

# Environmental science

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Environmental Sciences Demographic Transition All countries in the world aspire to become economically, socially and politically successful and in order to attain the most developed status; they have put in place measures that will steer them in the direction of success. Such measures may include good governance, emphasis on education, and zero tolerance on corruption and so on. But for the purpose of remaining relevant to our topic we are going to dwell on demographic transition and its impact on any given country.

Demographic transition is a process said to have began 300 years ago (at the turn of the 18th century) in Britain and France before it spread to Europe and other continents (Poston, 2006). This paper will then define demographic transition, the four phases of demographic transition, factors leading to decrease in crude birth rates and crude death rates, impact of demographic transition in developed countries and programs that would enable countries reach stage four of the transition. According to the encyclopedia of public health (2004), demography is defined as the study of changes in population and this means entrance into population through fertility, mortality, migration and the effects of these processes on the makeup, growth and the size of the population. It further defines demographic transition as population change over the years from high birth and death rates to low birth and death rates as the country moves from pre-industrialization to an industrialized status. With this in mind it is clear that the definition implies that the more developed a country is the low the birth and death rates and vice versa.

Demographic transition takes place in four stages and here we will be looking at the four phases as described by Rueter (2003). The first phase is concerned with the pre-industrial societies and here there is a high birth rate as well as a high death rate. Equally important to note here is the fact that

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population in this phase doesn't increase very fast and this could probably be due to high death rates. During this stage there are no family planning methods such as the use of contraceptives and therefore child bearing went on until the woman reached menopause. Deaths are extremely high at this stage and this can be attributed to natural events such as draughts, disease and, poor health and so on. Children were seldom seen as a burden and in some instances were seen as a source of labour and raising children was seen as a not so expensive process because there was no education and other expenses experienced in today's world. Phase two is also known as the mortality transition. In this stage, death rates decline because of improved health care of the general population. An important aspect to note in this stage is that there is a decline in infant deaths and most of them grow into adulthood and become productive members of the society. The third phase is known as the industrial stage or fertility transition. This stage deals with the decrease in births and this is due to increased female literacy, and parents discovering the need to have fewer children who they can cater for adequately. Another reason for the decline in birth rates is availability of effective contraceptives and increased costs of raising the children because they have to be put through compulsory education in many countries, proper health care, entertainment and other concerns. Phase four concerns itself with the postindustrial stage. In this stage the birth rates and death rates are low and the population is high and stable. Countries believed to have reached this stage include USA, Canada, and Argentina. Crude birth rates show the number of live births that occur during the year per 1, 000 of the population. When birth rates are above 30/100 it is considered high and if less than 17 considered low Chamberlain (2011). Factors that decrease crude

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birth rates according to Chamberlain are high cost of raising children, education and employment opportunities for women, availability of contraceptives, urbanization and the availability of pension system. On the other hand crude death rate is the sum of all deaths per year per 1000 people. CDR is decreased by improved health care, healthy eating, and proper education among others. Certain factors are characteristic of stage four phase in the demographic transition. The first one is improved health of the general population due to adequate food and proper health care. This has led to decrease in death rates. This is the opposite in developing countries where access to quality health care is limited. The second characteristic is the cost of raising the children being high. This has discouraged parents from giving birth to many children because of the high cost of bringing them up. In developing countries, birth rates in some quarters are high because people are not affected by the needs of the modern world such as the need for education. The third characteristic is educated women. This enables them to get good jobs, delay marriage and makes them well versed on the importance of family planning. In the developing world girl child has just started receiving attention and this may in future lead them in making wise decisions as concerns birth rates. Demographic transition phase four being the goal of developing countries means that they should put in place measures that will see them attain this level. My suggestion is that educational programs that target all members of the country should be initiated. Certainly an educated population will know the benefits of family planning and the importance of healthy living. The second program that I propose is the provision of free contraceptives in places where majority of the people will access the. This will have the effect

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of reducing birth rates due to unwanted pregnancies. In summary, demographic transition is a process that began long ago and it comprises of four stages. These stages have characteristics which indicate the level of development the country has attained and are an important indicator of the population and its growth in a particular country. Certain factors can be attributed to crude death rates and crude birth rates and governments can institute programs to enable them attain the fourth phase.

References

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