

Enhancing access to contraception and allowing migration are the two vital ways to address global population problems, argues Bjørn Lomborg (PhD), an adjunct professor at the Copenhagen Business School and director of the Copenhagen Consensus Center (CCC), who is also the author of *The Skeptical Environmentalist* and *Cool It*. His new book is *How To Spend \$75 Billion to Make the World a Better Place*.

How to Best Address Population Problems

There was a time when we worried about a "population explosion," with ever more people fighting over ever fewer resources. Yet, the population growth has decreased since the late 1960s and resources have not run out.

There are still population problems, but the two main ones are likely different from what you think.

The United Nations expects 2.4 billion more people by 2050. But contrary to common knowledge, this is not mostly about couples getting lots of babies. Remember, the average woman in the developing world had 5.4 children in the early 1970s, but today that number has dropped to half at 2.7. In Ethiopia, the average woman used to get 6.87 children in 1970, today that number has dropped to 5.26.

Even if every man and woman just had one baby survive, world population would still increase by 1.9 billion by 2050. More children only explain half a billion of the population increase. That we live longer explains another 0.4 billion. But the most important factor - 1.5 billion more by 2050 - is simply because we are still a young world, where many youngsters are yet to have their own family.

This does not mean the half-billion is unimportant. If families have fewer children, they can invest more in their future, giving them much greater earning potential. As countries get more prosperous, their birth rates fall.



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Mothers have fewer children who are better-educated and themselves have small families.

Increasing prosperity is shared among fewer people. This is what first happened in the Old World during the Industrial Revolution, and the living standards of Europeans rose rapidly. More recently, a number of East Asian countries have gone through a similar transition, none more so than China. The good news is that it could work anywhere, also allowing African countries catching up fast.

The Chinese government slowed the growth of its population by imposing a "one-child per family" rule. This may have been good economically, but was also an infringement of human rights. Fortunately, there are other, less drastic, ways to travel this road, particularly by making modern contraception available to everyone who wants it.

Population is just one key issue on the agenda for the international community at the moment. The problem is that, although everyone agrees that we should be doing everything we can to make poor people's lives better, prioritising a particular set of targets is difficult. Governments and NGOs have been

working together to agree how best to improve people's lives in the period to 2030, but there are still literally hundreds of possible targets, all of them stoutly defended by someone.

Having hundreds of priorities is like having none at all. That is why the Copenhagen Consensus Centre (CCC) is trying to help focus on the most effective targets, using the tools of economic analysis. Although economics does not provide the entire picture, understanding where we do most good is at least a very good starting point.

Groups of top economists are looking at each of 19 possible issues and making their recommendations. On the population issue, Hans-Peter Kohler and Jere Behrman from the University of Pennsylvania, United States, argue that making modern contraception freely available is a phenomenally good investment.

Providing contraception to the 215 million women that today want to avoid pregnancy but cannot, would cost about 3.6 billion dollars. It would annually result in 640,000 fewer newborn deaths, 150,000 fewer maternal deaths and 600,000 fewer children who lose their mother.

Estimating this misery in economic terms may seem cold, but it makes it possible to compare contraception to other big challenges. In total, contraception would avoid about 145 billion dollars in human misery. That alone means that every dollar spent will do 40 dollars good.

But experts also estimate that with

fewer kids, the parents can afford better schooling, while society benefits from fewer costs from kids and more income from a larger working population. Those benefits total 288 billion dollars per year, making a dollar spent on contraception do 120 dollars worth of good.

But population also means growth in older people and possibly shrinking populations. This is already happening in Europe and Japan, but will also start soon in China and eventually most places. Today, 12pc of the world's population is above 60 years, but in 36 years, that will almost double to 21pc. Ethiopia has less than five million older than 65 today, but will have more than 15 million by mid-century.

Although aging may seem a less pressing problem than global population growth, it is real and has to be tackled. Policies aimed at increasing the birth rate in Europe and elsewhere have not been successful, but there is a better solution: allow more migration.

Properly managed, this can benefit the receiving nation (getting more workers), the migrants (getting better pay) and the sending country (getting remittances). In total, it turns out that the benefits are more than forty times the cost.

There are other promising targets, which are more difficult to cost - discouraging early retirement and dependency, for example. But overall, the economists make a powerful argument for why contraception and migration should be prioritised on the list of global targets.

BY HIBAMO TAGESSE

VIEWPOINT

Globalisation's Greatest Bias

Using the flawlessly smooth approach of international trade, the developed countries are absorbing incomparable advantages from the less endowed countries. They configure their different companies into the development routes of progressing countries and tap the benefits they aim to get their hands on.

Ethiopia is one of such tribute paying countries. This trend of securing economic interests is astoundingly imposed on the underdeveloped in binding treaties. Most of the underdeveloped countries, given their strategic position in geopolitics, their booming markets and plentiful resource endowments, are lustfully planned as a sheep for slaughter by the well-developed.

These small economies are beheaded to fill the guts of the big ones with calculated higher economic benefits. All those swift efforts are made under uncountable designations by the wealthy, but summed up for this end called, economic superiority.

Various procedural and ideological competitions are noticed in the world, mainly aimed at adapting a better economic leverage inside the underdeveloped economies. In order to win the economic benefits of those battle grounds, different political ideologies got tailored all along.

Colonialism marked the beginning of the global economic scandal, ending those socio-sectoral approaches of agrarianism and monarchism, both of which divert global resources to the pockets of the very



Globalisation cheats the poor.

few. That changed with time, but to systems that enrich the selected elite. Socializing the economy, capitalizing the economy, liberalizing the economy and name it, so many idealistic approaches were calibrated to win the global economic benefits.

The most decisive patterns of economic interdependences of the world were enormously developed by trade, communication, language and ideology. International interactions using telecommunications and information technology infrastructures attract different economies closer.

Communications advancements make the world a small plot of market, but with unavoidably dear interdependence. But it is the developed countries that more smartly manage the interdependence for their favor and strategically build small economies around them, centering theirs as servers.

Small economies, like ours, are technically directed to sing the economic melody of their conductors. Once those small economies sign in to sing that chorus, the developed know how well they indebted them with never opted out discipleship circles.

Our country is also forced to the developed country's fishers spot. Their spot requires

us to process our international trade ties with the monarchy of information they design to the world economics.

In this information monarchism, the trade information of the developed countries forcefully governs the acts of the underdeveloped, like us. Our trade is brought only under the custody of their easily communicable trade informatics.

Consequently, we are globally acting, making all kinds of treaties, proclaiming laws, effecting policies and making all manner of decisions bound to such information. The steady marching of our small economy is scandalously trained to deeply depend on the trade pattern of the developed economies.

We are currently having deep trade ties with developed countries and emerging ones, especially china. These ties come to us designated as loans, assistances and supports.

These designations externally bear their normal meaning translations, but they internally bear great intentions to manipulate little economies, like us, by making them helplessly dependent on these designations.

Those developed countries are giving us huge amount of loans, assistance and support but with the precondition of employing their own trade actors, their own brand machineries and inputs on whatever price they tag to; imposing on us their own policy directives concerning the

help; and diffusing all their economic and political views.

It is, in fact obvious, that the borrower is servant to its lender. And these loans, assistances and supports made them masters over us. Under these globally deceptive approaches, whenever the developed economies are touched, we, the small economies, tremble with the heat conferred with them.

The currently observed Chinese economic standstill, for instance, adversely slows down our trade, industry and infrastructure development. The great disadvantage, here, is when the great economies are hurt. We, the small economies, are bound by agreement from using any other policy alternatives, less costly machinery and inputs, and partner with economic actors who perform with lower contract prices.

And generally, we are restricted from any alternative approaches. If at all, globalisation is cheating us to the prosperous.

Eventually, our economy is stripped of its resources through the instruments of debt and assistances. The greatest relief will, therefore, be to find our way out of foreign loan, support and assistances as much as possible. It is only, then, that all our highly celebrated developments would be sustainable stories.

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