Population and Strategies for National Sustainable Development


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We alone, however, take responsibility for the views here. They are those of the authors, and do not necessarily represent the views of the UNFPA, or of IUCN, its members and partners.
Executive Summary

The best way to summarize this book is to raise a series of critical questions, and direct the reader to responses in the text. There are many critical questions in attempting to link population with strategies for sustainable development. The following are 12 we find most important and relevant.

1. **WHY TRY TO LINK POPULATION WITH ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES IN NATIONAL STRATEGIES?**
   - Page vii ff. The Preface makes some basic arguments, and identifies bases for action in a variety of global agreements coming out of international conferences.
   - Page 21 ff. Provides more reasons: population and environment are linked in the real world, and both can be treated best in connection with the other.
   - Page 59 ff. Specifies some of the substantive questions found in common frameworks and simulation models of population, development and environment.

2. **WHAT IS A NATIONAL STRATEGY, AND WHAT KIND OF DEVELOPMENT IS IT AIMING AT?**
   - Page 15 ff. Identifies National Strategies for Sustainable Development, and specifies the meaning of development and of sustainable development: Promoting the wellbeing of people and ecosystems.

3. **WHY IS IT DIFFICULT TO MAKE THE LINKAGES?**
   - Page 21 ff. Identifies the problem in the strength of specialization, and suggests that what is needed is bridges across specializations. These are primarily organizational problems; we can turn to experience for lessons.

4. **WHAT ABOUT INTEGRATION?**
   - Page 30 ff. Probably the most used and abused term in this business. It seems everyone wants to do it, and, even more, everyone wants the magic formula for how to do it. There is none. We can offer some ideas, but it must always be done by adapting to local conditions.

5. **ANY GOOD IDEAS?**
   - Page 40 ff. Possibly. Here we propose a strategy for building Population Environment Networks, or PENs.

6. **WHAT’S ALL THIS ABOUT I = PAT?**
   - Page 57 ff. Introduces frameworks, or intellectual tools we use for thinking about population environment issues. I = PAT is one of the most common frameworks, and has been used in a variety of ways to help us think about the problem.
7. AND MODELS? WHY MODELS? WHAT MODELS?
Page 70 ff. Introduces the more complex business of building quantitative models to help us understand how things work, and to try to look into the future to see the probable outcomes of current actions, or of different policy options.

8. WHAT ABOUT THE DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION?
Page 89 ff. One of the more important observations to be made in the history of population change. There are not one but two: the past and the present. Here we make the case that the current form of the demographic transition indicates that we now have far more control over human mortality and fertility than at any time in the past.

9. POPULATION PROBLEMS – WHAT CONDITIONS ARE IMPORTANT?
Page 99 ff. Introduces a large number of basic conditions of the human population, and how we can measure those conditions. They come out of the specialization of demography or population studies, and are the things we need to pay attention to in planning for sustainable development.

10. WHAT ABOUT MORTALITY AND FERTILITY?
Page 103 ff. Both must be reduced in the less developed regions to promote the wellbeing of people and ecosystems. Today it is far easier to do than in the past, and governments have a major responsibility for doing it.

11. AND MIGRATION?
Page 118 ff. An inexorable process, as old as the human species itself, it is both caused by and produces environmental change. Few governments have been able to control migration, but it can be predicted and at least in part planned for.

12. AND URBANIZATION?
Page 122 ff. It appears inevitable, and it may well be the best strategy for promoting sustainable development. Many governments try to slow the process; it would be better to work to promote sustainable cities.
Preface
Addressing Population–Environment Linkages to Promote Sustainable Development

Linkages for Sustainable Development

In the past three decades the linkage between population and environmental problems has become a major object of concern in international development. The world’s population has reached the unprecedented level of 5.7 billion, and though rates of growth have slowed, it is still possible that the population will double or more before levelling off. The optimistic hopes for economic development of the 1960s have faded. Despite large amounts of international assistance, and some successes, the list of problems grows, along with increasing human misery. Environmental degradation reaches all corners of the planet, from ozone destruction, to global warming, to deforestation and life threatening pollution. Too often, however, population, development and environment have been treated separately, following lines of specialization that divide scientific disciplines and development agencies alike.

This separation is now recognized as a major problem, giving rise to new and urgent calls for more attention to linking population and environmental issues in promoting sustainable development, which is itself a new idea that is an adaptation to the failures of the development dream.

The human species, which grew very slowly for thousands of years, suddenly exploded after 1950, with growth rates peaking at over 2 percent per year. Now the large population base means large absolute additions, possibly near 1 billion per decade over the next half century or more. Moreover, the rapid growth will occur in the poorer countries of the world, those least capable of coping with it.

Over the past three decades and more, average annual world economic growth has generally exceeded world population growth by one or two percentage points. Even with the shocks of rising oil prices in the 1970s and the world wide recession of the 1980s, economic growth overall has kept ahead of population growth. In reviewing three decades of work on poverty, the World Bank estimated average annual real per capita growth rates over 1950–80 at 3 percent for industrial and middle income countries, and even 1.3 percent for the low income countries. By these measures economic development, almost universally desired, has been almost universally experienced. But the gap between rich and poor remains, in some cases grows larger, and in all cases is both unstable and unsustainable.

There have been some real gains in the quality of life, at least by major aggregate measures. These gains themselves have led to rapid population growth. Infant and maternal mortality have declined in most areas, life expectancy has risen, along with school enrolment and literacy, especially for the most disadvantaged of the human population, women and girls.

But other gains remain elusive, and the rise of absolute numbers in stark poverty overwhelms
whatever gains may be apparent for some. The number of people in absolute poverty rises daily. The numbers of hungry, sick and malnourished people do not diminish. Deaths from simple, easily controlled infectious diseases number in the hundreds of thousands annually.

And whatever achievements we make seem to come at high costs to the environment. Forests are diminishing; air, water and land pollution grow rapidly; biodiversity is declining; the protective ozone layer is being destroyed and the planet is threatened with future temperature rises that could spell disaster for many areas.

The linkages between these dynamics and their attendant problems are complex, but visible everywhere. They are especially evident in the world’s unequal distribution of wealth and welfare. Poor people are often driven to farm weak and vulnerable soils because they have nowhere else to go for food, while wealthy farmers turn forests into pastures for beef to earn foreign exchange. Poor women in poor countries often bear more children than they wish because they lack the basic social services that give them a choice in fertility and family size. In many wealthy countries, on the other hand, where social services are extensively available, populations are expected to decline. Wealthy countries can protect their forest resources by promoting destructive logging in poorer countries. Wealthy countries can export toxic wastes and toxic industries to poor countries where environmental protection systems are weak. Environmental organizations in wealthy countries support biodiversity and protected areas in poor countries, often excluding indigenous peoples whose lives depend on the resources being protected, and who have often lived for centuries using those resources in a sustainable fashion. These global inequalities are clearly unstable and unsustainable. They tend to lead to conflicts between environmental conservation and human welfare.

Although the linkages between population, development and environment are complex and often conflicting, it is possible to address the linkages in such a manner that promotes the welfare of both people and the environment. But to do this, we shall have to change common ways of thinking and acting.

The narrow emphasis on economic growth should give way to a focus on sustainable development. The fundamental aspect of sustainable development is that it promotes the welfare of both people and ecosystems, implying increasing human productivity to raise the level of human welfare for both present and future generations.

The narrow emphasis on environmental conservation, often implying exclusion of people, should give way to an emphasis on human sustainable use of natural resources. This implies linking people and population dynamics to environmental conservation in a mutually beneficial system.

The narrow emphasis on population control or fertility limitation should give way to an emphasis on human welfare, reproductive health, responsible parenthood, and choice. This implies providing basic social services, including primary health care, education and family planning, especially to women and to people in rural areas.

Although current emphases and programmes are now broadening and changing in positive directions, much remains to be done to make the linkages between population and sustainable development more productive. For this we need both more knowledge and more action. Both knowledge and action require that we find ways to bridge the scientific and organizational specializations that mitigate against cooperative effort.

Scientific specializations have given us great powers of observation and knowledge generation. From agriculture and anthropology to sociology and zoology, scientific disciplines have greatly
increased our knowledge about the world precisely because they have focused observation and analysis on a narrow range of conditions. These have often been paralleled by organizations that specialize in specific activities, such as curing illness, providing health care, promoting agriculture or building effective and efficient water and waste systems.

It is also those specializations, however, that make linking difficult. Specializations work in large part because they build strong agendas and tools for action and observation. But these often act as barriers to communication across specializations. Linking population with sustainable development will require that some barriers be dismantled, or that bridges be built between specialized disciplines.

This guide is concerned with making the linkages and building the bridges between population dynamics and attempts to promote sustainable development, especially at the level of national planning. Another manual published by IUCN, *Our People, Our Resources* (Barton et al, 1996), provides tools and options for making the linkages at the local community level.

**Bases for Action**

The grounds for action by the global community and by national governments have grown rapidly over the past two decades. The first world conference on the environment was held in Stockholm in 1972. Although it articulated some controversies between the more and less developed regions, it eventually led to the formation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 (Robinson, 1993).

From UNCED came *Agenda 21*, a 700 page document in which nations of the world agreed that today:

_Humanity stands at a defining moment in history. We are confronted with a perpetuation of disparities between and within nations, a worsening of poverty, ill-health, and illiteracy and the continuing deterioration of the ecosystem on which we depend for our well-being. However, integration of environment and development concerns, and greater attention to them will lead to fulfilment of basic needs, improved living standards for all, and a safer, more prosperous future. (Agenda 21, Preamble, 1.1)_

In 1969 the United Nations created the Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) and in 1974 convened the first International Conference on Population, held in Bucharest, Romania. There, too, despite initial controversies, the Conference adopted a World Plan of Action that emphasized an integrated approach to population and development issues. Two subsequent decennial conferences were held in Mexico City in 1984, and Cairo in 1994. The Cairo Conference was officially designated the International Conference on Population and Development. The General Assembly resolution 49/128, ‘Report of the International Conference on Population and Development’ as adopted on 19 December 1994, among other things:

>(6.) Fully acknowledges that the factors of population, health, education, poverty, patterns of production and consumption, empowerment of women and the environment are closely interconnected and should be considered through an integrated approach...
The Cairo Conference was especially important in giving emphasis to the condition of women as a determinant of modern population dynamics. That raised some controversy, but in the end there was broad agreement that better primary health care, more equal social services and opportunities, and better family planning services for women are both morally imperative and necessary to achieve real advances in human welfare. The consensus at Cairo has been endorsed by some 180 countries.

Finally, the World Summit for Social Development took another step in this integrated march of international conferences by focusing on ‘Attacking Poverty, Building Solidarity, and Creating Jobs.’ While the summit did not given much explicit attention to environmental issues, there are numerous references to the links between poverty, women’s status, population growth and environmental degradation, all of which are intricately tied together in many less developed regions. The Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development made the following points in reference to the issue of linkages:

(6.) We are deeply convinced that economic development, social development and environmental protection are interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development....

(8.) We acknowledge that people are at the centre of our concerns for sustainable development and they are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with the environment. (UN 1995B).

Moreover, in the prescriptions for implementation and follow-up (Chapter V), the Copenhagen Declaration recommends:

The integration of goals, programmes and review mechanisms that have developed separately in response to specific problems.

A Note on Terminology

The terms ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ assigned to countries have often caused difficulties and misunderstanding. Economic development can be given a precise definition: long term increases in real output per capita. But this is a variable, and the question of where the division lies between the more or less developed has often caused needless controversy. The term development or developed takes on a great deal more meaning, which is often less precise and open to controversy when applied to the political, social or cultural conditions of a society. The World Bank has provided one useful solution in ranking countries by their level of Gross National Product per capita, and then describing groups as low, middle or high income countries. The United Nations Population Division has another solution, which we shall adopt for the most part in this volume. Its documents speak of the More Developed and Less Developed Regions, and of the Least Developed Countries. The 1992 revision of World Population Prospects (UN, 1993) indicates that there are now 47 countries in this latter category, six of which were added since the 1990 revision, ‘after the approval of the General Assembly in December 1991.’ This phrase indicates as well as any that these definitions have important political implications. We use the More and Less Developed Regions classification for simplicity and because it has achieved some currency in population documents. We attach no moral, social, cultural or political significance to the terms, however.
All of these bases for action are reflected clearly and coherently in the basic policy document of IUCN, *Caring for the Earth*, which was published in 1991 and adopted by more than 80 countries (IUCN, 1991). At various points in the manual we shall draw on *Caring for the Earth*. It reflects the global bases for action, but also has a major advantage over them. The language of *Agenda 21*, for example, could not directly confront the issue of fossil fuels, and the need for cleaner, more sustainable sources of energy, nor could it say very much about population. The International Conference on Population and Development was able to say only very little about the population–environment linkages and what should be done. It was also less free to speak of the needs of women when these ran counter to specific religious positions. IUCN is somewhat less constrained by these understandable global political concerns. Its position can be based more firmly on scientific observations of the global condition. Thus *Caring for the Earth* can speak somewhat more frankly and openly about all of these needs and their interconnections.
Part I

Introduction

This introduction discusses use and users of the guide. It is designed to be used by national or regional (state, province etc.) level planners who wish to link population and environmental conditions more closely in planning for sustainable development.

The introduction also lays out the basic orientation, which is taken largely from IUCN’s basic policy document, *Caring for the Earth* (IUCN, 1991). The aim of this document, and of IUCN, is to promote sustainable global and local communities. Sustainable development is defined as promoting the wellbeing of people and ecosystems. Although this volume gives emphasis to population conditions, it adheres to the basic position of *Caring for the Earth*, that both rapid population growth and high consumption are unsustainable.

Finally, the section provides an historical overview that brings more detail to the volume’s basic orientation. The current conditions of global environmental change derive from the integral connection between population growth and technological and social change. The transition to fossil fuels, the rise of urban industrial society and rapid population growth are integrally intertwined, each causing and caused by the other. Gradual changes in the past have given way to exceptionally rapid and potentially destructive changes today. The growth of human populations and of human consumption are now unsustainable. Promoting sustainable development has become a widely shared responsibility of governments and peoples throughout the world. To promote sustainable development, we must build bridges between specialized disciplines and activities to treat our problems in a more holistic manner.
The Guide: Users, Use, and Basic Orientation

Users

This guide is designed primarily for two types of national level planners: those concerned with overall development planning, and those concerned more specifically with environmental conservation.

It attempts to show how population conditions can be taken into consideration in addressing problems of promoting economic development, environmental conservation or, more broadly, sustainable development.

A major aim of this volume is to show how population conditions can be examined and linked to planning for environmental conservation and sustainability. Much of the material on population necessarily emphasizes growth rates and the growth of numbers. This is, of course, primarily a condition of the Less Developed Regions, and arises in part from recent dramatic successes in controlling mortality. The current growth rates in these regions are not sustainable and they are closely related to pressures that reduce the wellbeing of both people and the environment.

Nonetheless, as we state at a number of places throughout this volume, the basic orientation taken here is derived from *Caring for the Earth* (IUCN, 1991): *both population growth and high consumption are unsustainable*. Both must be dramatically altered. *Caring for the Earth* provides many useful guidelines on ways in which production and consumption must change to promote sustainability.

This volume focuses more on population, however, which implies giving much attention to the condition of rapid population growth in the Less Developed Regions. There are three main reasons for adopting this emphasis:

1. It is where populations are growing rapidly that we can see some of the most visible linkages between population dynamics and the environment.
2. It is also where populations are growing rapidly that we can see most clearly the interlinked problems of poverty, inequality and the population–environment dynamic.
3. Perhaps of even greater importance is that the negative aspects of rapid population growth can be mitigated, far more easily than is often believed, by addressing the problem of growth directly. Today we have far greater capacities to intervene to reduce both mortality and fertility than we have ever had in the past. Moreover interventions for the control of mortality and fertility can greatly increase human welfare and the quality of life. As we shall note later, it is not as easy to intervene directly to control human migration, the third component of population dynamics. It can be predicted, and this is important, but it is far less easily controlled by direct intervention than either mortality or fertility.
Part I Introduction

Use

This is not a book of recipes to be followed mechanically. It is rather a set of ideas and options from which planners and implementers can choose activities appropriate to their specific conditions.

It can be used at national, state or provincial, and district levels, where planning covers a substantial geographic area with many different environmental conditions and many local communities. It can be used by government organizations, or by non-governmental organizations for project planning, or for monitoring the impact of government policies and programmes.

National planning bodies can use the guide to help search for and identify specific sectors or regions where population and environmental conditions pose specific problems, and where strategic interventions can be planned. National bodies can then be led to consider devolution of responsibility and authority for addressing any specific problem. Similarly, national level planning groups in specific sectors, such as agriculture, forests, health, or urban systems can use the guide to identify specific activities where population and environmental dynamics appear to create problems, and then can plan strategic interventions to address those problems.

The guide can also be used at state, provincial or district levels, wherever administrators have responsibility for a substantial geographic or administrative area. For example, many national planning bodies or agencies now have parallel provincial and district level development planning units, whose local plans fit into and contribute to national plans and have special responsibility and authority for implementation at local levels. In such cases, the guide can be used at all levels, to assist in generating a comprehensive strategy for dealing with the population issues in development stimulation throughout the nation.

Basic Orientation

This work is based on the key policy document of IUCN, Caring for the Earth (IUCN, 1991) which provides both a visionary and a practical statement of what needs to be done to achieve sustainable global and local societies. It has been adopted as IUCN's basic policy, and has also been adopted by over 80 countries which are members of the Union. As noted in the preface, the basic message of Caring for the Earth, was reflected in both Agenda 21 and in the World Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development.

Caring for the Earth is subtitled A Strategy for Sustainable Living. Later we discuss the issue of strategies. Here we must address the issue of sustainability, since it is central to the vision of IUCN basic policy. The term is now commonly used in connection with both development and environmental conservation. Caring for the Earth provides the definitions

Definitions of Sustainability

Sustainable Growth is a contradiction in terms. Growth cannot continue indefinitely. The term is neither used nor to be inferred from the discussion in this handbook.

Sustainable Use refers only to renewable natural resources; it means using them at a rates within their capacity for regeneration.

Sustainable Development implies increasing human productivity and the quality of life while keeping within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems.

Source: IUCN, 1991, p. 10

Elsewhere (Carew-Reid 1994), sustainable development is defined more succinctly as:

PROMOTING THE WELLBEING OF BOTH PEOPLE AND ECOSYSTEMS.
Is National Planning Possible?

Failure of State Planning

It may appear incongruous to write of national planning for sustainability today, when central planning and state interventions are everywhere being displaced by privatization and the reliance on markets. To be sure, much central planning has turned out to be less than successful. It has nowhere lived up to the dreams that attended the early Soviet plans, or the central planning of many new nations that gained independence following World War II. Too often central planning has been associated with erratic oppression, corruption or bureaucratic obstruction. Planning and state intervention have been very much discredited, and today they seem to be in full retreat.

Global Forces

Moreover, the capacities of individual states to manage their own economies and societies are weakening under the pressure of global forces that they cannot contain. Global economic conditions intrude heavily on the economy of any state, and are for the most part beyond state control. International capital flows, controlled by a small number of large transnational institutions, have resulted in heavy debt burdens that now appear unsupportable in many poor countries. The power of external institutions to impose structural adjustment packages is all too evident. Transnational companies have far more power than do most states, to move everything from capital and people to toxic wastes. The breakup of large states, the emergence of ethnic conflicts and a massive global arms trade threaten all states with violence and refugee floods that can disrupt any planning. Under these conditions we can not expect a great deal of national level planning.

Possibilities of State Planning

But these conditions do not by any means negate the need for planning and the ability of states to create policies and programmes that can promote sustainable development. States still do have some capacities to control borders, to mobilize resources, and to direct those resources towards productive activities. They have capacities to establish policies that stimulate and enhance individual achievement, and collective welfare. Some of the most important policies and programmes concern the development of human capital, through promoting health and educational services; the protection of natural resources; planning for sustainable use; and the empowerment of local communities, through devolution of responsibility for resource management. It is in recognition of these possibilities that this volume is especially directed.

on page 4, which are those used in this guide.

We recognize that for many low income countries, economic growth is considered a necessity. The demand of poor people and poor countries to raise the standard of living and quality of life is a legitimate one and must be supported. As Caring for the Earth maintains, the high inequality of wealth in the world today is neither stable nor sustainable; gross disparities in consumption must be overcome (p. 44).
To the extent that economic growth is necessary to raise standards of living, especially amongst the poor, it must be supported. But growth cannot continue endlessly, and there is much evidence now that economic growth itself will not necessarily produce sustainable local and global societies. The authors of Beyond the Limits (Meadows, 1992) merely restate what the World Bank (1992) and UNDP (1993) have to say about the process of economic growth without increasing employment. Nor does economic growth necessarily by itself alleviate problems of poor housing, the homeless, poor health, or other conditions associated with a lower quality of life. Growth has thus proved in part a failure. To advance the quality of life of human beings and the world’s ecosystems, to produce sustainable local and global societies, different models and different ethics must be found. The idea of sustainable development, for all its imprecision and weakness, provides a better vision than does economic growth.

**Companion Volumes**

IUCN produces a variety of planning guides for specific environmental conditions, including wetlands, parks and protected areas; for specific species; and for the broader vision of biodiversity. The full list of such guides appears in the appendix. There are two guides, however, that are of special interest to the problem of this guide, integrating population into strategies for sustainability. *Our People, Our Resources*, is a manual designed primarily for work at the local community level in rural environments. It offers options and resources to promote participative assessment and planning around the integrated management of natural resources and population dynamics. It also refers to ‘Primary Environmental Care’, or PEC, an approach to community management of resources promoted by IUCN and other organizations.

A second companion volume of particular interest is *Strategies for National Sustainable Development* (SNSD), by IUCN and IIED (Carew-Reid, 1994). It provides ideas, options, and a distillation of lessons learned from creating national level plans for promoting sustainable development, or National Strategies for Sustainable Development. (See Box on SNSD, p. 16). The ideas presented in this guide are meant to be integrated into planning and implementing those strategies for sustainable development.

**Overview**

The guide begins in Part I with a review of the global historical context of the population–environment relationship. It is necessary to recognize the distinctive context of the current global conditions of unsustainable growth and the current efforts to address the problem. These efforts are organized in specific ways in which national and international organizations attempt to intervene with human processes of production and consumption. A major and pervasive aim of these interventions today is to promote economic development, the long term rise of human productivity and human welfare. These global conditions and the organized interventions have emerged with an accelerating rate of change over the past two centuries, producing our modern global society.
It is increasingly clear that these past efforts at raising productivity and welfare have produced both a higher quality of life for much of the human species, and also major environmental stress, placing our planet at risk. This now presents an important new challenge for the world community. The challenge is to organize for planning and implementing strategies for sustainable development.

In Part II, the guide considers a series of issues in organizing at the national level for integrating population issues with strategies for sustainable development. To promote sustainable development, it will be necessary to bring together highly specialized information from a number of sources to a place where it can be effectively used. Population, agriculture, forestry, finance, industry, health, transportation, education and pollution are only some of the important sources of knowledge and information that have become highly specialized, both in scientific disciplines and in large scale government and private agencies. The specialization has been important and has increased powers of observation and of planned intervention. But the specialization has also built barriers, making communication difficult. At the same time, all of the real world problems we face tend to spill over the boundaries of specialized activities. They need to be brought together to focus on human problems, rather than upon their specializations alone. This is very much an organizational problem. It requires drawing together the powerful specializations that are an integral part of the way we allocate resources and make collective decisions. The very fact of specialization implies a resistance to integration, and special tactics are required to overcome this resistance. In this part, we provide some suggestions for organizing to build bridges across the boundaries of specialized scientific disciplines, and specialized agencies. Each section in Part II includes a set of questions concerning population and environment dynamics, and the organization of linkages, which will refer the reader to tools discussed in Parts III and IV, where we provide a series of suggestions for assessing population–environment dynamics.

Part III focuses specifically on the population–environment nexus. It reviews the major frameworks and models people have used to think about the population–environment link, and pays special attention to a powerful modelling process, the Population Environment Development Model, produced by the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA). This section also reviews some of the major types of linkages, suggesting different tools, from which governments can choose to work on what we find are basically local, or location-specific problems.

Part IV of the guide is something of a primer on population, with some discussion of environmental measures as well. It lays out the tools and perspectives of population analysis that will be needed for strategies of national sustainable development. It begins with a discussion of the Demographic Transition, one of the most profound changes the human species has experienced. The Demographic Transition is often misunderstood, however, and taken to indicate that little can be done to affect patterns of human reproduction. This misunderstanding is much in need of correction, since today we find that human reproduction can be changed far more easily than is often believed. Moreover, promoting that change is important for increasing human quality of life, and especially for promoting the wellbeing of women. This section also reviews basic demographic tools, as well as the course of population dynamics especially in the low income countries of the world.
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