



Brussels Rural Development Briefings
A series of meetings on ACP-EU development issues

Briefing session n° 16

**Population growth and its implications for ACP
rural development**

Wednesday 27th January 2010 – 8h30 – 13h00
European Commission, Building Borschette, - Rue Froissart, 36, Room 1D
<http://brusselsbriefings.net>

Population growth: current state and future projections

In 2009, world population stood at 6.8 billion, up about 83 million from 2008. The world total is likely to reach 7 billion in the latter half of 2011, with the bulk of growth in the world's poorest nations¹. Although the rate of global population growth is declining, the UN projects that total population will increase from the current 6.8 billion to approximately 9.1 billion in 2050. Virtually all of the growth is in developing countries². The global population is aging in developed countries due to a fall in fertility and a large increase in longevity and those aging societies account for about 70 percent of global GDP. Many of the world's least developed countries have the opposite problem: high fertility rates, reduced longevity due to diseases like HIV/AIDS and an increasingly youthful population³. The world is in a period of change in its age structure: the population aged 60 and over, which currently represents slightly more than half the number of 15-24 year olds (over 1 billion people), is rising sharply and projected to surpass 1 billion within two decades and to overtake the 15-24 age group. The population aged 80 and over is projected to increase at an annual rate of 3.4% from 2000 to 2050. During the last 50 years, the number of people aged 60 or over in the world rose by 350 million (to 550 million) and in the next 50 years, a 1.5 billion increase is projected⁴.

Regional disparities

The large increase in global population hides regional variations. Since 1975, African population more than doubled. It notably reached 1 billion in 2009, and forecasts indicate 2 billion in 2050 and 4 billion in 2100⁵. But Africa is four-times less populated (a bit more than 30h/km²) compared to Europe, and population is badly distributed between empty and over-populated areas⁶.

The less developed countries of Africa, Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean are projected to increase by just under 50% in the 40 years between now and 2050, and the poorest of these are projected to double in population size over that period. But this scenario assumes that fertility in less developed countries will decline smoothly to the low levels observed in today's more developed countries: about 1.8 children per woman and for this to happen, many factors are key as family planning. Compared with other developing regions in 1960, sub-Saharan Africa started with a slightly higher total fertility rate of 6.7 children per woman.

By the mid-1990s, dramatic reductions had occurred elsewhere—to 3.0 children per woman in Latin America, 3.8 in South Central Asia, and 2.2 in East Asia. During that period, all three regions saw a

¹ Population Reference Bureau, 2009 World Population Data Sheet, http://www.prb.org/pdf09/09wpds_eng.pdf

² Population Reference Bureau, 2009 World Population Data Sheet, cit;

³ Commission on Growth and Development, The Growth Report: Strategies for Sustained Growth and Inclusive Development, 2008, <http://www.growthcommission.org/storage/cgdev/documents/report/growthreportpart4.pdf>

⁴ Harvard Initiative for Global Health, Global Demographic Change: Dimensions and Economic Significance, Working paper n. 1, 2005, http://www.hsph.harvard.edu/pgda/working/working_paper1.pdf

⁵ UN, World Population Prospects. The 2008 Revision. Highlights, http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wpp2008/wpp2008_highlights.pdf and UNFPA, State of world population 2009. Facing a changing world: women, population and climate, http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2009/en/pdf/EN_SOWP09.pdf

⁶ World Bank, The world's growing population, World Bank Atlas (36th edition), 2004, <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPRH/Resources/population.pdf>

surge in contraception use: the percentage of married women aged 15–49 using contraception rose from around 13 percent to 80 percent in East Asia, from 7 to 40 percent in South Asia, and from 14 to 67 percent in Latin America. The figures for sub-Saharan Africa over that time period are much less important, rising from around 5 percent to just 18 percent with fertility falling from 6.7 children per woman to 5.9 only. While some African countries (Namibia, Botswana, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Kenya) have achieved fertility reductions, the majority of SSA countries still have very high fertility rates⁷.

By 2050, the number of youth (ages 15 to 24) will have risen from 43 millions in 1950 to 348 millions in Africa and, at that point, about nine in 10 young people will be in developing countries. This very large group will arrive at working age with higher expectations for employment, health care, education, access to credit. They will move to urban areas if opportunities in the rural areas diminish. But will the economic conditions of their country be able to meet their rising expectations? This will be one of the major social questions of the next few decades⁸.

Impact of rapid population growth on economic development

From now until 2050, the world is projected to add 3 billion people and only 100 million will be in rich countries. One billion will be in fast-developing countries, like India and China, the remainder two-thirds of the world's population increase, will be added in countries that do not yet have a solid track record of economic growth. Therefore, the supply of labour is not where the jobs are being created⁹. The question of the influence of population change on economic growth has been discussed for decades around population size and population growth. However, the debate has given insufficient attention to the critical issue of the *age structure* of the population (that is, the way in which the population is distributed across different age groups), which can change dramatically as fertility and mortality rates change.

Age structure can have significant effects on its economic performance depending for example on the high proportion of children and elderly vs. active people who contribute directly to economic growth. Between 1965 and 1990, in the world as a whole, the working-age population grew 0.31 percentage points per year faster than the total population, whereas in sub-Saharan Africa it grew 0.08 percentage points slower than the total. AIDS pandemic is bringing average age down in many countries¹⁰.

There are 22,4 million people with HIV in sub-Saharan Africa of which the majority is between 20 to 59 years old¹¹. As a result, the population of the 35 sub-Saharan African countries most affected will be 10 percent lower in 2015 than it otherwise would have been, despite continuing high fertility in the region and threatening development since it represents the economically active part of the population¹².

Migration: the solution?

Migration alone will not be sufficient to solve the problem of youth unemployment even if it could help alleviate it and could also benefit those host countries with an aging population. Some argue that well managed long-term migration and well-supervised programs of temporary migration for work should be part of 21st century globalization. For many countries, migration for work purposes is the only potential solution and remittances represent more than ODA. Many poor countries suffer from the brain drain effect as highly educated people leave.

Large scale migration from the developing world to the developed world would increase global incomes substantially as well as population as it is the case in the US¹³.

Gender equality and empowerment to reach reproductive rights and reproductive health¹⁴

⁷ Population Reference Bureau, 2009 World Population Data Sheet, cit.

⁸ Population Reference Bureau, 2009 World Population Data Sheet, cit.

⁹ Commission on Growth and Development, The Growth Report: Strategies for Sustained Growth and Inclusive Development, 2008, <http://cgd.s3.amazonaws.com/GrowthReportComplete.pdf>

¹⁰ RAND, The Demographic Dividend: A New Perspective on the Economic Consequences of Population Change, by Bloom, Canning, and Sevilla, 2003, http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/2007/MR1274.pdf

¹¹ Source: UNAIDS, AIDS epidemic update 2009, http://data.unaids.org/pub/Report/2009/JC1700_Epi_Update_2009_en.pdf

¹² RAND, The Demographic Dividend, cit.

¹³ Commission on Growth and Development, The Growth Report, cit.

There are various reasons for continued high fertility as few opportunities in rural areas, low incentive to save, and children are still viewed as insurance for old age and a source of labour. Furthermore, and despite medical advances, infectious disease is still widespread, particularly in rural areas, so cultural norms and policies encouraging high fertility in order to achieve desired family sizes are not changing much¹⁵.

In SSA, women have little choice in the decision of child bearing. They often need to bear many children as a means of social recognition and economic survival¹⁶. While mortality has declined in Sub-Saharan Africa, following the pattern in other areas (infant mortality in the region fell by 43 percent between 1960 and 2000), fertility has not (declining only 19 percent in the same period)¹⁷. The risk of dying from pregnancy or childbirth in sub-Saharan Africa is one in 22. Comparatively, the risk in developed countries is only about one in 7.300¹⁸. Early childbearing poses serious health risks for both mother and child. Some countries have reduced the prevalence of early childbearing by keeping girls in school and changing community norms and national policies about early marriage¹⁹. Another serious issue is the lack of response for gender-based violence involving profound brutality towards women and girls. Policymakers need to give priority to educating and empowering African girls and women to deal better with demographic trends and development.

Population and environment

Population dynamics have important environmental implications but other demographic dynamics, including changes in population flows and densities, can also pose challenging environmental problems²⁰. As global population continues to grow, limits on resources as food, arable land, water, forests and fisheries are under pressure, especially in less-developed regions which cope with a growing share of population. Migration can exacerbate pressures on some local environments and urbanization often results in high levels of pollution. Two specific areas illustrate the challenges of understanding the complex influence of population dynamics on the environment: land-use patterns and global climate change. Fulfilling the resource requirements of a growing population ultimately requires some form of land-use change--to provide for the expansion of food production through forest clearing, to intensify production on already cultivated land, or to develop the infrastructure necessary to support increasing human numbers. During the past three centuries, the amount of Earth's cultivated land has grown by more than 450 percent, increasing from 2.65 million square kilometres to 15 million square kilometres. A related process, deforestation, is also critically apparent: a net decline in forest cover of 125 million acres took place during the 15-year interval 1990 – 2005 (with, on average, a 20% annual decrease in the world forest area), although changes in forest cover vary greatly across regions²¹. Whereas developing countries experienced a net loss of 200 million acres, developed countries actually experienced a net increase, of 20 million acres²². On global climate change, research suggests that many changes in atmospheric gas are human-induced: contributions related to industrial production and energy consumption lead to carbon dioxide emissions from fossil fuel use and land-use changes, such as deforestation, affect the exchange of carbon dioxide between the Earth and the atmosphere; and some agricultural processes, such as paddy-rice cultivation and livestock production, are responsible for greenhouse gas releases. With FAO projecting that 70 percent increase in food production will be needed to feed the 2050

¹⁴ The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) articulated a bold new vision about the relationships between population, development and individual well-being. At the ICPD, 179 governments adopted a forward-looking, 20-year Programme of Action (PoA) that built on the success of the population, maternal health and family planning programmes of the previous decades while addressing, with a new perspective, the needs of the early years of the twenty-first century. The ICPD Programme of Action, sometimes referred to as the Cairo Consensus, was remarkable in its recognition that reproductive health and rights, as well as women's empowerment and gender equality, are cornerstones of population and development programmes. The Consensus is rooted in principles of human rights and respect for national sovereignty and various religious and cultural backgrounds.

¹⁵ RAND, The Demographic Dividend, cit.

¹⁶ World Bank, Africa's Population Set to Double by 2036, <http://go.worldbank.org/5W42H1WC30>

¹⁷ RAND, The Demographic Dividend, cit.

¹⁸ WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA et al., Maternal mortality in 2005,

http://www.unfpa.org/webdav/site/global/shared/documents/publications/2007/mm_update05.pdf

¹⁹ Population Reference Bureau, 2009 World Population Data Sheet, cit.

²⁰ RAND, The Environmental Implications of Population Dynamics by Lori Hunter, 2000,

http://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB5045/index1.html

²¹ FAO, State of the world's forests 2009, <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/011/i0350e/i0350e.pdf>

²² RAND, The Environmental Implications, cit.

population estimates, it is worth recalling that agriculture is an important source of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, representing 14 percent of the global total²³.

Future challenges

Future population trends will depend on a combination of factors such as: lower fertility rates in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, higher fertility rates in developed countries, increased family planning services in developing countries, lower levels of HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa and Asia, the impact of climate change or environmental degradation to human health and livelihoods. The experience of Asia and Latin America has shown that female education, legal reform and access to family planning services have made a difference in many countries. Therefore, critical policy areas to address include public health, family planning, education and economic policies that promote labour-market flexibility, openness to trade, and savings and investment.

Policymakers must plan for the future health care and pension-income needs in developing countries as well. Addressing population ageing is a challenge, especially in the current financial situation²⁴. With increased urbanization (by 2050 the population living in urban areas is projected to almost double, passing from 3.3 billion in 2007 to 6.4 billion²⁵), special attention, needs to be devoted to rural development as to make farm and non-farm rural activities attractive to the youth.

Objectives of the Briefing

In order to improve information sharing and promote networking, CTA, the EC-DG Development and EuropeAid, the ACP Secretariat, Euforic, Concord and IPS organise bimonthly briefings on key issues and challenges for rural development in the context of EU/ACP cooperation. The briefing on 27th January 2010 will discuss demographic dynamics and their effects in development by (i) raising awareness on existing and emerging key population challenges; (ii) promoting exchange of information and expertise; (iii) feeding in the debate various perspectives on the policy options.

Target group

More than 100 ACP-EU policy makers, representatives of EU Member States, civil society groups, research networks and development practitioners, international organisations based in Brussels.

Available material

Input and comments before, during and after the meetings will be included in the Briefings blog: <http://brusselsbriefings.net/>. A short report and a Reader in printed and electronic format are produced shortly after the meeting. Articles by IPS Europe, partner in this event, will be widely disseminated.

²³ FAO, Food Security and Agricultural Mitigation in Developing Countries: Options for Capturing Synergies, 2009, Food <ftp://ftp.fao.org/docrep/fao/012/ak596e/ak596e00.pdf>

²⁴ RAND, The Demographic Dividend, cit.

²⁵ UN, World Urbanization Prospects: The 2007 Revision, <http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wup2007/2007wup.htm>