FUNDAMENTALS OF ECONOMIC HISTORY

Edited by
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Introduction
The earliest pioneer of the study of population was T. R. Malthus (1766-1834).\(^1\) His fears about population explosion generated a great deal of controversy, research and quest for solutions to the problems of overpopulation. His economic and demographic model, even though questioned, has motivated development economists and economic historians to undertake investigations into the problems of economic-demographic inter-relations in the developmental process with particular reference to the developing countries.\(^2\)

Since the publication of the works of Malthus, scholars have developed and introduced historical demography as a discipline that, at its evolutionary stage, depended on parish registers, census rolls, birth and death registers.\(^3\) The discipline analyzes and assesses such events with demographic implications as migrations, wars, famines, epidemics, draughts, urbanization and settlement patterns. Scholars' preoccupation
with the Malthusian fears of population explosion in terms of its geometric increase as against the arithmetic increase in food production, precipitated the adoption of interdisciplinarity in researching and teaching historical demography. By and large, the integration of insights, theories, models and research methodologies from ancillary disciplines especially demography, culminated in the merging of historical demography and demographic history. This new sophisticated approach has facilitated research in fertility in relation to other population dynamics, social economic processes and their historical development. So far, the qualitative and quantitative data generated from research have afforded a better understanding of the historical processes of population change and its implications for economic growth and development.

Thus population as a factor in development is worth studying. Its impact on economic, social and political development cannot be overemphasized. Demography per se as the statistical study of human population encompasses an examination of the total size of a population, its composition by age, sex, location, occupation, and birth and death rates within these categories. The study also includes such sociological features as migration, the average size of a family and the average age at marriage. Thus what we mean by the
demographic factor is a crucial and multifaceted phenomenon in the developmental process. It includes the demographic data that are generated by censuses of population and by registration of births, marriages, deaths etc. hence the emphasis on the accuracy and adequacy of such statistics in such thickly populated countries as India, China and Nigeria. In the Social Sciences, these characteristics of a population are called demographics. They include the above-mentioned features as well as statistics on the number of children, education level and other social and economic factors. Demographic changes refer to prominent socio-economic influences such as food supply, public health, life cycle, earning patterns urbanization and other related features.

For a proper management of population and its distribution, advanced countries initiated periodic censuses from which data were generated to estimate the magnitude and dynamics of population change according to which national policies were formulated and implemented for development. The developing countries have copied those population policies and are still learning from the advanced countries the modalities for accurate head-counts and measurement tools used for determining important demographic changes and how the changes have impacted on food supply, public health,
education, earning patterns, urbanization and improved quality of life.

**Effects of Population Growth on Economic Development – A Historical Perspective**

Demographic studies in several countries have confirmed the possibility of population growth with the concomitant effects of economic development and under-development. Even in development studies, economists have reached a similar conclusion with reference to the developing economies. It is in the light of this reality that the meanings of economic growth and development must be clarified even though in general usage the two concepts have been interchangeably employed. However, in practical effects, the two concepts are linked to each other.

Simply put, economic growth is the expansion of the output of the economy. This national output is also called national income. On the other hand, economic development is the process whereby the real per capita income of a country increases over a long period of time accompanied by institutional, cultural and attitudinal change. By a rise in real per capita income, we mean better nourishment, health, education, living conditions and expanded range of opportunities in work and leisure for the poor.
Increase in England's population acted as a stimulant to industrialisation and economic growth with other prerequisites from 1750 and 1850 as people moved into manufacturing, mining, trade and industry, the sectors that generated increasing returns and higher productivity. The rise of industrial towns also led to labour mobility, working class organisation and expanded markets. Agrarian revolution and land reform encouraged rapid increase in agricultural change and productivity on account of the introduction of new agricultural techniques. There was the immigration of farmers from France and Holland who became exponents of scientific and commercial farming.

Contrary to Malthus' fear about creeping diminishing returns to land and anticipation of food shortage for England's increasing population which rose from 14 million in 1830 to 37 million in 1914, remarkable progress in technical revolution and import of food supplies from abroad after 1850 induced a general disregard for birth control. Hitherto, an English law had forbidden the emigration of workmen from Britain to compel an optimal use of labour for further industrial productivity.

As a result of further parliamentary reforms, the law was abrogated in 1824 and thereafter the onset of external
migration slowed down the rate of population growth from 1830 to 1914 as the number of emigrants substantially exceeded the number of immigrants. Hence, British labour, like British capital, was free to move to anywhere in the world. A few artisans went to other European countries and promoted the Industrial Revolution. British labour and capital also contributed to the development of railways in Europe, India, America and Africa. British emigrants who went to British colonies, America, Australia, Canada and New Zealand spread and promoted British trade and influence.

But from 1930 to 1950 the British population increased from 40 million to 43.5 million. There began low death and birth rates. Majority of people enjoyed a higher standard of living and began to protect their status by limiting their family size through various devices including birth control methods. This practice which gradually extended to other parts of Europe and other advanced countries, has been described as the 'demographic transition'.

It is not surprising that some Eurocentric scholars in their publications deliberately omitted an overwhelmingly convincing evidence of the contributions of the cheap labour of thousands of African slaves to the promotion of industrial revolution in Britain, other parts of Europe and North Africa.
Professor Inikori in his research and publications, has exposed their hypocrisy by amassing abundant evidence that confirmed that African slave trade and New World slavery played a prominent role in the capitalist transformation of Western Europe and North America.\textsuperscript{21}

He also affirmed that the same factors accounted for the simultaneous emergence of dependency structures in Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa by the mid-nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{22} Indeed, the Atlantic slave trade had a profound demographic impact on the slave-exporting regions. Another undeniable effect was the global redistribution of Africa's population in terms of those with the best skills, the best gifted, inventive, able-bodied men and women and children whose contributions to the development of the slave-importing regions were proverbial. Population re-distribution within Africa was caused by internal migration, warfare, natural disasters and famine.\textsuperscript{23} And during the colonial period, some two million European and Asian immigrants settled in Northern and Southern Africa where they developed commerce, agriculture, mineral resources and industry. Hundreds of Indians were imported into East Africa to construct and manage the colonial railway system.
Estimates of the number of exported slaves from Africa to Europe and the Americas have been a controversial topic among scholars. While Curtin gave an estimate of 9,566,100 African slaves taken to the Americas from 1451 to 1870, Lovejoy’s figures were 11,690,000 exported slaves of whom 9.8 – 9.9 million made it to the Americas while the rest perished during the Middle Passage.²⁴ Both Rodney and Inikori disagreed with the above figures, arguing that out of 15.4 million Africans who were exported, about 8.5 million were from West Africa. Mauny, whose research interest was outside West Africa, suggested the export figure of 14 million Africans to North Africa and other Muslim countries. Lastly, Patrick Manning’s estimate of 18 million African slaves included those exported from West Africa, Savanna, the Horn of Africa and East Africa.²⁵

All the above-mentioned scholars agreed that the slave trade which spanned four centuries had prolonged negative demographic impact on mortality, fertility and migration. Incessant slave wars and slave raids led to depopulation of towns and villages, disruption of agricultural work and trade. Areas that suffered the most devastating impact of the slave trade in terms of population decline were: the West African coastal areas down to Angola between 1730 and 1850; the
The United States also owes its economic growth and development over the centuries to the labour and investment of immigrants. Their major motive for coming to America was economic. They were well informed about American economic conditions, and the available opportunities for their material improvement. During good times such as the 1880s and the first decade of the 20th century, there was a massive influx of immigrants. Of course, Americans deliberately encouraged immigration in the west and south west regions for the construction of the transcontinental railroads, and exploitation of the agricultural and mineral resources. The redistribution of immigrant population also accounted for the emergence of
industrial towns and urbanization. It has been estimated that in the 1880s more than 5 million people entered the United States and that between 1900 and 1910, over 8 million additional foreigners arrived and most of them made the cities their destinations. They came from Northern and Western Europe, Southern and Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and South America.

Effects of Population Growth on Economic Development

There has been an increasing upsurge in population studies since the publication of the works of Adam Smith, Malthus and Ricardo who expressed fear about the dire consequences of overpopulation on the economy. Although their fears have been disproved, their call for population control has had a beneficial effect on Europe over the years in terms of expansion of wealth for investment. Expansion of wealth created surplus capital, which when invested increased national output.

Increasing population afforded an adequate labour that was fed into the industries during the Industrial Revolution in some European countries. In other countries with scanty population, immigration of labour from elsewhere through some liberal immigration policies provided a panacea in the
short run. In the long term, especially in Britain, increase in birth rate was the answer. Thus, the birth of many children and frequent marriages led to the growth rate of population which when properly deployed to the industrial sector generated the much expected productivity.\textsuperscript{33} Scholars of European demographic history agree that the phenomenal increase in population led to abundant increase in the gross national product and that the industrial sector contributed a large percentage of national output.\textsuperscript{34}

We must however avoid a generalisation that what applied to Europe in the Age of Industrial Revolution must apply to other parts of the world. Conditions in the "developing countries" are rather different and therefore they are preoccupied with adverse consequences of rapid population growth. Where there were scarcity of capital, prevalent poverty and abundant labour, population growth had had such adverse effects as limited opportunities for savings and investment that could generate higher consumption in the future. As available resources are diverted to consumption of the sprawling population, only meagre resources are left for investment with little or no meaningful impact on development.\textsuperscript{35}

Population pressure on limited natural resources inevitably leads to the diversion of such investible resources to
consumption in the agricultural sector of the economies of the developing countries. The end result is that whatever insignificant proportion of resources that are invested will fail to generate the much expected multiplier effect. As each farmer is confined to small agricultural holdings, he overuses the land to the stage of diminishing returns when the harvest is not worth the investment. When many families over-cultivate a limited portion of land and produce less than subsistence level, inevitable poverty results.\textsuperscript{36}

Failure to check continuous population increase in such a circumstance will lead to inadequate resources to cater for the welfare of the present and future generations. Indeed, limited resources cannot be invested to satisfy the demands of the expanding population, for roads, public services, drainage and other socio-economic infrastructure. Obviously uncontrolled urbanization in the developing countries aggravates the above-mentioned problems and urban dwellers suffer from inadequate supply of housing, power, water, transport, education and health services, and from environmental pollution.\textsuperscript{37}

\textbf{Population and Per Capita Income}

Growing population without proportionate increase in productivity or national output often results in low per capita
The Derographic Factor in Economic Development

income by reason of population pressure on land, a rise in costs of consumption goods which are scarce and a decline in savings to acquire and increase capital. What should have been the required savings for capital must have been diverted to family expenses. Where the children constitute a higher percentage of the population, which is a general characteristic of the developing countries, more money is invested in their upbringing and education. But where they work to support their parents, there is apparently an economic gain but this practice is fast dying out. Generally, many children in the developing countries are a drain on the economy on account of their consumption without any contributions to the national product. To avert this problem, the number of children per family should be severely reduced and the necessary population policy or control ought to be promulgated and implemented. So far, China, India, Indonesia and Malaysia have adopted and implemented this policy with some attendant positive effects. Because low per capita income is the end result of the preponderant number of children who are supported by a few adults, population control is the required panacea.

The measure of economic development that is commonly used is per capita income although other indicators
are taken into account. The higher the per capita income, the higher the country's level of development. However this measure does not account for the complete story of the multidimensional phenomenon of development. Another indicator of the level of economic development is the level of industrialisation of a country. Some fortunate oil-rich nations that have high per capita incomes still need to develop some domestic industries as they are somehow characterised by features of a traditional premodern society.  

Notwithstanding the fact that such countries are wealthy in terms of per capita income, they may lack certain features of modern life like urbanization, jobs in offices, or factories, social mobility and universal education that people enjoy in less wealthy countries. Yet wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few, while the masses wallow in poverty.

Other indicators of economic development are the health and education of the population. Some countries provide good quality educational and public health facilities for their residents and thereby raise their life expectancy, lower infant mortality, give families the freedom to reduce family size and provide assorted recreational facilities. Economists and international organisations like the United Nations, and the World Bank, rank countries of the world according to per
capita income, life expectancy, urbanization and agriculture's contribution to GNP. Countries that have achieved an appreciable level of economic development are called developed countries or industrialised countries. And countries that have yet to attain a high level of economic development are the less developed countries (LDCs). But optimists, well-wishers and wishful thinkers are fond of referring to such countries as developing countries.

The developing countries are regarded as poor countries relative to the advanced countries because their per capita income is less than that required to acquire the basic food, clothing, shelter and education. The standard of living of their citizens is a small fraction of that of the advanced countries. Thus, an LDC can aspire to economic development by financing an economic programme of narrowing the gap between it and the developed countries. According to the conventional classification, the proportion of the world's population that resides in LDSs is usually very high because of the increasing birth rates and low death rates as well as apathy towards limiting family size. When the distribution of world population is compared with the distribution of world income, we then see clearly the unequal income distribution among the different countries. For example, in the 1980s, the developed
Adebayo Lawal

capitalist countries which contributed only 14.6 percent of the world's population produced 61.7 percent of the world's GNP. The non-communist LDCs, whose population was 50.8 percent of the world's population accounted for only 15.1 percent of world GNP. Logically, therefore, per capita GNP in the developed countries was, on the average, about 15 times that in the LDCs.44

There is also an unequal distribution of consumption of natural resources between the rich and poor countries just as there is unequal distribution of income. About 70.5 percent of the world's oil production was consumed by the industrialised capitalist countries in the 1980s while the LDCs consumed only 9 percent.45

Population and Social Infrastructure

A fast growing population must of necessity require increasing investments in social infrastructure. The demand for these facilities can be so overwhelming that resources are diverted from directly productive assets. Thus, it is always impossible for government to satisfy demand for educational, health, medical, transport and housing facilities to the whole population with the available limited resources. And any attempt to do this will result in the low quality of facilities and
services in overcrowded areas. The end result is poor quality of lifestyle and low productivity of labour. Indeed, there will be no limit to demand for government intervention in a situation of increased number of school age population, to establish more schools and employ more teachers. All these developments will result in poor quality of teachers’ facilities and poor rewards from the investments of scarce resources.

The government will bear the financial burden of providing schools for the projected primary school age population, primary school teacher requirements and their respective budgets, in terms of recurrent and capital expenditure over a period of time. If available revenue from various local sources is inadequate, the government has the option of borrowing from rich nations or request for aids. Similarly, projections must be worked out for secondary school age population and population for tertiary institutions for a period of time including teachers’ requirements and their budgets.

In government’s plan over a period, different phases of plan implementation have to do with basic health service scheme, projected health facilities required, capital and recurrent expenditure on health and the number of doctors, surgeons, dentists and nurses to be employed and paid
handsomely, otherwise they would declare trade dispute and abstain from work thereby putting the patients in danger. Thus, the challenge of providing adequate social infrastructure for a fast growing population is very enormous especially in the developing countries. 48

Population and Capital Formation

From the experiences of various countries worldwide, it is generally agreed that as population increases, per capita income declines. In what sense does population growth cause a decline in capital formation? This happens when there are more children to be fed with the same income and there is no opportunity for saving or investment. Even if there is some semblance of savings, as more expenditure is devoted to consumption of many more mouths especially in Africa where there are extended families, there is a further fall in the already low rate of savings and level of investment. Thus, as consumption rises, savings per capita declines. 52

Contrariwise, rapid population growth causes a rise in the demand for savings in terms of the spread of resources over more and more people. As more expenditure is devoted to a person’s education, health and skills, capital per person is raised to maintain income. In a sense therefore, a rapid increase
in population compels a diversion of capital investments from
direct productive activities to social overhead capital. By this
we mean the provision of more basic facilities in the form of
schools, roads, hospitals, water, telephones, etc. which do not
directly augment national product instantly, hence the low level
of the growth rate of the economy. It is therefore better for the
government to invest more in directly productive activities,
rather than in social overhead capital to realise more return on
capital.\textsuperscript{53}

Thus, as the government diverts its resources from
more productive activities to current uses to satisfy people's
immediate needs, capital formation and public savings will
decline. There will be a persistent tendency for incomes to
decline and consumption expenditure to increase. Then, the
government is not confident enough to levy taxes on the people
adequately, much less of collecting them to enable it fund social
services, hence a further fall in state revenue, resulting in
further decline in investment and capital formation and low
level technology.\textsuperscript{54}

**Population, Environment and Development**

Over the past centuries, mankind has changed the
natural landscape in areas of high population density through
agricultural practices, water diversion and extraction, irrigation, urbanization, industrialisation and reclamation. The changing living conditions of mankind in different environments have also affected forest cover in different parts of the world. Various studies by the relevant units of the United Nations reveal that up to half of the forests that naturally covered the earth have been cleared. Between 1990 and 2000, some 90 million hectares of forest were lost and the rate of deforestation in the 1990s was reckoned to be lower than during the 1980s.55

Widespread concern about the reckless destruction of green vegetation was so serious that the governments of the various countries in North America and Europe legislated against deforestation. So far, deforestation has been arrested in those regions of the world and other countries that unwittingly suffered progressive destruction of forest cover in the past are now adhering to the global campaign for environmental preservation by planned reforestation. The concern is justified because forests are critical: ‘they accommodate, preserve and sustain indigenous cultures, shelter global bio-diversity, render ecosystem services, preserve carbon, contribute to economic growth and satisfy recreational needs in diverse ways.56
Environmental damage is often caused by rapid population growth. Once there is evident population pressure on limited available land, an influx of people creates a tendency for various groups to inhabit areas that are ecologically sensitive. For example, settlement on hillsides and forest reserves, overgrazing and cutting of forests for farming purposes, inevitably lead to environmental damage. People's survival strategy is basically the frantic search for food for themselves and fodder for their livestock, hence the general resort to indiscriminate use of any available space, especially in the urban centres that witness unmitigated in-migration of large numbers of those who aspire to exploit economic opportunities in the industries. It is not therefore surprising that towns and cities often experience water, air and noise pollution.\textsuperscript{57}

**Population and Employment**

The same impact of population growth on land per head will reflect on employment opportunities. It is doubtful that employment outlets will increase in accordance with population growth especially in the developing countries where the rate of industrialisation is very slow. During the Industrial Revolution in Europe, expanding population was easily absorbed into the rising industrial establishments in the various
geographical zones. But where industrial expansion is lacking and agriculture is less attractive, majority of workers will be jobless or under-employed. Where more hands are employed to handle the work of a few people, wages are always low. Thus, in the developing countries that are noted for population growth, there is always surplus labour, with low income, meagre savings and nil investment. This being so, the incentive for capital formation is low. Job opportunities are therefore inadequate, hence a preponderant group of job-seekers. The more the population increases, the more the numbers of the unemployed that will create social problems that are common in developing countries.

To engage most of the population in economic activities, the human resource of a country must be developed, even though an attempt at identifying those economically active and those who are not can be a controversial academic exercise. Any attempt to define economic activity is further complicated by lack of consensus on what activities constitute productive work. However, it will not be difficult to identify people who are involved in gainful work, hence they can be said to be employed. The importance of employment inheres in its contribution to national output and creation of incomes in the working age. However, we exclude the armed robbers and
the jobless. Even though no government can fulfil an obligation of finding jobs for everyone, it is however important that the economic system must be well structured and managed to guarantee wage employment for most people of working age and adequate skills.\textsuperscript{60}

Whenever there is an imbalance between the size and growth of the labour force and opportunities for economic activity made available in an economic system, an inevitable employment crisis occurs. This is the common experience of the developing countries today whose population explosion hampers their economies in absorbing their labour supplies. And so long the economies persist in this failure, so they bear a mark of underdevelopment. Various kinds of unemployment are: open, chronic, seasonal, structural and voluntary unemployment as well as under-employment. They represent a major social and economic problem and are a loss of output that could be employed for the development of the society. They cause insecurity.\textsuperscript{61}

**Population and Standard of Living**

As said earlier, it is the per capita income that determines the standard of living of any given population. Although a rapidly growing population is a large market that
and improving their standard of living. For the past three decades, global campaigns for reduction in family size and improved quality of life have fallen on deaf ears, not least because the decision-makers have been hypocritical in the implementation of population policy.64

Urban Population Growth and Development

Recent demographic studies conducted by the United Nations have confirmed that the world is becoming increasingly urbanized. In most regions of the world, population growth is unarguably concentrated in urban areas. For the period 2000–2005, urban population growth is projected to be 2.0 percent per year.65 Since 1950, the proportion of urban dwellers has increased from 30 percent of total population to 47 percent in 2002. But in more developed regions where the process of urbanization is more rapid and advanced, about 76 percent of population live in urban areas as against 40 percent in the developing regions that are witnessing a gradually increasing level of urbanization.66

Generally, cities’ problems compel urban governments to formulate some priority action programmes including the upgrading of conditions for millions of inhabitants of informal housing; security against crime for all urban dwellers;
environmental protection, efficient management of resources and adequate funding for urban development. This demands a good grounding in urban economics and finance by the helmsmen to allocate greater financial resources to urban development for more effective use of the existing infrastructure and amenities.\(^67\)

Priority attention should be directed to key areas and sectors in the cities because urbanization is a fundamental process in any society. Hence urbanization policy and strategy must embrace the economic, geographic and the political sectors of the society. The cities are a crucial factor in the life of a country in terms of change in all its ramifications. Urbanization must then be managed to be an instrument for rapid economic growth, national development and individual improvement.\(^68\)

In the advanced countries, urbanization has been successfully employed to implement such national goals as: eradicating absolute poverty, maximizing job creation, reducing population growth, reorganizing available economic opportunities and allowing processes of economic development and change from the cities permeate the entire country. In other words, urbanization can be harnessed to build a nation. To further elaborate this point, urban history has abundant
evidence that cities have spearheaded economic growth and served as expanding domestic market that provided opportunities of development plans for the expanding population.  

The developing countries have some lessons to learn from the experiences of the advanced ones, should they disregard, as usual, the necessary response to the urbanization challenge. Hitherto, urban governments in the developing countries have been characterised by declining urban investment, inefficient cities, environmental deterioration, mass unemployment, continual instability and conflict. They cannot run away from the reality of these recurring nightmares in the cities that are generated by the rapid rate of urbanization.

Frequent outbreak of violence is common in the dense, unplanned informal settlements and overcrowded areas in the cities which lack adequate facilities and amenities. Various expressions of protest greet administrative incompetence or negligence in the health, education, service provision and other urban systems. Large numbers of homeless urban dwellers often threaten land ownership as they occupy with impunity, land not planned for low-income residential settlement. What is promptly required are sound policy, good management and
decisive leadership to nip in the bud the escalating conflicts and insecurities in the urban centres.

Population and Agricultural Development

While population increases, available land is fixed. Therefore increasing population on limited land will result in fixed land-man ratio. The more pressure that is exerted on land, the more reduced is the land-man ratio for the purpose of agriculture especially in the rural areas of the developing countries. The problem is more serious when the proportion of arable land is limited and nothing can be done in the short run to increase soil fertility to increase productivity, hence the need for reducing the size of the population in such countries.  

The story is however different in the advanced countries where about 3 to 5 percent of the population engage in agriculture. This is in sharp contrast to the developing countries especially Nigeria where between 50 and 70 percent of the population are farmers. What enhances agricultural productivity in the advanced countries is the widespread use of scientific and technological knowledge and skill over the years. This practice involves investment of huge resources beyond the reach of developing countries. Even if they could afford the facilities for scientific farming, the tropical climate and
vegetation constitute imponderable obstacles. Thus, an overspill of population in the Third World countries creates the classes of the landless and land owners. While the former are in the majority, they earn low wages or become jobless because they depend on the goodwill of the landowners. The bottom-line therefore is that majority of landless workers wish low wages have low per capita productivity and low incentive to invest in agriculture. This prevalent phenomenon always results in subsistence agriculture which is incapable of feeding an increasing population. A solution in the short run is importation of food items which consume much of foreign exchange.

In the long run, a national programme of expansion in agricultural output will also entail a large outlay of investment in importation of fertilizers and appropriate agricultural implements. Judging by the policy of some developing countries in this direction in recent years, this approach has not worked satisfactorily because of corruption and inflation that prevented an adequate acquisition of the agricultural implements. The policy could not be sustained because of the depleted balance of payments and the cost implications of foreign loans. Thus, population growth in developing countries does not automatically improve agricultural productivity.
A Summary of World Population Trends 1950 – 2050

According to the United Nations, the world population reached 6.1 billion in mid-2000 and has been growing at an annual rate of 1.2 percent or 77 million people per year. The findings revealed that six countries have accounted for half of this annual growth: India for 21 percent; China for 12 percent; Pakistan for 5 percent; Nigeria for 4 percent; Bangladesh for 4 percent and Indonesia for 3 percent. By 2050, it is believed that the world population will grow to 9.3 billion.80

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Area</th>
<th>Estimated Population (Millions)</th>
<th>Population in 2050 (Millions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1950</td>
<td>2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developed regions</td>
<td>814</td>
<td>1191</td>
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<tr>
<td>Less developed countries</td>
<td>1706</td>
<td>4865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developed regions</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>1508</td>
<td>4207</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America &amp; Caribbean</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>794</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern America</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melanesia</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Demographic Factor in Economic Development

Uganda, United Republic of Tanzania, Vanuatu, Yemen and Zambia.\(^5\)

The less developed countries are characterised by very high fertility rates and by implication, their population growth rate per year is very fantastic. According to Table 1, the annual growth rate is 0.57 percent up to 2050. Paradoxically some low-fertility countries such as China are included in this category as they are projected to experience high-fertility level later.\(^8\) In essence, fertility trends in them are unpredictable; however, they have a bright prospect of population increase reaching 6.4 billion by 2050 and contributing about 69 percent of the global population. Already, 16 countries with high fertility have been identified and known to have had a combined population of 269 million in 2000. Still, their population will likely surpass the one billion mark in 2050. The countries involved are: Afghanistan, Angola, Burundi, Burkina Faso, Chad, Congo, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Niger, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Yemen.\(^8\)

Although they all belong to the group of least developed countries, several of them are already seriously affected by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. They have even been bedevilled by civil war and political instability for the past
decades. There is no doubt that these developments have hampered the provision of basic services for the population. Worse, still, continuous rapid population growth in them will deter future economic development.

Contrary to the low fertility projections made for a few populous countries including Nigeria, India and Bangladesh in the 1990s, the 2000 population survey recorded high fertility. The fertility trend is believed to be continuous so that by 2050, the combined population of those three countries will reach 2.1 billion. A key crucial factor that will continually blur the picture of projected population trends up to 2050 in the less and least developed countries, is the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The demographic impact of the epidemic has been closely monitored since 1998. By 2000, some 45 countries were beset by HIV/AIDS scourge which decimated their population aged 15 to 49. The circle of populous countries battling with the epidemic is gradually expanding because they have an increasing number of persons living with HIV. Among the 458 affected countries, 35 are in sub-Saharan Africa and are in the groups of less and least developed countries including Nigeria, South Africa, Ghana and Swaziland.

Four of them that are in Asia are Cambodia, India, Myanmar and Thailand. In Latin America and the Caribbean
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are Bahamas, Brazil, Dominican Republic, Guyana, Haiti and Honduras. It has been calculated that out of the 33 million adults affected by HIV in the world in 1999, about 29 million or 88 percent lived in those 45 countries. Does it mean that the remaining 12 percent or 4 million adults affected by the AIDS scourge were accounted for by the advanced countries? It is interesting to note that the statistical analysis has been skewed against the less and least developed countries by giving an impression that the advanced or developed countries have completely eradicated the scourge. We need to know the details on the demographic impact of HIV/AIDS on North America, Europe, Australia/New Zealand, Russia and Japan to facilitate an objective comparative analysis. Already it is projected that by 2015, the population of the 35 African countries will be 84 million or 84 percent less than it would have been without AIDS.

Nine African countries which are now experiencing the most severe demographic impact of HIV, and with the highest HIV prevalence are Botswana, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In 2000, life expectancy in those countries was reduced by 12 years, i.e. it fell from 61.5 years to 49.3 years. Because the demographic impact is expected to remain severe in future,
Average life expectancy at birth in those countries is estimated to decrease to 45 years instead of a rise to 65 years in the absence of the disease.⁹⁰

**Conclusion**

From the foregoing, we can conclude that rapid population growth is likely to impede economic development. The arguments on dependency effects, employment and income distribution effects and investments plus budgetary effects are unarguably convincing. Many of the arguments in favour of population growth have limited applicability and could be employed in the thinly populated regions. The arguments are adduced to oppose any policies to reduce population.

We must always remember that many variables will influence economic and demographic changes and avoid the error that is often committed in addressing the correlation between GNP and population growth. Oftentimes, much is left out of the correlations to test whether population growth helps or harms economic development. In other words, since population growth is not a dominant influence on economic performance, we should not be unnecessarily troubled by the seriousness of the problem.
Most developing countries today are coping with population explosion without any anticipation of imminent catastrophe. Indeed some studies have disproved the gloomy 'poverty trap' theories of underdevelopment because many developing countries have succeeded in achieving some growth in per capita incomes notwithstanding their respective population explosion. What these countries should do is address the problems of population distribution by decentralising growth poles in terms of dispersing development projects. This will discourage concentration of population in the traditional urban centres that have historically served as the destinations of rural migrants.

However, the truth must be stressed that in the long run, rapid population growth makes development difficult. It makes it harder for a country to feed and raise the standard of living of the poor. Policy-makers will find it more difficult to find productive employment for the jobless. Neither will the government find the wherewithal to satisfy people's demand for healthcare, socio-economic services and amenities. Serious problems will be created by the high density of population on cultivable land. The end result is the diminishing returns, hence population growth is one of the most sensitive and crucial problems facing the Third World today.