



World Population Growth and Movement

by Michael Shenstone

Adaptation and update of a summary of a 1997 report by the author.

Trends in population change and movement are alarmingly clear in general but unpredictable in detail. They impinge increasingly on the full range of international issues of concern to the Group of 78.

World population, now over six billion, will continue its rapid growth. Although the rates of increase and of fertility have begun to taper off slowly, thanks in part to past international efforts, the total will probably reach 10 or 11 billion late in the new century.

Developing countries are still growing much faster than developed ones, but with wide variations. Sub-Saharan Africa, followed by the Middle East, has the highest rates; the lowest are in Japan and Europe, where actual declines are imminent or have begun; Canada will probably follow in three or so decades. Further urbanisation of the developing world, as well as the youth of its expanding population, will have serious political and migration consequences. Women as individuals, so often deprived of all choice, bear the heaviest burden in terms of sickness and mortality.

Movements of people, forced or otherwise, are becoming larger and more complex in the fluid, turbulent post-Cold War situation. Factors include population growth, gross inequalities within and between countries, economic change and globalization, environmental degradation, ethnic conflict, better communications.

If there are now slightly fewer recognised "refugees," this is largely because of stricter Western controls on asylum; instead there are many more "illegals" or "irregulars" as they are called. The huge numbers of "internally displaced" in developing countries and places like the former Yugoslavia are a particularly distressed and vulnerable category.

Population Growth Creates Problems

The complexity of causes and effects of population change is increasingly realised. Rapid growth, racing ahead of development, is actually reducing GDP per capita in much of sub-Saharan Africa; more generally it has a corrosive effect on institutions, can overwhelm governments struggling with the challenges of development, and holds back desperately-needed improvements in women's status and quality of life.

Reproductive health measures thus contribute indirectly but substantially to Canada's priority of alleviating poverty and meeting basic needs.

While extensive famine is unlikely, population growth in many developing countries will further increase malnutrition and also environmental stresses. Combined with--and often intensifying--a deterioration of socio-economic conditions, it can trigger mass migration, which in turn can impose severe strains on poorer receiving countries.

The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, central to current international population policy, placed major emphasis on the relatively new concepts of reproductive health and rights, addressed for the first time sensitive issues such as female genital mutilation, made numerous references to ways of empowering women (thus paving the way for the 1995 Beijing conference on women), reached broad agreement on key migration and refugee issues, and gave specific estimates of the resources needed to achieve reproductive health (including family planning) for all by 2015.

Canada and other donors accepted these as a commitment, reiterating it later in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Subsequent major UN conferences, particularly Beijing and the Cairo and Beijing review conferences in 1999 and 2000, reaffirmed ICPD language in the face of strenuous opposition from the Vatican and elsewhere but were unable to advance much beyond, despite strong efforts by Canada and others.

The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) is providing good international leadership on population, including ICPD follow-up. The International Regional Development Bank (IBRD) and regional banks have a spotty record; the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), as the leading international NGO in the field, works effectively but has suffered financially (including a large cut by Canada). Various discussion bodies and commissions have various track records.

Mixed Picture

A new South-South co-operative organisation on population may be useful. However the broader picture is mixed: Asian-Pacific Economic Conference (APEC) summits have commissioned studies including population along with other questions, but recent G-7/G-8, Francophone, Commonwealth and environmental summits attended or chaired by Canada have said little or nothing on population or migration in their pronouncements on global issues.

Some progress is being made. The use of modern contraceptives is spreading, even if unevenly (e.g. very little in Western Africa), but 100-120 million women still have an unmet need for access to family planning, and maternal mortality rates in developing countries have fallen little. Other issues needing attention include finding a proper balance of effort, enhancing quality of service, stimulating more research, and promoting human rights and non-coercion. But prospects are not good for donor contributions to

achieve their 2015 commitment. So far they average only 30% (Canada 25%!), whereas developing countries have met 70% of their target.

Trends in thinking about migration issues include a new emphasis, by Canada at any rate, on "human security", more discussion (though little more action) on getting at migration's "root causes", more attention to "control" (often with undesirable implications), and difficult controversies about the application of concepts such as "temporary protection" and "family reunification". However support for an international migration regime or major conference is minimal. The possibility of eventual pressures for freer world movement of labour (alongside capital and goods) is rarely touched on.

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) continues to deserve its preeminence among organisations relevant to forced migration, despite criticisms that can be made. Others such as the UN human rights bodies have been less effective. With sovereignty a shibboleth for so many countries, next to nothing is done for the internally displaced. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) has some policy potential for general migration issues; developed country bodies such as the Inter-Governmental Consultations on Asylum (IGC) and the OECD have continuing usefulness; so also does Canada's current and proposed bilateral cooperation with the European Union (EU) and with the U.S. although its immediate benefits to Canada should not be overestimated; and the Puebla group for North and Central America is off to a good start.

Key Recommendations

Here are some key recommendations for Canada:

- There is a need for clearer and more comprehensive policy statements. A detailed Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) policy document (a "strategy" or an "action plan") on population and development should be prepared very soon to provide a firm basis for specific programming on population by all CIDA's branches; so far CIDA's top management has not authorized this, perhaps for political reasons.

A document on Canada's international migration strategy is required, in order to bring together, update and refine the elements now scattered across various CIC statements, and incidentally make up for the lack of migration policy themes in the government's 1995 foreign policy statement. With population growth and movement so related, each document should contain elements of common analysis.

- In population, Canada should promptly move its assistance up from its present level of about C\$50 million towards our C\$200 million ICPD/OECD commitment. Our IPPF contribution should be restored, and more emphasis should be placed on Africa, particularly Francophone Africa. Reproductive health including family planning should be stressed, but with balanced attention to other factors bearing on population.

More population expertise should be provided throughout CIDA. The International Development Research Council (IDRC) should be urged to restore its abandoned

population research. Canada should encourage South-South cooperation, and more IBRD and regional bank lending for population after it has put its own house in order.

- In migration, Canada should look carefully at the policy implications for us of "root causes", including the complexities of population/migration/development relationships. Our long-term theme, with implications for many of the Group of 78's concerns, should be as expressed in Section 10.3 of the ICPD's Programme of Action: "governments ...should seek to make the option of remaining in one's country viable for all people". (The meaning is developed in the full text, appended to this document).

Equitable measures are required to restore the IRB's credibility and avoid it becoming a source of anti-immigrant intolerance. Its advocacy of speedier removals should be supported. The balance between the large sums spent in dealing (rather ineffectively) with asylum claimants in Canada and the small sums spent by Canada on refugee relief abroad through the UNHCR should be rectified. (Other significant comments on Canada's immigration policy will be found on this website in the summary of James Bissett's remarks to a Group of 78 luncheon on June 20, 2000.)

- Internationally, we should persevere with efforts to conclude a Memo of Agreement with the USA and foster more cooperation with the EU, without counting too much on major results soon from either, and should push ahead and expand the Puebla process. Continuous careful assessments of the numerous international organisations active in the field are warranted, so that we can encourage and help guide the most effective, but we must avoid a resource-driven temptation to over-prioritise among them, or to go in too exclusively for either regional or fully multilateral approaches. An international strategy is a necessity for us and cannot come cheap.

Continue Human Rights Emphasis

- Human rights should continue to have prominence in both population and migration policies: Canada should look at ways to integrate reproductive rights more clearly into human rights as a whole, consider adopting the IPPF's charter of reproductive rights, and improve the capacity of the UN human rights bodies, working alongside the UNHCR, to foster the rights of refugees and the internally displaced.
- As part of Canada's new Pacific emphasis, we should advocate more serious discussion of population and migration issues at APEC, and press for Japan to be invited to join the IGC.
- We should do more to see that such issues, along with other global concerns, receive attention at G-7/G-8 summits, Commonwealth and Francophone gatherings, and other major meetings.
- Within Ottawa, much more frequent and sustained senior-level interdepartmental dialogue on these questions is required, particularly between CIC, CIDA and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), including--on globalization issues--the latter's foreign trade component.

- Briefings, general foreign policy statements and reporting from posts should regularly feature population change and movement as basic and closely related phenomena needing to be taken into account everywhere.
- Canadian NGOs as well as academics should be encouraged to play enhanced roles in both fields, taking into account also the development aspects.

And, in sum, much more should be done by all concerned inside and outside government to highlight and discuss the fundamental long-term factors affecting and affected by population and migration, so that they receive our consistent long-term attention and help us cope with what the new century may have in store for us.

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Annex I

Section 10.3 of the ICPD Programme of Action:

10.3. Governments of countries of origin and of countries of destination should seek to make the option of remaining in one's country viable for all people. To that end, efforts to achieve sustainable economic and social development, ensuring a better economic balance between developed and developing countries and countries with economies in transition, should be strengthened. It is also necessary to increase efforts to defuse international and internal conflicts before they escalate; to ensure that the rights of persons belonging to ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities, and indigenous people are respected; and to respect the rule of law, promote good governance, strengthen democracy and promote human rights. Furthermore, greater support should be provided for the attainment of national and household food security, for education, nutrition, health and population-related programmes and to ensure effective environmental protection. Such efforts may require national and international financial assistance, reassessment of commercial and tariff relations, increased access to world markets and stepped-up efforts on the part of developing countries and countries with economies in transition to create a domestic framework for sustainable economic growth with an emphasis on job creation. The economic situation in those countries is likely to improve only gradually and, therefore, migration flows from those countries are likely to decline only in the long term; in the interim, the acute problems currently observed will cause migration flows to continue for the short-to-medium term, and Governments are accordingly urged to adopt transparent international migration policies and programmes to manage those flows.

Annex II

For further information on aspects of this paper, the following web-sites may be useful:

UN population statistics and activities: *UN Pop Info Network*:
<http://www.undp.org/popin/popin.htm> ; *UN Population Fund (UNFPA)*:
<http://www.unfpa.org>

ICPD and ICPD+5: the agreed 1994 and 1999 documents are to be found in full on the above *UN Pop Info Network* under the "ICPD" subhead

Refugees and asylum seekers: *UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)*:
<http://www.unhcr.ch> ; *Intergovernmental Consultations on Asylum etc. (IGC)*:
<http://www.igc.ch>

Migration: *International Organisation for Migration*: <http://www.iom.int> See their "Migration Web" heading and its subdivisions

Human rights: *UN High Commissioner for Human Rights*: <http://www.unhchr.ch> . See their "Website map"

Canadian and international population, migration and development policy issues: *Action Canada for Population and Development*: <http://www.acpd.ca>

Michael Shenstone, author of this paper, is a retired senior member of the Canadian Foreign Service, belongs to the Group of 78, and is a co-founder and the chair of Action Canada for Population and Development, an NGO which seeks to promote public discussion and Government action on international population and development issues and related questions.