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Can you care about Population Growth and about Human Rights?

2014 Budgett–Meakin Lecture, HLSI

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Lecture aims

- Clarify why reproductive rights are human rights
- Discuss some current controversies regarding global population growth
- Illustrate why and how population dynamics are critical to the current sustainable development discourse
- Allow time for discussion.
Reproductive Rights

- Luxury or core human rights?
- Lifelines...
- What a human rights approach means for family planning programmes
The Right to Health

“The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health”

ICESCR, 1966, Article 12.1
Key Human Rights Obligations

- Promote
- Respect
- Protect
- Fulfil
Key Human Rights Principles

- Participation
- Accountability
- Non-discrimination
- Empowerment
- Link to UN Treaty Monitoring Bodies
WHO Health and Human Rights

Examples of the links between Health and Human Rights

- Torture
- Slavery
- Violence against women and children
- Human rights violations resulting in ill-health
- Right to health
- Right to education
- Right to food & nutrition
- Freedom from discrimination
- Reducing vulnerability to ill-health through human rights
- Health & Human Rights
- Promotion or violation of human rights through health development
- Right to participation
- Freedom from discrimination
- Right to information
- Right to privacy
General Comment on the Right to Health

- Normative Content
  - Availability
  - Accessibility
  - Acceptability
  - Quality
Human Rights...

Kofi Annan: –

“Human rights are the expression of those traditions of tolerance in all religions and cultures that are the basis of peace and progress. Human rights are foreign to no culture and native to all nations.”
Reproductive Health approach...

- Gives high priority to quality of care
- Pays attention to the needs of unmarried women, men, young people and people beyond reproductive years...
- Aims at the provision of integrated reproductive health services within the context of primary health care, rather than vertical reproductive health services or, within that, only contraceptive services
Reproductive Health approach (cont’d)...

- Promotes the right to choice and aims to create conditions that would enable choice (e.g., providing information in an accessible form)
- Encourages male responsibility in family planning and in women’s reproductive health
- Focuses on issues of infertility as well as fertility control, so that women and men have greater choices about reproduction
For Health Professionals

How to treat us **young people:**

- Be confidential with us
- Provide us with the information and services we need
- Accept us as we are, do not moralize or demoralize us
- Use language or means we understand
- Ask and respect our opinions about the services
- Allow us to decide for ourselves
- Make us feel welcome and comfortable
- Don’t judge us
- Provide services at the time and within the time frame we have available
All young people of the world regardless of sex, colour, sexual orientation or mental and physical ability have the following rights as sexual beings.

1. The right to be yourself – free to make your own decisions, to express yourself, to enjoy sex, to be safe, to choose to marry (or not to marry) and plan a family.

2. The right to know – about sex, contraceptives, STDs/HIV, and about your rights.

3. The right to protect yourself and be protected – from unplanned pregnancies, STDs/HIV and sexual abuse.

4. The right to have health care – which is confidential, affordable, of good quality and given with due respect.

5. The right to be involved – in planning programmes with and for youth, attending meetings/seminars etc. at all levels and trying to influence governments through appropriate means.
“the greatest challenge to women’s rights comes from the doctrine of cultural relativism … the articulation of sexual rights is the final frontier for the women’s movement”.

Radhika Coomaraswamy, 2003
Amnesty International Turkey Campaign

A player at a Turkish football match at which both teams wore Stop Violence Against Women T-shirts, February 2004. The slogan on the T-shirts reads: "Red Card for violence against women".
Mainstreaming Rights...

Matrix for Integrating GRS into SRH Programming
Rights-based Programmes...

- Address sexual violence and coercion, especially as it relates to restricting women’s choice, and exposes women and girls to higher risks of morbidity and mortality.

Jacobson
Rights-based Programmes...

- Incorporate communication and behaviour change interventions encouraging the prevention of disease, the practice of safe sex, and changes in social norms that encourage equitable partnerships

Jacobson
Rights–based Programmes...

- Incorporate multi-source reproductive health and rights education strategies, and seek to instil a sense of entitlement among people and a rights-based ethos within programmes.
Rights-based Programmes...

- Establish means of ensuring the accountability of programmes to the population and means of redress for violations of rights

Jacobson
To ensure a fair selection you all get the same test. You must all climb that tree.
Assessing the overall quality of public health and human rights

Excellent

Public health provision

Strong on public health but weak on human rights
Weak on both public health and human rights

Poor

Human rights

Excellent

Strong on both public health and human rights
Weak on public health but strong on human rights
Rebecca West, 1913

“I’ve never been able to find out precisely what feminism is; I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat”
“In short, when human rights principles are applied to health, we begin to have the strategic, political basis upon which to mobilize across the divides of nation, class, race, and religion in support of each other and in pursuit of change”

Lynn Freedman
World Population Projections for 2025-2050

Population growth 1950 – 2050

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Time to Add Each Billion</th>
<th>Year</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
<td>130 years (1930)</td>
<td>(1800)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
<td>30 years (1960)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
<td>14 years (1974)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth</td>
<td>13 years (1987)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth</td>
<td>12 years (1999)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seventh</td>
<td>12 years (2011)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eighth</td>
<td>13 years (2024)</td>
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Top 20 Failing States, 2006

- Of the top 20, 17 have rapid rates of population growth, many of them expanding at close to 3% a year, or 20-fold per century.
- In 5 of these 17 countries, women have an average of nearly 7 children each.
- In all but 6 of the top 20 failing states, at least 40% of the population is under 15.
Demographic Transition

THE DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION MODEL

STAGE ONE (Pre-Modern)
STAGE TWO (Urbanizing/Industrializing)
STAGE THREE (Mature Industrial)
STAGE FOUR (Post Industrial)

CBR, CDR RATE PER 1000

YEAR

TOTAL POPULATION

CBR  CDR  Total Population
Fertility levels: 1950-2050

Children per woman (medium fertility)

- Africa: 3.09
- Latin America and the Caribbean: 5.08
- Asia: 2.60
- Oceania: 2.24
- North America: 1.80
- Europe: 1.43

Did the “population issue” go away?

- UN medium projections
- Assumptions that family planning programmes are in place
- People/donors “bored” with family planning
- Commodities
Sustainable Development

Economic Prosperity  Environmental Protection  Social Justice
Climate change: a few facts

- The increase in Greenhouse Gas Emissions over the last 150 years has already significantly changed climate.

- The twelve warmest years on record have all occurred in the last thirteen years.

- IPCC reports best estimate temperature rises of 1.8°C to 4°C. However, global carbon dioxide emissions are already rising faster than the most dire of the IPCC emission scenarios.
Climate Change Impacts on People and Populations:

- Temperature Rise
- Unpredictable precipitation
- Sea level rise
- Flood
- Increase in storm severity
- Glacial melting

Half of world’s population to suffer food shortages by 2050

1–2 billion to suffer water shortages by 2050

Increase in diseases: Diarrhea, malaria and malnutrition
Poor countries will be hit earliest and hardest:

- Most vulnerable to impacts
- Have less capacity to adapt
  - Rapid population growth and high fertility underscore both
  - Often due to poor access to SRH services
Vulnerability...

- Dependence on ecosystems
- Poor health
- Poverty
- Geographic exposure
- Low scientific and technological capacity
Population growth underwrites these vulnerabilities in three major ways:

1) Population growth and climate change act cumulatively to deplete the source of key natural resources, for example through soil erosion and deforestation, – (availability)

2) Population growth is projected to cause a significant escalation in demand for resources that climate change diminish, including fresh water and food, (demand)

3) Rapid population growth heightens human vulnerability to natural disasters caused by climate change, including by forcing more people to migrate and settle in areas at risk of floods, storms and drought.
Rising sea levels...

- We have seen a sea level rise of over 40 mm and significant retreat of Arctic sea ice and nearly all continental glaciers.

- At the moment:
  - **one third** of the world’s population lives within 60 miles of a shoreline and
  - 13 of the world’s 20 largest cities are located on a coast.
Figure 4.3: Cities at low-elevation coastal zones (LECZs)

The designations employed and the presentation of material on the map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNFPA concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. The dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.

Source: UN Habitat.
National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPA) UNFCCC

- Outline top priorities for adaptation and specific localized vulnerabilities to climate change
- Well over half of them refer to population growth/density as a factor that makes coping with the changes that climate change will bring much harder.
Population and the Environment

- Complex, Controversial, Critical Connection
  - Have to recognize different consumption patterns in GHG emissions, and the use of the world’s non-renewable resources
The Nile

- Demand for water is increasing in all ten countries of the Nile basin.
- Nile already severely depleted by the time it reaches the Mediterranean.
- Population of Nile basin set to double by 2050.
Egypt: 2006: 72 million  
2050: 122 million

Sudan: 2006: 32 million  
2050: 77 million

Ethiopia: 1900: 5 million  
2006: 76 million  
2050: 188 million

Uganda: 2006: 29 million  
2050: 104 million

(Medium projections)
Have to recognize the “Yuck” factor

- History of population/family planning; horrendous mistakes; global memories are long in respect of forced sterilization, transistor radios, coercion

- Population now increasingly being discussed, but not always in ways that emphasize that the goal is increased investment in voluntary family planning/SRH programmes that respect and protect rights
Policy considerations

- How useful is the reticence about population?
- Is caring about rights is intrinsically incompatible with: –
  - searching for equitable ways to harmonize global population with consumption of the world’s non-renewable resources?
  - global efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change?
Increased investment in family planning
Consumption/population – crass either/or approach
“The end of geography” in Bangladesh
Floods Cyclones Drought Landslides
FP already a sensible rationale; sustainable development constitutes another reason for investing in it
Ugandan Minister: developing countries will be most affected by climate change; have contributed the least to it, and have least capacity for adaptation
We won’t find the answers...

- If we don’t increase awareness that we have learned from the mistakes of the past; we know how important it is to respect and protect the rights of women, men and children.
- If we continue to believe that caring about rights is intrinsically incompatible with searching for equitable ways to harmonize global population with consumption of the world’s non-renewable resources, and global efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change.
- If we remain reticent about linking population dynamics to international sustainable development priorities, including climate change, food and water security etc.
Unmet Need...

- The number of women in the developing world with an unmet need for modern contraception declined slightly between 2008 and 2012, from 226 million to 222 million.

- However, in the 69 poorest countries—which are home to 73% of all women in the developing world with unmet need—the number has increased, from 153 to 162 million women.
Parting thoughts...

- Sustainable 2050
- Demography is not destiny
- Complexity is not chaos
- Human rights principles
  - Participation
  - Accountability
  - Non-discrimination
  - Empowerment
- Right to health care and health protection
  - Available, Acceptable, Accessible, Quality