

# HIGHLIGHTS



## Population growth and its implications for ACP rural development

### Brussels Development Briefing no. 16

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On 27th January 2010, CTA and other partners convened the 16th 'Brussels Development Briefing' - part of a series of bimonthly Development Briefings on ACP-EU rural development issues. About 80 participants gathered in Brussels to discuss the impact of population growth on ACP rural development.

#### Population growth and its implications for ACP rural development.

The Briefing examined the current state and future projections of population growth at global and regional levels, especially from a development perspective. It looked at the main issues involved in population growth in terms of impact on economic development, migration movements, pressures on environment and natural resources management. Discussions also touched upon the issue of gender and reproductive health. It outlined the critical policy interventions needed to address the effects of population changes on public health, family planning, education, migration, trade and investment.

This Briefing was a joint initiative of CTA, European Commission (DG DEVCO), the ACP Secretariat and ACP Group of Ambassadors, CONCORD and various media.

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Mr. Jean-Claude Boidin

**Introducing the 16th Brussels Development Briefing, Jean-Claude Boidin from the DG Development underlined the EU-supported activities linked to the issue of population growth in ACP countries. Mr. Boidin recognized that EC interventions were rather sporadic, focused particularly on households, health, support to national statistics systems, reproductive health and South-North migration. Hardly ever the demographic issue has been raised in the cooperation dialogue between the European Union and the ACP countries, the focus being turned mostly to economic policies and cooperation support strategies. Furthermore, Commission's representative highlighted the rationale of the reticence towards the demographic issue, as population is considered to be a rather sensitive matter and of an ideological and cultural nature. Despite this reticence, great deal is being made of the recent data, which is seen as an opportunity to reframe the population approach and bring it to the core of international discussions. Finally, the clear links between the impact**



Mr. Carl Haub

**of demographic trends on climate change and the ability of fighting poverty were underscored. The interrelation between population and security, as well as migration leading to conflict and tension were raised. Mr. Boidin concluded that demographics should be at the heart of the economy and of the ACP development.**

Dr. Hansjörg Neun, Director of the CTA welcomed the franc dialogue on demographics as it has been left out for many years in high-level forums. Dr. Neun stressed the questions related to demographics such as climate change, health, pressure on natural resources, emphasizing that during the last Brussels Briefing on "Food Security" held in December 2009, the issue of population growth was particularly addressed in various parts of the discussions by the participants. Presenting the conclusion of one New York Times article and of the UN Population Report regarding the crucial role of birth control methods in curbing global warming and reducing GHG emissions, Dr. Neun underscored slower population growth as a



Mr. Yves Charbit



Mr. Mona Herbert



Mr. Wolfgang Lutz



Ms. Sietske Steneker

solution to climate change. Yet, he emphasized the sensitive aspects of this issue, and its complexity.

Panel 1 reviewed the major trends (current state and future projections) in population at global and regional levels from a development perspective. Mr. Carl Haub from the Population Reference Bureau in Washington shared with the public various statistics on the world's current population trends. He stressed that population growth could be remarked today in the poorest countries and areas, whereas in the industrialized countries growth rates were rather constant or even declining. The reason for which birth rates rose from 1.6 billion in 1900 to almost 7 billion people projected for 2011 appeared as a result of the regression in mortality rates, particularly in developing countries. Furthermore, available data shows very young age structures in developing countries, which predict important population growth rates in the future, a good example of this situation being Sub-Saharan Africa. Mr. Haub looked further at the way of projecting population growth in the next 40 years and the challenges of maintaining accuracy in monitoring this process. He warned that UN projections are based on the assumption that there will be an increase in family planning, in developing countries, to the same levels as in Europe or America. The extreme aging in industrialized countries will place them in a difficult situation as pressure will be put on the economy and the society.

Moreover, low fertility rates in developed countries will trigger new South-North migration opportunities. As regards the relationship between development and demographics, several indicators linking population growth to modern contraception, healthcare, and household decisions seem to illustrate a lack of reproductive rights for women in developing countries which contribute to high growth rates. Dr Haub gave also an overview of the demographic situation in the US compared to Europe, which in his opinion, are quite similar in terms of fertility, as the overall US fertility is mostly boosted by the Hispanic population living in the country. Recognizing that the relation between poverty and fertility is of a very complex nature, Mr. Haub concluded that generally, judging by the data available, poverty is almost inexistent where fertility is very low, whereas poverty is very high where fertility is very high.

Mr. Yves Charbit, director of CEPED, gave an overview of the contribution of migration to rural economic development. Mr. Charbit underscored the important South-South dimension of migration, which represents 90% from the total migration in West Africa, only the remaining 10% being considered South-North migration. Regarding the macro-economic perspective, the professor questioned the relationship between wealth and remittances both in relation to the GDP/capita. Several study cases in 19 countries show that this correlation is rather small, but quite predictable as

migrants going abroad represent only a small fraction of the active population and hence the wealth-creation potential of the remittances plays a marginal role in the GDP. The result is also desirable since the opposite would be a sign of a high level of dependence on countries seeking migratory labour and thus an additional cause of economic fragility in the country of origin. At micro-level, the relation remittances-families-local development was also discussed. In terms of social development, remittances are very important, as they are used by families to cover health, education and housing expenses. Migration of men is leading to a change in the structure of the families throughout the whole of Africa, resulting in a large number of households being headed by women. Hence, the migratory movements seem to cause a feminisation of poverty, which was an issue raised by various participants. In practice, results show that income is higher in households with a female head, as the migrant-man has usually gone to North. In households with a male head, emigration is more likely to be internal (rural exodus) or continental in Africa and as a result migrant transfer is lower. The mobilisation of social networks also makes it possible for female households to offset other vulnerability factors, Mr. Charbit finally stressed. Mr. Mona Herbert from DSW in Uganda offered a perspective of the population growth and youth in rural areas, using Uganda as an interesting example. Several statistics presented by Mr. Herbert, reveal a situation of a real concern since over 70% of the total population in Uganda is not in

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productive employment, about 68% is engaged in subsistence farming and at least 60% is either composed by children, elderly, or unemployed and therefore not contributing to meaningful national development. According to Mr. Herbert, 67% of the population is under 29 years and more than 50% of the adolescent girls are giving birth by the age of 20. Moreover, Uganda's population doubled in the last 20 years and is expected to double again in the next 22 years, being supposed to reach 130 million by 2050. This huge population growth of 3.2% per annum has undoubtedly implications at several levels, putting pressure on Government's ability to provide social services like education, health, and housing as well as putting increased pressure on land use in agriculture and the protection of the environment, warned Mr. Herbert. In East African region, a Uganda still rank very high in terms of fertility rate (6.7%) compared to the other countries and has also one of the highest maternal mortality rate and lowest contraceptive prevalence rate in the region. Mr. Herbert concluded by giving a holistic picture of possible areas of intervention in order to tackle the problem of population growth.

Mr. George Ouma from DSW discussed some issues linked to youth population in relation to rural development in Kenya and gave some policy options to address their current needs. Africa's populations is remarkably young, figures showing that 43% of the total population in Sub-Saharan Africa is below the age of 15, therefore emphasis should be put on youth, he added. Moreover, the high population growth rate corroborated with the declining infant and mortality rates, determine a large number of dependent children on the active population in Kenya, hindering further socio-economic development. Emphasizing the high levels of the total fertility rates in rural compared to urban areas, Mr. Ouma warned that availability of arable land will continue to diminish, becoming a source of

conflict in the future. Population growth has also negative effects on the education of young people and their employment, but also on their health and security. Consequently, effective policy strategies should be put in place by the government in order to reduce population growth and at the same time improve the human well being in rural areas.

Moderated by the Mrs. Marianne Haslegrave from the Commonwealth Medical Trust, the discussions brought into attention various divergent view points. Africa has 30% of the world's population and 20% of the global land mass available and therefore cannot be considered as overpopulated. In this context, Africa's great workforce potential was underlined. Panelists remarked however the emerging youth bulge on the African continent which, even if trained, would not be absorbed by the labour market. Yet, land volume approach was considered too narrow by the speakers as, provided sufficient land was available for all, governments would still have to deal with other kind of problems (i.e. ensuring good services etc.) at country level. The difference between total land mass and real arable land was also brought into discussions and the impact of remittances at macro-level as the utilization of remittances for micro-finance seems to be a real political challenge. Yet, if governments managed to do so, remittances would significantly contribute to GDP growth in developing countries. The crucial role of education and the need to pay more attention to socio-psychological aspects when forecasting demographic growth were also stressed.

The second panel discussed critical policy interventions needed to address the effects of population changes on public health, family planning, education, migration, trade and investment. Mr. Wolfgang Lutz from the Vienna Institute of Demography focused his presentation on a new policy dimension approach based not only on the quantity dimension

of population but also on the quality of population in terms of education. Dr. Lutz approached population and education not as separate topics but as one. He underlined the fact that the pendulum of population concerns started to come back again in the international fora after the 70's and 80's seriously efforts to reduce population growth even by violating individual reproductive rights. This debate culminated in the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development held in Cairo which focused on reproductive health by leaving aside the growth aspect, especially in the context of climate change. The main idea for Dr. Lutz is to add education to the two standard demographic dimensions-ages and sex- and see further educational attainment as a key demographic dimension. He highlighted the many interactions between education, health and fertility as factors that greatly depend on each other. Making reference to the case of Ethiopia, he, showed that women without formal education have on average more than six children, while those with higher education have only two. This not only explains the fact that educated women can perform better for improving the life of their children but also provides women with better access to all kinds of information including health practices. Consequently child and maternal mortality rate are much lower for educated women. Mr Lutz underlined that the direct causal effect of education on economic productivity, fertility decline and health makes it a prime candidate for breaking the vicious circle of poverty, poor health and rapid population growth. Moreover, this can be done by the combination of basic education and reproductive health service. The examples of some successful countries, like Korea, that invested massively in education are a proof of this argument. Hence due to the strong interaction between education and both fertility and mortality and therefore for population growth, education and especially improving female education becomes

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a very important population policy. In his conclusions Mr. Lutz remarked that only a very small percentage (0.5 up to 2-3 %) of the ODA committed by the European countries is spent for basic education in developing countries, while, considering the need to achieve the MDG's, this amount should be rather around 8%. Mrs. Sietske Steneker from UNFPA gave an overview of the relevance of investing in women and in women's health in order to make progress towards the MDGs. Mrs. Steneker stressed the fact that even if women constitute today the majority of the world's poor and illiterate, they are at the end of the line when it comes to power and decision-making. It is therefore important to ensure universal access to reproductive health by 2015 not only because it constitutes a right, but because it is also a critical factor influencing population dynamics, such as population growth, size and age structures. Mrs. Steneker referred to the fact that maternal mortality represents the largest inequity in the world, and that of all regions, Africa has the world's highest maternal mortality (at least 100 times higher than the developed countries). Of all the MDGs, MDG 5 to improve maternal health is lagging the furthest behind. It is also a fact that the right and the access to reproductive health are essential for advancing women's empowerment and equality between women and men. In her conclusions, she stressed the need to tackle the root causes of maternal mortality and morbidity, including gender inequality, low access to education -especially for girls- child marriage and adolescent pregnancy and ensuring access to voluntary family planning could alone reduce maternal deaths by 25 to 40%, and newborn deaths by 20%.

Mr. Neil Datta, Secretary of the European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development, started by giving an overview of the population growth in the last 10.000 years and its implication for Europe, ACP countries and the rest of the world. It was noted that for the first time in 2008 more than 50% of humanity lives in cities and that at global level, all future population growth will thus be in town and cities while in rural areas it will decline. Mr. Datta underlined that population growth is not taking place where the new jobs are being created but where the MDGs are already most off-track, this being particularly true if we look at the African continent. Furthermore, 99% of the population growth is taking place in developing countries and 90% is taking place in the poorest of these countries, this situation being reflected in the increase of social infrastructure spending. Mr. Datta gave also an overview of the incumbent problem of vulnerable girls. In Sub-Saharan Africa the majority of girls aged 10-14 are living with only one or no parent, while a median of 5% and sometimes as high as 12% are living with neither parent and not in school. Furthermore, it is estimated that more than 100 million girls will be married at their child age in the next decade according to present trends. The potential solutions identified are upholding their rights to marriage at a legal age and increasing girls' access to education and health services. In his conclusions Mr. Datta made recommendation to EU and ACP Governments to invest in programmes for the most vulnerable girls and underscored the need to reverse trend in declining the assistance to reproductive health and family planning.

The final debate chaired by Mr. Kahijoro Kahuure, First Secretary at the Ministry of Health in Namibia focused around the need to invest heavily in education and human capital by the developed countries and the European Union and around the population growth policy. Panelists stressed the need to prioritize actions in order to achieve the MDG education's goal and to better invest in human capital. Population growth was also considered from the point of view of the new members of the European Union, like Bulgaria and Romania, which are facing an increasing ageing of their population. Particular attention was given to the link between population growth in rural areas because to date, in the majority of developing countries the increase of the population is happening in the rural areas. On the issue of the negative impact of HIV/AIDS on population trends in Sub-Saharan countries and how this could happen in other continents such Asia, experts underlined the focus from European donors in funding population assistance on HIV/AIDS but a decrease of awareness in reproductive health and family planning which raise some concerns. Panelists debated also the insufficient importance given to the demography study in European countries compared to the USA and therefore less investment in research. The conclusions made by Dr. Hansjörg Neun, CTA Director, focused on the importance to give crucial priority to education before economic growth. Particular attention has to be driven towards women's health and reproductive health, the need to increase their participation in the decision-making process and to improve family planning policies.

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