Population and Quality of Life

Synopsis of the theme papers solicited by the Independent Commission on Population and Quality of Life

November 1996

Paris

EPD-96/WS/3
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Differential population growth and its spatial distribution</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1. United Nations population forecasts</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2. Demographic transition and present changes</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3. Migration factors</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The urban revolution</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1. Growth of urban population</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2. Social outsiderdom and spatial segregation</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Population pressures, environmental resources</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1. The global approach to population-environment relations</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2. Climate change: causes and possible consequences</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3. Management and distribution of water</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4. The soil and mankind</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Development models in crisis</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1. Globalization of the economy and structural adjustment</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2. Consequences for employment and social spending</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3. Economic growth, social inequalities and deepening poverty</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Changes in family life and organization</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1. Social changes and transformation of family structure</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2. Family solidarity and intergenerational relations</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3. The status of women: progress, setbacks, new family patterns</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4. Children in a riskier society</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Education, a vital ingredient in quality of life</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1. The work of education and its effects</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2. Regional progress and regional differences in education</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3. Gender inequality and accumulated inequality</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Quality of life: an evolving concept</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1. Problems of definition and measurement</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2. Globalization, democracy and quality of life</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preface

The second half of the twentieth century has been marked by profound changes in terms of world population growth, structure and distribution, the pressures placed on natural resources and the environment, social and family organization and the role and status of women. These changes have culminated in a major crisis which has illustrated the complexity of socio-cultural realities and the importance of the interaction between population, the natural environment, the development of economic activities and the distribution of goods and services. The globalization of the economy has been accompanied by widening disparities among nations and growing inequality among the inhabitants of any one country, so highlighting the imperfections of models of social organization. Population growth, poverty and environmental damage are locked in a vicious spiral and present an urgent and formidable challenge to governments, international organizations and private institutions, especially as regards the strategies needed to ensure socially equitable and ecologically sustainable development.

This is the reason why many of them, concerned by the seriousness and urgency of these problems, decided to launch a fresh initiative in this area. In November 1992, they created an Independent Commission on Population and Quality of Life, made up of twenty eminent internationally-renowned political or scientific personalities. Its task was both to present an innovative analysis of the world’s population problems and to help draw up action-inducing proposals, free of institutional constraints and grounded in scrupulous respect for human dignity¹.

The Commission chose therefore to adopt a multidimensional approach capable of embracing the multiple interactions among demographic changes, socio-economic

transformations and the modification of the environment. The Commission’s work hence followed on naturally from the recommendations of the UN Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992) and the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994). It was also in tune with UNESCO’s orientations concerning population, environment, and sustainable and equitable development education consistent with management of population growth and prevention of aggravation of poverty.

The Commission’s strategy for action featured an exchange of ideas, opinions and knowledge — by a process of interaction — within the framework of public consultations organized in the five major regions of the world. The Commission was particularly eager to gather the views of women and young people in order better to understand the needs of those to whom population and health programmes are addressed.

The Commission sought advice from seventy or so specialists in the population sciences and related disciplines from different parts of the world on a series of specific themes concerning population and improving quality of life. It was felt that it would be not only timely but useful to analyse the main reports and cull from them the most important information and the newest ideas, so as to make them available to those working in the field of population education and information.

The main aim of this educational digest of the contributions received from the specialists consulted by the Independent Commission is to take a multidimensional approach in presenting the latest scientific information. The digest is intended primarily for regional advisors of the UNFPA country support teams, for national project leaders and for educators assigned to the treatment of population issues. It should also be of interest to policymakers required to explore at their level new approaches to social and demographic problems, and to actors in the field, that is to say, local leaders, heads of associations and women’s groups who must inform, persuade and actively mobilize men and women in finding original solutions suited to their needs.

The drafting of the digest is the work of Léon Gani, demographer and sociologist. Its production was co-ordinated by M.L.Samman, demographer and geographer, Senior Programme Specialist, EPD. It is available in French and English. The opinions expressed in it are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official views of UNESCO.
1. Differential population growth and its spatial distribution

1.1. United Nations population forecasts

All demographic processes, which are the subject of population studies and policies, boil down to the life and death of human beings. However, the conditions surrounding the birth, life and death of human beings are, like the meanings which humans ascribe to their existence, infinitely varied. Investigation of population problems involves the use of population forecasts based on sets of assumptions. These calculations serve to predict situations, build scenarios and foresee their many consequences.

◆ Population growth is measured in most places in the world, and extremely long-term projections — which for the first time extend by major region as far as 2150 — are periodically established by the United Nations. The basic assumption is that populations successively tend towards “stasis”. Although this assumption, which is applicable to all populations, does not rest on any theoretical or historical foundation, it is the only one currently available. That is to say that population forecasting, while absolutely necessary, is by definition speculative.

◆ Among the different scenarios which have been imagined two medium-range variants, called “middle” and “upper middle”, are generally employed. The former predicts a world population of 11.5 billion in 2150, the latter 20.8 billion. Both adopt fairly similar assumptions as regards future fertility rates — they differ on average by about 10 per cent — but this relatively slim difference produces enormously different results, on account of the great length of the forecast period. It is a striking example of how sensitive population trends are to variations in fertility and of how important public health and family planning programmes can be.

◆ Since 1950 the highest growth has been recorded in the developing countries and, in both of the above variants (middle and upper middle), this will continue to be the case. The population of Africa, for example, which was 222 million in 1950, was estimated to be 642 million in 1990. In the “middle” variant, it will grow to 2265 million in 2050 and 3090 million in 2150 (5 640 million in the “upper middle” version). Average population
density, currently 25 per square kilometre, will in this case rise to 102 in 2150. Whatever the
version and forecast period, it will soon no more be possible to speak of wide-open spaces on
the African continent, as has long been the cliché.

The projected growth of India’s population will be almost as spectacular as Africa’s. In the
“middle” variant, it will rise from 853 million in 1990 to 1699 million in 2050, with
population density increasing from 275/km² to 520/km². The gigantism of several countries
in Asia will become even further accentuated, shifting the world centre of gravity towards the
Asia-Pacific region for both economic — high growth-rate — and economic reasons.
According to the United Nations “middle” projection, the population of Asia will continue to
account for nearly half of the world’s population for another 150 years, forming a vast
reservoir of producers and consumers. This, with all the consequences it will entail in every
field, will be one of the key factors in the 21st and 22nd centuries.

◆ A study of demographic trends shows that the classic distinction between developed
and developing countries no longer fits the present reality or foreseeable future
distributions. A classification of the world’s countries by their position in the demographic
transition process — that is to say, the transition from an old-style population pattern of
heavy mortality and high fertility to a modern one of low mortality and low fertility — gives
the following four groups:

**Group 1:** Already developed countries having completed the demographic transition
— Europe, North America, Oceania, ex-USSR. These countries are characterized by
decidedly ageing populations, estimated at 1237 million in 2025 and 1 191 million in
2100.

**Group 2:** Countries well into the transition, whose fertility rates have declined steeply
but whose population continues to grow. This is, not counting a few countries with
fairly small populations (Mauritius, Barbados, Republic of Korea), particularly the
case of China, whose population according to the “middle” variant will be
1513 million in 2025, falling to 1405 million in 2100.

**Group 3:** Countries which by 2025 should be completing the transition. They include
most of the Latin American (573 million in 2025) and especially Asian (excluding
China) countries (3 043 million in 2025). The total population of this group is expected to reach 5860 in 2100.

**Group 4:** Countries whose fertility will probably be fairly high in 2025 and which will therefore still be a long way from completing the transition. Sub-Saharan Africa, with a population of 2730 million in 2100, occupies a large place in this Group, along with some Central American, Caribbean and North African countries.

### 1.2. Demographic transition and present changes

- In the industrialized world, the demographic transition took place during the 19th and first part of the 20th century. In most developing countries, it began during the 1940s and 1950s. **It would appear that the decisive factor everywhere has been the decline in child, maternal and adult mortality.** For example, most Latin American countries began implementing public health programmes in the 1930s whose aims included setting up urban and rural health centres, launching vaccination and infectious disease prevention campaigns, organizing programmes for eradicating malaria and smallpox, and providing drinking water and sewage systems. As a result, life expectancy at birth in most Latin American countries doubled to an average of 60 years.

- **Rapid decline in mortality is generally accompanied by a temporary rise in fertility.** In 1950 in many Latin American countries, the composite (or cyclical) fecundity rate stood at from 6 to 7.5 children per woman and remained quite high for several years. From 1950 to 1990, the index fell by half or more, down from 6.8 to 2.7 per woman in Colombia, from 6.9 to 3.6 in Peru and from 7.4 to 3.3 in the Dominican Republic.

- Several explanations have been suggested to account for the decline in fertility in various social, economic and cultural settings — ranging from the growing value attached to the child in the course of the transition (Ariès, 1980) and alterations in the status of women (Boserup, 1985) to secularization with regard to religion (Lestaeghe and Wilson, 1982). According to J.-C. Caldwell (1978, 1982), the level of fertility depends on the direction taken by exchanges of wealth between generations. In “traditional” societies, the flow benefits parents, who very quickly gain from the labour of their many children. When the trend goes into reverse and parents have to shoulder the social costs of their children, a decline in fertility is observed. In
Caldwell’s view, the demographic transition goes hand in hand with the transition from family to capitalist production.

- M.-E. Cosio-Zavala (1988), in line with the work of L. Tabah (1983), takes the view that there are today two models for demographic transition in the developing countries. The first applies to the privileged members of society who absorb modern values and contribute to economic and social progress. Among these people, lower fertility results to a large degree from better education, the improved status of women, widespread use of modern methods of contraception, urban surroundings and good living and working conditions.

The other model concerns underprivileged groups who reduce their fertility on account of the precariousness and insecurity of their living conditions. This “contraception of poverty” is aided by the intensive dissemination of birth control propaganda and an abundant supply of contraceptive methods. However this may be, the specialists are agreed that there is no single demographic transition mode). The circumstances of the transition are influenced by temporal and spatial variables, each society’s values and standards and its economic and social organization.

1.3. Migration factors

- Migration flows from the country to the towns, as well as international migration, have developed on a large scale in recent decades. It is not always easy to measure these flows or to tell which immigrants have left their country or home area for a short time or permanently, just as it is difficult to discern the reasons, economic or political, for the flows.

It is believed also that the number of “ecological refugees” will increase significantly in future years, especially if predictions of global warming and vanishing water tables come true. These factors cannot be considered apart from population growth, any less than the socio-economic inequalities among countries and regions, the environmental damage, civil strife and wars that have contributed so much to migration.

- In most African countries, migration flows from the country to towns are a “survival strategy” adopted by families in threatened areas, where there is a precarious balance between population and resources. The strong sense of solidarity imparted by upbringing and beliefs to every member of a family and clan means that at least part of the money earned by
a migrant will be returned to the family which “sent” him away (Mahieu, 1993). Conversely, the “home” family may continue to assist the migrant who has left for the city. In Kenya, for example, 25 per cent of migrants receive aid from the members of their family who have stayed behind in the village (Oucho, 1990). In general, migration flows multiply the risk of the marital unit being disrupted. In sub-Saharan Africa, polygamy can be a solution for husbands who depart alone. They take a new wife on arrival. There is a tendency towards the formation of “polycentred” families, with “nuclei” in both the town and the country.

Migration flows are not necessarily always bad for families. In certain Arab-speaking countries, such as Egypt, male emigration has led to the emergence of something new, namely families run by the woman. More and more often, the emigrant’s wife acquires greater freedom and decision-making authority in matters normally reserved for the husband. This has had an effect even in rural areas. The customs and traditions governing the place of women are undergoing a significant transformation. Although there is a return to a certain order of tasks when the husband comes back home, the abilities meanwhile acquired by the wife enable her to play a new role, which is all to the good of the couple. In any case, the process modifies the relations existing within the couple and family compared with what they were before the husband left (Geadah, 1990). There can, of course, be adverse effects as well: extra work for the wife, the strain of having to accept responsibilities for which she may be unprepared, lack of paternal presence for the children, possible hostility from other males in the family.

Where international migration is concerned, some 100 million people — or about 2 per cent of the world’s population — have been reported in recent census counts as living away from their home country. Data on international migration should be treated with much caution, since they are one of the weak links in demographic information. One of the main features of migration observed over the last forty years is, however, the growing number of female migrants. Women now make up nearly half of international migration flows.

This is notably true of Asia. There are countries like Indonesia and Sri Lanka where a majority of emigrants are women. Annual emigration from the Philippines, directed largely towards the Middle East in the 1970s, has swelled considerably, up from 350 000 in 1984 to almost 687 000 in 1992. Half of this emigration, induced above all by population pressures, poverty and unemployment, is made up of women. It was encouraged by the government,
which was keen to improve the balance of payments by means of the money remitted from abroad by the emigrants. In most cases, these migrants lead a very hard life. Deskilling, low wages, undeclared labour, poor housing, and sexual exploitation of women are common. These problems are particularly acute in the great cities, where immigrants bear the full brunt of the social tensions and difficulties engendered by the economic crisis and spreading poverty.

2. The urban revolution

Along with other important demographic changes, urbanization all over the world has gathered speed at varying rates according to country and region since 1950, as a result both of high population growth and desertion of the countryside.

2.1. Growth of urban population

◆ While Asia and Africa are much less urbanized than the rest of the world, their current rate of urban development is the highest of any. It is predicted that from 1980 to 2000 85 per cent of the growth in the world's urban population will occur in Africa, with urban growth rates of over 5 per cent per year in East, Central and West Africa where current urbanization levels are the lowest. According to United Nations forecasts, by 2025 almost 60 per cent of the population of Africa will be living in towns.

In Latin America, the movement towards concentration of population in cities begun at the beginning of the century has, as a consequence of demographic, economic and social changes, been swift. By the mid-1970s, urbanization ratios of something like 70 per cent were not very far behind those in North America and Europe. Despite an appreciable decline in the urban growth rate, the rate of increase of city populations continues to be higher than that of the population as a whole. By 2025, the urban population of Latin America should be close to the levels predicted for Europe and North America, that is to say, about five-sixths of the total population.
As with other facets of demographic change, **Asia is characterized by lack of uniformity.** A little over a quarter of the people of South Asia, South-East Asia and China are city-dwellers. In most of these countries, an urbanization ratio of 50 per cent will not be reached for another twenty years. Other countries in Asia, especially in West Asia, have higher ratios, often exceeding 60 per cent.

◆ Taken overall, 3 billion new citydwellers will by 2025, in the developing countries, have swollen the ranks of the billion counted in 1980 (UN, 1993). **In other words, a new age is dawning for the earth: the age of cities.**

The issues involved in population growth cannot these days be addressed without first considering the challenges posed by urban growth. While it would be wrong to limit the subject to mega-cities and their populations of 10 millions and many more, the scale of urbanization, which goes beyond anything the world has previously seen, makes it clear that it cannot be treated merely by projecting on the developing countries the industrialized world’s models of city civilization. These models are all the more unconvincing in that they can produce powder-keg situations in some of the world’s richest countries. The inference is that, **on the threshold of the 21st century, the “governability” of cities could be at the hub of all the problems and contradictions connected with population and quality of life.**

2.2. Social outsiderdom and spatial segregation

◆ **In most of the world’s biggest cities, shantytowns have grown up in which are crammed ever greater numbers of poor inhabitants, including many young people.** A third of the inhabitants of the poor neighbourhoods of large cities are today aged under 14. By about 2000, an estimated 60 per cent of babies in the developing countries will be born in cities. The cities will become synonymous with **extremes and inequality.** Sao Paolo in Brazil, for example, with a population of over 15 million, is the country’s main industrial centre. It is a city where enormous wealth exists side by side with increasing poverty. Three-quarters of the accommodation available to low-income inhabitants takes the form of a “city without the law” made up of favelas and slums that disregard all legal, technical and administrative rules. Here, as in many other large cities, there are problems concerning the supply of water, power and food, not to mention pollution, waste disposal, insecurity and the “marginalization” of a growing proportion of the population.
Desertion of the countryside is to a large degree responsible for the growing numbers of urban poor. In India, big cities like Calcutta, Bombay, Delhi or Madras are traditionally a magnet for single men and families from rural areas. Called “urban villagers”, they generally find jobs doing underpaid menial work in the underground economy. Meanwhile, a new category of migrants, made up of children forced by parental pressure to leave for the cities, is becoming an important fraction of India’s urban population.

Of the 69 million children (aged 0-14) counted as living in Indian cities in 1991, 17-20 million lived in slum conditions, and in 23 of these cities 5-6 million were living in destitution or “absolute poverty”. A great majority of these children are illiterate. They work 7-12 hours a day for miserable pay. Similar conditions obtain in cities in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. This economic exploitation is often coupled with sexual exploitation, especially of girls, and with a growing incidence of STDs, AIDS and substance abuse. In Asia, as in Africa or Latin America, the rural poverty of the 1960s has gradually — beginning in the 1980s — transformed itself into urban poverty.

Marginalization and pauperization are also to be found in the cities of the industrialized world. The 1992 Los Angeles riots seriously shook the United States just as, in France, the suburban crisis has revealed a “social fracture” and a civilization-induced malaise. Urbanization has acted as a magnifying glass or litmus test revealing an ever more dual society, which spawns growing inequality, segregation, and financial, psychological and cultural fragility. All over Europe the “two-track” city has become a reality, with its neighbourhoods and suburbs where the least fortunate segments of the population are concentrated, and all the disadvantages are combined — unemployment rates of 20-40 per cent, academic underachievement, spreading alcoholism and drug addiction.

The Western model cannot be imitated without causing serious environmental damage. Half a billion motor vehicles are currently licensed throughout the world, all contributing to the “greenhouse effect”. It may be imagined what the world will be like with several billion vehicles on the roads and in the cities. In 1992, the Earth Summit set the target of reconciling “sustainable development” and “human development” with the future of the cities, in order to make these “sustainable cities”. For this target to be met, enormous amounts of imagination and solidarity will have to be deployed to break the vicious circle of poverty, exclusion and
environmental destruction. The urban challenge, like theories of development, may be regarded simultaneously as “the conquest of new territories and the building of a territory”.

3. Population Pressures, environmental resources

3.1. The global approach to population-environment relations

Although the same cannot be said of policy debates, views do not seriously differ among the members of the international scientific community as to the interaction between population, resources and the environment. This is not to deny that uncertainties and doubts are common when these basic issues are tackled from a global standpoint. The world of today is faced with major challenges whose solution cannot be found within the setting of any one State or population. This is illustrated by the acid rain clouds which drift across borders, marine pollution, the loss of bio-diversity, the holes in the ozone layer, the greenhouse effect.

Any global disturbance ends up, by an effect of communication, having local consequences that affect all living organisms and their environment. The possibility of global warming may seem far away to a small peasant farmer or an impoverished city dweller. There is a difference where environmental matters are concerned between “macro” and “micro” awareness. Yet all life problems are a matter of equilibrium. In every life system and cycle, in the human body, the seas, the forests and species, nothing can grow unchecked without automatic self-regulation appearing to adapt and readjust the ecosystem. In today’s situation, however, it is difficult to see how balance can be restored unless awareness of the issues is followed by effective action to halt a process that everyone fears.

3.2. Climate change: causes and possible consequences

Scientists all over the world are broadly agreed on the fact that the principal challenge for the next thousand years will, if confirmed, be the warming which threatens the atmosphere, the common asset of rich and poor alike. The basic reasons for this perturbation are known: emissions of “greenhouse” gases, especially of carbon dioxide and methane. This climatic imbalance comes on top of all the other imbalances, like deforestation and over-
intensive farming, which human pressure and modes of development are inflicting on the planet.

The calculations carried out by the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) and the USA’s EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) are expressed in tonnes of emitted CO². Of the 5.15 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide emitted in 1985, 3.83 billion were attributable to the industrialized and 1.33 billion to the developing countries. From 1985 to 2025, the amount of carbon dioxide emitted is expected to more than double, to over 12 billion tonnes. The developing countries will in that event catch up with the rich countries where pollution is concerned. J. Bongaarts has concluded that population growth would be responsible for a third of atmospheric CO² emissions over the period 1985-2100. The developing countries’ share in total emissions would rise from 36 per cent in 1985 to 44 per cent in 2025 and 54 per cent in 2100.

On the basis of these estimates, the models designed by the IPCC and the EPA predict a global warming by the year 2100 of 2.5°C. if emissions are stabilized at 1990 levels and 4.2°C. if stabilization is not achieved until 2075. The consequences of a general rise in the earth’s temperatures could be disastrous. Rising sea-levels would pose a direct threat to millions of coastal inhabitants (60 per cent of the world’s population lives less than 80 kilometres from the coast). Among the consequences could be a spread of vector-borne diseases such as malaria, food shortages, faster desertification, massive population movements and a wave of “environmental refugees”.

Along with the planetary risk of climate change comes an urgent need for international decisions followed by practical effects, since, measured by the scale of the biosphere’s history, demographic and ecological changes are taking place at an unprecedented pace.

3.3. Management and distribution of water

Mankind is facing another challenge related to climate change, that of fresh water resources. These represent no more than 2.5 per cent of the earth’s water mass.

◆ Fresh water is far from being an inexhaustible resource. The water consumed by more than half the world’s population comes from underground aquifers whose replenishment is so slow that they may be considered as non-renewable resources. The problem is that the
consumption of fresh water has increased enormously — from 1900 to the year 2000, it will have risen tenfold as a result of two closely related factors. The first, indisputably, is population growth. From 1.6 billion in 1900, the world’s population will one century later number 6.2 billion.

Furthermore, average per capita consumption continues to grow. It rose from 400 cubic metres per person per year in 1940 to 800 cubic metres in 1990. It is believed that this average consumption will double again, although in unequal proportions, by the end of the century — to 1200 m³ on average per wealthy country inhabitant, and 523 m³ per developing country inhabitant. Differences in consumption can be very great. A United States citizen uses 24 times as much water for his domestic needs as a Senegalese. At the present time, the distribution of world water consumption is as follows:

- Agriculture: 69 per cent (a percentage which is down from that of 1900 and which should amount to 62.6 per cent in the year 2000)
- Industry and energy: 23 per cent (percentage on the rise, which should reach 24.7 per cent in 2000)
- Drinking water and water for domestic use: 8 per cent.

The increase in water consumption leads to over-exploitation of resources in certain countries, going well beyond the replenishment capacity of underground supplies. This is the case in Tunisia and Belgium, for example, where the extraction rate is estimated to be 50 per cent too high in relation to aquifer reserves. The corresponding rate is calculated as being 90 per cent in Israel, 97 per cent in Egypt, 164 per cent in Saudi Arabia and 299 per cent in the United Arab Emirates. The record is held by Libya, where fossil water supplies are exploited at a rate 404 per cent higher than replenishment capacity — a situation which could endanger the “water capital” left to hand down to future generations.

Africa has a particular interest in the water crisis, as is witnessed by the major droughts that have struck the continent since 1968. According to forecasts, two-thirds of Africa’s population will be living next century in areas where water is in short supply. This situation could seriously jeopardize development, since it is bound to accentuate the pressure of population on the environment.

◆ The water problem is not only a question of quantity. It is also one of quality. As a result of drawing too much on water tables, salivation affects nearly 40 per cent of the
world’s irrigation capacity. Water pollution is responsible for the spread of many diseases such as cholera, bilharzia and hepatitis. According to the WHO, 80 per cent of the illnesses affecting the populations of the developing countries are attributable to water pollution. 14 million children aged under five die from them each year. These risks are likely to increase along with the dramatic growth in city populations. Such giant cities as Bombay, Calcutta, Cairo, Mexico City and Sao Paolo are already facing drinking water shortage problems.

This being so, water is coming to be viewed as a “strategic resource” as important as oil, if not more so. It is a tension-creating factor among countries which have to apportion the waters of the rivers which flow through them. This problem exists in the case of Turkey, Irak and Syria, for example, which must share the waters of the Tigris and the Euphrates. It is a major issue in the Israelo-Palestinian peace talks. The same problem faces Ethiopia, the Sudan and Egypt as regards the waters of the Nile. Rapid population growth in these countries is playing a decisive part in the increasing degree to which these river waters are being exploited. In 1992, the Rio Summit devoted the longest chapter of its “Agenda 21” to water. A series of recommendations has been issued for assessing this precious commodity, conserving it and organizing its use.

3.4. The soil and mankind

◆ Population pressure, which creates higher demand for the staples of life, comes to bear also on the land, entailing various kinds of interrelated consequences. The main type of soil deterioration results from deforestation for the sake of raising crops, providing pasture on the cleared land or obtaining firewood. 43 per cent of the forest appears to have disappeared in Guatemala and 74 per cent in the Sudan (R. Bilsborrow, 1991).

In Thailand, 55 per cent of land area was forested in 1961, as against only 28 per cent in 1989 (M. Barberis, 1993). The country holding the record for deforestation and soil erosion is El Salvador; its forests, which once covered 90 per cent of the land area, now cover only 3 per cent, and the point has been reached where the country has now to import nearly all its wood. According to FAO and World Bank estimates based on satellite pictures, 17-20 million hectares of forest are being destroyed each year, with Latin America accounting for about half of this figure. The rate of deforestation in the developing countries taken as a whole is about 1 or 1.5 per cent per year.
In these countries, the growing numbers of mouths to feed and poverty are impelling, in the view of most authors, peasant farmers to fell trees, cultivate marginal land more intensively, shorten fallow periods, indulge in overgrazing and repeat sowings on burnt-off acreage. All these practices, which enter into what R. Bilsborrow calls a “household survival strategy”, help to *impoverish the soil*, in particular by depleting its nutritive and organic content. This deterioration goes hand in hand with a decline, resulting from chemical and physical alteration and from loss of fine surface particles owing to water or wind erosion, in the soil’s *ability to absorb and retain water*.

*Soil erosion* is universally acknowledged to be irreversible, at human level. It is uncertain on the other hand whether *desertification* — which is complex and ill-defined — can or cannot be reversed. One of the aims of the action plan to combat desertification was indeed to measure the risk in arid and semi-arid areas (deserts themselves, classed as super-arid areas, being excluded).

UNEP has published the following estimates of the area actually affected by desertification:
- 1984 : 3 475 million hectares
- 1992 : 3 592 million hectares.

These estimates are the subject of argument in scientific circles (R. Jaubert, 1994) since the notion of desertification has changed. In 1977, it covered situations which could lead to desert conditions whereas, in 1992, the same term was being used to designate a “downturn” in production potential.

However this may be, the plan to combat desertification mounted in the late 1970s provided little in the way of results, either in the scientific understanding of arid regions or practical action to halt the deterioration of resources. All the uncertainties do not stop friction arising between the people receiving investment in this connection, namely the farmers, and those left to fend for themselves, that is to say, the nomads. While this is particularly evident in Africa (cf the troubles opposing Senegalese farmers and Mauritania herdsmen in the late 1980s), there has in the last ten years been an upsurge in the number of disputes directly concerning control over resources in the arid regions of the world (Bächler, 1994).
4. Development models in crisis

4.1. Globalization of the economy and structural adjustment

◆ In a world which seemed inexorably destined for progress, the tandem of development and economic growth was regarded as indissociable and a sure guarantee of improved standards of living for all. This view was based on the idea that development, all things considered, could be measured by the single yardstick of gross national product (GNP). Today the productivist model is in serious difficulty, as are the liberal and Marxist principles which underlay post-war economic theories and policies. Scientific and technological modernization and economic growth appear to cohabit with worsening poverty and social abandonment. This social duality is to be found everywhere in the world. Globalization is becoming the new focal issue where social and economic problems are concerned.

◆ The crisis which unleashed its full impact in the 1980s was to destabilize the economies, highly dependent on the vitality of the world market, of the developing countries. Rising interest rates, unfavorable terms of trade and, in the case of some countries, higher oil prices added to their indebtedness whereas interest payments and debt-service were already a grave handicap for them. The growth slowdown in the industrialized countries spread to the developing countries. As UNICEF put it, “There was a transmission of the crisis from the developed to the developing countries.” Of the major “internal” factors contributing to the crisis, the problem of farm commodity output is probably the most serious. In Latin America, for example, the farm trade balance which had been in the black until the 1970s went into the red, to the point where food and especially grain imports became an essential structural feature of foreign trade.

This situation contributed to the indebtedness of the developing countries. According to some authorities, the external loan policies practised by the international economic and banking system were in large measure responsible for this state of affairs (L. Faxas, 1994). The Latin American debt which amounted to $151 billion in 1978 had risen to $360 billion by 1984.

By the same token, debt and debt-service turned the poorer countries into net exporters of capital. From the 1982 financial crisis until 1989, the amount of capital transferred by Latin
America to its creditors totalled 4 per cent of regional GDP, whereas foreign capital inflows to the region amounted to only 2 per cent of regional GDP.

◆ In these circumstances, the countries concerned could no longer avoid galloping inflation, a drain on hard currency, capital flight and a growing public deficit. They were obliged to apply the **conventional stabilization programmes**, better known by the name “**structural adjustment**”, advocated by the international lending agencies (International Monetary Fund, World Bank). These programmes aim at **restoring the lost (fiscal and monetary) balances** so that the external debt can be honoured, the rationale being that non-repayment could imperil the international monetary system (as witness Mexico’s “crash” declared in 1982).

Structural adjustment measures usually consist in cutting public spending (more particularly, welfare and public works spending), eliminating subsidies, reducing the money supply by instituting “real” interest and exchange rates and, lastly, promoting a market economy based on liberalization of trade. the abolition of protectionist measures, the privatization of State enterprises and doing away with price controls.

**4.2. Consequences for employment and social spending**

The social costs of the economic crisis and of the inevitable adjustment policies that go with it have been borne “in disproportionate fashion” (E. Valenzuela, 1994) by workers and the underprivileged sectors of society.

◆ To take the example of Latin America, the social cost of structural adjustment was first reflected in **an aggravation of the employment situation**. While actual unemployment hit hardest among the young, there was an appreciable rise in the number of casual, unstable and badly paid jobs and a rapid expansion of the “grey” labour market, and of “self-employment” among the poorest sections of the population.

◆ Second, adjustment produced a **decline in average wages**, estimated at about 7 per cent in the formal sector of the economy. In the agricultural sector, the decline was more like 20 per cent. The most severely affected were public sector employees, whose salaries shrank by approximately 30 per cent. In many countries, public sector employment played an “anticyclical” role, which is to say that it offset the labour market crisis, the price being a severe
reduction in public service wages. It is believed that, in the urban undeclared economy, the real average income of each worker fell by 40 per cent. In Africa, wages are thought to have fallen by some 30 per cent from 1980 to 1987. The downward process seems still to be at work in such countries as Cameroon where, in 1993 alone, wages dropped by 25 per cent and then by another 75 per cent (A. Adepoju, 1994).

◆ The third aspect of adjustment involves the decline in public spending, especially in the “social” areas of education, health, housing, etc. During the 1980s, per capita social spending fell by over 20 per cent in all the countries in the Latin American continent, except Chile and Colombia. These drastic cuts notwithstanding, progress in the fields of child mortality, life expectancy and infectious disease control was not affected, thanks to technical innovations which enabled costs to be held down, services to be better targeted and administration to be streamlined.

4.3. Economic growth, social inequalities and deepening poverty

◆ As is clear to see, the success record of structural adjustment policies is very uneven. The use of adjustment policies to restore overall macroeconomic equilibrium has helped to revive growth, but to an unequal extent depending on the region. While Latin American economies have rebounded, with spectacular growth rates for 1992 (World Bank figures published in 1994 show 7.5 per cent for Argentina and 8.7 per cent for Chile), this has not been the case in Africa. Estimates for the African continent as a whole are more or less negative, the forecast 0.4 per cent GDP growth rate concealing substantial differences. In the view of the World Bank, sub-Saharan Africa is experiencing particularly hard times “which are not expected to improve much over the next ten years” (WB, 1994).

One of the most important consequences of adjustment policies has been the accentuation of social inequalities. Economic growth can occur while at the same time, all over the world, poverty, social exclusion and disparities grow worse. In Africa, 50 per cent of the population live below the extreme poverty line and this figure is increasing. South Asia alone is home to 62 per cent of the world’s poor. In Latin America, ECLAC figures show that at the end of the 1980s poverty affected 164 million people, compared to 112 million at the beginning of the decade. Evidence has also been brought to show that the income of poor families has declined during the crisis. In other words, there has been an appreciable increase in not only the extent but also the degree of poverty.
Social inequality, and problems related to unemployment, poverty and social exclusion have worsened in the developed countries as well. The European Union countries, despite being home to the 20 per cent of the world’s population which receives some 80 per cent of world income, have 50 million people living below the poverty line. There are 3 million vagrants, for the most part victims of unemployment, who are well on the way to becoming derelicts. Unemployment has become structural. Millions of social drop-outs, indigents and poorly housed people, among whom community virtues and social values are disintegrating, are gradually forming a caste beyond the pale of society.

◆ The world economy and the crisis are thus in the process of altering, and perhaps destroying, the integrated construction model of society and the ways in which people perceive events in society. The worldwide economy and the international dimension of the crisis are helping to split the whole earth into two camps. Under these circumstances, social “distance” can become social “difference”. Social and political dissimilarities become purely and simply “racialized”, so providing a motive for increased xenophobia, nationalism and fundamentalism.

Conscious of these changes, certain international bodies, such as the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and UNICEF have developed a critique of the structural adjustment policies put into practice under the auspices of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. To this end, they study the social cost and impact on quality of life of adjustment programmes and assess the long-term implications of deteriorating human resources for sustainable development. The key points in their argument are the long-term effects of poverty and the need to put into effect adjustment policies capable of taking social factors into account and of bringing about significant structural change.

The ECLAC considers, for instance, that growth must, in consultation with the economic and social forces, be combined with equity and democracy. As the ECLAC sees it, this approach is the only way of guaranteeing sustainable development. Its sentiment is that “just as equity cannot be achieved without solid and sustained growth, so growth demands a reasonable degree of socio-political stability, which itself implies respect for certain requirements of equity. It follows from this reciprocal dependence between growth and
equity that these goals should be pursued in simultaneous rather than sequential fashion. This is a historical challenge." (ECLAC, 1992).

5. Changes in family life and organization

The family is a multiform entity that varies according to civilizations, social groupings and mentalities. Through a series of modifications, it has adjusted itself to changes in society and new socio-economic and cultural demands. Everywhere in the world, families have, to varying degrees depending on their place in society, endured the consequences of the crisis and sought to develop adequate responses, generally known as “life strategies” or, where families live in poverty, “survival strategies”.

5.1. Social changes and transformation of family structure

While broad trends regarding the forming and unforming of families, or their role as pivot between the individual and society, are difficult to discern, certain changes — whose extent is more or less marked according to region and country — may be observed. Family structures alter along with growing urbanization, job and housing problems, the number, position and role of children, longer life expectancy, etc.

◆ In most countries, marriage is occurring at a later average age, especially among women. South Asia is the area where women still marry youngest and, throughout this region, marriage remains an essential family goal. Families “arrange” marriages for relational and social mobility reasons (Palriwala, 1994). In sub-Saharan Africa also, marriage is seen as the common destiny of every adult and acts in the first resort as an alliance between two families. In most African societies, personal aspirations and choices — including those concerning matrimony — take second place to family decisions. The practice is changing slowly among people whose lifestyle is undergoing transition, but these are still a minority. As an example of how marriages “prescribed” by families continue to be the norm, the 1986 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) in Senegal found that for 41 per
cent of women the first husband is a first cousin and for a further 30 per cent the first husband is some other relation.

Another peculiarity of Africa is the wide gap between the age at which men and women first marry. In West Africa at the last count, this age difference was 8.4 years. It enables polygamy to exist while maintaining equivalent numbers of males and females in the same age cohort.

To judge by the steady proportion of polygamous men, polygamy is holding its own quite effectively against modern influences and the family legislation adopted in many countries. Marital mobility is fairly prevalent among women, however. Marriage split-ups, often at their instigation, and remarriages are common. “Matricentric units” composed of a mother and her children are a constant feature of African families, which prize numerous offspring, generally from 5-7 children, depending on country.

In Europe, marriage is everywhere postponed to a later age, although more so in the North than in the South. Unwed couples living together are numerous in Northern Europe. Divorce rates have risen greatly (in Scandinavia, one marriage out of two ends in divorce). Fertility has become associated with later age groups, and one family out of ten is childless. The number of single-parent families has sharply increased, while a growing proportion of parents, fathers in particular, live apart from their children. Declining fertility and long life expectancy have accelerated the population ageing process. One person out of five today is aged over 60 in the European Union countries; the proportion in 2020 will be one in four.

5.2. Family solidarity and intergenerational relations

The trend towards fragmentation of family structures which is noticeable in Europe does not necessarily exist in other parts of the world. The African continent’s enormous economic problems appear, however, to be stretching the traditional family solidarity still strongly anchored there to its limits.

◆ The reason why African families may be considered as “extended” is that they are both reproductive units — both biologically and socially — and productive units having an economic function for all their members. The relationships existing between old and young, and between men and women, are not limited simply to the domestic sphere; they also
determine the organization of production. The standards still governing family values are more often than not derived from the demographic and economic precariousness which once marked the life of family groups. **Solidarity within the family group extends very broadly. Any member of the family group may call on other members for help, even those considerably removed in terms of kinship.**

In the city environment, this kind of solidarity is sorely put to the test and seems to have reached its limits. In East Africa, a narrowing of solidarity to the “nuclear” family has been observed. Even so, the fact of living in large households, as is the case with most Africans, enables them to take advantage of “economies of scale” as regards housing, food, child care and tending the elderly. The present crisis, with its growing numbers of jobless young people, destitute migrants, and orphans in AIDS-affected areas, will continue to demand “extended” family solidarity.

◆ **In Latin America, the family is without any doubt the basic collective unit for dealing with the economic crisis.** In general, families from the poorer sections of the population have had to increase their work output, in particular by “moonlighting” in the undeclared economy. The crisis has led to exploitation of the working capacity of women, young people, even children. The hardest hit families are those with low labour potential, especially those that tend small children or elderly persons. Families have a lively sense of their duties towards the elderly. Many families invite relations to live with them and object to children, even married ones, leaving home.

◆ **In the Arab countries, families continue to look after the elderly and, in exchange, elderly relations do what they can to be of service to the family,** While it is true that the cultural and religious values of the Arab countries make intergenerational solidarity a duty for all, there are unmistakable signs of change. The marital family model is rapidly gaining ground, and couples are finding it increasingly difficult to take charge of their elderly parents. The “grey tide” will clearly become a fact of society in the Arab countries also. These countries almost all, however, lack legislation or institutions for protecting and caring for older people.

◆ **In Europe, there is a clearer perception of the idea that ageing populations are a general problem for society,** and one which — over and above its repercussions on family policy, flows of money and of services from one generation to another and funding schemes for
pensions and social protection — has numerous and complex implications for intergenerational relations.

The social integration of the elderly, including integration into their own families, constitutes a major problem for Western societies. Surveys in several European countries tend, however, to discredit the idea that old people are abandoned. The European Observatory on Ageing points out that, while a growing proportion of the elderly — mostly women — live alone, a majority of them remain in regular contact with their children. In Denmark, for example, only 2 per cent of persons aged 70 are considered as being socially isolated, i.e. living alone without any contact with family, friends or neighbors, although 10 per cent of them have the personal feeling that they are indeed isolated.

Situations, including material conditions — which may be viewed as a question of equity between generations — obviously differ according to country. Poverty is generally more pronounced among the elderly than in younger age groups, since the position of older persons is more precarious. The ones who fall victim to poverty are those who have not had a full working career or who do not receive a bereavement pension (as may be the case with widows). Problems of loneliness, exclusion and poverty are especially common among women, who in the developed countries form the great majority of the very advanced age groups.

5.3. The status of women: progress, setbacks, new family patterns

The living conditions of women at the close of the 20th century are a study in contrasts, which are more or less marked according to culture, social status, and region. On the plus side, the life expectancy of women generally exceeds that of men, the difference varying by country and region. In Europe, women live on average six years longer than men. Again, women’s level of education has continued to rise, especially in the countries of the South. Only a few years ago, the rate of primary school enrolment among girls was about 60 per cent that of boys. Today, it is over 90 per cent.

◆ The fact remains that, in regard to health, education, employment and civil rights, important differences still exist in many countries between the situations of women and men. The crisis seems to have accentuated these differences. Certain experts hold that women are the “biggest losers” in the processes involved in declining living conditions. Consequently,
one of the main features of the last years of this century could well be the “feminization of poverty”.

Where health is concerned, women living in developing countries run a risk of dying as a result of pregnancy and childbirth complications twelve times higher than women in the developed regions of the North. Maternal mortality accounts for some 500,000 deaths per year. The incidence of maternal mortality is highest in sub-Saharan Africa — 540 maternal deaths for 100,000 live births.

The economic crisis is having a serious impact on women’s health. In Russia, for example, the drop in the standard of living over the last few years has led to less and poorer quality food for general consumption. These food deficiencies have adversely affected the health of pregnant women, nursing mothers and children. Genital and urinary tract ailments, along with the effects of anaemia and toxaemia, are responsible for childbirth problems in nearly one mother out of two. Maternity-related mortality, already high, is on the rise in Russia. In 1992, it had reached 50.8 deaths per 100,000 live births, fifteen to twenty times the rate in developed countries.

◆ There are other illustrations of the situation, which is inequitable in many ways, endured by women as the century draws to an end. In many countries in Europe, Latin America and Africa, a marked increase is to be observed in the number of single-parent families with at least one dependent child. Single-parent families account for 20 per cent of all households with children aged under 5 in Denmark, 19 per cent in the United Kingdom, over 15 per cent in Germany, over 10 per cent in France and 6 per cent in Spain (1990-1991). Of these families, taken overall, the percentage in which the mother has sole charge is something like 85 per cent in the European Union countries. In these European single-parent families, the proportion of women living below the poverty line would appear to be twice as large as that of men living in the same condition.

There has also been a substantial increase in women who work, although the crisis might have been expected to cause something of a withdrawal of women from working life. Not only has this failed to happen, but women would seem to prefer full-time jobs as being a guarantee of independence, a factor of security and an expression of equality, despite the added duties and responsibilities entailed.
In Latin America, single-parent families with absentee fathers are not something new engendered by the crisis. The crisis merely continues and accentuates a long-standing trend that in particular of the disintegration of the working-class family built around the father. In Brazil, the number of single-parent families has not stopped growing, especially in the cities. In over 80 per cent of cases, these families are run by women.

In Africa, the proportion of households run by women is on the rise owing to migration, marriage breakdowns and polygamy, where the wife does not live with the husband. Women are at the same time taking up small-scale occupations in order to eke out a living when, for example, menfolk lose their jobs or must provide for a relative suffering from AIDS. These new burdens could be detrimental to women insofar as they prevent them taking part in community and education work.

5.4. Children in a riskier society

With the growth in city populations, unemployment-related poverty, housing problems and family dislocation, children from underprivileged environments are increasingly at risk. Of the children living in often desperate hardship, many must work and are grossly exploited, as in Bangladesh where 10-14 year-old children make up 9 per cent of the labour force.

Numerous studies have been carried out on the “street children” of India, especially in large cities like Bombay, Calcutta and Delhi. These studies find that most of the children have been living on the streets for more than five years, but that 90 per cent of them have not severed their family ties. Data concerning these children are often unreliable and the definition of what constitutes a “street child” can vary. For some authors, a “street child” is a child without a family who lives and sleeps in the streets. His sole environment is the street with all its attendant dangers such as the drug trade, substance abuse, prostitution, violence, AIDS, etc. Such children are mostly aged from 5 to 15, and are usually boys. A “street child” is above all else an outcast, a distinction which should avoid the street child being confused with underprivileged children in general.

During the 1960s and 1970s, homes were set up for dealing with these children’s basic needs — food, shelter, clothing. This approach, which was very costly, for the most part yielded disappointing results, since the children given shelter in order to be “re-educated” did not shed their outcast status. Another approach was to provide vocational training and
resources to enable the children to quit the streets and ply a trade, usually manual. Since the fact of being in the streets in the first place was an indirect consequence of unemployment, these attempts also failed in most cases. The programmes currently in effect, while differing by country and culture, generally rely on giving the child a hearing, having him followed by an educator on a basis of mutual trust and, where possible, returning him to his family.

“Saving” children from the streets is always a tricky process, requiring as it does the correct steps for staying in regular touch with the children, teaching them anew how to wash, eat meals, “kick” drug habits, partake in activities, learn to read. Most of these programmes are the work, not of governments, but of local leaders backed by NGOs and/or international bodies. City authorities are also taking an increasingly active part in them, although the programmes continue for the most part to be run by independent organizations.

6. Education, a vital ingredient in quality of life

Whatever approach is chosen to describe a people's conditions of existence, education-related factors invariably stand out as major conditions for quality of life. It is therefore no surprise that, of the four variables selected by the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) to constitute the human development index (HDI), two relate to education. They are the adult literacy rate and mean per capita years of school attendance. The relation between level of education, health and procreative habits is especially significant.

6.1. The work of education and its effects

◆ Many authors have described the beneficial effects of education in pushing back mortality especially among the very young. L. Summers, in an essay (1994) summing up national case studies from different developing regions, states that the infant mortality rate in Latin America is about 140 per 1 000 if the mother is illiterate, 90 per 1 000 if she has been to primary school and 50 per 1 000 if she has had at least seven years of education. Summers quotes similar figures for the Asian countries.
The explanation for these findings is not that educated mothers spend more on their children’s health; it is rather that they tend more often to practice better hygiene — care over choice of drinking water, more cleanliness in preparing meals, awareness of the danger represented by faecal matter, protection against malarial mosquito bites, fuller attention to vaccination programmes, more likelihood of giving birth in germ-free clinics, correct weaning habits, etc. Educated mothers are also more likely to treat infantile diarrhoea by oral dehydration than by folk remedies, which often make the case worse.

Along with the benefits of education for women as regards infant and juvenile mortality, should be added the reduction in childbirth-related maternal mortality. Five years of schooling can avoid 10 deaths per 1000 deliveries. Similarly, education for women can help in reducing the incidence of AIDS.

◆ Improvements in health can be reflected in monetary benefit for the whole of society. Using data from India and Kenya, Summers compares the cost of schooling 1000 more girls with what the health system would have to spend to obtain the same results in terms of reduced mortality and fertility. In India, educating 1000 more girls would lead to the avoidance of 2 maternal deaths, of 43 deaths of children under 5, and of 300 births. This performance would cost $32000 in education, as against $110000 in health care and family planning. The conclusion is that the education of mothers is a better paying health proposition than investment in the health sector itself.

◆ Further to the influence of education on personal development are the effects which benefit all members of a society; these are known as “externalities”. While vaccination protects a person against a particular disease, it has the added effect of reducing the risk of infection spreading to others. Likewise, the lower fertility and slower population growth induced by the education of mothers have a favorable impact on the environment. A number of authors stress the political benefits of education: the advent of democracy is aided in principle by the development of an individual’s ability to form judgments and join in the life of society.

6.2. Regional progress and regional differences in education

Several indices, usually ratios, are used to measure progress in education and differences among various groups in a population or differences between countries and regions.
Adult literacy rates — calculated separately for men and women — provide an important clue to a population’s quality of life. It is for this reason that the adult (age 15 and over) literacy rate is one of the four variables selected by the UNDP to measure progress in “human development” (see 7.1. below).

It is worth noting that data concerning illiteracy and literacy are often unreliable in that they often depend on personal declarations made at census time. Furthermore, the “sensitiveness” of the subject may cast doubt on the information supplied by a certain number of countries. However uncertain the data may be, they show that important progress in literacy has been made in most developing countries. The literacy rate of the over-15 population averages 65 per cent in these countries.

Illiteracy is still widespread in a number of Central American (Guatemala, Nicaragua), Caribbean (Haiti) and, to a lesser extent, Andean (Peru, Bolivia) countries. It is a problem which affects several South Asian countries from Iran to Bangladesh, but China, South-East Asia and the Middle East are also concerned by it. Asia is where the largest numbers of illiterates are to be found, given the great size of its population, and rates run high in such countries as India and Bangladesh. In Africa, illiteracy rates, while still high — especially in the sub-Saharan part of the continent, have declined appreciably. In 1970, the illiteracy rate (both genders combined) was over 77 per cent. According to the UNESCO figures used by the experts 2 this rate was down to about 53 per cent in 1990.

Other indices are generally used to estimate educational progress and disparities by country and region — namely primary and secondary school attendance rates or length of schooling, defined as the average number of years that have been spent at school by adults of both genders aged 25 and over³.

The average length of schooling varies greatly throughout the world. It lies within a range of seven to twelve years and more in the industrialized countries (United States, 12.4 years; France, 12 years; Japan, 10.8 years), as well as in countries such as South Korea, Argentina and Colombia. It is from four to five years in countries like China and Indonesia, 2 According to UNESCO estimates, the illiteracy rate in the developing countries in 1995 was approximately 30 per cent. The rate was over 43 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa and about 50 per cent in South Asia (World Education Report, UNESCO, 1995).

³ The average number of years of schooling is, along with the adult literacy rate, one of the four variables used by the UNDP in calculating the “human development index” (HDI).
and from two to four years in many Latin American (Brazil, Bolivia), Asian (India, Iran, Thailand) and African (Egypt, Morocco, Kenya) countries. The most clearly disadvantaged group of countries, where school attendance is very low (under two years on average and often less than one year), is essentially African. It includes thirty or so sub-Saharan African countries, which are among the poorest in the world, and a few countries in Asia (such as Yemen and Pakistan).

◆ The average length of schooling is obviously linked to the school attrition rate, the drop-out rate in particular. If it is assumed that the main purpose of primary education is to give everyone the permanent and irreversible ability to read, write and do arithmetic, the consensus is that this ability cannot be acquired without a minimum number of years — although opinions differ somewhat on this number — of primary school attendance. Most observers agree that leaving school for any reason before the sixth year, in a country where the language used in school is not the native tongue, carries with it a high risk of reverting to illiteracy.

According to world estimates published by UNICEF, the proportion of children enrolled in primary school who will continue to the end of the primary cycle is about 50 per cent in South America, 51 per cent in South Asia, 69 per cent in Central America and the Caribbean, 82 per cent in North Africa and the Middle East and 85 per cent in East Asia (UNICEF, 1994). These figures must be treated with caution, given that data on school attrition are sketchy and imprecise.

◆ The differences among the world’s countries, according to their degree of development, are just as striking if the criterion used is the gap between resources and needs. Whereas certain developed countries are experiencing an annual shrinkage in their school-age population and are worried by problems associated with the closing of primary schools, especially in rural districts, many South Asian and sub-Saharan African countries are having, owing to population growth, to cope with pressing needs in this field.

The challenges facing education systems in these countries are all the more difficult to meet since any increase in education budgets is restricted by the economic crisis, ballooning public deficits and balance of payments difficulties. While the developed OECD Member countries devoted about 5.4 per cent of their GDP to education in the 1980s, this percentage was 3.7 per cent in Latin America and 2.8 per cent in South Asia.
Given that, in certain countries with high population growth, the increase in numbers outpaces that of the budget, resources per pupil are shrinking. In Africa (not counting South Africa), average annual primary education expenditure per pupil is around $50. Few countries manage more than $100 per pupil. The gap between the extremes is huge, ranging from $5 in Uganda to $1782 in South Africa.

6.3. Gender inequality and accumulated inequality

The experts consulted by the Independent Commission are unanimous in agreeing that serious inequalities in education persist not only between males and females but also, in some countries, between the broad mass of the population and certain minority groups.

◆ Where illiteracy is concerned, women accounted for 62 per cent of all illiterate adults (age 15 and over) in the developing countries in 1980, and 63.9 per cent in 1995 (UNESCO). The proportion of women illiterates, far from declining, is everywhere tending to rise, providing further evidence that the economic crisis is tending to aggravate the inequality experienced by women. In the case of some countries, in Africa particularly, certain experts are wondering how much priority will be assigned to the education of girls. These experts feel that the current hardships affecting families and the trend towards lesser school attendance observed in recent years give little cause for hope. Should money problems arise, the decision to educate will almost certainly be taken in favour of boy children.

◆ Gender inequality can be magnified by certain political, social and cultural situations. This is the case in Guatemala, for example, where girls from Amerindian communities (“indigenous women”) have much greater difficulty than boys in obtaining education. Nearly 70 per cent of such women in the 20-24 age group have not received any education, compared with only 20 per cent of “non-indigenous” women. The situation is compounded by the fact that most of these people live in rural areas, whereas the means and resources devoted to education are increasingly concentrated in the towns.
7. Quality of life: an evolving concept

The contributions by the experts consulted by the Independent Commission on Population and Quality of Life enable a critical appraisal to be made of the situation of populations in various parts of the world as compared with their spatial distribution, lifestyle in comparison with natural environment and resources, and forms of social and family organization. The experts were also asked to report on developments in the population-versus-quality of life debate. Broadly put, two main issues lie at the heart of the polemic. On the one hand, there is the problem of how to define “quality of life”, followed by discussion on the soundness of the indicators capable of measuring it. On the other hand, questions are being asked about the “paths of discussion” on population and quality of life, with some experts wanting to perceive the meaning of these concepts and deduce future trends.

7.1. Problems of definition and measurement

◆ Research into the notion of “quality of life” forms part of a summum of thought and study on levels, standards and norms of living developed by the different agencies of the United Nations in the wake of the pioneering work done by the League of Nations before the Second World War. The need to measure and compare situations in space and time has led to the construction of specialized indicators for describing changes in and various economic and social aspects of the life of populations.

◆ The scope of the debate broadened greatly in the late 1980s as “composite” notions such as “human development” or “quality of life” entered into the discussion. As concerns the definition of the latter notion, the experts agree that it cannot be reduced to a set of “objective” yardsticks. In the view of some, quality of life is by nature a subjective perception allowing “recognition of and respect for the different ways in which men and women lead their lives, exercise their citizenship and produce social activity” (Lapeyronnie and Martucelli, 1994).

There are other experts who attribute the subjective nature of the notion of quality of life to the fact that it is heavily influenced by circumstance and so varies from one population to another. According to Léon Tabah, quality of life “for someone who lives in a rich country can be impaired by a simple loss of comfort, whereas for someone living in a poor
country the very idea of comfort is trivial or unthinkable and the primary task is to cope with emergencies and satisfy immediate basic needs”.

◆ Certain experts, while admitting that “the concept is a complex one, not easily definable by figures”, feel that “it is possible to give an indirect idea of it through a set of indices on living standards, life expectancy, mortality, health, fertility, education, access to vital commodities and the status of women”. Espousing this view, D. Noin considers that pride of place should be given to “demographic indicators since, generally speaking, they are of better quality than economic indicators and they thus make it possible to cover a greater number of countries”.

Synthesizing 13 indicators, D. Noin devised a “quality of life index” (QLI) whereby the countries of the world may be classified into three major groups: privileged or relatively privileged countries, intermediate countries, underprivileged countries. The details of the classification show that, in 1994, for 75 per cent of the world’s population, or 4238 million people, quality of life was “poor” or “fairly poor”. D. Noin added that “this kind of calculation, based on country figures, obviously provides no more than an indication since some people have poor quality of life in privileged countries while others enjoy satisfactory quality of life in underprivileged countries.”

◆ This “composite” approach was adopted in the early 1990s by the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) which designed a composite “human development index” (HDI) closely correlated with the one mentioned earlier. At first (1990), the HDI was composed of three variables, namely life expectancy at birth, the adult literacy rate and GDP (gross domestic product) adjusted by per capita purchasing power. In 1991, a fourth variable was added: average years of schooling. Each variable is expressed by a different unit of measurement — life expectancy by lifetime in years, degree of education by years of school attendance, income in adjusted dollars, and adult literacy as a percentage ratio. In order to combine them, the value of each variable is ranked on a scale ranging from 0 (minimum) to 1 (maximum).

It will be noticed that two of the four variables making up the HDI concern education. The HDI has attracted some criticism as to the trustworthiness and relevance of its components. As another expert (Lengyel, 1994) points out, it is much more important to look at the overall content of the UNDP reports on human development than to refer
only to the index. The HDI finds its place in analyses which are extremely critical of certain countries, explicitly named, for their inadequacies as regards food, job and income security, human rights, gender equality, disarmament, etc. The idea governing the application of the HDI is that the notion of “human development” enables the North and South to unite on behalf of democratic freedoms, rational and creative use of resources, the development of competitive but “convivial” markets, all of which make it possible to wage war on poverty within the framework of reform and restructuring policies.

◆ The “quality of life” idea is approached differently by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (Report on the Social Situation, 1993). According to the Report, quoted by one expert, “it is tempting to derive a synthesis from a quality of life index, but, given the current state of knowledge, this goal is far too ambitious.” Or again: “The arbitrary nature of quality of life indicators detracts from their credibility as objective instruments of measurement for classifying the different countries by social wellbeing criteria.” As to the core issue, the UN Social and Economic Council considers in its Report that “the paradoxical combination of material progress and social deterioration confers an ambiguous character on ‘quality of life’ in many countries.” The social deterioration in question is marked by a decline in “essential values”, in individual cultures and in certain traditions which can lead to various kinds of alienation, including drug abuse (UN, Report by the Economic and Social Council, quoted by P. Lengyel, 1994).

In the view of Th. Locoh, this social deterioration already threatens “whole swathes” of the body of society in Africa, owing to the possible collapse of standards of family solidarity. These, she considers, are the last remaining rampart against disintegration. Yet family solidarity based on traditional values cannot act as a substitute for “bankrupt nations”. “The ingenuity employed by family groups in devising strategies for survival is a mere palliative against the seriousness of the economic crisis, which calls for macroeconomic solutions at national and international level.”

Th. Locoh goes on to stress that “improvement — or even maintaining the status quo — in the ‘quality of life’ of families requires an overhaul of the policies conducted by efficient States” so that the needed changes can be backed by “collective institutions”. It is indeed true that family solidarity systems “can be a source of great inflexibility obstructing personal initiative and creativeness, especially among young people and women. The reappraisal of values and attitudes must, however, be conducted within each society without
haste, free from the threat of external economic and political reprisals.” Seen in this light, the problem leads back to the deeper significance of social change and notions of development; it casts doubt on the idea that modernization ineluctably destroys traditional communities.

7.2. Globalization, democracy and quality of life

◆ Viewed at this level, discussion on population and quality of life cannot be separated from a much more sweeping analysis of the crisis affecting development models. L. Tabah issues a reminder that “the world is still geared to population growth and production” and that appeals to the rich countries to restudy their development and consumption patterns have to date gone unheeded. In the early 1970s, the declaration by Sicco Mansholt, then Chairman of the EEC, in favour of “zero growth”, like those of the Club of Rome (Meadows Report, 1972), of E. and P. Ehrlich or of Gunnar Myrdal exhorting the rich countries to place a moratorium on growth led to nothing. As Léon Tabah puts it, “the hard fact is that a generalization in the Third World of development along the style of the rich countries is a fading prospect”, since “it would, when combined with population growth, lead to a twenty-fold or fifty-fold rise in consumption with all the environmental consequences that this would entail.” (L. Tabah, 1994).

◆ D. Lapeyronnie and D. Martucelli, in their contribution, aim at placing the “population-quality of life” issue within an analysis of the crisis of modern national societies. In their opinion, “the integration of populations in all the European countries has rested on the twin capacity of industrial labour to provide an identity which is more ‘rational’ than cultural heritage and to incorporate each person into social modernity via the class struggle.” They nonetheless go on to say that “we are today experiencing a decomposition of this matrix of national societies [...] which is marked by the ‘crisis’ of the primary institutions of population integration, viz. the school, the family, religion, political parties, trade unions ...”. The effect of the decline of these institutions is that “the world of the social protagonists is drifting apart from the world of systems. Planet-spanning logic, the world of the market and global rationales seem to have become completely detached from ‘persons’ and individual identities [...] At bottom, as everywhere, market mechanisms have replaced social integration.” In the eyes of Lapeyronnie and Martucelli, it is clear that societies everywhere in the world “are managing the absence of alternative development
theories”, within whose framework the debate on population and quality of life could take place. At the dawn of the 21st century, this absence reveals a sort of breakdown in “historical imagination” just at a time when the social interrogations of the waning century are tending to coalesce around the world.

◆ For the two authors, “the issue today is ever more clearly political. In the immense transition that is taking place from the nation-state to globalization, protection of people’s quality of life is directly related to the construction of democratic political space.” They are saying that this is the only possible road for “combining acceptance of globalization — there being no development possible without a market economy, management of cultural identities and preservation of a civic public space for individual freedoms, since ‘quality of life’ cannot exist without an assurance of the freedom and social conditions — in particular, welfare policies — needed for it to be translated into practice.”

◆ In one way or another, all the experts posit the issue of population and quality of life in terms of reducing social inequalities — both nationally and internationally — and of providing greater room for action by an increasing number of social actors. This was asserted very clearly by the Chair of the Independent Commission, Mrs. Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo, when she emphasized the need for “turning the logic around” in seeking the paths that lead to sustainable human development. The tracing of new perspectives, and resistance to conformist doctrinaire models form a challenge “to every citizen, since they demand independent choices of lifestyle grounded in values. This requires initiative, new ways of thinking and doing, and taking risks.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Auteur</strong></th>
<th><strong>Titre</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adepoju Aderanti</td>
<td>Poverty, Structural Adjustment Programmes, Population and Quality of Life in Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allison Chris</td>
<td>Population Policies and Governance: Some Introductory Remarks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allison Chris</td>
<td>L’évolution démographique: les 40 années écoulées et les 35 à venir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baer Anne</td>
<td>Water, Population and Quality of Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bandyopadhyay D.</td>
<td>Powerlessness and Fertility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bandyopadhyay D.</td>
<td>Impact of Structural Adjustment Programmes: Survival Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behnam Djamchid</td>
<td>Réflexions sur l’évolution de la famille dans un monde en changement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benneh George</td>
<td>Demographic Changes and the Role of the Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berquó Elza</td>
<td>Family and Household Structure in Brazil, 1970-1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chavez-Malaluan J.J.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castelain Meunier</td>
<td>Un premier regard sur la paternité contemporaine à travers le monde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooks Rebecca</td>
<td>The State and Reproductive Self-determination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dickens Bernard</td>
<td>Les transitions démographiques dans les pays développés et le monde en développement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cosio-Zavala Maria E.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costas-Centivany Cynthia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de Coulomme-Labarthe Ghislaine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dyson Tim</td>
<td>Approche globale pour un «mieux-être» des «Enfants de la Rue» dans le monde. Analyse, tendances et prospective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fausto Ayrton</td>
<td>World Population Growth and Food Supplies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faxas Laura</td>
<td>Nines y Ninas de y en la cana en Brasil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faxas Laura</td>
<td>Les inégalités sociales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garreton Manuel Antonio Espinosa Malva</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gilbert Alan</td>
<td>Ajustement structural, qualité de la vie et développement durable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamza Nabila</td>
<td>From Adjustment Policies to the new State-Society Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaabouni Adnène</td>
<td>Human Resources : Work, Housing and Migration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrison Paul</td>
<td>Les changements dans la famille arabe: évolution ou régression?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Carrying Capacity in Relation to Production and Consumption Patterns - North and South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jaubert Ronald</td>
<td>Population et plan de lutte contre la désertification</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaddar Miloud</td>
<td>Population et santé en Afrique</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ladjali Malika</td>
<td>Santé sexuelle et reproductrice des jeunes : mythes et réalités</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lapeyronnie Didier</td>
<td>Le débat population et qualité de la vie dans un monde en changement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martucelli Danilo</td>
<td>Quality of Life: The Emergence of a Concept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lengyel Peter</td>
<td>Familles africaines, population et qualité de la vie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locoh Thérèse</td>
<td>The Health Implications of Future Demographic Change -1992-2025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lush Louisiana</td>
<td>Pathways for the Exploration of Population Policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mertens Walter</td>
<td>Street and Working Children in South Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohsin Nadeem</td>
<td>L’Afrique subsaharienne: crise économique et demographic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mouchiroud Alain</td>
<td>Opinions on Population Matters of Leaders and of Others in Influential Positions in Public Life at Recent Important Meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mousky Stafford</td>
<td>La population: sa place à l’ordre du jour des activités internationales, depuis la conférence mondiale sur la population de 1974</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nimwegen Nico (van)</td>
<td>Population-Related Policies and Quality of Life: The Case of the Netherlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noin Daniel</td>
<td>Cartographie des indicateurs de qualité de vie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>de Oliveira Orlandina</td>
<td>Family Strategies, Dynamics and Characteristics : Mexico, Central America and the Caribbean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castillo Marina Ariza</td>
<td>Family, Population and Quality of Life in Western Europe: Dynamics, Changes and New Family Life Alternatives and Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gonzalez de Rocha Mercedes</td>
<td>Changing Family and Gender Relations in South Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orivel François</td>
<td>Quality of Life, Caring Capacity, Public Policy and Population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palomba Rossella</td>
<td>The World Carrying Capacity: Population Compositional Aspects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sabbadani Linda Laura</td>
<td>Human Resources, Education and Employment in Latin America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palriwala Rajni</td>
<td>Coherence, Cooperation and Coordination in Internationally Assisted Population Activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sachs-Jeantet Céline</td>
<td>Humaniser la ville : Les enjeux de la citoyenneté et de l’urbanité</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Senarclens Pierre (de)  Les changements démographiques: reflexions introductive
Senarclens Pierre (de)  Population and Security
Silvestre Emmanuel  Analisis de la situation de los ninos, Ninas y adolescentes de y en la calle en America Latina y el Caribe
Santana Adalgisa Martinez Ara Gena
Sinding Steve W.  The Role of Government and Demographic Change
Tabah Léon  Les interrelations population-environnement-développement: état de la question et perspectives
Valdés Teresa  Cambios en las familias en America Latina: Procesos sociales y culturales
Weinstein Marisa  Crise et pauvreté en Amérique Latine
Valenzuela Eduardo  Evolution de la famille et changements des structures familiales en Russie
Vishnevsky M.A.G.  Evolution du statut de la femme et la qualité de la vie en Afrique sub-saharienne au regard des transformations structurelles de nature économique et politique actuelles
Youego Christine  International Migration, Population and Quality of Life in a Changing World
Zlotnik Hania