

Environmental Studies Program

Issues Update: Population Growth and Disease

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Keywords

Environmental Health, Population, Disease, Climate Change, Overcrowding

Overview

World Population is currently around 6.5 billion and growing at 76 million annually which is the equivalent of the approximate population of Germany. As of 2008 the UN projects that if current growth rates are sustained, the population will surpass 9 billion before 2050.

Population had a direct affect on global health, causing the over exploitation of ecosystems to support an exploding population and an increased demand for food and clean water. Demand for clean water has tripled since 1950 while supplies decline due to contamination and over-pumping. It is projected that half a billion people live in water-stressed environments and that the number will grow to 3 billion by 2025.

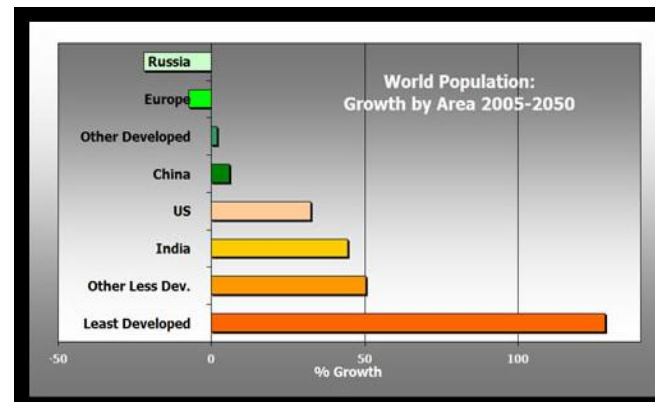
Population growth can also cause overcrowding, poor sanitation and rapid urbanization which can lead to the sudden increase of old diseases or the emergence of new ones. Furthermore, the regions of the world that are currently experiencing the highest growth are those with the highest rates of poverty that lack the resources and infrastructure to maintain the health of the population. According to the WHO, poverty/malnutrition/disease cycle is responsible for 11 million global deaths annually. Diarrhea alone is responsible for the deaths of 2.2 million children per year. Many of these deaths can be averted by simple access to clean water and sanitation measures.

In response to alarming population projections and many dangerous and severely unjust coercive population control measures, at the International Conference on Population and Development held in 1994, 180 countries pledged to follow the ICPD Programme of Action which focuses on shifting away from demographic targets, fertility reduction, and population control to comprehensive health, women's empowerment, and reproductive rights.



Solutions for decreasing population growth and improving public health

- Family Planning
- Education
- Increased Access to Modern Contraceptives
- Reduce Poverty
- Empowering Women
- Better Health Care
- Improve drinking water quality
- Better Sanitation
- Oral Rehydration for Diarrhea Victims



CASE STUDY: Cambodia

Introduction

Beginning in the 1970's, average number of children per woman increased to 6 in the 1980's, putting a strain on the country's resources.

Approach

In 1994 the Cambodian government adopted the National Birth Spacing Policy as well as established the National Reproductive Health Program. This was followed in 1997 by the National Safe Motherhood Policy, which was enacted to help make family planning more readily available.

2003 National Population Policy acknowledge negative consequences of fast pop growth on health, environment, fight poverty and reinforce commitment to improve access

Results

By 2005, contraceptive rates reached an impressive 40%. However, only 27% of the women of reproductive age who were married/in a union used contraceptives and 25% were identified as unmet in terms of their need for family planning.

Therefore, in 2006, the government adopted the National Strategic Development Plan to increase contraceptive use to 44% by 2010 and 60% by 2015.

Outstanding/Unresolved Issues

While programs like these have produced moderate success, there are others that have been ineffective so far including programs that employ coercive measures to sterilize the population. A global effort is needed to support social, non-coercive programs in order to curtail the current rate of growth.

Lessons Learned

- Family planning does reduce fertility
- The Government must support and play an active role in non-coercive population control programs
- Donor funding is needed since the per capita funding has decreased

Resources

- <http://www.peopleandplanet.net/doc.php?id=100§ion=12>
- <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/worldbalance/>
- <http://www.overpopulation.org/>
- <http://www.who>

References

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- <http://www.overpopulation.org/>
- <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs310/en/index.html>
- http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/UNPD_policybriefs/UNPD_policy_brief1.pdf
- Miller's "Living in the Environment"