



World Population Day

"Family planning, to relate population to world resources, is possible, practical and necessary. Unlike plagues of the dark ages or contemporary diseases we do not yet understand, the modern plague of overpopulation is soluble by means we have discovered and with resources we possess. What is lacking is not sufficient knowledge of the solution, but universal consciousness of the gravity of the problem and education of the billions who are its victims."

Martin Luther King (May 5, 1966 speech that Dr. King gave when receiving the Planned Parenthood Federation of America/Margaret Sanger Award)

History of World Population Day

- World Population Day was first commemorated in 1987 when the world's population reached 5 billion. It took all of history for the world's population to reach 2 billion in 1927 – but less than a lifetime to arrive at 6 billion in 1999.

- During the 1800s, population increased at progressively higher rates, reaching a total of about 1.7 billion people by 1900. Currently the world's population is at an estimated 6.6 billion. In 2008, the world will reach an invisible but momentous milestone: For the first time in history, more than half its human population, 3.3 billion people, will be living in urban areas.

- The theme of this year's World Population Day is Men as Partners in Maternal and Reproductive Health. Key topics for World Population Day 2007:

- 1) Men's role in maternal and reproductive health;
- 2) Maternal health and family planning around the world;
- 3) Adolescent sexual and reproductive health;
- 4) State of world population; and
- 5) Global urbanization and its future implications.

Men's Role in Maternal/Reproductive Health

- While women receive the bulk of reproductive health education, including family planning information, gender dynamics can render women powerless to make decisions. Men often hold decision-making power over matters as basic as sexual relations and when and whether to have a child or even seek health care.

- Men face many socio-economic barriers to sexual and reproductive health care. Twenty-three percent of men aged 15–49 have no health insurance; the proportion is highest (37%) among men in their early 20s, the age at which sexual risk-taking is especially prevalent.

- On World AIDS Day 2006, Engender Health launched the Men as Partners program, which works with men in promoting gender equity and health in their families and communities.

Engender Health sponsored a march to promote HIV awareness in Ahmedabad, Gujarat; the march attracted more than 1,000 people.

- To date, Engender Health has developed Men as Partners programs in over 15 countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the United States.

Maternal Health and Family Planning Around the World

- The number of deaths each year from maternal causes is estimated to range from 507,000 to 585,000 – equating to the death of one woman every minute, every day. Of these deaths, 99% occur in low-income countries. Women in sub-Saharan Africa have a one in 16 lifetime risk of dying from pregnancy or during childbirth as compared to a one in 1,800 lifetime risk for women in developed countries. Maternal causes account for nearly 20% of deaths and disabilities for women of reproductive age in developing countries.

- More than 10 million women a year suffer severe or long-lasting illnesses or disabilities caused by complications of pregnancy or childbirth.

- Most maternal deaths (61 per cent) take place during labor, delivery or in the immediate post-partum period. Some 3.4 million newborns die within the first week of life.

- Five direct complications account for more than 70 percent of maternal deaths: hemorrhage (25 percent) is the most common cause of maternal death; infection or sepsis (15 percent); unsafe abortions (13 percent); eclampsia (12 percent); and obstructed labor (8 percent).

- The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) estimates that family planning programs and population assistance accounted for almost one third of the global decline in fertility between 1972 and 1994.

- The divide between less developed and more developed countries' contraceptive use continues to shrink in disparity, although rates of use in the less developed countries remain uneven. According to the Population Reference Bureau, rates of sterilization are higher in the less developed countries, while use of traditional methods is reported more often in more developed nations.

- One in three deaths related to pregnancy and childbirth could be avoided if all women had access to contraceptive services. That means some 175,000 women each year could be saved, and many more could avoid severe or long-lasting injuries.

- Approximately 15 percent of women ages 15 to 19 give birth each year. Early marriage often leads to early childbearing, which not only limits life opportunities but also adds to serious health risks related to women and children.

- Teen mothers face twice the risk of dying from childbirth than do women in their twenties and their children are more vulnerable to health risks as well.

Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health

- Every year, about 15 million babies are born to adolescent mothers. Young women are twice as likely to die from childbirth as women in their twenties, and women under the age of 15 are five times more likely to die.

- The proportion of teen childbearing varies by region. According to the Population Reference Bureau, Africa has the largest proportion of teenagers giving birth at a rate of 12 percent, compared to the smallest, Europe (2 percent). Meanwhile Canada and the United States have greater percentages of teenage childbearing (5 percent) than Europe.

- The United Nations estimates that only 17 per cent of sexually active young people use contraceptives.
- More than one quarter of pregnancies worldwide, about 52 million annually, end in abortion. Many of these procedures are clandestine, performed under unsafe conditions. About 13 per cent of maternal deaths are attributed to unsafe abortions, coupled with lack of skilled follow-up. Some 74,000 women each year die as a result.

The State of World Population

The world population reached 6.6 billion in 2007 and is projected to grow to 9.4 billion by 2050. The world's 10 most populous nations are:

- 1) People's Republic of China: 1.319 billion (about 20.1 % of world population)
- 2) India: 1.122 billion (about 17.1 %)
- 3) United States: 300 million (about 4.6 %)
- 4) Indonesia: 225 million (about 3.5 %)
- 5) Brazil: 186 million (about 2.8 %)
- 6) Pakistan: 165 million (about 2.5 %)
- 7) Bangladesh: 147 million (about 2.3 %)
- 8) Russia: 143 million (about 2.2 %)
- 9) Nigeria: 135 million (about 2.1 %)
- 10) Japan: 128 million (about 2.0 %)

- The United Nations calculates that world population will grow at a rate of 1.1 percent between the years of 2005 to 2010. Future population growth is highly dependent on the path that future fertility takes. In the medium variant, fertility of the world declines from 2.55 children per woman today to slightly over 2 children per woman in 2050. If fertility were to remain about half a child above the levels projected in the medium variant, world population would reach 10.8 billion by 2050.
- Total fertility rate in 2007 stands at 2.56 percent with 62 percent of births attended by skilled attendants. In developed regions, 99 percent of these births are attended by skilled attendants; in less developed regions only 57 percent.
- Globally, the number of persons aged 60 years or over is expected to nearly triple, increasing from 673 million in 2005 to 2 billion by 2050. Over the same period, the share of older persons living in developing countries is expected to rise from 64 per cent in 2005 to nearly 80 per cent in 2050.

Global Urbanization and Future Implications

- While the world's urban population grew very rapidly (from 220 million to 2.8 billion) during the 20th century, the next few decades will see an unprecedented scale of urban growth in the developing world.

- The population of the less developed regions is projected to rise steadily from 4.9 billion in 2000 to an estimated 7.7 billion in 2050. While fertility rates are expected to decline, particularly rapid growth is expected among the least developed countries, whose population is projected to rise from 668 million to 1.7 billion. With sustained annual growth rates higher than 2.5 percent between 2000 and 2050, the urban populations of Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Somalia, Uganda and Yemen are projected to rise from 85 million to 369 million in total.
- Urban populations in Africa and Asia's are expected to double between 2000 and 2030. The number of people living in urban centers, in other words, could double in just a single generation.
- The first great wave of urbanization unfurled over two centuries, from 1750 to 1950, in Europe and North America, with urban populations rising from 15 million to 423 million. The second wave is happening now in the developing world. The number of people living in urban areas will grow from 309 million in 1950 to a projected 3.9 billion in 2030. By 2030, the towns and cities of the developing world could make up 80 per cent of urban humanity.

This Fact Sheet was updated in March 2007 by Larry Wilcher at the Population Resource Center. It is based on information from a number of sources, including the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Population Division, EngenderHealth, the United States Census Bureau For more information contact the Population Resource Center at (202) 467-5030, 1731 Connecticut Ave., N.W. Washington, DC 20009.