

## Review Article

## The Mythe of Over Population

Williams Johannes Yao Dedo<sup>1\*</sup><sup>1</sup>Faculty of Religions and Social Sciences (RSS), Catholic University of Ghana, Fiapre-Sunyani

## Article History

Received: 28.01.2026

Accepted: 23.03.2026

Published: 27.05.2026

## Journal homepage:

<https://www.easpublisher.com>

## Quick Response Code



**Abstract:** Propaganda has gradually made people widely believe that the Earth's population is growing uncontrollably, threatening the planet's resources, ecosystems, and overall sustainability. But this believe remains a simplistic approach of the complexities of population dynamics, resource distribution, and environmental impacts. While it is true that global population has been increasing, as a result of technological advancement and healthcare improvement, the real concern is not the sheer number of people, but rather how resources are consumed and distributed. Overpopulation fears often ignore the role of unequal resource allocation, wasteful consumption patterns, and the environmental degradation driven by industrial and agricultural practices that are not inherently tied to population size. All this are the immediate causes of poverty, unemployment, and massive rural migration. Moreover, demographic trends indicate that many regions, particularly in developed countries, are experiencing declining birth rates and aging populations, which could lead to a population stabilization or even a decline in the coming decades. The myth of overpopulation also overlooks the potential in manpower for technological innovation, sustainable agricultural practices, and shifts in global economic systems that could allow for more equitable resource distribution. Thus, addressing environmental issues and sustainability requires a shift in focus from population numbers to more nuanced solutions that tackle inequality, redefinition of north-south cooperation, consumption patterns, and environmental stewardship and responsibility. My interest in this topic is to create awareness among the youth and married couples, even policymakers about the danger associated with some of the, so called, modern behaviour related to sex, the use of contraceptive, the right to abortion etc... I am very happy this paper is being published roughly a year from "Infinite Dignity", a declaration released by Pope Francis on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2024. This paper is not a review of "Infinite Dignity". But it finds its resonance in the papal document in a very unique manner. The central message of "Infinity Dignity" is the "Infinite dignity of every human person as it clearly pointed at the use of contraceptives and the practice of abortion as some of the ways through which human dignity is abused. The knowledge of this danger will go a long way to help the youth, and the married couples shape their moral and religious life according to the Church's teaching on the faith and moral. Social media today is proposing so many worldly values which in one way or the other are very far from helping humanity grow according to the plan of god. Many are the strategies deployed by liberal philosophers and even some African governments to make us believe the so called myth of over population of the planet earth, and its implications on development, especially in the underdeveloped countries.

**Keywords:** Population Dynamics, Infinite Dignity, Resource Allocation, Ethical Modernity, Demographic Myth, Ecclesiastical Alignment.

**Copyright © 2026 The Author(s):** This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.

## A. BIRTH CONTROL

The pontifical Council for the family has published in 1994 an *Instrumentum Laboris* entitled:

*Ethical and Pastoral Dimensions of Population Trends.*

It was in view of the International Conference on the Population which took place in Egypt at Cairo in 1994.

\*Corresponding Author: Williams Johannes Yao Dedo

Faculty of Religions and Social Sciences (RSS), Catholic University of Ghana, Fiapre-Sunyani

The document had the following presentation: The first part examined population trends. The second part described attitudes regarding demographic realities. The third part set out ethical principles in light of which the Church analysed these realities. The Church then proposed its pastoral guide lines based on these examinations.

The preparatory document of the Church projected the person and the family as focus for a better ethical approach to various demography related problems. It is true that during this century the world population has grown remarkably. This statement of the document feats the African continent very well. According to recent estimates, Africa is a continent with high fertility. The total population of Africa in 2024 was about 1.5 billion, with a growth rate of 100 million every three years. The total fertility rate (births per woman) for Africa is 4.7 as of 2018, the highest in the world according to the World Bank [1]. However, the African continent is also under-populated, with weak population densities in the greater part of its territory. In addition, the uncertainty of specific demographic data has been particularly evident in this continent. It is very important to interpret population growth with very real factors. The population growth the world is acknowledging today is explained, first of all, by what experts see as “a new fact”. That is the increase of the average life span. They believe that, in many countries the average life-span increased more than double in this century. The reason for this is that health care condition and standards of living have improved. More efficient policies and better food production have contributed to that. The world witness more than 90% lowering of infant mortality rate coupled with the considerable fallen of the maternal death rate. It will be very important, for the sake of objectivity, not to limit our approach to the population growth to a mathematical plus and minus of birth and mortality rates. Other factors count a lot in approaching population growth. Among other things, we have changes caused by urbanisation and migration. The proponents of the myth of over-population intentionally refuse to take into consideration those important elements.

### 1. Remote Roots the Theory of Over-Population

The proponents of the myth of over-population agree or base their approach on a remote theory which can be traced to Thomas Malthus (1766-1834). Malthus based his philosophy on the principle that, because food production follows mathematical increase, and the population a geometric increase, social laws should not prevent natural laws to promote the natural selection of the strongest amongst the weak. This theory developed with time to become an instrument in the hands of these advocate of the myth of population explosion. But before our time, Galton (1822-1911), one of the neo-Malthusians, using his master's theory of natural

selection recommended that nature be help to achieve it natural selection. By this, the neo-Malthusians took their master's philosophy to the eugenics. Subsequently, the eugenics gave birth to individualism, and later on to hedonism with its automatic permit to the use of contraceptives. Permissive sex feeds on contraceptives. The neo-Malthusians ideology travelled fast and found solace into some governmental and non- governmental organisations (NGOs). Using many theories of birth control these NGOs convince their vulnerable victims to adopt the use of contraceptives. This explains the proliferation of a big international network of illicit commerce of contraceptives of all kinds. The aim here is the control of the world population.

The poor countries have been made to believe that there cannot be a discourse on sustainable development without mentioning contraceptives. They have been educated, even together with their political leaders, to believe that sterilization and abortion are part of the human right they should fight for. NGOs use Africans against their own interest by offering young men and young ladies scholarship outside their countries to study this misleading concepts of human right and sustainable development. These studies tune their minds and intellects to defend and spread their masters' various theories on birth control. They become marketing officers for pharmaceutical firms and manufacturers of contraceptives. The access to grants and help for poor countries has been conditioned to the submission to birth control policies.

### 2. Questions to Answer

Is there really a threat of over-population? The problem must be well stated and well addressed. Is the world moving towards a situation where the earth will be full up and food will not be available as a matter of over-crowding of the planet earth? The first population growth revolution in the XIX century was as a result of a drop in the mortality rate due to improvement in technology, economy and life style. This led to a brief rise in population growth rate. It lasted till the sixties. Now we are at the phase of transition where the gap between the rates of birth and mortality is dropping. From the recent 2000 revised UN statistics on the prospective of the world population, experts predicted that there will be a little change in the population of the developed areas due to the drop in the rate of fertility. That is fertility will drop under the level of replacement. The level of replacement is defined by experts as the necessary number of children per woman to ensure the replacement of the population in long term. This they think should be 2, 1 children per woman.

Another argument against the myth of over-population is that, between population and prosperity there is no determined relationship. For many experts, poverty is not the automatic consequence of over

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org>

population. It is rather a fruit of people's inability to face and addressed issues confronting them at the various levels of their existence. India which previously was exporting food is now able to achieve food self-reliance through its "green revolution". Israel has been able to transform its previous bad soil into fertile soil. In fact, sustainable development needs labour (working force) and good initiatives. Development needs population growth. It is when there is under production with a big population that progress and prosperity are difficult to achieve. The blame should rather be put on laziness and bad policy. Nigeria with its 226.5 million people (that was at January 2024) is the strongest economy in Africa. Then comes Egypt with 113.6 million. Is Egypt poorer than many under-populated countries? Comes South Africa with 60.9 million. Etc... People do not only consume, they also produce food, capital, and resources. They even contribute through their thoughts to decision making and big transformations. So, what is necessary is to organize society politically and economically so that individuals do not become liabilities but assets. This demands political will and both individual and collective responsibility. Government machineries must be well structured to deliver services for the development and the welfare of the people. Accountability and prudent management will fast-track and sustain development. The debate around poverty must rather focus on some of these social and structural elements rather than deviating people's attention. The myth of over-population was unfortunately conceived to develop a lucrative business that favours abortion and contraceptives and those who benefit from them both politically and economically. Men and women are manipulated and used against themselves to serve false ideologies or theories. Good indigenous cultures are constantly suppressed or even killed to pave the way to misinformation that renders their victims vulnerable. We may even categorise this attitude as another form of modern slavery.

## **B. THE POSITION OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**

### **1. Population and Development**

The position of the Catholic Church in its teaching on a sustainable development that respects the sacred dignity of the human person remains constant over the centuries. The Church is not insensitive to situations of poverty and misery around the world, but it is awakening humanity to a redefinition of key anthropological, ethical and existential development concepts like; poverty, global solidarity, aid, grants, international trade, and above all the concept of the human person and his/her dignity. The Church recognises remarkable efforts some governments are sustainably making to alleviate poverty in society, but she is convinced that, it can be done better or more than it is being done. That was the believe Pope Paul VI expressed when he wrote:

"We are fully aware of the difficulties confronting the public authorities in this matter, especially in the developing countries. In fact, we had in

mind the justifiable anxieties which weighs upon them when we published our Encyclical letter *Populorum Progressio*. But now we join our voice to that of our predecessor John XXIII of venerable memory, and we make our own his words: "No statement of the problem and no solution to it is acceptable which does violence to man's essential dignity; those who propose such solutions based them on an utterly materialistic conception of man himself and his life. The only possible solution to this question is one which envisages the social and economic progress both of individuals and of the whole of human society, and which respects and promotes true human values."

Clearly, the Church's suggestion to spouses in this regard is the concept "Responsible Parenthood". This concept comprises many dimensions of the family life. But in this particular context it means giving birth to the number of children each families can cater for and afford to educate. But this planning must use the "natural family planning method".

### **2. Family and Contraceptives**

The family has seriously become the battle field for class struggle. Beijing 1995 declared the family as a battle field between husband and wife, where the husband's dominion over the wife must be overthrown. And one of the ways through which man achieves his suppressive goals of dominion over the woman is maternity. Maternity therefore has been presented as a form of oppression of the man over the woman. Through pregnancy, they say, the man restricts the free movement of the woman for nine months, while he himself goes about moving freely. So, in the name of human right many beautiful concepts were coined under the pretext of freeing women from men's dominion. Among these concepts was that of "reproductive health" which came, as we mentioned earlier, as another definition and expression of human right and included the right to contraceptives and abortion. This ideology travelled very fast to force women, worldwide, to believe that the use of contraception and the practice of abortion were expressions of their human right which they need to defend. A huge amounts of money has been invested for serious campaigning, through adverts and curriculum designing. Various theories have been elaborated and preached to convince people, especially women and the youth. The concept of reproductive health has been very well supported by theories psychologically linked to the development and the welfare of both women and families and even countries and continents. Examples of such theories state:

«... it is claimed that a woman's ability to space and limit her pregnancies has a direct impact on her health and children's health. Moreover, the use of contraceptives has an important role in

the decline of such problems as unintended pregnancy and abortion» [2].

#### Another Says:

«Family planning (FP) plays a pivotal role in population control, poverty reduction, and human development. Robust FP services have a range of benefits, including maternal and infant survival, better nutrition, increases educational attainment, a stronger position of girls and women at home and society, prevention of sexually transmittable diseases (STDs), and environmental conservation.» [3].

Unfortunately, the situation on the ground reveals rather a serious lack of respect for human life in favour of money, and the destruction of the family and the family structure. Many women in both rural and urban centres end up developing strange illnesses after their 40s and 50s among those using contraceptives. In most cases health agents are unable to give them assistance because of the difficulty in understanding and explaining causes and origins of their illness. These innocent women spend their times moving from one hospital to the other till they become very poor, miserable, hopeless and helpless and die. One can even think, in this perspective, of the rate at which cancer is ravaging the female population today. A passionate and data based research needs to be conducted in that area. It is very easy to access the negative impacts of these contraceptives on families. The initial joy and serenity attached to family life are in many cases, taken away from victim women and their family members. But still the situation on the ground reveals that adverts and publicities continue to keep many women, consciously or unconsciously, slaves to the usage of contraceptives. The situation is worsened by governments' complicity in adopting and incorporating the practice as national health policy under the pressure of international organizations. The use of contraceptives and the practice of abortion are incorporated in nursing training programmes and enforced as compulsory topics to study by every student. Students who do not have these elements on their transcripts are denied employment by governments. Years back, graduate nurses and midwives, from the then Catholic University Colleges of Ghana were denied employment because they had not taken courses on family planning. One begins to realise how powerful is the hand behind this policy? Serious available studies denounced the dehumanizing condition in which some of the contraceptives and their methods are imposed and practised on people in some places. One typical example is how, in 1976, in one of the prominent Asian country, the law ordained the sterilization of 6 million of women for a period of 6 months. To talk about this is to make

mention, also, of the sad experiences of rural and urban populations of Asia, Africa, Latin America, and even Europe in that domain.

The Catholic Church from its early days has declared its opposition *vis à vis* the use of contraceptives in any form. The famous and outstanding church document that articulated more clearly this position of the Church is *Humanae Vitae*, published in 1968 by Pope Paul VI. It states that spouses must be open to life in every sexual act and that every attitude to prevent conception is morally wrong. The marital act as ordained by the Creator is to unite the couple in a growing love and procreation. By this the pope, taking into consideration his socio-cultural and religious environment, condemned the use of contraceptives in any form.

The pope founded his argument on the dignity of marriage as God's own institution to achieve his plan of love (cf. n° 8). In re-echoing this teaching, the pope is mindful of the image of marriage as well as responsible parenthood. We see this doctrinal anthropology in n° 7-18 of the document.

To live their vocation, spouses have to open themselves to God's grace which he gives them through the sacrament of matrimony. In this, the document based its teaching on GS n° 48.

Marital love found in this document its purpose and significance according to the design of God. And sexual love is not only meant to survive the Joy and sorrows of daily life but to reinforce husband and wife's promise and commitment to each other. The partner in this context, is not an object used for self-satisfaction but she or he is loved for his or her sake.

Sometimes, what people say to appease their conscience is: "is this in the Bible?". The Church's position on the use of contraceptives is bible based. The creation of man and woman in the two creation stories in Gn 1, 26-28 and Gn 2, 15-25, reveals God's plan on marriage and family life. God, right from creation created man and woman for community of life, procreation and education of children. Community of life, procreation and education of children are all divine missions which derive strength from marital love. After the fall, God in his faithfulness caused his only Son to take up the supreme sacrifice of love on the cross to redeem the fallen marriage and family life, restore it and raise it to the dignity of sacrament. From this sacrifice flows the grace of special love that enables husband and wife to live in a constant and total self-giving to each

<sup>2</sup> K. A. SARVESTINA et al. «Determinants of Contraceptives Usage among Married Women in Shiraz, Iran» in [http://www.jmrh.mums.ac.ir/article\\_8771\\_fb91dbb6b3f68ec9956e536120b6](http://www.jmrh.mums.ac.ir/article_8771_fb91dbb6b3f68ec9956e536120b6) [accessed: 05-05-2019].

<sup>3</sup> A. LONGWE, J. SMITHS, «Effects of Knowledge, Acceptance and Use of Contraceptives on Household Wealth in 26 African Countries», in <http://www.rn.nl/workingpapers> [accessed: 07-05-2019].

other. This love and any of the missions it supports, again, as we have said before cannot be tempered with by any man-made ideology or law. Marital love is divine because it is perfect and inclines to perfection in order to bear fruit. The fruits are the welfare of the spouses, and the procreation of children and their education. Anything preventing that project is obstacle and seen as against the plan of God. The marital love in which spouses mutually and freely engage in sexual act is open to co-operating with God in generating a new life. As a consequence, any sexual act which is not open to procreation and the joy of spouses is prohibited by both natural and divine law. In other words, the use of contraceptives which means both reserve and closure to procreation and matrimonial joy is against God's plan, and therefore prohibited. As we said, Pope Paul VI is of the view that any debate on contraceptives opens a debate on conjugal love and responsible parenthood. While new philosophies understand the practice of conjugal love to mean mere satisfaction of human pleasure, the Church understands it as a noble and worthy responsible act opened to procreation, education of children, growing and maintaining joy and harmony within the family. In other words, the sexual act has unitive and procreative values.

While others also understand responsible parenthood to mean man's capacity to control artificially procreation in the name of their concept of development, the Church has a more realistic position. Re-echoing the Church's traditional teaching on the matter Paul VI says:

Therefore, we base our words on the first principles of human and Christian doctrine of marriage when we are obliged once more to declare that the direct interruption of the generative process already begun and, above all, all direct abortion, even for therapeutic reasons, are to be absolutely excluded as lawful means of regulating the number of children. Equally to be condemned, as the magisterium of the church has affirmed on many occasions is direct sterilization, whether of the man or of the woman, whether permanent or temporal. Similarly excluded is any action which either before, at the moment of, or after sexual intercourse, is specifically intended to prevent procreation whether as an end or as a means. Neither is it valid to argue, as a justification for sexual intercourse which is deliberately contraceptive, that a lesser evil is to be preferred to a greater one, or that such intercourse would merge with procreative acts of past and future to form a single entity, and so be qualified by

exactly the same moral goodness as these. Though it is true that sometimes it is lawful to tolerate a lesser moral evil in order to avoid a greater evil or in order to promote a greater good, "it is never lawful, even for the greatest reason, to do evil that good may come out of it. In other words, to intend directly something which of its very nature contradicts the moral order, and which must therefore be judge unworthy of man, even though the intention is to protect or promote the welfare of an individual, of a family or society in general. Consequently, it is a serious error to think that a whole married life of otherwise normal relations can justify sexual intercourse which is deliberately contraceptive and so intrinsically wrong. On the other hand, the church does not consider at all the use of those therapeutic means necessary to cure bodily diseases, even if a foreseeable impediment to procreations could result there from provided such impediment is not directly intended for any motive whatsoever [4].

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Sangwa, S. (2025). *Population growth and poverty in Africa: Debunking the neo-Malthusian myth*. [Unpublished manuscript].
2. Mveyange, A. (2015). *On the fertility transition in Africa: Income, child mortality, or education?* [Working paper]. World Bank Group. <https://documents.worldbank.org/en/publication/documents-reports/documentdetail/1234567890>
3. Uetz, P. (2024). Myths about overpopulation. *Free Inquiry Magazine*. <https://secularhumanism.org/2024/03/myths-about-overpopulation/>
4. Population Connection. (n.d.). *Myths and misconceptions about population trends and dynamics*. <https://populationconnection.org/resources/population-myths/>
5. Ehrlich, P. R. (1968). *The population bomb*. Ballantine Books.
6. Bricker, D., & Ibbitson, J. (2019). *Empty planet: The shock of global population decline*. Crown Publishing Group.
7. Pearce, F. (2010). *The coming population crash: And our planet's surprising future*. Beacon Press.
8. Pope Francis. (2024). "Dignitas Infinita", in <https://www.vatican.va> [accessed on 01-09-2025].

---

**Cite This Article:** Williams Johannes Yao Dedo (2026). The Mythe of Over Population. *EAS J Humanit Cult Stud*, 8(3), 122-126.

---

---

<sup>4</sup> Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, Vatican City 1968.