



New Insights into the Population Growth Factor in Development

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Edited Transcript – Eliya Zulu

Fine. Thanks a lot, Martha, and I don't know whether it's still afternoon or evening, but good afternoon everybody. So my presentation, this is basically the outline of my presentation. What I'm going to talk about is that just what are seem to be the population challenges in Africa and the framing of these issues. And I will present quite a bit of data and go through those data slides quite quickly. But the main aim is really just to illustrate how these issues are framing the discussions on population in Africa. And then my colleague, Dr. Musinguzi will come to also, you know, give more insights on those issues.

You've probably all seen this chart, basically just showing how the global population is growing. The projected population, according to the U.N. projections that the global population, which is about 7 billion now, will go to -- will increase to 9.2 billion by 2050. But I think what's clear is that most of this growth will be generated in the less-developed world, where most are in the least-developed countries, where most African countries actually fall. Africa is projected to -- its one billion population will actually increase to two billion by 2050.

And I think another key point to note there is that, you know, the share of Africa's population in the global, you know, global size will increase from the current 15 percent to 23 percent by then. Those sorts of numbers, actually when you look at them, the U.N. projections, that was the medium variant. That is, you know, the assumption that if we follow what is like the middle level sort of fertility, that's the figure I was giving you. But what this is illustrating is that actually Africa's population of one billion can reach between 1.8 and 2.3 billion by 2050, depending on how well the continent actually does in reducing fertility. This gap, which is about 600 million, actually represents Africa's total population barely 20 years ago. And so while we often take it that it's the medium variant, maybe we tend to just think about the middle ground and so on.

The, if you look at the table below, which shows the fertility assumptions, currently the total fertility rate in Africa being 4.7, you can see that the difference actually between the





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highest fertility and the lowest fertility variance is just one child. So given -- I mean so it's very, very easy to see how the -- if really the efforts to reduce fertility are not intensified, it's easy to see how, you know, we can actually go to the end part where we end up with 2.2 billion people, as opposed to the two billion that we are talking about.

The point of this table here is to note that while the continent as a whole has a big population growth challenge, there are actually big differentials within the continent itself. The rapid growth is mostly driven by West, Central, and East Africa, with Southern Africa and the northern part of Africa actually not growing as fast. When you look at these figures one may ask, "So what?" I mean other people have argued that actually big populations may be good for development. Or it's a politically sensitive issue. Some countries feel, you know, that they are strong when they have big population.

So why should we be worried about this? The truth is that while big populations may actually be good by providing, you know, a big labor force, economies of scale, and so on. Rapid population growth makes it harder for governments to provide the basic social services that are needed to improve the quality and productivity of their populations. And these challenges are actually even bigger in the African context, where economies have either stagnated or are growing very, very, have been very, very slowly over the last two decades or so. And we also have to think about the consequences of having such big populations for the continent's rapidly deteriorating biodiversity.

The primary means through which populations have reduced their fertility and population growth is through mass adoption of modern methods of family planning. In 2008, 55 percent of married women globally were using modern contraception, but only 17 percent were doing so in Sub-Saharan Africa. In West and Mid African, actually only 10 percent were using modern contraception, and seven percent, respectively. So East Africa has, you know, a relatively high sort of contraceptive use rate. But the fertility is still high, suggesting that, you know, most of this use is actually for spacing, as opposed to limiting the number of children that women should have.

So you can ask the question, why are people having so many children? But before I get to that, I'll just quickly go through some other issues relating to the population growth factor. And here the main focus is on the issue of urbanization. In 2008, as many of us here may know, for the first time in human history the world's population became more urban than rural. This figure shows that developing countries, actually we're seeing that most of the growth in population will happen in developing countries. But it's critical to



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note that even within the developing countries, most of this growth will be happening in urban areas.

In Africa, the tipping point for the urban, what is called the Urban Tipping Point, is projected to take place around 2032, after which, you know, all the rural population will stop rise and start declining, while all the growth, most of the growth we are talking about will actually be happening in urban areas. So why should we be concerned about this rapid population growth, which is really pushing also a rapid urbanization? The truth is that the consequences of urban, rapid urbanization, which is taking place, the consequence of the Africa's rapid urbanization growth, which is taking place amidst economic stagnation. Also I think we have to accept it's not just rapid urbanization and so on. There are also issues of governance. There are issues of planning that, you know, we need to plan our cities better and so on.

But as a result of this, a combination of these factors, there's a rapid growth of slum settlements in Africa and other developing parts of the world. These slums are settlements characterized by poor housing conditions, poor social services, non-existence of basic amenities in some cases, poor health outcomes, insecurity, unstable incomes and livelihoods, and so on. But so if you look at the green chart there, it may give you the impression that there's been some progress in Africa in reducing the prevalence of the number of people living in urban slums. But the red chart actually shows that, you know, the number actually doubled between 1990 and 2010. And U.N. Habitat estimates that by 2020 there will be 372 million Africans who'll be living in slum settlements.

And another point to note, I think when we talk about urban growth, rapid urban growth, people tend to think that it's because it's largely, you know, generated by rural to urban migration. But this slide here shows that it's actually the natural increase, the fertility within urban areas themselves, that accounts for most of this growth. In developing countries, it's 60 percent. But in Africa, because of the high fertility that we see even in urban areas, 75 percent of the growth is actually due to that.

And, I mean, this chart here is just emphasizing the same point, that sometimes we tend to think all urban areas are better off because there are hospitals there, the facilities are better. But that in urban areas, when you start looking at the poor versus non-poor, there are very, very high levels of unwanted fertility even within the urban areas, as you can see in these, the example from these three cities.

Apart from urbanization, another critical demographic sort of feature of Africa is the young age structure of the population. And this is driven mostly by, you know, high





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fertility over a long period of time. And what you see here is that between 40 percent and 50 percent of the populations in East and Southern and West Africa are below 15 years of age. And between 30 to 40 percent are actually between 10 and 24 years. What are some of the implications? There's a very, very high dependency ratio. We need to talk about building the Africa of the future. We need to think about how we can have, you know, how we can improve education, how we can protect the young people today, their essential needs, and so on. But with such a young population, it's very, very hard for us to actually achieve these objectives. But another critical component that is related for population growth, another critical component or implication of a young age structure is actually that it produces high momentum for further population growth.

And this chart here illustrates how a young population has in-built momentum to continue growing for many years, even after you actually, the population reaches replacement level of fertility, which is estimated to be a total fertility of 2.1. That is, you know, a woman is actually producing enough children just to replace the current generation in future. So this is Ethiopia, the third, sometimes people say it's the second, but the third largest country in Africa. So this is very significant. And what it shows is that even if Ethiopia's total fertility reaches 2.1 in 2020, for instance, which is 10 years from now; it's current population of 95 million will continue growing for another 50 years and stabilize at about 110 million in about 2070. However, if replacement level fertility is actually attained, say 20 years later in 2060, which seems, you know, not very unrealistic when you look at the assumptions that we looked at before, the population would then stabilize at 300 million. And that stabilization will happen in the year 2110.

So again, this shows the urgency of trying to address the issue of population. This brings in Zimbabwe. And the main difference between Zimbabwe and Ethiopia is that Zimbabwe has a lower fertility level. And that the population is a bit, is less younger than the one for Ethiopia. So the differences across the three scenarios are not that big. But the momentum is still there, because the populations still grow for many years to come, and stabilize after 40, 50, 60 years.

And finally, I would like to look at this other demographic feature also. I think that those who have looked at development among the Asian tigers, we've noted how this demographic dividend actually helped the Asian countries to actually get away from the sort of developing country to middle income sort of status. So as fertility is declining and mortality is declining, the dependency ratio goes down and that allows, you know, a country to actually release resources for investment in the current labor force but also investing in the quality of the progression through better education and so on.



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So this like Kenya in 2010, 55 percent of the population were in the labor force, while 43 percent are in the, you know, youth age group. If fertility continues to decline, the way it is projected now, in 2030 61 percent of Kenya's population will be in the labor force; and in 2050, 65 percent of the labor force, the structure will change. So this is just part of the demographic process itself; it's not something that anybody is doing anything about to engineer it. But as fertility and mortality declines, the age structure changes such that, you know, you get this so called demographic dividend where now you're able to have a much bigger labor force.

So the point we need to ask ourselves: Is Africa ready to take advantage of this because this process is on the way. And you know, the Asian experience by the World Bank experts showed that for a population to take advantage of this, the labor force itself has to be well educated, it has to be productively employed so that the economy has to be able to generate enough jobs. And if those two conditions are met then you be able to make the savings and investments that are required.

So the point I want to make here is that when you talk about fertility, reduction of fertility, or controlling population growth, it should not just be about reducing fertility. We should also be thinking about how we can invest in the quality of the population so that when this dividend comes up in Africa, Africa can take advantage of it.

So -- and I think I've gone through the data there. Now I'm going to get into this issue. One I think can ask the question, okay if you look at all these population growth challenges in Africa, why is it that people are not actually having fewer children in Africa? It is the only continent where fertility is so high. And yes it's true that large families are quite highly valued in many part of Africa, yes? However the evidence in this chart are from the work that the Institute and the UNFPA did recently, shows that a sizeable proportion of women in Africa would like to control their reproduction. Actually 78 million of them but only 40 percent of them of the women who want to avoid pregnancy were actually using modern contraception. In 2008, for the 7 million which represents the 60 percent of those who wanted actually to control their fertility and were not able to do so because of a lack of contraception or lack of access and many other reasons.

And if you look at -- that's looking at those who are not using family planning, but you can also look at those who already have a child and ask them, did you want to have this child and so on. So that's looking at the intended pregnancies. This work shows that 17 million of the pregnancies were actually not intended. And 91 percent of them were



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either not using contraception or using largely ineffective, the largely ineffective traditional methods.

So I mean from where I stand it's very, very clear that the Africa has a very, very high demand for fertility control. And that the demand will undoubtedly increase in as many parts of the continent where people still desire many children revise their fertility preferences. The main challenge there is not that of demand but how to insure that those who are in need actually have access to contraception. And I think if you can just focus on that without even talking about the issue of population control and so on. We can actually reduce the level of fertility in Africa substantially. When you ask those who are not using contraception, "Why are you not using contraception," these are the sort of reasons that you get: There's still quite substantial opposition to family planning as you can see in the numbers that are highlighted with red. But there is also quite substantial proportion of women who are not using family planning because of what they, what are called method-related reasons. And most of these reasons are actually related to the health concerns that women have about family planning. So these are the sort of issues that family planning programs can address by improving the quality of services, by making sure that services reach out to people, where people are as much as possible.

But I think the truth is that family planning programs to be used sustainably in Africa, they have to be heavily subsidized or given free of charge because studies have shown that 97 percent of the women cannot afford the full cost of contraception, which gets to this slide about also the work that the Goodmarker Institute and the UNFPA did recently; and this slide actually shows the extent of the funding gap admitting the need for family planning. But it also provides what I consider to be very strong case for investing in family planning, maternal health and newborn health services. According to this analysis, the annual investment in family planning, if the annual investment increased from the 290 million to 2.3 billion in Africa to erase basically all [unintelligible] need for family planning, this are the sort of effects that this would have, that you would reduce unintended pregnancies from 11.7 million to about 2.7 million. And just abortions would reduce from about 3.5 to 1.2 million, and the reductions in maternal health are also there.

So this is basically the situation in Africa. But then I prepared, I just wanted to say that while in the past there was some tension, some debate about really addressing population issues in Africa, right now the landscape has changed a great deal. And the big advantage that we have on the continent right now is that there are many countries that have shown that with seriousness, with, you know, proper leadership, strong government leadership, and so on you can address a lot of this population challenges. I'll just go through a couple of them here. I think we all know about Kenya, which in 1978 had the





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highest fertility level in the world. But this fertility has reduced to 4.6 by now. Total use of modern contraception has gone up from 4 percent to 39 percent; and this was mostly because of providing an enabling environment that allowed a lot of international players to come into the country and also the issue of political leadership, strong political leadership.

We should also mention that Kenya and Zimbabwe, which is the next country, also invested a lot in the status of women. These two countries have the highest levels of female illiteracy around the continent and so on. But Zimbabwe's another country that is there. Unlikely what I'm calling a major success story; you can look at Malawi for instance. Malawi banned family planning in 1969. It was only ended in 1984 but within this period, although the total fertility is still very high, Malawi has managed to increase contraceptive use of modern methods from 1 percent in 1984 to 28 percent in 2004.

Ghana is another, you know, success country, another country that you can look at: proper leadership, commitment to addressing population issues. And I think one of the countries that I should also mention quickly is Rwanda. With the genocide people would have thought that the country wouldn't be worried about these issues but in a period of three years between 2005 and 2008, use of modern contraception increased from 10 to 27 percent.

So what are the key messages from the issues that I am raising? Yeah, Africa is the key sort of population challenges in Africa are still rapid population growth, the young age structure, it poses a lot of challenges for development. But I think the issue of rapid urbanization and its consequences also has to be looked at. Addressing these concerns is increasingly seem to be -- okay, however -- sorry I think I went -- addressing these concerns is increasingly seem to be key to the continent's development prospects and the realization of the MDGs within Africa itself. And I think that the issue is that, the point I ended with is the greater commitment within the continent itself to make sure that you address these issues. Well, you know things are working: it's mostly through political leadership, our health systems, strong family planning programs and also investments in the status of women.

But I think that we can't run away from the fact that there's only a handful of countries that we can even call success stories in Africa. The challenge is still quite big. And the international development committee should build on Africa's successes, the success stories and support efforts especially to improve universal access to family planning -- this is a huge funding gap -- expand public education in reproductive matters, improve



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the status of women and also improve the situation that we have seeing in the urban settings in Africa. Thank you.



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