

DOES FAMILY PLANNING STILL MATTER?

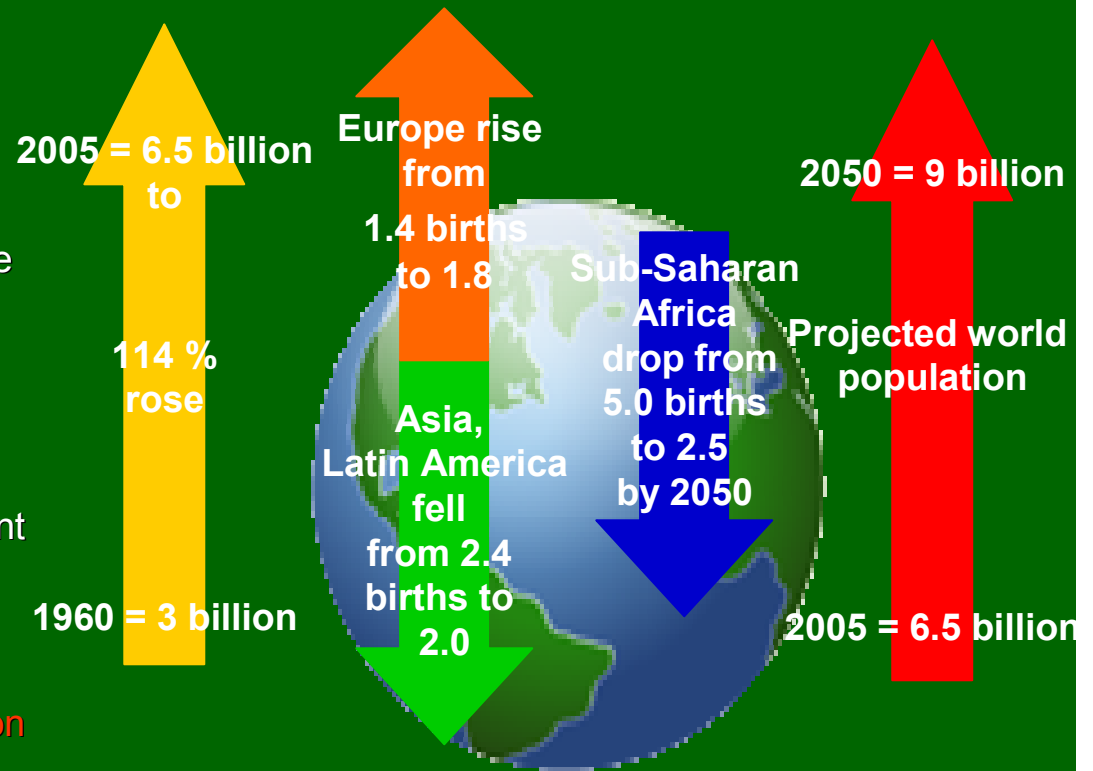


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Past and Future Population Growth

- Between 1960 and 2005, the global population rose by 114 percent, from 3 billion to nearly 6.5 billion.
- By 2050, the percentage increase is expected to be around 40 percent but the absolute numbers will remain huge (2.6 billion).
- The UN projections assume that fertility in Asia and Latin America will fall from 2.4 births per woman to slightly below 2.0 births. In Europe, it will rise from its current level of 1.4 to 1.8. In sub-Saharan Africa, fertility is assumed to drop steadily from more than 5.0 births to 2.5 by 2050.
- Under these assumptions, world population is projected to be a little over 9 billion by 2050.



Three Factors Account for Future Population Growth

- **Population momentum** – Owing to the high proportion of the population in the reproductive age range, 15-45 years, the birth rate in many developing countries is sustained at a high level, accounting for more than half the projected increase in population between now and 2050.
- **Unwanted births** – resulting from unmet need for contraception. Elimination of such births would reduce population growth by 20 percent.
- **High desired family size** – many couples want more children than the number that will allow population growth to stabilize, accounting for about 20 percent of population growth.

Official family planning policies and fertility decline

- The number of developing countries with official family planning policies rose from only two in 1960 to 74 by 1975 and 115 by 1996.
- International funding increased in parallel from US\$168 million in 1971 to US\$512 million in 1985.
- By 1990, reproductive change was established throughout most of Latin America and Asia, including such countries as Bangladesh and Nepal, and fertility had started to decline in sub-Saharan Africa.

Official family planning policies and fertility decline

- Between 1960 and 2000, the proportion of married women using contraception in developing regions rose from less than 10 percent to about 60 percent.
- The average number of births per woman fell from six to about three.
- Donor support for family planning commodities and service delivery fell from US\$560 million to US\$460 million.

International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) recommendations

- The ICPD recommendations replaced the demographic-economic rationale for family planning programs with a broader agenda of women's empowerment and reproductive health and rights.
- Since 1994, family planning promotion has dropped steadily down the list of international development priorities.
- Some of the causes of this priority loss were unlinking family planning and economic development and the continuing fertility decline in many countries which encouraged a belief that the problem was largely solved.
- HIV/AIDS, population aging and international migration have arisen as the new priorities.

Benefits of promoting family planning

- **Reduction of poverty and of maternal and child mortality.**
- **Empowerment of women by lightening the burden of excessive childbearing.**
- **Enhancement of environmental sustainability by stabilizing the planet's population.**

Poverty reduction

- A study of 45 countries by Eastwood and Lipton in 1999 and 2001 estimated that the proportion of people living in poverty would have fallen by a third if the crude birth rate had decreased by 5 per 1000 population in the 1980s.
- Fertility decline also brings a long-term benefit. Some 20 years after the onset of a drop in fertility, the proportion of the population aged 15-64 years starts to rise faster than that of individuals aged 0-14 and 65+ (the less economically productive ages), providing countries with a unique but transient opportunity to make rapid gains in living standards.

Poverty reduction

- Such a *demographic bonus* allows income to be used for productive investment rather than expended on the support of young and old people.
- Households with many children are more likely over time to become poor and less likely to recover from poverty than families with only a few children.
- Children from large families are usually less well nourished and less well educated than those from smaller families.

Poverty reduction

- Family planning also brings large potential health and survival benefits for children, mainly as a result of wider birth intervals.
- Family planning is one of the most cost-effective ways of reducing infant and child mortality. About one million of the 11 million deaths per year of children younger than five years could be averted by eliminating inter-birth intervals less than two years.

Health benefits

- In 2000, about 90 percent of global abortion-related and 20 percent of obstetric-related mortality and morbidity could have been averted by the effective use of contraception by women wishing to postpone or cease further childbearing.
- A total of 150,000 maternal deaths (representing 32% of all such deaths) could have been prevented with high cost-effectiveness, particularly in Africa and Asia.

Gender equality, human rights and education

- The shift from six births, of which several might die, to around two births, nearly all of which survive, known as the *reproductive revolution*, represents the most important step towards achieving gender equality by boosting women's opportunities for non-domestic activities.
- Contraception allows the attainment of a fundamental human right to choose the number and timing of children.

Gender equality, human rights and education

- **The achievement of universal primary education for both sexes is an important Millennium Development Goal (MDG) and many countries seek to increase secondary- and tertiary-level enrolments.**
- **The feasibility of meeting such goals is directly affected by high fertility and rapid population growth. Even to maintain existing standards, governments with rapidly growing populations have to double the number of teachers, equipment and classrooms every 20-25 years. A similar stress is placed on health services for infants and children.**

Environmental sustainability

- **Past growth has had a direct effect on increasing the fraction of land area devoted to food production, with inevitable loss of natural habitats and biodiversity.**
- **Further population increases, particularly in poor agrarian countries, will put fragile marginal land under pressure from over-cropping and over-grazing, with potentially severe outcomes in terms of loss of vegetative cover, soil fertility depletion and soil erosion.**

Environmental sustainability

- **Increasing demand for water is also directly related to population growth, mainly through the extra water needed to grow more food.**
- **Increases in carbon dioxide emissions have been far greater in the rapidly growing economies of China and India than in Europe and North America.**

Keys to sustainable family planning programs

- High-level political commitment
- Broad coalition of support from elite groups
- Adequate funding
- Legitimization of the idea of smaller families and modern contraceptives through mass media and the like
- Availability of a wide range of methods through medical facilities, social marketing and outreach services.

Revitalization of the family planning agenda

- **Accord a higher priority to investment in family planning than to investment in HIV prevention and treatment.**
- **Reassert the economic rationale that was muted in Cairo.**
- **Press for greater recognition that the demographic circumstances of low-income and middle-income countries are increasingly diverse and that government actions and international assistance must be tailored accordingly.**

Revitalization of the family planning agenda

- **Protest against MDG hegemony in setting the development agenda, particularly against the myopia implicit in the 2015 deadline for their achievement.**
- **Recognize that a delay in the onset of fertility decline when populations are doubling in size every 25-30 years carries medium-term implications for future population size and economic prospects.**
- **Develop family planning champions outside of the United Nations family.**