

**WORLD POPULATION COLLAPSE:
LESSONS FOR THE PHILIPPINES**

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ABSTRACT: A hundred countries today face increasing economic, socio-cultural, political and security problems while their populations age and start to decline, a result of Total Fertility Rates (TFR's) falling below replacement levels since the 1960's. As their population pyramid gradually becomes inverted, their ageing workforce, which foresees little replacement, needs to support a growing number of elderly. To resolve these difficulties, their governments desperately encourage their citizens to raise more children. If ever they succeed, their few working people in the future will be doubly burdened, as they must support not only the many elderly they already have, but also the many children they wish to have.

All this the Philippines will also have to experience after its fertility rate sinks to levels below replacement by 2025, brought about by today's general trend of parents bearing less children, coupled with increasing emigration of individuals and families. It would be pointless to abandon the normal population pyramid we still have today, and then, like rich countries at present, wish to regain it by all means.

A serious study of the latest world demographic data will reject population control as a quick-fix solution to poverty in the Philippines, and hopefully encourage efforts towards good governance, both in the public and the private sectors: steps that will allow the Philippines to take full advantage of its rich human resources, which it can share to ageing countries desperately in need of them.

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I. The World Demographic Picture

[1] Widespread use of contraceptives in the 1960's and the general preference for having fewer children pushed the fertility rates of developed countries below replacement levels between 1965 and 1975. The population control program began in the Philippines around 1970 through the use of the mass media, legislation, government policies, population and sex education modules in schools, and the promotion of contraceptives. This program has succeeded in bringing down Philippine fertility rates during the past three and a half decades, principally by persuading people to have smaller families.

A. Worldwide Decline in Total Fertility Rate (TFR)

[2] *Newsweek's* cover of September 27, 2004, shows a baby in a stroller looking at other empty strollers beside him. The title reads, "Baby Bust. For more and More Countries, The Problem Isn't Having Too Many People But Having Too Few." The report, "Birth Dearth," has this introduction: "Remember the population bomb? *The new threat to the planet is not too many people but too few.*"¹ After describing daily news, warnings, and "proofs" of overpopulation, the author writes:

Yet this is not the full story. To the contrary, in fact. Across the globe, people are having fewer and fewer children. Fertility rates have dropped by half since 1972, from six children per woman to 2.9. And demographers say they're still falling, faster than ever. The world's population will continue to grow—from today's 6.4 billion to around 9 billion in 2050. But after that, it will go sharply into decline. Indeed, a phenomenon that we're destined to learn much more about—depopulation—has already begun in a number of countries.

Welcome to the New Demography. It will change everything about our world, from the absolute size and power of nations to global economic growth to the quality of our lives.²

A host of similar headlines and articles at the start of the new millennium attest that indeed, overpopulation has been but a myth, now in its final moments of existence.³ Gone were the days when the mass media overwhelmingly advanced the doctrine of world overpopulation—a quasi-dogma in public opinion that turned out to be nothing more than a well-crafted heresy.

¹ Report by Michael Meyer, "Birth Dearth," in *Newsweek*, September 27, 2004, pp. 56-63 (emphasis added).

² Michael Meyer, "Birth Dearth," p. 58. Since the 1970's, several demographers, economists, and other experts have been informing the public of these trends.

³ Some examples: *European Pension Systems Set to Collapse. Low Fertility Blamed*, in *Friday Fax*, May 4, 2000; *Underpopulation, Not Overpopulation, the Real Global Problem*, in *Washington Post*, March 18, 2001; *Developed Nations Warned on Aging Crisis Time Bomb*, in *Manila Bulletin*, Aug 30, 2001; *Have Three Babies to Sustain the Population*, in *Daily Telegraph*, Dec. 12, 2003; *Asian Economies Desperate for Babies*, in *Daily News Express*, Feb. 2, 2004; *Have More Babies, Say the Tories*, in *Daily Mail*, September 22, 2003: "Women should have more babies to stave off the looming crisis of an ageing population, the Tories will say today. The call to 'go forth and multiply' comes from work and pensions spokesman David Willetts, who wants couples to send birth rates soaring"; *In address to Estonians, President Calls on Citizens to Make More Babies*, in *New York Times*, January 2, 2003: "Worried about a declining population, Estonia's president has urged the country's 1.4 million residents to make more babies. 'Let us remember that in just a couple of decades the number of Estonians seeing the New Year will be one-fifth less than today,' President Arnold Ruutel said in a speech broadcast live on national television Wednesday."

[3] What is “fertility rate”? What does its decline foretell? How does it relate with the process of population ageing and impending collapse taking place in a hundred countries today? Simply stated, the “Total Fertility Rate” or TFR refers to the average number of children a woman will bear over her lifetime of reproduction (that is, from 14 to 49 years, although some would include only those from 15 to 45 years).⁴ In general, a TFR of 2.1 children per woman is necessary to replace a country’s population. The TFR computation includes not only married women, but all women. Hence, since many women bear zero or one child, the rest should bear more than 2.1 if the population is to be replaced. The replacement level TFR is actually higher than 2.1 in less developed countries, where mortality rates are higher: in the Philippines, it is estimated to be around 2.29.⁵

What is the world’s TFR scenario today? According to the United Nations Population Division’s *World Population Prospects. The 2004 Revision: Highlights*,⁶ it has gone down to half in the past 50 years, and will be below replacement level in another 50 years. “In 2000-2005, fertility at the world level stood at 2.65 children per woman, about half the level it had in 1950-1955 (5 children per wom[a]n). In the medium variant, global fertility is projected to decline further to 2.05 children per woman [by 2050].”⁷ The situation is worst in developed countries, with some having a TFR half of the world’s figure:

Fertility levels in the 44 developed countries, which account for 19 per cent of the world population, are currently very low... Fifteen, mostly located in Southern and Eastern Europe, have reached levels of fertility unprecedented in human history (below 1.3 children per woman). Since 1990-1995, fertility decline has been the rule among most developed countries.⁸

[4] When a country’s TFR is below replacement level we say that its population will no longer be able to replace itself. Does this mean that the country’s population will start to decline immediately? Not necessarily. Considering that populations increase or decrease because of *births*, *deaths* and *net migration*, we shall now briefly examine how, in a country with a very low number of births per woman (as reflected in its low TFR), its population could still grow *temporarily*, because of *population momentum*, *reduced deaths* and *immigration*.

First of all, as to the number of *births*, the effect of a below-replacement TFR on the population count could be somewhat cushioned if there are relatively many women of reproductive age. In this scenario, each woman gives birth to only one or two children; but since

⁴ More technically, the UN Statistics Division defines TFR as “the number of children that would be born per woman, assuming no female mortality at child bearing ages and the age-specific fertility rates of a specified country and reference period.” From: http://unstats.un.org/unsd/cdb/cdb_dict_xrxx.asp?def_code=142.

⁵ Jacques Dupâquier, *La population des continents et des États en 2004*, in *Population et Avenir* (Paris), no. 670 (November-December 2004): 21. See also this review’s website, <http://www.population-demographie.org>.

⁶ Dated February 24, 2005. The UNPD is an office under the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. Its 100-page report highlights the results of the 2004 Revision of its official world population estimates and projections. The *World Population Prospects*’ Preface states that “The 2004 Revision is the nineteenth round of global demographic estimates and projections undertaken by the Population Division since 1950. The full results of the 2004 Revision will be presented in a series of three volumes currently under preparation. The first volume will provide the comprehensive tables presenting the major demographic indicators for each country for 1950-2050; the second volume will contain the distributions by age and sex of the population of each country for the period 1950-2050, and the third volume will be devoted to an analysis of the results obtained.” The *Highlights* and the three volumes are available from <http://www.unpopulation.org>.

⁷ UNPD, *World Population Prospects*, pp. 7-8, no. 8.

⁸ UNPD, *World Population Prospects*, p. 8, no. 10.

there are proportionally many women doing so (relative to the population), the total number of children born would still be many. This temporary phenomenon is called “population momentum.”⁹ Later on, when these many women go beyond the reproductive age, there will be fewer women to replace them (a consequence of a low TFR), and the new births will be unable to replace the number of deaths.

Secondly, as to the number of *deaths*, better medical attention has greatly lowered infant and child mortality. At the same time, life expectancy increases as proportionally less people die from diseases, accidents, wars, hunger and natural calamities, and as people live longer due to better diet and health care. Hence, in a country with below-replacement TFR, the population may continue to increase if the low number of deaths helps offset the low number of births.

The third factor contributing to population change is *net migration*. In a country with below-replacement TFR, the population may still increase if many adults are drawn into it, a phenomenon known as immigration. For example,

in 2000-2005, net migration in 28 countries either prevented population decline or doubled at least the contribution of natural increase (births minus deaths) to population growth. These countries include Austria, Canada, Croatia, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Portugal, Qatar, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, the United Arab Emirates and the United Kingdom.¹⁰

The UNPD further reports the following trends:

At the country level, during 1990-2000, 32 of the 44 developed countries have been primarily net receivers of international migrants. This group includes traditional countries of immigration such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States of America, most of the populous countries in Northern, Southern and Western Europe as well as the Russian Federation and Japan. The movement of people from less developed regions to more developed regions has dominated the world migration patterns for almost half a century, but these flows have not been exclusively unidirectional. Several countries or areas in the less developed regions have been attracting migrants in large numbers, including Hong Kong (China SAR), Israel, Kuwait, Malaysia, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, South Africa and the United Arab Emirates. During 2000-2010, the major countries of origin of migrants are China, India, Indonesia, Mexico and the Philippines.¹¹

Immigrants can increase the receiving country’s population size not only by their mere presence, but also by increasing its TFR, since many of them are of reproductive age. “Over

⁹ The World Bank defines the term as “the tendency for population growth to continue beyond the time that replacement-level fertility has been achieved because of a relatively high concentration of people in the childbearing years. For example, the absolute numbers of people in developing countries will continue to increase over the next several decades even as the rates of population growth will decline. This phenomenon is due to past high fertility rates which results in a large number of young people. As these youth grow older and move through reproductive ages, the greater number of births will exceed the number of deaths in the older populations.” From: <http://www.worldbank.org/depweb/english/modules/glossary.html>

¹⁰ UNPD, *World Population Prospects*, p. 9, no. 19.

¹¹ UNPD, *World Population Prospects*, pp. 31-32. The same report estimates the following figures: “In terms of annual averages, the major net receivers of international migrants are projected to be the United States of America (1.1 million annually), Germany (204,000), Canada (201,000), the United Kingdom (133,000), Italy (120,000) and Australia (100,000)” (pp. 9-10, no. 20).

time, however, the fertility of migrants tends to converge to that of natives, as migrants adapt their preferences and behaviour to those of the host society.”¹²

[5] We have just seen that even if the TFR falls below replacement levels, population momentum, decrease in infant and child mortality, increase in life expectancy, and immigration can prevent a country’s population from collapsing. But this will not be for very long. The country will eventually lose its population momentum, as the bulk of its women age, lose their reproductive capacity and are replaced with less numerous women in the reproductive age bracket. Mortality and life expectancies depend much on the medical sciences’ capacity to reduce deaths and prolong life, but these have their limits. Improvement in health care will not be unending. When the period of improvement ceases, that is, when infant and child mortality has been lowered to the minimum, and health care can no further extend life expectancy, the large number of deaths among the by then immense elderly population will contribute to population decline. Such population decline can take place two or three generations still after the TFR goes below replacement level. This means that for countries that went below replacement TFR between 1965-1975, their population would start to decline between 2005-2015, as did Japan’s in 2005.¹³

Migration on the other hand can be more flexible. Governments can develop policies to encourage or discourage migration, whether immigration or emigration, although they cannot always control these movements easily. By allowing immigration, countries can help prevent their populations from collapsing and even help them grow.¹⁴ But at this point in time, this seems true in theory, but not in practice. The UN Economic and Social Council stated that,

... given the low fertility levels prevailing in the more developed regions, net migration has become the major driving force behind their population growth, accounting for half of that growth in 1990-1995, two thirds in 1995-2000 and three quarters in 2000-2005. If current trends continue, between 2010 and 2030 net migration will likely account for virtually all the population growth in more developed regions. *Thereafter, a net migration gain of 2.2 million migrants*

¹² See the discussion on “Migration and Fertility,” by the UN Economic and Social Council, Commission on Population and Development, in *World Population Monitoring, Focusing on International Migration and Development*, January 25, 2006, pp. 19-20, paragraphs 50-53. Quoted text is from paragraph 50.

¹³ See also Norimitsu Onishi, *Village Writes Its Epitaph: Victim of a Graying Japan*, in *The New York Times*, April 30, 2006, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/04/30/world/asia/30japan.html?_r=1&oref=slogin: “This mountain village near the Sea of Japan, withered to eight aging residents, concluded recently that it could no longer go on. So, after months of anguish, the villagers settled on a drastic solution: selling all of Ogama to an industrial waste company from Tokyo, which will turn it into a landfill. With the proceeds, the villagers, mainly in their 70’s, plan to pack up everything, including their family graves, and move in the next few years to yet uncertain destinations, likely becoming the first community in Japan to voluntarily cease to exist. ‘I’m sure we’re the first ones to have made such a proposal,’ said Kazuo Miyasaka, 64, the village leader. ‘It’s because there’s no future for us here, zero.’ On a hill overlooking a field of overgrown bushes, surrounded by the sounds of a running stream and a bush warbler, Mr. Miyasaka pointed below with his right index finger. ‘I never imagined it would come to this,’ he said. ‘I mean, those all used to be rice fields.’... Japan is dotted with so many such communities that academics have coined a term — ‘villages that have reached their limits’—to describe those with populations that are more than half elderly. Out of 140 villages in Monzen — the municipality that includes Ogama—40 percent have fewer than 10 households, most of which are inhabited by the elderly.”

¹⁴ “Over the past decade, the Governments of many receiving countries have been actively adopting or amending laws and regulations so as to facilitate the inflow of the types of migrants they need, especially skilled migrants and temporary low-skilled workers.” *World Population Monitoring*, p. 28, paragraph 83.

*annually is not expected to counterbalance the excess of deaths over births projected for the more developed regions.*¹⁵

It adds:

Although international migration can play a role in slowing population ageing and forestalling population reductions, it cannot reverse these processes unless its volume increases markedly. Net migration to Europe, for instance, would have to increase fourfold to maintain constant the size of the working-age population.¹⁶

[6] All this leads to the conclusion that while below-replacement TFR will not *immediately* lead to population decline if it is compensated by population momentum, decreased mortality, longer life expectancy, and immigration, such compensations will tend to be temporary because of their limits. Hence, if governments wish to maintain or increase their populations, they will have to try to increase the TFR by motivating the citizens to have more children, mainly through political decisions affecting the economic and social conditions of the country. But sad to say, as will be seen later, they cannot easily succeed in this attempt.

To simplify our discussion, other factors affecting population increase or decrease are not expounded upon here, such as the proportion of women of reproductive age; decreased male fertility possibly due to drugs, alcoholism or pollution; the impact of wars, famines and epidemics; urbanization and economic growth, etc. Deaths due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic tremendously affect population trends in some countries,¹⁷ but not in the Philippines, where condom use to supposedly control the epidemic has never been widely accepted.¹⁸

B. Consequences of the Quintupling of the Oldest-Old Population and Population Collapse

[7] The UNPD states, “*The primary consequence of fertility decline, especially if combined with increases in life expectancy, is population ageing, whereby the share of older persons in a population increases relative to that of younger persons.*”¹⁹ Another *Newsweek* cover story has the following title: “*What To Do With Granny? The Cost of Taking Care of the Elderly.*” It describes how “by 2050, for the first time in human history, the elderly will outnumber children,

¹⁵ *World Population Monitoring*, p. 14, paragraph 42. Emphasis added.

¹⁶ *World Population Monitoring*, p. 43, paragraph 141 (in the Conclusions).

¹⁷ UNPD, *World Population Prospects*, p. 8, no. 13: “Twenty-five years into the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the impact of the disease is evident in terms of increased morbidity and mortality and slower population growth...”

¹⁸ Cardinal Alfonso López Trujillo (President of the Pontifical Council for the Family, Vatican), *Family Values Versus Safe Sex*, December 1, 2003: “In Thailand and in the Philippines, the first HIV/AIDS cases were reported in 1984; by 1987, Thailand had 112 cases, while the Philippines had more, with 135 cases. Today, in the year 2003, there are around 750,000 cases in Thailand, where the 100% Condom Use Program had relatively great success. On the other hand, there are only 1,935 cases in the Philippines - and this, considering that the Philippines’ population is around 30% greater than Thailand’s! Relatively low rates of condom use by the people in general, and staunch opposition from the Church and a good number of government leaders against the condom program and sexual promiscuity, are well-known facts in the Philippines.” The quoted text cites the following references: Rene Josef Bullecer (Director of AIDS-Free Philippines), *Telling the Truth: AIDS Rates for Thailand and the Philippines*; Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines, Pastoral Letter on AIDS: *In the Compassion of Jesus*, January 23, 1993; and Jaime L. Cardinal Sin, Pastoral Letter on *Subtle Attacks against Family and Life*, July 9, 2001.

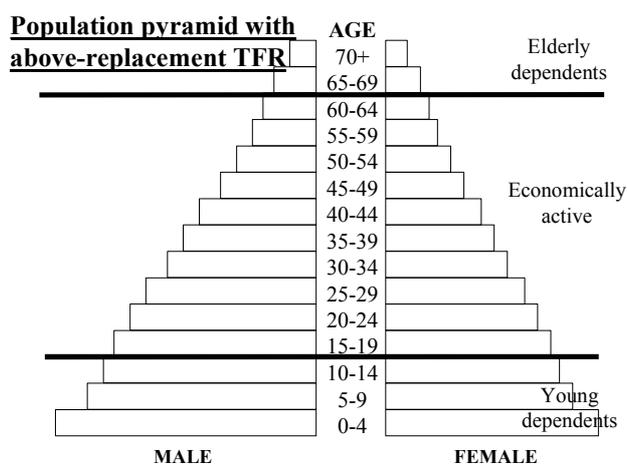
¹⁹ UNPD, *World Population Prospects*, p. 9, no. 14.

posing a problem of how to look after this new generation of seniors, without going back to the extended family for care.”²⁰

In Europe, Japan, Singapore, and many other countries, decline in TFR due to the widespread use of contraceptives and the systematic option of having few children started four decades ago is today taking its toll in terms of a rapidly ageing population. Sad to say, this is nature’s way: having only a few births today will lead to having more coffins than cradles two generations or so later. Developed countries at present already have more elderly persons (over 65’s) than children (below 15’s), and by 2050 they will have two elderly persons for every child.²¹ Some say that in 2050 some parts of Italy will only have one child below 5 years old for every 20 persons above 65.

“Globally, the number of persons aged 60 years or over is expected *almost to triple*, increasing from 672 million in 2005 [that is, 10.34% of world population] to nearly 1.9 billion by 2050 [that is, 20.88% of world population].”²² “An even more marked increase is expected in the number of the oldest-old (persons aged 80 years or over): from 86 million in 2005 to 394 million in 2050,”²³ *an increase of almost five times*.

[8] A population with an above-replacement TFR (that is, with 2.1 or more children per woman) will have a pyramid-shaped “population pyramid.” In this scenario, the economically active persons support their children and a small group of elderly dependents.



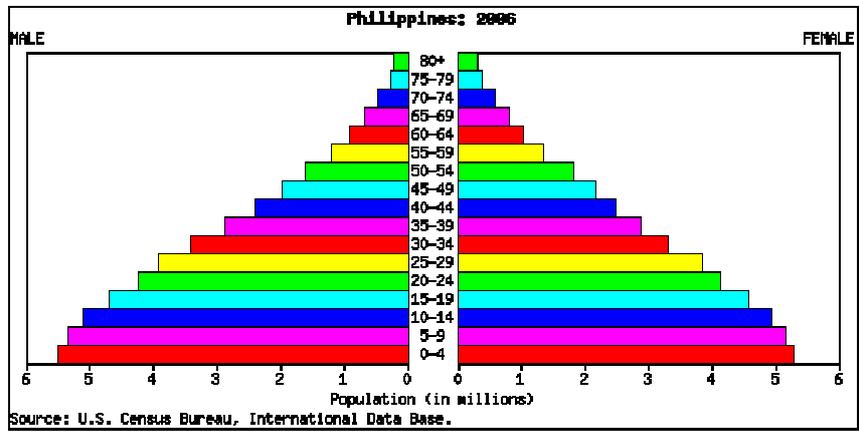
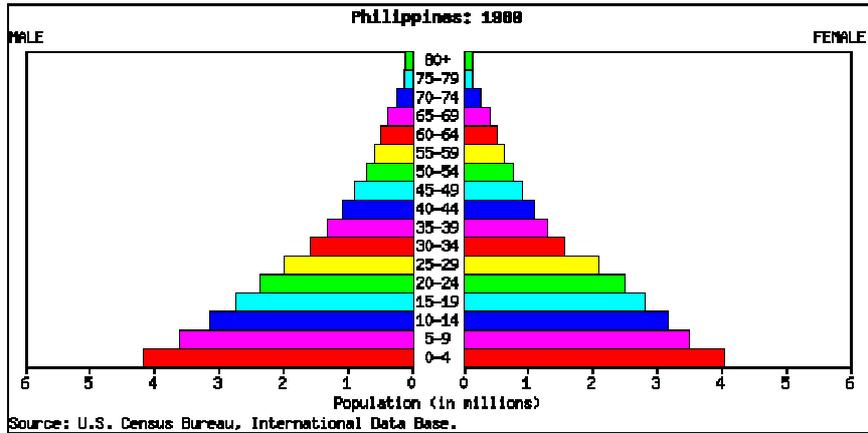
The relatively normal-shaped population pyramids of the Philippines in 1980 and 2006 reflect TFRs above the replacement level, as seen in the following approximate figures:

²⁰ Ginanne Brownell and Carla Power, *The Golden Age*, in *Newsweek*, Dec. 6, 2004 (Latin America and Asia editions).

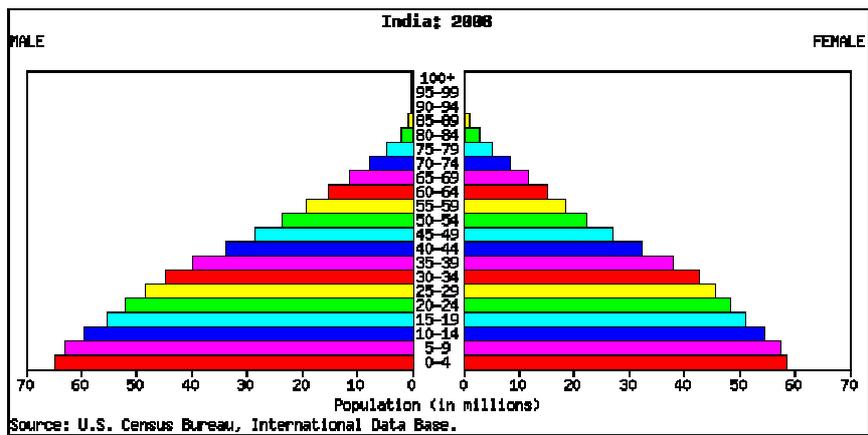
²¹ See UNPD, *World Population Prospects*, p. 9, no. 15.

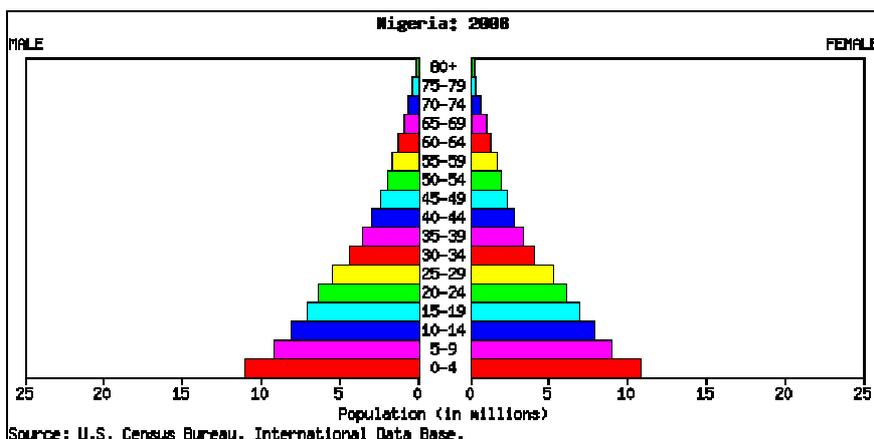
²² UNPD, *World Population Prospects*, p. 9, no. 14, emphases and text in brackets added.

²³ UNPD, *World Population Prospects*, p 9, no. 14.



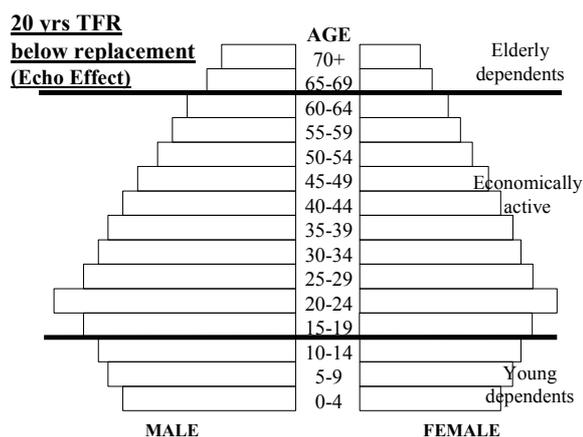
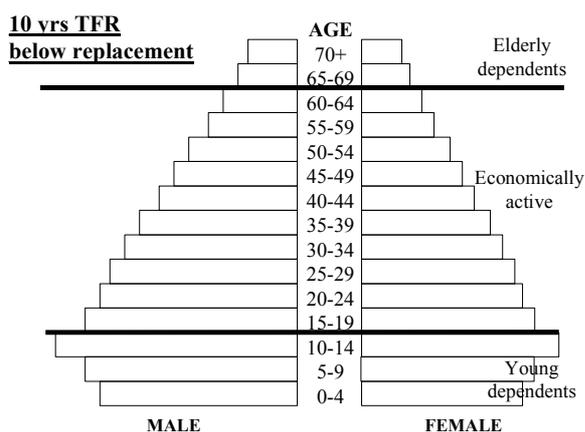
India and Nigeria also have population pyramids with bases wider than the upper segments:

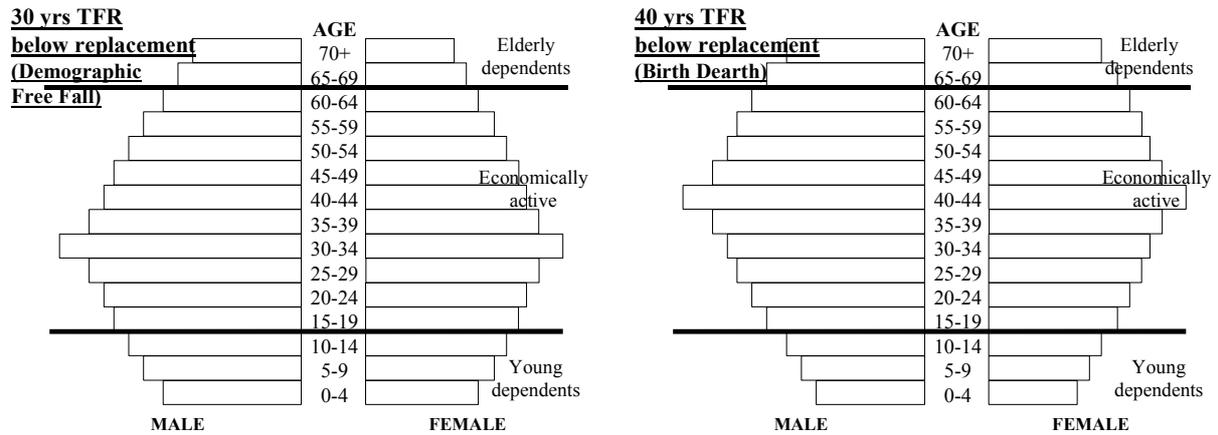




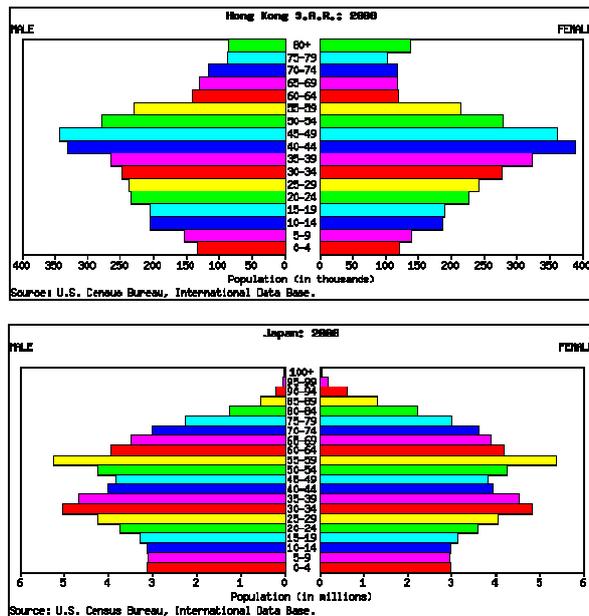
Note that at the lower part of the Philippines' 1980 population pyramid, and of Nigeria's in 2006, each segment is *noticeably wider* than the one immediately above it. This reflects a TFR way above the replacement level (as well as declining infant mortality): many more were born and survived in the last five years than in the previous five years. Such observation is less pronounced in the case of the Philippines and India in 2006, in that the lowest segments are only *slightly wider* than the ones above them: this reflects an on-going decline in their TFR.

[9] What will happen if the TFR goes below replacement level? What used to be a pyramid, with a large base, would have continued to have the figure of a pyramid, had there been no decline in TFR to below-replacement level. But because there were fewer children born each year, the wide bases, which rise in the graphs as the persons age, have been replaced by narrower bases each year. The population pyramid's lowest segments will progressively become narrower than the ones above them, ultimately leading to a diamond-shaped figure:



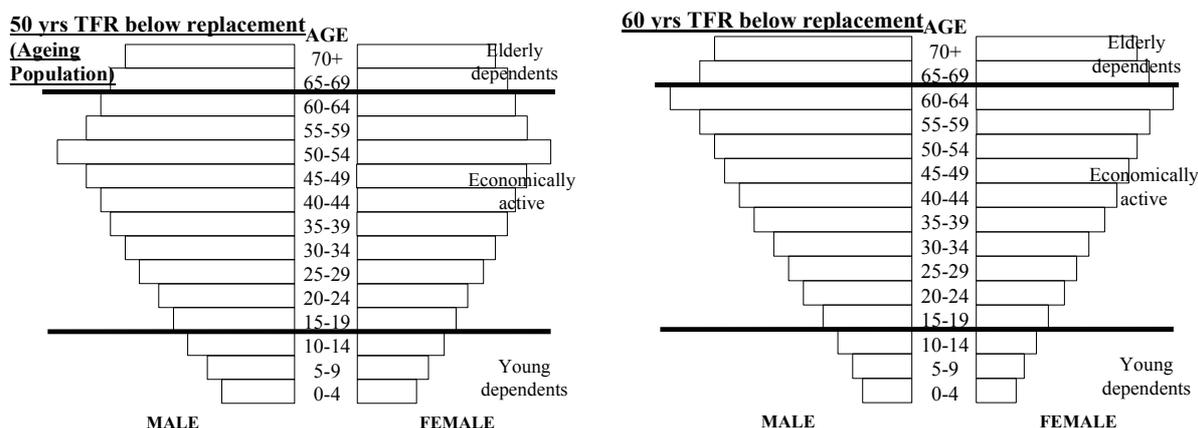


Hong Kong and Japan, for example, both have a diamond-shaped population pyramid in 2006, reflecting a fall of their TFR below replacement levels some 30-40 years ago:

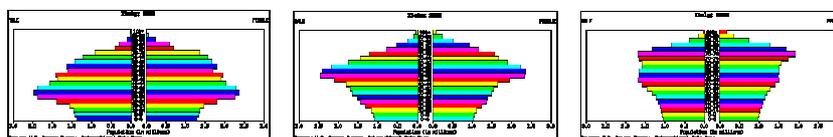


This diamond-shaped scenario means that the economically active persons will have to support a relatively few children and a relatively few (but rapidly increasing in number) elderly. This condition contributes to their present economic boom, since the workers will get to keep a big share of their earnings, instead of spending them for the needs of children and the elderly. This is the situation that those in favor of population control want us to foresee; they explain that the Philippines will become well-off when it reaches this stage. But they never explain what will happen *beyond this stage*. They never explain what will happen next, saying that we will just “cross the bridge when we get there.” What will happen next, as we shall see now, and to say the least, is *disaster*.

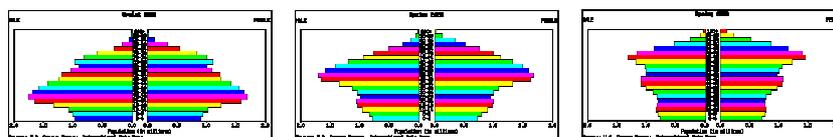
[10] If the TFR of a certain country remains below replacement levels, the fewer women of reproductive age will give birth to still fewer children than their mothers did, further narrowing the base of the pyramid, and causing the graph's bulging portion (that is, the segments representing the most number of people) to rise. The diamond-shaped population pyramid's base will continue to narrow, while the wide middle part will continue to rise, resulting in a figure shaped like a toy top:



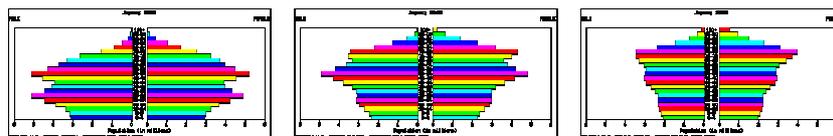
This will be the stage of many countries by 2050. For example, Italy's population pyramid had a low bulging part in 2000, will be diamond-shaped in 2025, and toy top-shaped in 2050 (left to right):



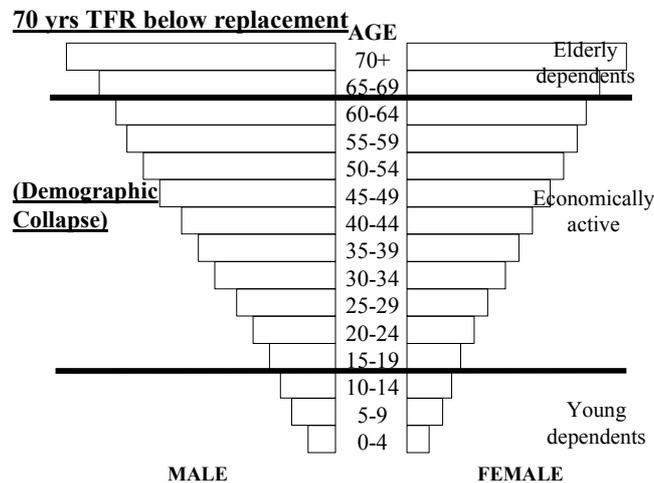
Spain's population pyramids of 2000, 2025 and 2050 look similar to Italy's:



Japan, whose population started to decline in 2005, also manifests this trend:



[11] If the trend continues, countries with low TFR's will end up having an inverted population pyramid, resulting in a demographic collapse.



In both a top-shaped and an inverted population pyramid, a huge number of elderly have to be supported by a smaller number of working people. That these countries' working (economically active) population is relatively big today contributes to their economic prosperity. Meanwhile, the number of infants and children continuously decreases: they should not be seen only as young dependents needing care (and hence, the lesser they are, the better for the economy, as population control advocates say), but also as the future labor force which will support the growing elderly population. There will be less economically active persons in the future. And to make the situation even worse, the average age of workers (that is, the average age *within* the economically active group) likewise increases.²⁴

[12] Ageing countries experience what is called the "demographic winter," where all is cold, without life. Like endangered species, unless their TFR returns to above replacement levels, a very difficult task, they will reach the inverted pyramid stage within decades. "Nations cannot have a future this way and will suffer a tragic loss of population that constitutes, as has been said, suicide," Card. López Trujillo explains.²⁵ These nations urgently come up with measures to hopefully bring back the springtime into their lands, to have more children, more life, more resources. If they fail, they will become extinct.

With the prevailing consumerism, value-free sex education and the general preference for having few children, the ageing countries today will probably need one or two generations to

²⁴ The US Census Bureau, from where the population pyramids on this paper for the years 2000, 2006, 2025 and 2050, were taken, provides the population pyramid projections of all countries for any year until 2050 (see <http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idbpyr.html>). They also provide in the website an impressive "dynamic" view, where one may see how the population pyramid's bulging part rises as the years go by in countries with decreasing TFR.

²⁵ Interview granted to Lorenzo Fazzini, "Cardinal Lopez Trujillo: A More Humane Economy is the Real Challenge Faced by States," in http://www.asianews.it/view_p.php?l=en&art=2119.

convince their citizens to have more children. And they will have to wait for another generation for these children to grow up and be eventually incorporated into the labor force. Meanwhile, the number of elderly will increase.

There is no doubt that we Filipinos truly love and care for the elderly. However, from an economic perspective (that is, from the perspective supposedly taken by those pushing for population control in the Philippines), an older national population leads to extreme economic burden. Families with only a few members will find it more difficult to care for the elderly than those with more members, unless they are extremely rich or have access to homes for the elderly, an institution yet uncommon in the Philippines.

[13] Another point to consider is that the increasing number of beneficiaries in proportion to contributors gradually overburdens the pension fund and the social security system. To lighten this burden, ageing countries will have to require two or three more years of service before retirement eligibility, a move that will delay potential retirees from claiming money from the pension system, and at the same time make them continue to contribute to the pension fund for two to three more years. Simultaneously, governments will be forced to increase taxes, and decrease pension and health care benefits. In short, from the perspective of the individual citizen working for a living, burden will be increased and benefits decreased; this scenario is becoming a more frequent trigger of workers' strikes in Europe.

Having fewer children will result in a decline in the number of new workers. The labor force will be older, less efficient and less capable of learning new procedures and equipment with the latest technologies. With the decrease in local manpower, immigration will be necessary, but which, if not managed well, could lead to social instability and other security concerns.²⁶ Immigration supplies not only workers, but also live bodies to add to the population. If ever the TFR is maintained or increases in many of the developed countries today, it is because of immigrants, who, in many cases, have bigger families (though perhaps not for long, as they quickly adopt the small family size mentality prevalent in the country welcoming them). "For the developed world, such a level of net migration will largely offset the expected excess of deaths over births during 2005-2050, which amounts to a loss of 73 million people."²⁷

Having fewer and older people means a smaller market, especially for certain sectors such as baby food, clothing, vaccines and certain other medicines, sports facilities, office equipment, education, etc.—products and services the elderly employ less. It is said that the Spaniards have developed fields for so many cows to produce so much milk, but now they have no children to drink the milk.

[14] The number of children adults in ageing countries have to feed has been decreasing in the last three decades, hence, parents are able to lavish them with more material goods. But little did

²⁶ See Marlise Simons, *Tensions Drive Out Dutch*, in *The New York Times*, February 28, 2005. "Leave this stable and prosperous corner of Europe? Leave this land with its generous social benefits and ample salaries, a place of fine schools, museums, sports grounds and bicycle paths, all set in a lively democracy? The answer, increasingly, is yes. This small nation is a magnet for immigrants, but statistics suggest there is a quickening flight of the white middle class." The article describes how rich and middle-class Dutch feel a general pessimism about their country, "and about the social tensions that had grown along with the waves of newcomers."

²⁷ UNPD, *World Population Prospects*, p. 9, no. 18. It also states: "During 2005-2050, the net number of international migrants to more developed regions is projected to be 98 million or an average of 2.2 million annually. The same number will leave the less developed regions."

these children know that when they, few as they are, become adults 30 years later, they would have to care for an immense number of elderly: their parents and their grandparents, who would, besides, eventually live much longer compared to their great grandparents. Those kids' parents had many brothers and sisters helping each other support their elders, and few children to raise. In contrast, many kids today have only one or two siblings (if any) to call upon for help later to support their ageing and long-living elders. The situation seems worst in China, with the country's one-child policy that started around 25 years ago: the lone child is lavished with the love and care of six persons, that is, of two parents and four grandparents; when the child's turn to work comes, the child will have to support, all by himself or herself, those same six persons (or if the child marries, the two spouses will have to support twelve persons)—plus their own children.

An extreme example from a Scottish paper provides a bleak picture of their country's future if the TFR remains below replacement level:

The population of Scotland will fall below five million by 2009, according to a recent article. More worrying than the fact the population is getting smaller, is that it's also getting older as the birth rate falls significantly. All this suggests that by the year 3573, there'll be two people left in Scotland, probably a married couple in their 90s living in Bearsden.²⁸

C. Babies Desperately Needed

[15] Because of the consequences of having an elderly and a collapsing population, governments in many developed countries now encourage families to have more children. Dr. Joseph Chamie, former UNPD Director, said to the Population Association of America that,

In attempting to raise birth rates, governments are seeking to address the underlying causes of low fertility and adopting policies, programs and incentives to encourage couples, in particular women, to increase their child bearing. Tax breaks, maternity and paternity leave, childcare, after school programs, part-time employment, job security, cash allowances and other financial incentives are among the measures adopted or being carefully reviewed by governments.²⁹

Dr. Chamie asks, "What responses can governments take to raise low fertility rates closer to replacement levels? The following is a non-exhaustive enumeration of 25 options or measures that governments have taken or could take to raise or maintain fertility levels:

1. Restrict or limit contraception
2. Restrict or limit abortion
3. Restrict or limit education of girls
4. Restrict or limit employment of women
5. Facilitate early marriage
6. Match making to encourage marriage
7. Public relation campaigns for marriage, childbearing and parenthood
8. Make child-raising a financial option for women (e.g., paid job)

²⁸ *Child-Friendly Policies Can't Defuse a Population Timebomb*, in *Scotland*, February 15, 2004.

²⁹ Joseph Chamie, *Low Fertility: Can Governments Make A Difference?*, Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Population Association of America (PAA), Session 105: International Responses to Low Fertility, Boston, Massachusetts, 2 April 2004, p. 2.

9. Strengthen the economic security of motherhood within the family
10. Paid maternity leave
11. Paid paternity leave
12. Cash bonus for birth of child
13. Cash payments for dependent children
14. Prenatal, antenatal health care and infertility treatments
15. Infant and child care facilities
16. Pre-school and after school care facilities
17. Tax benefits or deductions for dependent children
18. Pensions, social security and elder-care services related to childrearing
19. Part-time work opportunities for parents
20. Flexible working hours
21. Shared parental responsibilities between mothers and fathers
22. Shared housework among males and females
23. Changed traditional roles of males and females so men take on more female roles at home
24. Preferences for parents with dependent children, e.g., priorities in mortgages, housing, loans, government services and benefits, etc.
25. Political/legal system more responsive to couples with children, e.g., granting extra voting rights to adults with minor children³⁰

[16] France gives as much as 800 Euros for every child born.³¹ In an extreme scenario, a city in southern Italy near Naples offers 10,000 Euros for each new baby, according to the article, “*Where have all the bambini gone?*”:

Back in Laviano, the mayor doesn’t have any plans to change the attitudes of the men in his village. He can only hope that his 10,000 Euro award will persuade the women of the village to have more babies. But only one child has been born in the first three and a half months of 2004. “We have to get the birth rate up to 15 babies a year,” he says. “If we don’t, the schools will have to close, and . . .” he pauses to give a shrug, “... and that will be it.”³²

Other cities or provinces provide a 200 Euro or more monthly subsidy to mothers for every child or second child below two years old, financially assist corporations to create day care centers in their premises, set up match-making agencies for young men and women to hopefully

³⁰ J. Chamie, *Low Fertility: Can Governments Make A Difference?*, p. 5.

³¹ A. Dorozynski, *France offers E800 Reward for Each New Baby*, in *British Medical Journal*, May 10, 2003, 326(7397):1002, for implementation last January 1, 2004.

³² Alasdair Palmer and Bruce Johnston, in *Telegraph*, April 18, 2004. The article says, “In apparently child-loving Italy, the birth rate has plunged to the second lowest in the Western world. Now the desperate government is bribing couples to procreate.” See also *Italy Offers Cash to Boost its Birth Rate*, from *Reuters*, December 7, 2003: “The 2004 budget package includes a one-time 1,000 euros (\$1,200) payment to Italians on the birth of their second child, a measure set to run from December 1 until the end of 2004. ... Mayor Rocco Falivena (of Laviano) digging deep into town coffers is offering couples 10,000 euros (\$11,900) for every newborn baby.”

find a spouse,³³ offer tax breaks³⁴ and so on. Many advertisements today depict pregnant women in a very positive way, as if hoping that many others would imitate them.

[17] But efforts to correct the economic problems by reversing population decline among the native citizens of these ageing regions will succeed only after a generation or two, since the babies have to grow to adulthood first. And this is assuming that they meet a prior condition: that they in fact reverse the people's mentality of having as few children as possible. Though this might seem not to be an impossible task, considering that some recent studies show that young parents actually have a fewer number of children than the number they desire, statistics show that government programs pushing for increased fertility have not succeeded so far:

Based on national experiences during the past quarter century, it appears that government policies that promote childbearing, reduce the costs of childrearing, facilitate working couples, especially women, encourage greater male involvement in parenting and preferences to couples with children, may be able to influence fertility in an upward direction. Such policies have been observed to have noticeable effects on period total fertility (Hoem 2001, Lestheage 2001, McDonald 2001a and 2001b, Milligan 2002). Some demographers, while recognising that the wish to have children does not lend itself to precise scientific measurement, say that experience, available evidence and intuition point to a link between fertility rates and public aid to families (e.g., Doroozynski 2003, McDonald 2003, Milligan 2002, Morgan 2003). *However, many of these rises in fertility tend to be short lived, usually less than five years.* In response to government incentives and programmes, couples may elect to temporarily modify their fertility behaviour by having births earlier than they may have desired. These changes in timing plans may give rise to short-term increases in period rates; *afterwards, however, the fertility of many of these cohorts appears to return to the longer-term low fertility levels.*³⁵

[18] But still, if ever governments in dire need of population growth were able to increase fertility rates, what will be the foreseeable effect? At the rate TFR's are decreasing today, the question might end up being nothing more than theoretical, depicting a situation impossible to attain in practice. But assuming it will eventually be possible, will increasing TFR's and thus having more babies in these ageing countries actually solve their economic problems? What might be the scenario?

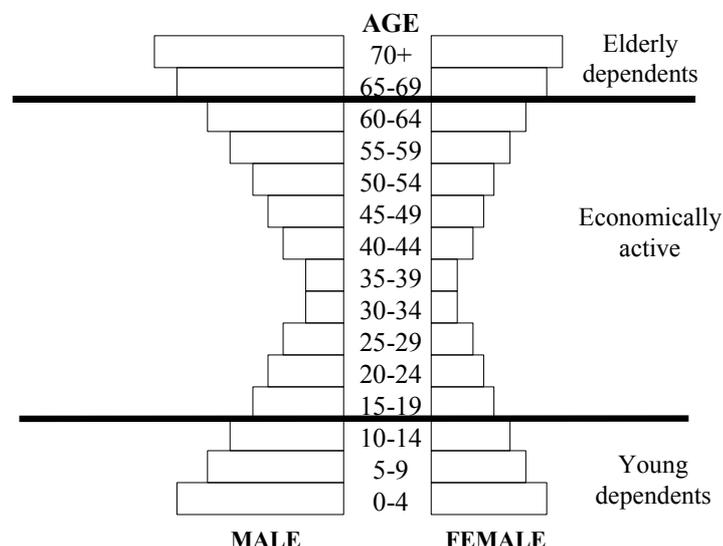
As seen earlier, the relatively small working population (the product of low TFR since when they were born some 30 years ago) in these countries *today* has to feed and care for an overwhelming number of elderly. If ever those countries succeed in increasing birthrates some generations from now, their workers will have to care not only for their big population of elderly dependents, but also for the increasingly big batches of children they want to have, the young

³³ *Countries Play the Dating Game to Halt the Baby Blues*, in *Financial Times*, December 10, 2003: "When governments start running dating programmes, you know that policymakers are worried about low birth rates. Since the late 1990s, Japanese prefectures have been organizing hiking trips and cruises for single people."

³⁴ *Seoul to Use Tax Breaks to Increase Birth Rate*, in *Korea Herald*, August 26, 2003: "The government plans to expand tax breaks for families with young children and increase support for daycare centers in order to help working women and boost Korea's falling birth rate, the Ministry of Finance and Economy said yesterday."

³⁵ J. Chamie, *Low Fertility: Can Governments Make a Difference?*, p. 11 (emphases added). See also *Why have Cupid and the stork failed?*, in *The Straits Times, Singapore*, March 22, 2003: "Cupid and the stork flew into Parliament for a scolding yesterday as MPs questioned why Singapore's approach to get singles to tie the knot and have babies has failed. They did not hold back their punches as they called on the Government to relook its policies that have neither stopped nor reversed the declining marriage and fertility rates. And MPs were not short of policies to pummel, wrestling with issues such as abortion, childcare, infant care and matchmaking agencies."

dependents. This will mean a double economic burden for them. Their population “pyramid” will then have the shape of an hourglass:



Hence, ageing countries are today in a serious predicament, in a sort of “damn if you do, damn if you don’t” situation: continued economic woes and the nation’s extinction if you don’t produce more children, doubled economic woes if you do. They will probably need to weather through this situation until their planned big batches of babies reach working age, and until the big elderly population declines, for their economy to finally pick up again.

[19] In short, what is the demographic scenario ageing countries wish for, by encouraging their citizens to have more babies? Simply stated, they hope to return to the scenario they were in 50 years ago: to have many babies who would eventually replace the work force, and in turn care for both the young and the elderly dependents. That is, they seek a normal population pyramid, shaped like a real pyramid, with a wide base and a narrow tip, and not like a diamond, a toy top, an inverted pyramid, or an hourglass. They want to revert to the pyramid they had 50 years ago, the pyramid that the Philippines still has today, but which can eventually lose if its TFR continues to decline. Within a few decades, our country can easily fall into the same trap where ageing countries find themselves in and want to escape from right now.

II. Lessons for the Philippines

[20] Demographic trends are like icebergs. They move slowly but surely. The effects of an increase or a decrease in the TFR can be felt only decades later, and similarly, the situation can be reversed only decades later. And what is visible at present is, like the iceberg’s tip, but a small part of the whole reality, which, in the case of demography, has massive implications for the future.

A. The Need to Avoid the First World Scenario

[21] What can the Philippines learn from the current rapid population ageing and imminent decline in developed countries today? Or do we have nothing at all to learn, and thus have the

option of pushing for population control today, then cross the bridge of population ageing and decline when we get there?

A quick summary of the preceding discussions is in order. The process of population decline in many developed countries started some 40 years ago, when their TFR went below replacement levels. Today they have few children and a growing population of elderly, leading to serious economic difficulties that are just beginning, and which will worsen in the coming decades. To solve those problems, they encourage their citizens to have more children, and need immigrants to replace their labor force and the population itself. If ever they succeed in reversing the trend of an ever-declining TFR and actually raise more children two or three generations from now, their relatively small and ageing labor force will have to support not only the big elderly population they will continue to have, but also the growing population of children that they intend to have.

[22] The UNPD figures indicate that *it is not an exaggeration to say that as early as now the Philippine TFR is already dangerously low*. Whereas in the early 1970's the average Filipina had six children, today she has around three, and in another 20 years, only two. Shortly after 2020, or just fifteen years from now, the Philippine TFR will sink below its replacement level of around 2.29,³⁶ as shown in the following table:

<u>YEARS</u>	<u>PHILIPPINE TFR</u>
1970-1975	6.00
2000-2005	3.22
2015-2020	2.34
2030-2035	1.87
2045-2050	1.85 ³⁷

In a 2002 note to correspondents, the UNPD stated that “over the past decade, more and more developing countries have joined developed countries in seeing their fertility levels fall below this replacement fertility floor, challenging the assumption that there is some inherent magnet drawing populations to a replacement-level equilibrium.”³⁸ Hence,

In a break with traditional thinking, and one with enormous implications, the United Nations Population Division is proposing new guidelines for projecting fertility... [that would] envision that countries currently in the midst of the transition from high to low fertility – the ‘intermediate-fertility’ countries – will reach fertility levels below replacement before 2050.³⁹

As discussed earlier, the experience of many countries in the past decade shows that such a decline in TFR cannot be reversed overnight. The Philippines’ declining TFR is at dangerously

³⁶ Dupâquier, *La population des continents et des États en 2004*, 21. Due to higher mortality rates, developing countries need a TFR of more than 2.1 to maintain their population.

³⁷ UNPD, *World Population Prospects, Table VII-16. Total Fertility, by Country, for Selected Periods (medium variant)*, pp. 78-79.

³⁸ UNPD, *Are Intermediate-Fertility Countries Heading for Population Decline?*, Press Release Note 5717, March 4, 2002, p. 1. The Philippines is included in this note as one of the 74 countries with “intermediate-level fertility,” that is, “above 2.1 and below 5 children per woman.”

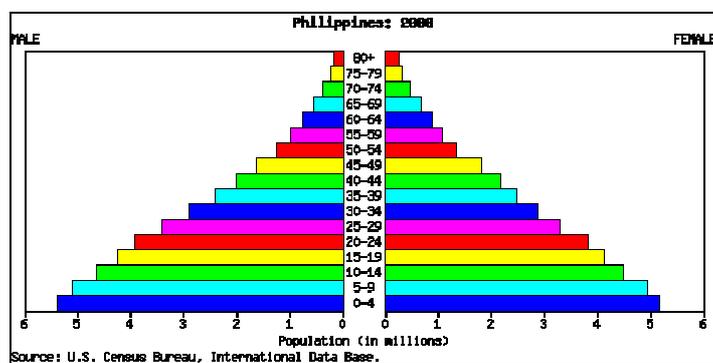
³⁹ UNPD, *Are Intermediate-Fertility Countries Heading for Population Decline?*, p.1.

low levels today.⁴⁰ It will be too late and useless to wait for the TFR to go below replacement level and then try to raise it up again. The only solution would be to try to prevent its further decline *today*—an effort that will probably not be successful within a few decades, but will hopefully at least lessen the impact of an ageing population.

If approved, the so-called “Two-Child Policy Bill” and all other bills promoting population control will certainly plunge the Philippines’ TFR further down. The replacement TFR assumes an average of 2.29 children for *all women* in the Philippines; the Bill on the other hand proposes 2.0 children not for all women, but for *women who have families*. Assuming that 95% of all Filipinas raise a family while the other 5% remain single, what the Bill proposes roughly speaking is a TFR of 2.0 x 95%, or 1.9, which is way below the replacement level. This computation furthermore assumes that the families will actually have two children. Experience in other countries shows that when the target is to have two children, the tendency is to have less (one or even zero child) rather than more children. This will send the country’s TFR further down.

[23] The first consequence of lowered fertility rates, population ageing, will undoubtedly hit the Philippines, sooner rather than later, it seems, for, “population aging, which is becoming a pervasive reality in developed countries, is also inevitable in the developing world *and will occur faster in developing countries*.”⁴¹ The discussions on Philippine population frequently overlook the fact that the median age (that is, half of the people are below this age, and half above) is rapidly rising. In 1950, the Philippines’ median age was 18.2 years old, in 2000 it was 22.2, and in 2050 it will be 37.9,⁴² roughly Europe’s current median age. In other words, while 50 years ago the country’s median age was that of a college student, today it is of a young professional, and 50 years from now, of one approaching midlife.

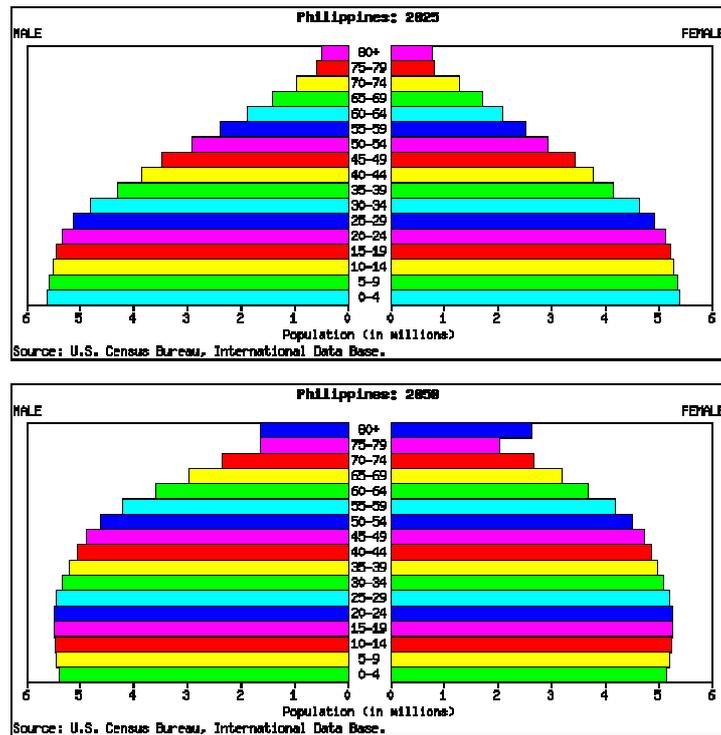
The Philippine population pyramids of 2000, 2025 and 2050 reflect this trend:



⁴⁰ As the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of the Philippines pointed out way back in 1990, “The government’s intensified program will push our fertility levels to the edge of irreversibility. When this comes to pass, on whose conscience will this crime fall?” In *Love is Life. A Pastoral Letter on the Population Control Activities of the Philippine Government and Planned Parenthood Associations*, Manila, October 7, 1990, no. 9.03. See also their other statements related with population control.

⁴¹ UNPD, *World Population Prospects*, p. 9, no. 16 (emphasis added).

⁴² UNPD, *World Population Prospects*, p. 79



The country's 2050 population pyramid's lowest segments will be progressively narrower than the ones above them. From this projection, it can be reckoned that the country's population pyramid will be diamond-shaped towards the third quarter of the 21st century, and could later be inverted. We can no longer sit back, relax and think of "just crossing the bridge when we get there," because we have already reached the bridge. We have started crossing it, not safely in the middle, but at the border, where the risk of falling is great. Some confidently state that there is no need to be extremely paranoid, or to exaggerate the facts for the sake of discouraging the people from using contraceptives and thus committing mortal sins. But absolutely no paranoia or exaggeration is involved here, just hard facts. At the rate its TFR is declining, the Philippines will, within 20 years from now, join the other countries that have fallen into the river. It will be a point of no return, or at least, of extremely difficult return. Why go there in the first place?

We must furthermore remember that fertility decline in developed countries started when they were already well-off; the Philippines on the other hand has a struggling economy today. When in the future the Philippines faces the same economic problems brought about by TFR decline faced by rich countries today, the Philippines will surely suffer a whole lot more.

[24] It has to be stressed that the Philippine TFR will probably reach below replacement levels within two decades *even without additional population control efforts*. The truth is that until now, the Philippines' contraceptive prevalence rate is much lower than that of many other less developed countries, although it is gradually rising; therefore it can be said that other factors aside from contraceptive use contribute greatly to the country's fertility decline. Filipinos now marry later in life, marital unions have become less stable, emigration to urban centers makes rearing children more difficult, emigration to other countries is on the rise, decisions on how to

spend money have left having more children out, and the mass media greatly influence more and more spouses to have less and less children.

Population control has succeeded so far, not simply through the distribution of contraceptives, but more effectively, by changing the people's mentality and convincing them to raise less children. Perhaps the factors contributing to the decline in fertility are already in place and will push fertility down even if we remove all "family planning" (read: "family reduction") programs. Imposing additional population control efforts in the country will only speed up this process and the onset of the economic, social and strategic problems rich countries face today.

B. Emigration, a Strong Population-Reducing Factor

[25] In search of greener pastures to allow them to take care of their families better, millions of Filipinos have gone abroad since the 1970's. Developed countries "pull" migrants towards them, basically to fuel their economies by providing cheap labor. The money sent home by migrants to their families is one of the country's greatest sources of revenue today. How does emigration of Filipinos affect the country's population?

First, the sheer number of workers leaving the country subtracts numbers from the population. It is estimated that 489 thousand Filipinos left the country annually between 1990-1994, 746 thousand annually between 1995-1999, and 867 thousand annually between 2000-2003.⁴³ "From January 1 to November 21 this year [2006], a total of 1,011,148 land- and sea-based Filipino workers have been deployed for work abroad," that is, 12.4 percent more than over the same period last year, and easily meeting the Department of Labor and Employment's target of sending one million workers abroad each year.⁴⁴ The year 2006's rate translates to more than 3,000 Filipinos leaving the country everyday, or at least 11 million in ten years, and will not seem to decrease in the near future.

Secondly, if the migrant is still single and settles abroad, he or she might probably raise a family there. The migrant will thus contribute to the population growth not of the Philippines, but of the host country.

Thirdly, due to less physical proximity, spouses separated by emigration tend to have less additional children. Furthermore, experience sadly shows that separation of spouses in many of these cases have led to infidelity and consequent family breakdown. In such situation, the physical separation has given rise to marital separation, leading the spouses not to have more children. On the other hand, the partner in the infidelity, if not married, could bear a child and remain a single parent, another situation that tends to limit the number of children.

Fourthly, through emigration, the Philippines will lose its young workers of reproductive age. If this trend continues—and there are no signs to the contrary, at least for now—the country will have less and less replacement for older workers retiring from the labor force. At the same

⁴³ UN Economic and Social Council, Commission on Population and Development, *World Population Monitoring, Focusing on International Migration and Development*, January 25, 2006, p. 14, Table 5: Average annual number of migrants leaving for employment abroad and percentage female, selected countries in Asia, 1990-1994, 1995-1999 and 2000-2003.

⁴⁴ *Filipino Deployment Abroad Exceeds 1M Target--Labor Dept*, in *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, December 1, 2006, <http://www.inq7.net>.

time, losing many child-bearing members will further contribute to a slowing down of the country's TFR.

Fifthly, losing a high proportion of skilled personnel can be detrimental to the development prospects of our country. To compensate for this loss, the country has to maintain contact with these skilled workers to stimulate the transfer of technology and capital.⁴⁵

Sixthly, a relatively new phenomenon is starting in the Philippines. While in the past it was normal to emigrate alone, today more and more emigrate with their families. Cases abound in which schools, hospitals or companies abroad entice Filipino teachers or nurses⁴⁶ with a package allowing their families to migrate as well within a few months or even weeks. Hence, the Philippines will be losing not only individuals, but whole families. Host countries today need not only a supply of labor force, but also a supply of young, warm bodies, to replace their ageing and imminently collapsing population. From a pastoral point of view, this replacement migration by families would be more acceptable than migration involving separation of spouses and of parents from their children, which hopefully will now be minimized. But from the economic point of view, which is the perspective supposedly taken by those pushing for population control in the Philippines, emigration of whole families is detrimental to the country since if their spouse and children are already with them, overseas Filipino workers no longer send to the country as much money as before. Instead, they tend to spend, save and invest more in the country where they live.

In summary, emigration will hasten the ageing and decline of the Philippine population by physically subtracting members from the country, especially those of reproductive age, and by reducing the number of children those left behind beget.

C. Conclusion: Rule Out Population Control

[26] The Philippines is not exempted from the global trend of decreasing TFRs and increasing life expectancy, which cause world population today to age and later to decline. The economic, social, security, and other implications of this trend are forcing many governments to encourage citizens to have more babies for the sake of the nation, and to facilitate immigration to have more laborers and to bodily replenish their population. Meanwhile, in the Philippines, which will probably experience the same problems within decades, many (short-sighted) legislators and agencies still push for intensified population control. Population control is done not only through the distribution of contraceptives, but worse, by creating a mentality that goes against large families in sex education modules and in the mass media, and by creating an atmosphere less and less conducive to larger families.

Will an intensified population control program today actually eradicate poverty? The TFR is in fact already decreasing, even without intensifying population control. But the effect desired by population controllers, the slowing of population growth, will not immediately take place, due to population momentum, decreased mortality and longer lifespan. By the time

⁴⁵ See *World Population Monitoring*, p. 43, paragraph 144 (in the Conclusions).

⁴⁶ Thousands of nurses working in major Philippine cities find work abroad, while those from smaller cities and towns move to the bigger ones. Forced by the circumstances, thousands of Filipino doctors, lawyers and other professionals study nursing just to emigrate more easily. Sad to say, hospitals in many Philippine provinces lack nurses and doctors today. A similar process could take place with other professions.

population growth will have slowed down, the TFR will be way below the replacement level, and the average population age will be extremely high. In other words, the solution proposed to solve poverty, that is, population control programs, will just create more economic difficulties in the long run.

Nor may one say that we should limit population growth now, hope for rapid economic development, and finally try to solve whatever problem might come up in the future. It will simply be too late by then.⁴⁷ Countries that were already rich 30 to 40 years ago when their TFR's started to decline, and are now ageing, encounter extreme difficulty in solving their economic problems today. Their efforts to encourage their citizens to produce more children have not yielded acceptable results after a decade. They depend on immigration to maintain their population growth. The Philippines is not a rich country today, and may or may not be rich within 50 years. How will it support its ageing population? Will it also invite workers from other countries to replace its dwindling workforce? How will it attract immigrants if it has no jobs to offer to its people in the first place? Even if it becomes rich by then, it will have to face the same problems rich countries face now, and will have to tell the people to raise more children. We simply cannot afford to fall into the trap rich countries have fallen into 30-40 years ago, and from which they desperately try to escape today. *Graphically speaking, we cannot afford to have in the future a population pyramid like theirs now, and then, like them today, wish to regain the population pyramid we have now.*

[27] Population control has to be ruled out as a solution to poverty. To clarify this statement, does “ruling out population control” mean that we should tell the people to have as many children as they can, to uncontrollably “go forth and multiply,” as some claim the Church teaches? No. Since population control involves encouraging (or even forcing—physically, economically, morally or otherwise) people to have few children, “ruling out population control” simply means not encouraging people to have few children, which is *entirely different from telling them to have all the children they can possibly produce.*

Parents should instead be guided and supported to attain the number of children they can generously and responsibly raise and educate. For some spouses, this means having one child or two; for others, five, ten, twelve, fifteen or even more. Neither the government nor the Church may compel, instruct, or encourage spouses to raise a specified number of children, as what population control programs definitely try to do, either through massive propaganda, or through deceptive and coercive policies. Rather, the government and the Church should form and guide the people to reflect on their actual circumstances, and to freely, generously and responsibly decide whether to have another child now, or not to have another child for the time being or indefinitely. This is one aspect of responsible parenthood, which the Church has always taught, and which takes into account both the real capacities of individual spouses and the national demographic situation.

[28] This paper has attempted to show that world and Philippine demographic trends, as well as peculiar Philippine conditions such as emigration of young professionals and of whole families, rule out population control as a quick-fix solution to poverty. On the contrary, any

⁴⁷ Besides, it has to be remembered that historically, it is the onset of development that brings about the fall in fertility, and not the other way around (including in less developed countries). The reason for the gradual fall in fertility in the Philippines is that among other things development has also been very gradual.

economic, social or political policy proposed to solve poverty should take advantage of, rather than suppress, our abundant *human resources*. As Dr. Gary Becker, 1992 Nobel Prize winner in economic science, explains, “human capital,” which refers to the skills, education, health and training of individuals, comprises around 80% of the wealth of advanced countries, and hence “can be neglected [only] at a country’s peril.”⁴⁸

Any solution to poverty furthermore has to take into account, support and promote our closely knit family ties, the time and dedication parents give to their children, the care children and extended families give to the elderly whom we truly love, the moral principles and holistic training children receive from their parents, and all the other values that the Filipino family has until now maintained, in spite of the pressures exerted upon it by secularism.⁴⁹ The contribution to the national economy of these services and values that find their dynamism within the family is impossible to calculate, but they provide a key—the most important one—to good governance in the public and private sectors, a condition *sine qua non* to attain stability in society, reach economic development and diminish poverty.

⁴⁸ Gary S. Becker, Ph.D., *Human Capital and Poverty*, paper presented at the International Symposium on “The Family and the Economy in the Future of Society,” organized by the Pontifical Council for the Family in Rome, March 6-9, 1996. His conference was published in the Council’s review, *Familia et Vita*, 1, 2 (1996): 19-25 (quoted text is on p. 19). Dr. Becker is Professor of Economics at the University of Chicago.

⁴⁹ Going beyond considerations on demographic collapse, it is precisely these values that population control programs put at stake, with their allied value-free sex education programs that incite teenagers to exercise their sexual faculties as long as they practice “safe sex.” The adolescent reproductive rights that population control programs promote override parents’ inherent natural and constitutional right and duty to orient their children on matters pertaining to sexuality, foreseeably to the extent of fining or imprisoning them (and other educators such as teachers and the clergy) if they do not allow their children access to reproductive health “information” and “services,” which of course include access to pornographic material, contraceptives and abortifacients such as the pills and the intrauterine device. Incidentally, doctors in many developed countries refuse insertion of the intrauterine device, fearing that the damage it may physically cause on the reproductive system would lead patients to sue them.