

POPULATION TRENDS IN AFRICA



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A Background Document for the

ALL-AFRICA PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE ON
POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

12-16 May, 1986

Harare, Zimbabwe

*“Population should be seen as
a central component in formulating
and implementing policies
and programmes for accelerated
socio-economic development
plans.”*

— DECLARATION OF KILIMANJARO

INTRODUCTION

Africa is now the fastest growing region in the world. The course of population change in Africa over the past few decades has greatly altered the size, composition and distribution of the continent's population. African governments are increasingly aware of this situation as reflected by the statement of the Kilimanjaro Programme of Action for African Population and Self-Reliant Development, emanating from the Second African Population Conference at Arusha, United Republic of Tanzania, in January of 1984. This concern was further reflected in the support given by African representatives to the recommendations produced at the International Conference on Population held in Mexico City in August of 1984. These recommendations recognized the important relationship between population and economic development, and re-affirmed the rights of individuals and couples to make informed decisions about childbearing.

POPULATION TRENDS: 1950-1985

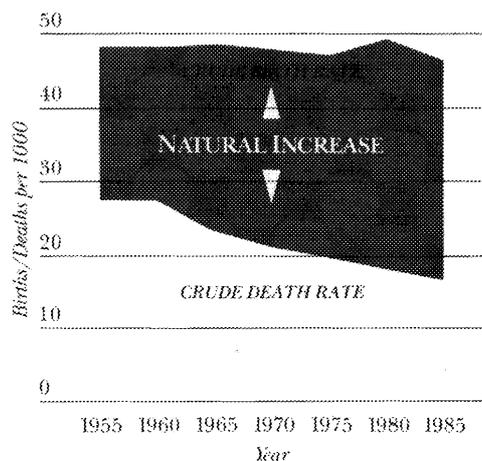
During the 1950s, Africa's growth rate of 2.1 percent per year was considerably lower than that of either Latin America or Western Asia. This was due to a high death rate — the highest in any of the world's major regions. Since then, the death rate has fallen rapidly from 27 to 16 deaths per 1,000 population. However, the birth rate remains very high at 45 births per 1,000 population. (See *Chart 1*) This translates into an average of 6.3 births per woman. As a result the annual growth rate for the continent has risen to 3 percent in the early 1980s, making Africa the fastest growing region in the world with a doubling time of 23 years.

AGE COMPOSITION

Africa's population is overwhelmingly young — 45 percent are under age 15 and only about 3 percent are over age 65. Because of its continuing high fertility and declining mortality, Africa will remain very "young" until well after the year 2000. This youthful age structure contributes to the rapid rate of population growth in the region.

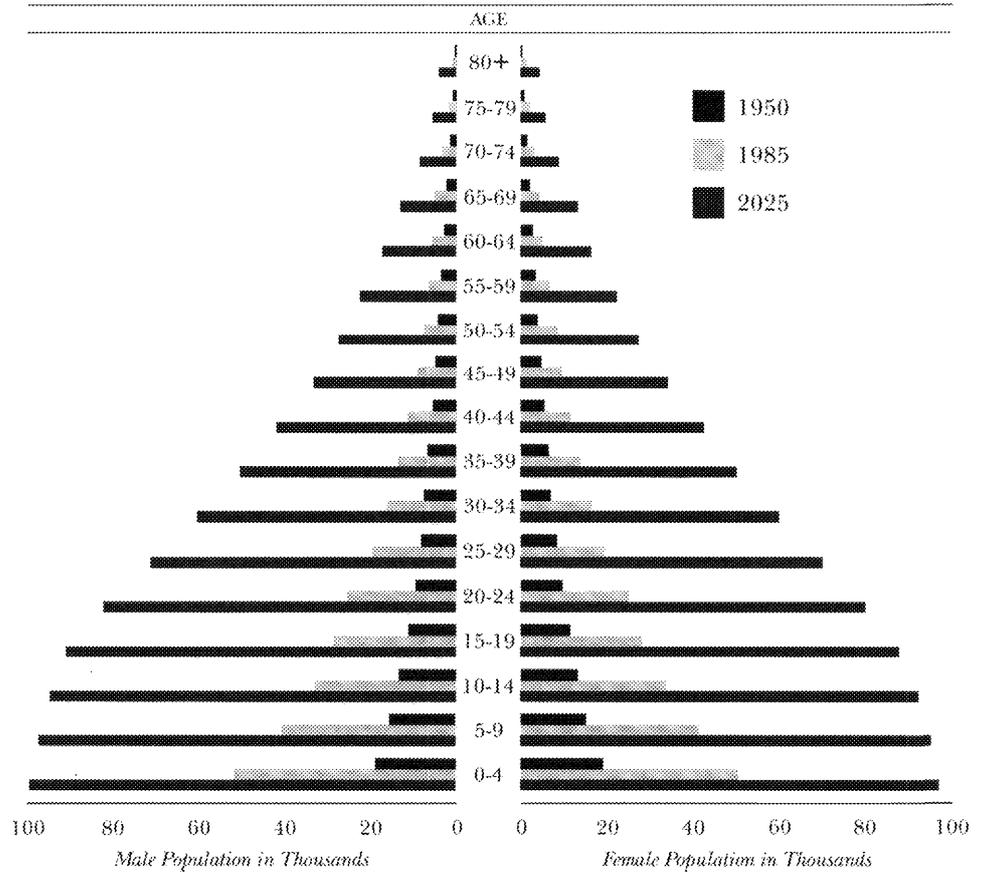
(See *Chart 2*)

Chart 1
AFRICA'S GROWING POPULATION



AGE COMPOSITION — *continued*

Chart 2
AFRICA'S YOUNG POPULATION



THE FUTURE POPULATION OF AFRICA

If Africa's population continues to grow at 3 percent per year, the population will reach 1.8 billion by the year 2025, more than triple its current size of 553 million. However, even if the fertility rate were to decline gradually beginning in 2000 and reach half its 1985 level by 2025, Africa's population would still almost triple — from 553 million to 1.6 billion over the forty-year period. (See Chart 3) This growth will result from what is known as "population momentum." High fertility produces a large number of couples of child-bearing age. Even with declining fertility, such a large number of couples would still produce many more births than there are deaths and the population would continue to grow at a high rate. This momentum will continue in Africa for decades to come. In addition, the death rate is projected to continue falling in future years and this will contribute to an even higher growth rate.

Chart 3
AFRICA'S PROJECTED POPULATION

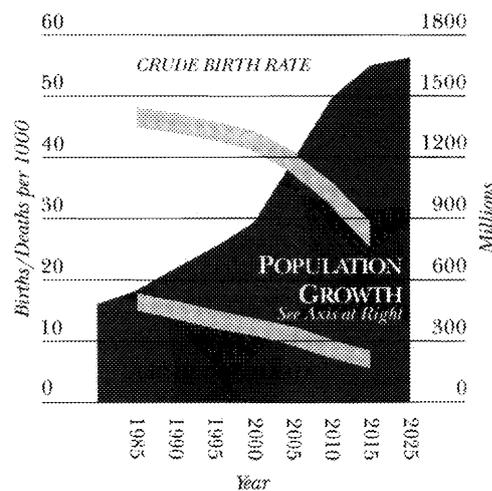


Chart 4
AFRICA'S RAPID URBANIZATION

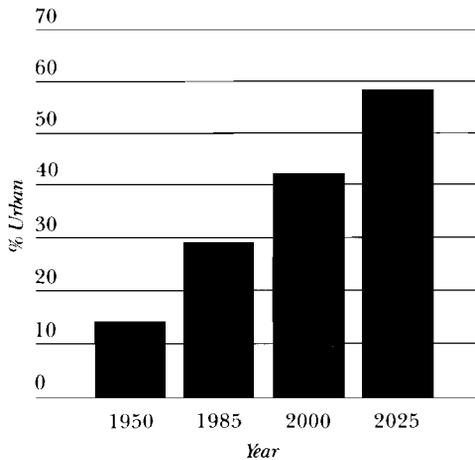
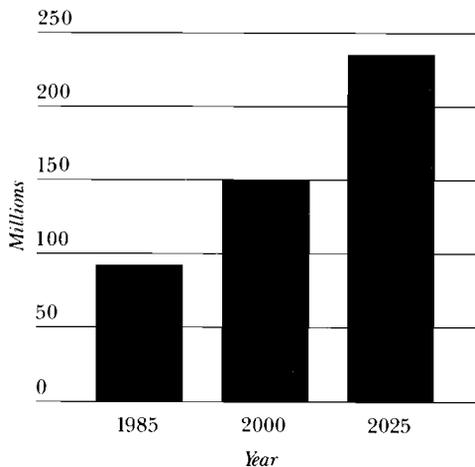


Chart 5
AFRICA'S CHILDREN OF PRIMARY SCHOOL AGES (6-11)



URBANIZATION

While shifts in birth and death rates are the primary determinants of the size of Africa's population, migration influences its distribution. Rural-urban migration is the most notable trend. Even though Africa remains the least urbanized of the world's regions, the proportion of people living in cities grew from 14 percent in 1950 to 29 percent in 1985 and is projected to reach 42 percent by the turn of the century. By 2025, if present trends continue, a majority of Africans will reside in urban places. (See Chart 4) The number of city dwellers will grow from 180 million in 1985 to 960 million in 2025.

POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Africa's evolving demographic situation affects its socio-economic development. Dramatic increases in population are projected for all age groups. These increases can create a double burden for a country's development plans. For example, the number of primary school-age children (ages 6-11) will grow from 92 million in 1985 to 149 million in 2000 and 234 million in 2025. (See Chart 5) It will be costly to provide schooling for the growing numbers at current enrolment rates, class size and teachers' salaries. It will be an even greater financial and

POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT — *continued*

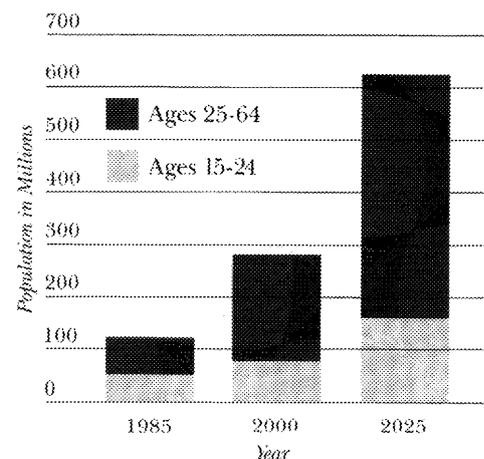
organizational burden to increase enrolment rates, an educational improvement planned by most African countries.

The growing number of young adults entering the working age groups could also pose special economic and social problems. Currently there are 105 million people between the ages of 15 and 24; that number will grow to 170 million in the year 2000 and 341 million in 2025. The estimate for 2000 will undoubtedly be correct — these people are already born. This tremendous increase after the turn of the century is a reflection of the momentum of population growth discussed above.

The future growth in the number of persons of working age will exacerbate the job creation problems that beset most African countries. According to the International Labour Organization, about 130 million Africans are in the labour force. That number is projected to more than double to 284 million by the turn of the century and by 2025, some 625 million people will be in the labour force, either working or seeking employment. (See Chart 6)

Chart 6

AFRICA'S LABOUR FORCE INCREASE



PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

The impact of past and current high levels of fertility on the future population size of Africa will be dramatic — particularly in the ages needing schooling and jobs. The population momentum implicit in a young society means that rates of growth will remain high for many years to come. Africa, then, will be faced with extraordinary demands on its resources to provide basic services for its increasing numbers.