

Forum: Social, Humanitarian and Cultural committee

Issue #24-01: Measures to combat overpopulation

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Introduction

As of May 2017, the world's population reached a population of 7.5 billion. In 2050, according to the UN, an estimate of 9.7 billion people will inhabit the earth. We are rapidly advancing towards an undesirable condition in which the number of human population surpasses the Earth's capacity. This urgent issue that must be addressed is known as overpopulation.

Over the last few decades, human population has transcended past what researchers believe to be Earth's sustainable capacity. The excessive consumption of Earth's natural resources plays a major role on the ecological deterioration and planetary contamination. Studies performed by the Population Reference Bureau indicate a positive correlation between population growth and the increase of per capita consumption. This has the potential to inevitably terminate our global civilization. In present-day, evidence of unsustainable uses of resources is existent. This can be seen in the exploitation of groundwater, oil, natural gas, phosphorus and coal, among others. Therefore, the continuing of uncontrolled, unregulated births can lead to dreadful consequences to the environment including but not limited to: the acceleration of climate change, extinction of organisms, intensive farming practices, depletion of natural resources and habitat loss. Other repercussion include the emergence of new epidemics and pandemics, food shortages, starvation, lower life expectancy, higher water supply contamination, unemployment and rising conflict between territories.

It is of crucial importance to solve this humanitarian issue as rapidly as possible. However, to accurately approach overpopulation with a solution, we must understand its causes. Research has located a link between 'population explosion' and developing nations. The major factors for this are the medical and technological advancements, the social standards of developing nations on contraception or family planning, and the economical status of family units. Overpopulation is strenuous issue to overcome,

because attempting to control every childbirth within a population, regardless of a country's size, is a nearly impossible task. Several countries have already made an effort to solve overpopulation and results have shown vast consequences.

Definition of Key Terms

Overpopulation

The condition of having a population so dense as to cause environmental deterioration, an impaired quality of life, or a population crash.

Population Growth

An increase in the number of individuals that reside in a country. If the amount of people that reside in an specific area surpasses the sustainable consumption of the Earth's resources, that area is considered to be overpopulated.

Zero population growth

The maintenance of a population at a constant level limiting the number of live births to only what is needed to replace the existing population. Through different techniques such as birth regulations, countries seek to achieve zero population growth to control the amount of population.

Demographics

Relating to the dynamic balance of a population especially with regard to density and capacity for expansion or decline. Demographic trends and demographic shifts may suggest a nation's overpopulation status.

Fertility Rate

The ratio of live births in an area to the population of that area; expressed per 1000 population per year. Fertility rates are higher in developing countries suggesting a correlation between a nation's accessibility to resources, such as contraceptives and family planning, and overpopulation.

Birth Rate

The ration between births and individuals in a specified population and time. Nations with high

birth rates such as Nigeria struggle with population growth.

Contraceptives

The deliberate prevention of conception or impregnation. Several nations where contraceptives are utilized in abundance have experience a decline of birth rates and fertility rates. Due to this, population growth has not been an issue in these nations.

Family Planning

Planning intended to determine the number and spacing of one's children through birth control.

General Overview

As previously articulated, there are several distinct factors which have affected the “population explosion” that has undertaken the world over the past several decades. The following are some examples of components that have lead to the 7.5 billion people inhabiting Earth.

Medical Advancements

As of the twentieth century, there has been a significant decrease in mortality rates. The CDR or Crude Death Rate –the number of deaths occurring among the population of a given geographical during a year– in 1900 estimated 17.2 deaths per 1,000. In 2012, that number decreased to 7.9 deaths per 1,000. There has also been a decrease of infant mortality. Annual infant mortality has dropped from 8.9 million in 1900 to 4.5 million in 2015. This occurred predominantly due to medical advancements. The development of antibiotics to combat resistant bacteria, the creation of effective way to control epidemics such as of polio and other epidemics through vaccines, measures to treat health ailments, solutions to infertility problems, stopped common premature deaths due to disease, and safer pregnancies have all been factors that have influenced the decline of the death.

Although the CIA estimates the average birth rate is 4 births per second, fertility rates have decreased in developed nations. Factors such as an increase in sexually transmitted diseases, obesity, and environmental factors have led to the rise of male and female subfertility. Also, women are delaying starting a family, and this has lead to an increase in infertility levels due to ovarian ageing and a reduction in a chance of conception. Advancements in medicine have also led to an increase the average life expectancy. In developing nations, life expectancy rose from 42 to 64, infant mortality rates also decreased, in 1990 deaths of children under the age of 5 had a mean of 112 per 1000 while latest research

by The World Health Organization shows that number has decreased to 19. These changes have caused the population of developing nations to increase immensely. Earlier medical and technological advancements urged the development of contraception in 1900s. However, these contraceptive options were only introduced in 1950's with the creation of the first contraceptive pill.

Everyday, new technology and research are allowing us to improve medicine and cure diseases that have previously claimed a large quantity of lives every year. This possibly means that mortality rate and infant mortality rates will continue to drop increasing the amount of people on Earth. Seeing that there is no conceivable justification to halt medical advancements or restrain from providing medical resources to regions in need, overpopulation seems inevitable.

Contraceptives

In developing countries the question in regards to contraceptive options does not revolve around ethical considerations, it revolves around cost. The trend seems to suggest that the poorer the developing country is, the greatest the fertility rate. It is also important to note that poor African countries, such as Zimbabwe and Mali, have the least resources to maintain and handle larger populations. Estimations have shown that in developing nations, a total of 100 million married women do not have access to contraception or family planning. Researchers have suggested providing contraceptives will not be enough and furthermore developing nations should be provided with sexual education on how to properly used contraceptives. Sexual education should entail a description of possible resources and materials that could be used to prevent pregnancy or STI, Sexually Transmitted Infections, along with how to use them and their potential risks. Sexual education should also emphasize the danger in numbers by expressing the effects of overpopulation on the environment and on humans and should be accessible to every individual, no matter their socioeconomic status. However, sexual education is more than often a controversial issue due to social and cultural standards.

Social and Cultural Standards

The lack of contraception usage in some countries relates to the rejection of such by religions. In various countries in the Middle East, the strictness of Islam prevents the usage, or even the discussion of contraceptives. Occasionally, men take the childbearing decisions while women have little to no say. Some Middle East nations have allowed or are looking to implement contraceptive education and family planning strategies. Some of these nations are Jordan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, and Morocco.

Nevertheless, other Middle East nations, such as Yemen, follow strict Islamic rules, and do not accept the use of contraceptives or education of such topics. Additionally, the Roman Catholic Church has also condemned measures of child control and other contraceptives, as it is believed that sexual acts must only be performed for the possibility of conception.

Sexual education refers to the guidance of issues regarding human sexuality. It ranges from topics such as human sexual anatomy, emotional relationships, reproductive activity, safe sex, birth control and many subjects. The integration of sexual education and birth control in school appears to decrease the number of unplanned teen pregnancies states the U.S Department of Health and Human Services. According to the UN there are about 16 million teenage girls that give birth each year. Among the countries with the highest percentages of teenage pregnancies lie Niger, Chad, Mozambique, Bali and Liberia. Sexual education is a very controversial issue given that individuals possess different attitudes about sex in general, given their culture or individual beliefs. Different cultures and parents While some cultures and parents think school should be allowed to teach children about safe sex and contraceptives, others might perhaps view the conversation as a taboo, might want to teach their children themselves about the topic, do not believe or accept, based on religion, what is being taught.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

China

In 1953, the decrease of death rates in China caused the population increased by 2.8% contributing to an addition of 2.5 million people by 1970. However, the rapid population growth created a strain for the government as it could meet the people's needs. Therefore, the government started implementing family planning service, extending contraceptive and abortion services to rural areas, and promoting later marriages, and longer time interval between births. By 1980 the government had aimed to decrease population growth to 1.0% and by 2000 reach zero growth. Nevertheless, statistics showed that his goal was impossible. By 1979, China established the One-Child Policy, which limited family units to only one child each. It was heavily implemented in urban areas and more lenient in rural areas. As result of the policy was the general reduction of fertility and birthrates. However, it also resulted in a sex ratio skewed towards men. As only male babies would pass on the family name, female fetuses were aborted, abandoned or placed in orphanages. Other consequence included growing proportion of elderly people, births after first child went unreported and hidden. The accurate amount of undocumented children is unknown, estimates state that there are several million. In 2015, Chinese government announced the end

of the One-Child policy. Additionally, China is the most populous country in the world.

India

India has a total population of 1.3 billion, making it the second most populated country in the world after China. The Indian Government recognized overpopulation as an issue in 1947 as a result of exhaustion of food and resources to support the population. This resulted in the implementation of family planning techniques and in 1966; family planning was given a department within the Ministry of Health. Although, India has managed to lower their growth rate down to 2.1%, overpopulation remains a constant concern due to uneven distribution of food, forests are destroyed for firewood, and clean water is scarce. Research has shown that large families are stimulated by; low literacy, inadequate health, and high infant mortality. Currently, women in India have on average 4-5 children. Nevertheless, by 1970's growth and fertility rates have balanced off due to the central government's work with local health authorities to implement an 'ambitious' population control program. Estimate of 6.2 million indigent men were sterilized in a year. Reports show police dragging men to surgery in 'camps' that were described as unsanitary and in impersonal conditions. Today, 85% of sterilizations are done on women who have had three to four children. Experts state that contraceptive options and technology did not stress enough and did not stimulate education and cultural change.

Yemen

For centuries, Yemen was highly regarded for its fertile soil and superior irrigation techniques. Presently, a vast and dry desert has taken what was once this prosperous land and this rich area has been affected by social and political problems. Yemen imports 80% of its food and faces a water crisis. In 2015, 50% of the Yemenis struggled to find clean water to consume or grow crops with. Aquifers are on their last drop and taps are running dry due to the overpopulation issue. Yemen has demographic issues. In 1990, Yemen's population stood at 12 million. In 2010, it reached 23 million with a 95% growth. Additionally, Yemen's social standards do not advocate use of contraceptives.

United States

The United States is the third most populated country in the world. The United States consumes the Earth's natural resources at an unsustainable rate. Americans utilize 25% of the world's scarce energy sources, consumes 4 times more the amount of grain of than developing nations. Furthermore, 22% of

Carbon Dioxide emissions originate from the United States.

Nigeria

In 1950, Nigeria's population stood at less than 40 million. Currently, Nigeria is home to 170 million people. However, due to the lack of adequate resources and a large amount of the population living in the slums, the real population is unknown. Such slums are also overcrowded. Some cases have indicated 50 people sharing a bathroom and living space. Although contraceptives are free in Nigeria, citizens don't have access to them and due to religious beliefs, they are also looked down upon. Further cultural-standards indicated that large families in Nigeria symbolize prestige. Although, Civil law in Nigeria does not recognize polygamous unions, 12 states in the country, all twelve governed by Shariah law, recognize such unions as equivalent as monologous unions. Impoverished families tend to have more children, as some might not survive to adulthood.

By 2050, it is belief that Nigeria's population will surpass that of the United States, and could go beyond 400 million. Researchers fear that the population growth will fuel poverty and conflict such as the rise of radical groups like Boko Haram. The rise of population is likely to build-on Nigeria's strained infrastructure, and increase poverty, unemployment and political instability.

Uganda

Uganda has one of the highest population growths in the world. Currently, there are 27.7 million people in Uganda and estimates show that that number will increase to 56 million by 2025. Midway through the 21st century, estimates have shown that Uganda will become the 12th most populated country, surpassing the populations of Russia and Japan, with 130 million people. An average Uganda woman gives birth to seven children, and only 1 in 5 of these women has access to contraceptives.

Chad, Mali, Guinea Bissau, Burundi, Malawi, Niger, Egypt, Bangladesh, Democratic Republic of Congo and Ethiopia.

Among other countries, Chad, Mali, Guinea Bissau, Burundi, Malawi, Niger, Egypt, Bangladesh, Democratic Republic of Congo and Ethiopia have a impactful population growth rate and are amidst a colossal population explosion.

Russia

In contrast to the countries previously mentioned, Russia has a negative population growth. Russia's declining population arose post-soviet union. While Russia's population peaked during 1990's, about 148 inhabitants, that number has dropped up to 143 by 2017. Research performed by demographer, Murray Feshbach, indicates that Russia could have as few occupants as 111 million by 2050. Factors that have lead to Russia's population decline are low birth rate/fertility rate (1.75 births per women), rising cases of alcoholism, HIV/AIDS, and a decrease of male life expectancy. Other factors include high rates of abortion and low levels of immigration. Additionally, Russia has not fully addressed this drastic issue. Putin has mentioned on various speeches the low birth rate; "What has prevented a young family, a young woman, from making this decision? The answers are obvious: low incomes, a lack of normal housing, doubts about the level of medical services and quality education. At times, there are doubts about the ability to provide enough food." Furthermore, due to Russia's economic crisis the government's ability to tackle the current demographic trends is limited.

Germany

With 82.4 million inhabitants, Germany is ranked as the biggest country within the European Union. By 2060, Germany will be the third biggest country in the EU after Great Britain and France. Germany's birth rate reached their lowest level since 1945. In 2016 there were 68,000 registered births, 20,000 less than during World War II. This is due to the fact that Germans are living longer -as a result of medical advancements- and having fewer offspring. Factors that resulted on the low birthrate include the unemployment rate. Steffen Kröhnert from the Institute for Population and Development states that Germany's birth rate is constantly declining, even after factoring in immigration. Although this issue has been present over several years, German politicians have not address it, until recently. Consequences originated from this negative population growth included problems in dealing with working population diminishing, payment of health care and social security. Not long ago, the german government seeked to introduce a new legislation to sponsor family-building in an attempt to encourage couples to have more babies.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
18th Century	The Industrial Revolution resulted in a ‘population explosion’ with a population growth of 57%.
1839	Charles Goodyear invents and patented the Rubber Vulcanization.
1855	First Rubber condom produced.
1960	The first oral contraceptive was approved by the FDA.
July 11, 1973	Establishment of World Population Day and World’s population reached 5 billion.
August 19-30, 1974	UN World Population Conference hosted in Bucharest Romania.
April, 1976	Family Planning Initiative and forced sterilization.
September 25, 1980	China’s One Child Policy was formally instituted.
August 6-14, 1984	UN International Conference on Population hosted in Mexico.
September 5, 1994	International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo.
October 29, 2015	China’s One Child Policy concludes.

TABLE I.1. POPULATION OF THE WORLD, MAJOR DEVELOPMENT GROUPS AND MAJOR AREAS, 1950, 1975, 2007 AND 2050
ACCORDING TO DIFFERENT VARIANTS

Major area	Population (millions)			Population in 2050 (millions)			
	1950	1975	2007	Low	Medium	High	Constant
World	2 535	4 076	6 671	7 792	9 191	10 756	11 858
More developed regions	814	1 048	1 223	1 065	1 245	1 451	1 218
Less developed regions.....	1 722	3 028	5 448	6 727	7 946	9 306	10 639
Least developed countries	200	358	804	1 496	1 742	2 002	2 794
Other less developed countries	1 521	2 670	4 644	5 231	6 204	7 304	7 845
Africa	224	416	965	1 718	1 998	2 302	3 251
Asia	1 411	2 394	4 030	4 444	5 266	6 189	6 525
Europe	548	676	731	566	664	777	626
Latin America and the Caribbean.....	168	325	572	641	769	914	939
Northern America.....	172	243	339	382	445	517	460
Oceania.....	13	21	34	42	49	56	57

Source: Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat (2007). World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision, Highlights. New York: United Nations.

This chart distinctly expresses the significant increase of the populations in less developed countries. Furthermore it emphasizes the rapid population growth in less developed regions in comparison with the population increase of more developed regions.

UN involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

There are numerous UN committees devoted to the issue of overpopulation. Several UN population conferences have been held throughout the 20th century. Conferences such as The World Population conference hosted in Bucharest, Romania in 1974 that focused on the relationship of population and development, which generated the World Population Plan of Action. Additionally, the International Conference of Population on Mexico City in 1984 which expanded the World Population Plan of Action to incorporate later research and data by Governments on topics such as conditions of health, employment and education and issues of international cooperation and pursuit of adopting policies relating to population. Later in 1944, a new Programme of Action was adopted, that emphasizes on the indissoluble relationship between population and development. This advanced Programme allowed the integration of population issues into socio-economic development proposals and provide better quality of life for future generations. In the General Assembly 21st special session held in New York on July 1999, centered around the achieved and challenges encountered in the implementation of strategies in regards to population and the UN resolution adopted in 18 of December, 1997. This special UN General Assembly was convened to review and appraise the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted in Cairo in 1944.

- A/RES/S-21/2 (This resolution is explained under section Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue sub-section UN Resolutions)

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

UN Resolutions

As mentioned above, the UN has created different resolutions to address overpopulation. A/RES/S-21/2 “Key Actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development” overall states that the government should invest in the social sector, particularly in relation to education and health as a measure and “effective strategy for development”. Furthermore, governments should proclaim their engagement and “enabling environment to achieve sustained economic growth in the context of sustainable development and to eradicating poverty”

China’s One Child Policy

This strategy for population control was utilized to reduce China’s population. This policy limited family units to only have one child unless they had twins, are rural couples, ethnic minorities or children themselves. It was implemented in 1980 and after its implementation it has been estimated to prevent

over 100 million births from 1979 to 2009. Research has shown that bonuses at workplaces are methods China enforce the policy. Furthermore, family units only have one child to enjoy benefits such as subsidised education. Nevertheless, this policy has had a large quantity of drawbacks; violates the human right of parents to “determine freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children,” they were forced abortions, male to female ratio is drastically skewed, orphanages are overflowing with abandoned children, mainly female and millions of undocumented and concealed citizens.

India's Forced Sterilization Programme

India's government introduced and established this programme in 1970's to address the alarming population growth rate. The programme specified that men with two children or more were under the obligation to be sterilised. However, impoverished men were also forced into sterilization in unsanitary camps. The programme failed and it still being negative criticised as it not only violated basic human rights but created a negative image of family planning and its result on other governments initiatives of family planning being impeded. Similar, yet more subtle practices occurred in countries such as Peru, Canada, China, Czech Republic, Germany, Japan, Russia, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Mexico, and Uzbekistan.

Possible Solutions

Education and Awareness

People lack access to information and services regarding family planning and birth control. If such services were available and affordable to the general population it would substantially reduce the birth rate and prevent the 80 million unintended pregnancies annually. The implementation of sexual education in school and the provision of condoms, pills and intrauterine devices would further help. It is also highly important to explain the consequence of overpopulation, especially to low-income and socioeconomic families who don't see the danger in numbers. Education regarding the effect of overpopulation on our earth and how to build and maintain a sustainable mean of living could be transformative.

Birth Regulations

Although birth regulation programmes such as China's and India's are highly controversial, researchers argue that they have been highly successful. Though these enforcements, such as may not be feasible in every country, it would be beneficial for an expedient programme or policy to be formulated to regulate

the number of births. Perhaps benefits could be given to couples that only have one child (this number will vary from country to country) or taxes could be imposed on those who have more than one child.

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Appendix or Appendices

- Description of United Nation Conferences regarding Overpopulation: www.un.org/en/development/devagenda/population.shtml.
- Summary of India's Sterilization: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-30040790>
- Abstract of how contraceptives contain global population: <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2016/mar/08/rise-use-contraception-global-population-growth-family-planning>
- Synopsis of China's One Child Policy: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1116810/>
- Insight into Developed Countries birthrate decline: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4255510/>
- Overpopulation in developing nations: www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12281798