation. Furthermore, the interface between demography and epidemiology is a promising area for further research.

Karen Haandrikman
Visitors to the PRC

- From September until November 2006 Marianna Yepishova, a PhD student from the Kharkiv (Charkov) National Academy of Municipal Economy (Ukraine), stayed as a guest researcher at the Population Research Centre. Her visit was made possible by a grant from the Hospitality Scheme of the European Coimbra group, a project of the Task Force for Eastern Neighbouring Countries.

Recent publications


Conferences/Workshops

- Ajay Bailey presented a paper ‘We have come here to earn: Living betwixed and between, the story of Karnataka migrants in Goa, India’ at the International workshop on “Geography and Liminality: Theories and Case-studies”, organized by the University of Groningen, in Groningen, July 8-11.
- In July, Karen Haandrikman participated in the ERSA Advanced Summer School “GIS and Spatial Econometrics” in Groningen.
- Ajay Bailey presented a paper ‘Contextualizing the Survey: Linked Trajectory of Method Triangulation in a Study on HIV/AIDS in India’ at the 7th International Interdisciplinary Conference Advances in Qualitative Methods organized by the Inter-national Institute of Qualitative Methodology, in Gold Coast, Australia, July 13-16.
- Biswamitra Sahu presented a paper entitled 'Religion, Minority Status and Reproduction in India and Bangladesh' at the XVI World Congress of Sociology organised by the International Sociological Association, in Durban, South Africa, July 23-29.
- Ajay Bailey and Inge Hutter presented a paper ‘Learning from the past: Integrating research and evidence-based practices for action, case studies from India.’ at the World Congress on Action Research organized by University of Groningen, in Groningen, August 21-24
- Inge Hutter and Aagje Papineau Salm participated in a seminar on “Ethical Issues in Reproductive Health” organised by the IUSSP Committee on Reproductive Health in cooperation with NIDI and PRC, in Wassenaar, September 20-24.
- October 23-27, PRC, Emory University Atlanta, and University of Southampton organized the annual workshop on Qualitative Research Methods.
- Karen Haandrikman presented a paper on 'Geographical dimensions of the partner market in the Netherlands' at the Ruimteconferentie organized by the Netherlands Institute for Spatial Research (RPB) in Rotterdam, October 31.
- Fanny Janssen presented on the Determinants of Trends in Old-Age Mortality at a meeting on *Prospective Life Tables* organized by the Dutch Actuarial Association (AG) in Zeist, November 16.

PRC News

- For the academic year 2006-2007, PRC welcomed eight new master students, four from the Netherlands, two from Pakistan, one from Kazakhstan, and one from Ethiopia.
- PRC offered four fellowships to the International Diploma Course in Reproductive Health Management of the Karnatak University Dharwad, India.
- September 2006, Mieke Reuser (NIDI) and Beata Nowok (PRC-NIDI) started their PhD research on ‘Multi-state models applied to chronic diseases’ and ‘Estimating international migration flows in Europe’, respectively. They are supervised by Frans Willekens.
- September 2006 until May 2007, Biswamitra Sahu is conducting her fieldwork in India and Bangladesh.
- December 2006 until February 2007, Viktor Venhorst, PRC MSc alumnus, joins the PRC as a researcher in a project on “Demographic trends and developments in quantitative and qualitative housing needs in the northern Dutch provinces”.
- Marieke van der Pers, research master student with specialisation demography, was selected by the University of Groningen to opt for the Top Talent program by NWO (the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research).