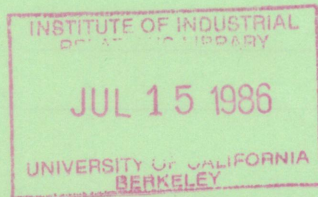


Population-U.S.

International Population Policy:

Issues & Choices
for the
United States,

THE SEVENTY-FIRST AMERICAN ASSEMBLY,
APRIL 17-20, 1986,
ARDEN HOUSE, HARRIMAN, NEW YORK.



The American Assembly
Columbia University

= New York = 1986.

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PREFACE

On April 17, 1986, fifty-nine men and women from the federal government, Congress, business, the universities, the law, trade unions, and not-for-profit organizations gathered at Arden House in Harriman, New York, for the Seventy-first American Assembly, entitled *International Population Policy: Issues and Choices Facing the United States*. For three days, the participants discussed the relationship of population growth to economic development and individual welfare, the international consequences of population growth, and the policies that the United States should follow in addressing those consequences.

Dr. Jane Menken of Princeton University acted as director for this Assembly program and supervised the preparation of papers used as background reading for the participants. Authors and titles of these papers, which will be compiled and published as a W.W. Norton book entitled *World Population and U.S. Policy: The Choices Ahead*, are:

Jane Menken Princeton University	<i>Introduction and Overview</i>
Paul Demeny The Population Council	<i>The World Demographic Situation</i>
Samuel H. Preston The University of Pennsylvania	<i>Are The Economic Consequences of Population Growth A Sound Basis for Population Policy?</i>
Ansley J. Coale Princeton University	<i>Population Change and Economic Development</i>
John Bongaarts The Population Council	<i>The Transition in Reproductive Behavior in the Third World</i>
Michael S. Teitelbaum The Sloan Foundation	<i>Intersections: Immigration and Demographic Change And Their Impact On The United States</i>
George B. Simmons University of Michigan	<i>Family Planning Programs</i>
David E. Bell Harvard University	<i>Population Policy: Choices for The United States</i>

On the first evening of the Assembly, the participants were addressed by a panel of experts from the developing world. Ms. Sandra Kabir, Mr. Frederick Sai, Mr. Adrian Lajous, and Mr. Wu Jianmin discussed population growth issues in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and China. Former Senator Joseph W. Tydings, Jr., and the Honorable Danny J. Boggs spoke on the other two evenings concerning United States policy choices.

Following their discussions, the participants produced this report on April 20, 1986; it contains both assessments and recommendations. We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of The Ford Foundation, The Rockefeller Foundation, The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and The Laurel Foundation, which helped fund this undertaking. They, as well as The American Assembly, take no official stand on subjects that they present for public discussion. In addition, it should be noted that the participants spoke for themselves rather than for the institutions with which they are affiliated.

William H. Sullivan
President
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**FINAL REPORT
of the
SEVENTY-FIRST AMERICAN ASSEMBLY**

At the close of their discussion, the participants in the Seventy-first American Assembly, on *International Population Policy: Issues and Choices for the United States*, at Arden House, Hariman, New York, April 17-20, 1986, reviewed as a group the following statement. This statement represents a general agreement; however, no one was asked to sign it. Furthermore, it should be understood that not everyone agreed with all of it.

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

Since 1963 the population of the developing world has more than doubled, to nearly 4 billion people today. The annual growth rate of the developing world stands today where it did in 1960, at around 2 percent. During the intervening period, however, as death rates declined, the growth rate actually increased, to over 2.5 percent per year during the late 1960s. A more recent decline in the birthrate has brought overall growth back to its current level. Barring wars or calamity, the prospects are that the population of the developing world will continue to grow rapidly well into the next century. The United Nations Population Division, which has prepared "low," "medium," and "high" projections to 2025, shows in its low projection that the 1985 developing world population of 3.7 billion will at least double in forty-five years to 7.4 billion and could rise to 8.2 billion or even 9.1 billion people.

In 1963, the Twenty-third American Assembly published *The Population Dilemma*—one of the earliest attempts to place the issue of global population growth on the U.S. public policy agenda. That Assembly called attention to the rapid decline in death rates in the Third World since the end of World War II and the fact that birthrates were still quite high. Using UN projections, it foresaw that the population of the less-developed countries (LDCs) would increase to around 3.7 billion in the mid-1980s—a remarkably accurate prediction.

Since the publication of *The Population Dilemma*, concerted public action has occurred, both in the industrialized and the nonindustrialized countries. The United States has played a leading role intellectually and financially in population assistance programs over a twenty-year period. Two international population conferences have called upon all countries to tackle the problem of rapid population growth, and most LDCs have adopted policies and programs aimed at reducing population growth. And, as we note below, considerable progress has been made. Both mortality and fertility have declined substantially, but the fact that growth rates in the developing world have not declined below where they were in 1963 demonstrates that the issue of rapid population growth remains a cause for continuing attention by the U.S. government and others.

During the 1960s and 1970s, nearly all of the many assessments of the world population situation found that continuing rapid population growth through maintenance of high fertility would be detrimental: the realization of the aspirations of the countries of the developing world for improvement of their social and economic status would be made not impossible, but more difficult. The United States responded to this situation by encouraging na-

tions of the Third World to take steps to recognize that continuing high fertility and rapid population growth were major obstacles to development and to establish policies and programs intended to reduce fertility. Toward that end, it has also provided assistance for voluntary family planning programs in many parts of the world and has encouraged other nations to do the same. The policies of the United States rested upon a broad public consensus.

Recently, however, these positions have come under attack. The U.S. position in 1984 at the International Conference on Population sponsored by the United Nations departed in two major ways from the stance adopted by at least four previous administrations. It gave reduced significance to any effects of population increase on economic growth, saying that population growth was a "neutral" phenomenon, not necessarily positive or negative, but taking its character from a constellation of other factors that determine the situation in a particular country. The U.S. statement credited economic development, spurred by free market policies, as a principal force that leads to a voluntary lowering of fertility by individuals. In another vein, while voicing support for voluntary family planning programs, the new policy took a very strong stance against abortion, reiterating and extending the prohibition on the use of U.S. funds to pay for abortions performed for family planning reasons. Implementation of this policy has led to withdrawal of funding from the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF). In view of these changes in U.S. international population policy, the Seventy-first American Assembly undertook a reevaluation of the world population situation and the U.S. response.

THE RATIONALE FOR U.S. POLICIES TOWARD REDUCTION OF HIGH FERTILITY

There are two major bases for a U.S. government role in reducing high fertility. First, high fertility, over the long term, has negative effects on social and economic circumstances, such as those relating to education, health, and income, and on natural resources and the environment. Second, involuntary high fertility may infringe upon a person's human right to choose his or her family size.

Population growth is always slow in the sense that it moves in small incremental steps, nearly invisible in the short term, yet compounding day by day. Numbers inching upward are hardly noticeable; yet they may lead to dramatic changes in the quality of life as populations double or triple. And these changes may well affect future generations. Even if fertility declines from high to replacement levels, it can take half a century for population growth to cease. It may take just as long for environmental degradation due to pressures on resources to become obvious. How one assesses the importance of the changes engendered by high fertility depends quite directly on individual attitudes and values, one's optimism about human adaptability to almost any situation, one's views on the role of women and the family, and one's personal "discount rate"—the extent to which the welfare of future generations is considered relevant to actions taken today.

Some of the factors affected by high fertility are discussed in the paragraphs that follow. Various international declarations have affirmed the fundamental human right of couples to choose the size of their families. For example, the United States has subscribed to the policy adopted at the UN International Conference on Population that "women and couples have the right to determine freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children, and that they have the right to the means that would enable them to do so."

Health and Education

The participants in this Assembly concluded that reducing high fertility has important and unambiguous benefits for women and children. The health of mothers will be improved by reducing the numbers of unwanted pregnancies and encouraging women to have their children during optimal childbearing years, neither too young nor too old. Equally important, if births are more widely spaced and reduced in number, the health and survival chances of newborns and older children are significantly improved.

Parents who have fewer children tend to invest more in the education of those they have, thus significantly improving their future prospects. By the same token, when fewer children are entering the school-age population more resources are available for improving the quality of education that is available.

It was concluded that access to family planning can, through reducing fertility, facilitate a diversity of family, social, and political roles for women. These opportunities include increased education and increased employment options.

Economic Development

The consensus of the participants in the Seventy-first American Assembly differed from the views expressed by the U.S. government at the 1984 International Population Conference in Mexico City in its assessment of the impact of population growth on the well-being of people and the development prospects of most of today's LDCs. The participants concluded that rapid population growth in the least developed countries (acting primarily through the effects of high fertility) has substantial and generally negative economic and social effects and that fertility reduction in those cases can bring about corresponding benefits.

While the participants were careful to state their position that fertility reduction policies are not alternatives for sound economic and social policies and institutions, fertility reduction, particularly in the poorer developing countries, can relax constraints on human capital formation, help countries create enough jobs to accommodate the labor force, reduce the stress on social and political institutions, and lessen the problems of maldistribution of income and opportunity. Reduction of fertility in and of itself will not cause poor nations to become rich. But it can provide time and relieve pressure on societies to direct resources toward satisfying the minimum needs of a rapidly growing and economically dependent population. Furthermore, since high fertility tends to affect the poor disproportionately because it depresses wage rates, it can contribute to a significant worsening of income distribution and concomitant social and political tensions.

The participants reviewed the arguments in favor of high fertility, including the argument that high fertility induces technological innovation and infrastructure development. They concluded that on balance, in most LDCs, such benefits, to the extent to which they exist, are likely to be overwhelmed by the negative effects outlined above.

Resources and the Environment

The relationships between population growth and depletion of natural resources and degradation of the environment are usually complex, but they are basic to development and human well-being. While population growth cannot always be considered the primary cause of environmental problems, it is often a contributing factor, as in the case of desertification. Under conditions of high fertility and rapid population growth, renewable resources must

be shared by increasing numbers of people, possibly outstripping regenerative capacities and leading to degradation of the resources. Degradation of such resources as clean water, topsoil, and vegetative cover in LDCs undermines economic development by constraining improvements in health, agricultural production, and infrastructure. Rapid exploitation of natural resources attributable to increasing population densities can also lead to irreversible changes such as species loss. Those countries with very high growth rates may be least able to intervene to protect their own environments; slower population growth may give them greater opportunity to acquire the economic or political capacity to do so before the resource is exhausted.

Other Effects

Some participants noted that reductions in fertility will bring about lower rates of urban growth, reduce the hardships involved in urban overcrowding, and thereby possibly reduce some of the socio-political problems that such rapid growth can engender. It was noted that political leaders in many countries are concerned about the social, economic, and political burdens associated with rapid urban growth.

U.S. POLICY APPROACHES TO ALTERING GLOBAL DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS

Any national population policy must take into account the possibly diverse attitudes and values of citizens as well as an understanding of the objective effects of population growth on a country's long-term development. U.S. policies toward family planning should reflect this diversity.

Family Planning

In 1965, the U.S. government decided to establish within its overall foreign aid program a new program to support family planning in developing nations. At the outset, the U.S. Congress embraced the fundamental policy that U.S. funds would be used to support population programs on a strictly voluntary basis.

Provision of voluntary family planning services has become a principal policy approach endorsed by the U.S. government for promoting individual choice in the area of human reproduction and for altering national and global demographic trends. Over two decades of foreign aid by the United States devoted to this purpose have contributed to the development of family planning programs in many of the developing countries of the world.

Today, not only the United States but most of the other developed Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries provide foreign aid for family planning, together devoting about \$500 million annually for this purpose. While this represents only 2 percent of all official development assistance, developing country recipients of this aid have dramatically increased their own national expenditures in support of their family planning programs to a total now in the range of \$1.5 billion annually.

Extensive evaluations of the efficacy of these foreign aid and local government expenditures in promoting access to and use of contraception in the Third World have demonstrated impressive successes. Large increases in the use of contraception have resulted as a direct consequence of these programs in many parts of the developing world. There have been substantial declines in national fertility levels and substantial increases in the ability of couples to choose freely the size and spacing of their families.

Participants recognize that family planning programs vary in terms of their

scale and content and the effectiveness with which they have been implemented. Continuing efforts are being made as part of U.S. support for family planning to increase our understanding of these variations and of the factors which determine program effectiveness.

Contraceptive Research

As experience accumulated with these programs, the basic policy approach was expanded to other areas. In the early 1970s, it was recognized that currently available methods of fertility control fell short of people's family planning needs and that the traditional private sector sources of new contraceptive technology were not investing substantially in research and development leading to improved methods. The U.S. government, along with a number of other developed countries and the World Health Organization, established special funding programs that are contributing to the search for safer and more effective contraceptives having fewer undesirable side effects. Recently, liability suits in the United States, coupled with widespread terminations of insurance coverage, have had the effect of deterring contraceptive testing and research, particularly by the private sector. As a result, there are significant shortfalls in funding by the private sector for research, both basic and clinical, in this area.

Status of Women

Another policy approach adopted in the 1970s emerged in recognition of the difficulty many women in developing countries have in gaining access to contraceptive information, supplies, and services because of severe restrictions on women's rights and roles in many societies. Many Third World governments, with assistance from UN agencies and the United States and other developed country foreign aid programs, began special programs to improve the education, status, and opportunities of women in their countries. The commitment to policies and programs to promote the rights of women and improve their roles and status in their families and communities has grown enormously throughout the world in the intervening decade.

Health

Another basic policy approach, the promotion of primary health care in the Third World countries, which is related to both individual rights and well-being and to national development efforts, has also had profound effects on demographic trends. Maternal and child health care programs have been components of many family planning programs since their inception, and all governments have seen health and family planning as closely linked, mutually reinforcing parts of national development efforts.

Education and Development Policies

Education, especially for women, has also come to be recognized as an important determinant, not only of national development and individual advancement, but of lower demand for large families in many countries. Other broader development policies and programs, including those promoting agricultural development, rural development, and industrialization, all combine their much larger impacts on individual welfare and national development with indirect effects on fertility. While these larger development programs should in no way be conceived of as policies to alter demographic trends, the particular way in which aspects of these are implemented can exert power-

ful fertility impacts—for example, by causing increases in the age of marriage and by shifting the balance of the economic costs and benefits of children.

Beyond Family Planning

In recent years, some Third World governments have sought to further stimulate the use of family planning by people in their countries through the adoption of policies that go beyond actively promoting smaller families and facilitating access to contraceptive information and services. These policies introduce the concept of inducements to individuals to adopt contraception or to limit their family size, or, in other cases, the concept of disincentives or penalties to discourage individuals from bearing more children.

It is evident that there is a continuum of measures, beginning with information and education and extending through various types of encouragement and inducement all the way to physical coercion, that might be considered by governments as possible means to achieve such social change. At one end of that continuum, there is almost universal acceptance of information and education as appropriate means to encourage family planning; at the other end, there is universal condemnation of physical coercion for such purposes. Exactly where to draw the line between appropriate inducements and improper compulsion is very difficult to decide in the abstract, and, moreover, the line may be drawn differently in various nations because of differences in cultural traditions and value systems.

During the last two years, both Congress and the administration have strongly reaffirmed support for voluntarism in U.S. family planning assistance programs and opposition to policies that are not consistent with internationally accepted human rights.

Abortion

An area of controversy in the United States has been policies regarding the availability and use of abortion. Millions of abortions are now performed annually throughout the world. Many of these are performed in developing countries where abortion is illegal, and extensive documentation indicates that such abortions are a leading cause of maternal mortality in most of these countries. Provision of family planning services has been shown to reduce abortions, both in countries where it is legal and especially in countries where it is illegal. However, because of deep controversies over the acceptability of the use of abortion, in 1973 the U.S. government prohibited the use of any of its foreign aid funds for abortion services and, in 1984, it further prohibited the provision of any of these funds to nongovernmental organizations that are in any way involved with abortion using their own monies.

IMMIGRATION INTO THE UNITED STATES

The United States continues to be the prime receiving nation of the world and historically has benefitted from the contributions immigrants have made to our society. A main impetus for migration to the United States has been the differences in economic and social opportunity between this and other countries. Rapid population growth in developing countries since World War II has increased the size of the population that would like to migrate. Fertility declines in high-fertility countries would serve to reduce additional pressures fifteen to twenty years hence. Moreover, over the long range, the contributions of fertility declines to economic development could lessen the economic differentials favoring emigration.

However, development assistance is no substitute for immigration policy, concerning which numerous issues are being debated in the United States. The participants in the Assembly concurred that U.S. immigration policy needs to be reformulated, but they could neither explore nor resolve the complex questions raised. Among these are the following: What levels of legal immigration are desirable? What criteria should determine admittance: family reunification, U.S. unemployment, U.S. needs for skilled workers, immigrants' potential economic contributions, or humanitarian concerns about refugees? To what extent should worries about the future size and composition of the U.S. population shape immigration policy? How can basic rights of immigrants and refugees be respected? What are the magnitudes and impacts of undocumented migration?

RECOMMENDATIONS

The foregoing assessments of international population trends and policy approaches led participants in the Seventy-first Assembly to the following recommendations for U.S. foreign policy concerning population in the years ahead:

1. The participants strongly recommend that U.S. assistance for population programs be maintained at least at its current share of overall U.S. development assistance.
2. The participants fully endorse both the voluntary basis for U.S. family planning assistance and its goal to provide people with a full understanding of the family planning options open to them, including the benefits and drawbacks of those alternatives, along with full access to contraceptive services.
3. There was a strong consensus that the United States should not permit its foreign aid funds to be used for activities that entail abridgement of human rights. The participants recognize that different countries hold different views and perspectives concerning what constitutes appropriate means of encouraging and assisting people to use family planning. For this reason the participants recommend that the U.S. government should respect the sovereignty of other countries and should not impose sanctions on other countries or organizations working in those countries that carry out programs that cannot be supported directly with U.S. assistance funds, provided that these programs are consistent with internationally recognized human rights.

Consistent with such policy, the participants believe the U.S. government should maintain its full support for the UN Fund for Population Activities.

4. The participants reached a consensus that the U.S. government should not withhold its funds from countries or organizations that engage in abortion activities where abortion is legal. The participants specifically recommend that this policy be applied to restore funding to the International Planned Parenthood Federation.
5. The participants agreed that reproductive freedom is a fundamental human right. A majority felt that this right should include access to contraception and abortion and recommends that U.S. policy should not frustrate the exercise of this right.
6. Efforts should be undertaken to improve the education, economic opportunities, and health of women. Women's issues, needs, and organizations should receive much greater attention and financial support from the U.S. foreign aid program.
7. The Assembly participants agreed that the current policies and laws related to immigration into the United States are inadequate and that reevaluation and reformulation are required.

8. The participants recognized the need for increased efforts in research, development, and education related to improvement of voluntary fertility control. They recommend:

- **improvement of the technical, managerial, and other capacities required within developing countries to enable them to develop and carry out appropriate population policies and programs;**
- **increased efforts to ensure that family planning programs are designed and managed effectively and efficiently and offer high quality client care;**
- **the provision of education programs to increase the individual person's knowledge of reproductive physiology and other aspects of reproduction to enhance his or her own ability to determine the number and spacing of children and improve health and well-being;**
- **increased research to expand contraceptive options, including basic research in reproductive biology and continuing work on development and testing of new methods;**
- **and the consideration of measures to reduce current legal and liability barriers in the United States to contraceptive research, testing, and availability without reducing current standards of quality and safety.**

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ABOUT THE AMERICAN ASSEMBLY

The American Assembly was established by Dwight D. Eisenhower at Columbia University in 1950. It holds nonpartisan meetings and publishes authoritative books to illuminate issues of United States policy.

An affiliate of Columbia, with offices in the Sherman Fairchild Center, the Assembly is a national, educational institution incorporated in the State of New York.

The Assembly seeks to provide information, stimulate discussion, and evoke independent conclusions on matters of vital public interest.

American Assembly Sessions

At least two national programs are initiated each year. Authorities are retained to write background papers presenting essential data and defining the main issues of each subject.

A group of men and women representing a broad range of experience, competence, and American leadership meet for several days to discuss the Assembly topic and consider alternatives for national policy.

All Assemblies follow the same procedure. The background papers are sent to participants in advance of the Assembly. The Assembly meets in small groups for four or five lengthy periods. All groups use the same agenda. At the close of these informal sessions participants adopt in plenary session a final report of findings and recommendations.

Regional, state, and local Assemblies are held following the national session at Arden House. Assemblies have also been held in England, Switzerland, Malaysia, Canada, the Caribbean, South America, Central America, the Philippines, and Japan. Over one hundred forty institutions have cosponsored one or more Assemblies.

Arden House

Home of The American Assembly and scene of the national sessions is Arden House, which was given to Columbia University in 1950 by W. Averell Harriman. E. Roland Harriman joined his brother in contributing toward adaptation of the property for conference purposes. The buildings and surrounding land, known as the Harriman Campus of Columbia University, are fifty miles north of New York City.

Arden House is a distinguished conference center. It is self-supporting and operates throughout the year for use by organizations with educational objectives. The American Assembly is a tenant of this Columbia University facility only during Assembly sessions.

The American Assembly

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