



# PRESS RELEASE



UN OFFICE OF THE HIGH REPRESENTATIVE FOR THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES,  
LANDLOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES AND SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES

## POPULATION TRENDS IN LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

### UN SECRETARY-GENERAL'S REPORT EMPHASISES SUSTAINED ECONOMIC GROWTH TO REDUCE HUNGER IN LDCs

**United Nations, 17 January 2005:** The goal of development is to improve the quality of life of all people. In that sense, population is at the core of development. "In 2005, 753 million of the 6.5 billion inhabitants of the world, or 11 per cent, live in the least developed countries," says Secretary-General Kofi Annan in a January 2005 report on Population and Development. "Between 2005 and 2015," the report states, "the LDCs as a whole are expected to absorb nearly a quarter of all population growth in the world; high fertility levels characterize the majority of the LDCs." Consequently, their populations are still young, with 39 per cent of their inhabitants being children under the age of 15.

Levels of extreme poverty, the report states, in most of the LDCs are high: over 20 per cent of their overall population lives in extreme poverty, surviving on less than \$US 1 per day, and in ten of them that proportion is higher than 40 per cent. "Although fertility levels have started to decline in some of the LDCs, the desired number of children remains high."

The report indicated that measures to ensure family-planning services should be affordable, acceptable and accessible to all who need and want them. This can help reduce unwanted fertility, especially in the high-fertility countries of today, and thus begin the process that gives rise to the demographic bonus. Because most of those high-fertility countries are among LDCs, where levels of extreme poverty are high, the advantages that the demographic bonus can bring, also contribute to the reduction of poverty.

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“Because poverty and malnutrition often go together,” the report states, “sustained economic growth broadly shared, is also necessary to reduce hunger, particularly in the least developed countries.” Again, high fertility and rapid population growth have hindered the achievement of universal primary education in least developed countries.

The report states that the Programme of Action gives considerable attention to the ways and means by which its recommendations may be implemented. It acknowledges that domestic resources provide the largest portion of the funds needed, estimating that only about a third of those costs would come from external sources. “The LDCs would require a greater share of external resources on a concessional and grant basis.”

The report concludes that the implementation of the Programme of Action depends crucially on building a partnership for global development where all actors, including governments, multilateral and donor agencies, civil society and the private sector, cooperate to realize its goals and objectives. In this way, it validates the importance of the goals included in the UN Millennium Declaration and contributes to underscore that international cooperation is essential for the implementation of population and development programmes, particularly in the least development countries.

For further information, please contact: **Nosh Nalavala**, Media Officer, United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (917) 367-2471, e-mail: [nalavala@un.org](mailto:nalavala@un.org). Website: <http://www.un.org/ohrlls/>

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