POPULATION GROWTH IN ETHIOPIA: CAUSES, IMPACTS AND WIDER AREAS OF INFLUENCE

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Outline for this evening:

1. Population issues in Ethiopia;
2. Population policy in historical context
3. How can we approach the issue today?
Population in Ethiopia:

- Rate of growth: 2.5%/year
- UN projections
- Very young age structure
- Urbanization rate is double national growth rates
Birth and contraception rates:

- Fertility is 5.1 children per woman
- Under 10% of women use modern contraception
- Unmet need for contraception is defined as: “A woman who would like to delay or prevent her next pregnancy and is not using modern contraception”

Over a third of married women have an “unmet need” for contraception in Ethiopia
Impacts of population growth on Ethiopian development indicators:

- Maternal health (one in five deaths for women is due to pregnancy related causes)
- Education (primary school enrolment is lower amongst women with large families)
- Hinders economic growth
- Environmental degradation
Impacts of high population growth on development efforts:

• Hinder Attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGS)
  1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
  2. Achieve universal primary education
  3. Promote gender equality and empower women
  4. Reduce child mortality
  5. Improve maternal health
  6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
  7. Ensure environmental sustainability
  8. Develop a global partnership for development

“The MDGs are difficult or impossible to achieve with the current levels of population growth in the least developed countries or regions” APPG Report, Return of the Population Growth Factor
1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger:

Reduction of percent of population living in poverty not represented in *numbers* living in poverty:

2. Achieve universal primary education:

Primary school completion rates 2006-2007

Total fertility rates 2006

Population and reproductive health policies in Ethiopia:

• Rates of fertility decline
  – Data shows that fertility has declined from 6.4 births per woman in 1995 to 5.4 births per woman in 2005

• Government commitment to family planning programs?
  – Still very low

• Abortion law (2005) one of the most progressive in Africa
Population and Environment: Malthusian worries in the 21st Century

• Debate around the relationship because it is difficult to achieve consensus in a generalized way...

• Relationship is better observed on a case by case basis, illustrated in Ethiopia
Population Growth and Environmental concerns- Ethiopia

Ethiopia’s environmental makeup:
- Desert in the east
- Rainforest in the west
- High altitude vegetation in the central, southeastern and northern highlands
- Human dependency on environment is high
- Population growth of 2.7 %/ year has accelerated land degradation
“There are no jokes in wife and land” (proverb used by farmers in northern Ethiopia..)

Land degradation is caused by the following:
- Population growth
- Unsustainable land use
- Ambiguous land ownership policies...

Increasing family size (decreased land holdings) + unsustainable practices = productivity
Population and the Ethiopian environment...

• Examples of environmental concerns
  – Desertification
  – Water shortages
  – Land degradation
  – Soil erosion

• Deforestation
  – Estimated to be at 150,000-200,000 hectares annually which if continues at this rate could denude country in as little as 20 years
Distribution of populations

- Land per capita seems ample but what is important is density:

- Populations organize themselves according to environmental conditions

- Most of lowlands are not suitable for habitation due to malaria and water shortages

- Majority of population (80%) and 70% of livestock live in ecologically fragile highlands

- Such highlands constitute only 45% of available land area
1. Inefficient farming techniques require large areas of land
2. Low use of soil conservation techniques
3. Increasing family size and soil erosion means less arable land
4. Farmers have to share same piece of land exerting even more pressure

Food Insecurity
The effects of landlessness..

- Urbanization
- Deforestation
- Expansion to marginal areas
Multi-sector approach: pioneered in Ethiopia

- **Population-Health-Environment Framework** examples from Ethiopia
- Where do these three meet?:
  - **Population - Environment** (population pressure, migration, overexploitation of land)
  - **Environment - Health** (food and water security, diseases and pests)
  - **Health - Population** (sexual and reproductive health through family planning, infant and maternal health)

Before trees were re-planted in the village where these women live they were walking up to 25km a day to collect wood.
Wichi Provence in eastern Ethiopia, case study:

Project has three central activities:

- Educate local inhabitants on sustainable land use practices
- Rehabilitate areas through reforestation programs
- Introduce family planning services
Guiding Principle:

Individuals cannot exercise adequate stewardship over natural resources unless their basic needs for health, nutrition and economic well-being are addressed.
Preliminary results show success:

Contraceptive prevalence that was initially very low now stands at around 30% use. Which is three times the national average.
Climate Change- poor countries will be hit earliest and hardest:

• Most vulnerable to impacts

• Have less capacity to adapt

• Rapid population growth underscores both
Climate Change adds an extra dimension to pop- environment model

- Rapid population growth can make adaptation to the changes and impacts much harder
Ethiopia’s National Adaptation Program of Action (NAPA)

- Submitted to the UNFCCC by Ethiopian Government in 2007
- Acknowledges that population pressure is one of key causes of climate change vulnerability as it impacts on:

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<th>Loss of natural habitat</th>
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<td>Soil Degradation/ Over farming</td>
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<td>Desertification</td>
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Does population growth cause climate change? Skewed global rates of consumption show otherwise:

• For every 1,000 people in Ethiopia, there are only two motorized vehicles (compared to 787 motorized vehicles per 1,000 Americans) (Population Action International)

• The average American emits about two hundred times more carbon dioxide than the average Ethiopian.”

• It will however be an important factor in the future as developing economies industrialise.
Global Population Growth Today:

Global population growth shown between Less Developed and more Developed regions 1750 – 2150.

Drivers of population increase

• Decreased mortality
• High fertility (lag behind mortality)
• Momentum from previous generations
Demographic impacts of high population growth:

- Urbanisation
- Migration
- Young age structures
The missing Millennium Development Goal?

- Introduction of the additional MDG in 2006:
  
  “To provide universal access to reproductive health by 2015 and reduce the unmet need for family planning”
Human numbers vs. human rights

• Population programs in context
  – History of family planning (population control policy)

• International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), Cairo 1994

• New paradigm built around human rights;
How can we approach population matters today?

• Improving economic and educational opportunities for women and girls and reducing infant mortality rates.

• Providing universal access to high quality, voluntary family planning services
  – Addressing today’s “unmet need” for contraceptive services (200 million women worldwide)
The deal for Family Planning..

Global levels of investment at an all time low, declined by 30% in real terms since the mid 1990s.

Source: Prof. Joseph Speidel, evidence to the Group.*
Update: Population and Sustainability Network compiled from financial resource flows for demographic activities 2005; www.resourceflows.org
Reasons for disinvestment in family planning:

• Assumptions about fertility decline
• Donor fatigue and alternative needs for the same money (HIV/AIDS)
• Resistance from opposed groups
Wider benefits of family planning as part of sexual and reproductive health services:

- Maternal and infant health
  - 76 million unintended pregnancies in the developing world in 2003 resulted in 184,000 pregnancy related deaths and 1.8 million infant deaths.

- Expanded opportunities for women’s education, employment and social participation

- Lowering population pressure
WIN/WIN opportunity for family planning

• Relatively easy to implement

• Relatively inexpensive (unique intervention in the breadth of benefits it brings)

• Demand for it already exists and is growing

• Can bolster capacity to cope with environmental changes at household and national level through easing population pressure
Conclusion

• Reaching population stabilization on its own would not be the silver bullet for development challenges, environmental sustainability or climate change...

  BUT

• It would make action much more feasible.
What the future holds..

• Build on lessons learned, the paradigm supporting sexual and reproductive health rights is still pertinent today and for the future

• Ethiopia and other Least Developed Countries need bold and progressive policies developed with human rights as a central pillar

• Necessary political will, and international support to implement policies that have largely been ignored
Thank you for listening

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