Sustainable development can only be achieved...when population, environmental and development linkages are adequately translated into policies and programmes, and when social sectors are given equal priority with economic growth.

Dr. Nafis Sadik,
Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund,
"The State of World Population 1989".
A country’s population is a resource. As such, it must be the wealth of the country, not a problem. Problems occur, however, when the population is out of balance with the resources required to sustain it. When this happens, the equity and quality of life of all concerned are reduced or lost. The results are: poverty, malnutrition, unemployment, crime and other societal ills. Such is the case in most developing countries today, where population is growing at such a rate that it can no longer be provided with adequate services in order to sustain itself.

Traditional population planning too short-sighted
Population planning, as traditionally conceived and practised, has tended to be too narrow and short-sighted. Because of its focus on population quantity through fertility reduction, it has often been intimately identified with family planning programmes. It is only in recent years that population planning has begun to be understood more appropriately within the context of human resource development. The United Nations World Population Conference in Bucharest in 1974, which resulted in the World Population Plan of Action, “officially” broadened the concept of population planning to encompass human resource planning. This approach was reiterated

**Human resource development - a means and an end**

Human resource development, as is now globally recognized, is the only sector of development that is both a means and an end in itself. An end, because it improves equity and the quality of life. A means, because it is the foundation of sustainable economic growth.

Because human resource development is so central as both a means and an end of overall socio-economic development, it is easy to see why population planning, taken as human resource planning, should be an integral part of development planning.

It is in this context, that governments of some nations have begun to formulate and implement a population policy that seeks to integrate population factors into all sectors of development planning, with the ultimate aim of human resource development.

In St. Lucia, it has been recognized that some of the present social and economic problems being experienced, are directly and indirectly linked to population-related factors. Such a recognition has prompted the development of a National Population Policy which seeks to develop our human resources as well as influence the size and growth of our population, its geographic distribution and other characteristics, in a way that is consistent with the nation's resources.
The main population-related problems facing St. Lucia can be attributed to several factors. These include a high fertility rate, especially among teenagers and a resultant high dependency ratio.

The female population at the end of 1989 was estimated at 51 per cent of the total population. The total fertility rate which had been declining throughout the decade of the eighties reached a level of 3.5 children per woman in 1989. However, the population is still growing at a rate which is not consistent with the nation’s limited resources.

Births to teenagers unacceptably high
The statistics show that children born out of wedlock have accounted for about 85 per cent of the total births, a trend consistent throughout the decade of the eighties.
Births to teenagers are unacceptably high, if not alarming. In 1989, nineteen (19) girls under 15 years of age had their first child; while 764 children were born to mothers in the age group 15-19 years.

The implications of such a high fertility rate are numerous. For example, in the area of employment, the legacy of the high fertility rates of the past decades has left the country with a large proportion of young adults. This factor has rapidly increased the labour force growth rate, and has resulted in high unemployment rates, especially among the youth.

Fig. 1

ST. LUCIA: Percentage distribution of live births (1989), according to broad age groups of women
Limited School Places
A very young population also has repercussions on the education system. At present, the number of available school places is limited, particularly at the primary level. In fact, only about 30 per cent of the students who sit the Common Entrance Examinations can benefit from secondary education.

The unavailability of school places for such a large number of children is the direct consequence of parents with too many children, and the Government's inability to accommodate them in any one year. The education system, which is already stretched, is unable to cope. This problem, in itself, would have disastrous effects on illiteracy rates.

Heavy dependency burden
Because of its very young population, St. Lucia has a high dependency ratio. In essence, a high dependency ratio means that the working population (persons aged 15-64 years) has to support its very large youthful population, as well as the elderly. At present, persons under 15 years and over 64 years of age account for about 50 per cent of the total population. The implications of this high dependency ratio is that too small a percentage of the population has to provide foods and services for too large a proportion of the population. This condition is further aggravated if unemployment is prevalent.
Population density (persons living per unit of land area) is high in the urban areas, with some 46.8 per cent of the population living in the northern (Castries/Gros Islet) area. This high density will place a severe strain on existing infrastructure, and will result in the need for further physical expansion.

The level of emigration, which became very significant in the sixties, had a profound impact on alleviating unemployment and limiting the rate of population growth. However, the peak level seen in the sixties has declined. It is now estimated at 11 per 1000 of the population, with no significant increases being forecasted for the foreseeable future.

**POPULATION GROWTH PROSPECTS**

A crucial issue for St. Lucia is the future growth of its population. Evidently, appreciable increments to the population are expected during the next twenty five years. If present trends continue, the population is expected to almost double by the year 2015, reaching a level of 290,908. If, however, the country were to decrease its total fertility rate from its present level of 3.5 children per woman to achieve the population policy goal of 2.1 children per woman by the year 2000, then the population change in 2015 would only amount to 206,697, representing a 39 per cent increase.

**Burden on social services foreseen**

These projected changes have important consequences for the size of the principal age groups as well as the
ST. LUCIA: Population Composition, Age & Sex

(a) Mid-year estimate
Source: Central Statistical Office, St. Lucia

(b) Low variant - TFR=2.1 in the year 2000
Source: ECLAC, Port of Spain, Trinidad
resultant burden that could be placed on the country for the provision of adequate social services. If current demographic conditions remain constant, the pre-school age (0-4) population could grow by 90 per cent to 42,951. Similarly, the school age population (5-14) would soar from a total of 43,225 to 70,437 children by the year 2015. Equally important is the current large proportion of youth (15-29) which would almost double by the year 2015. On the other hand, should fertility reach replacement level by the year 2000, the numbers in the 0-14 age group would actually decrease by 20 per cent, while the increases in the youth group would only amount to approximately one quarter of the current total.

More women, more births
Changes in the number of women in the childbearing age group 15-44 has special significance for trends in the number of births. If current demographic conditions remain constant, the consequences of past high fertility will result in an increase in the female childbearing population 15-44 by as much as 111 per cent by the year 2015. Given the constant fertility, this, of course, would result in a corresponding rise in the total number of births.

Larger labour force expected
Even more alarming are the massive increases expected in the working age population (15-64) if present trends continue. The numbers are expected to increase
by 127 per cent, within the twenty five period. This represents a difference of approximately 93,663 additional persons over the 1989 figure. However, if declines in fertility, as stated above, are achieved, the change will only amount to a 94 per cent increase.

Fig. 3: Labour Force in St. Lucia, 1985-2015

- TFR=2.1 by 2000 and net migration halved by 2010
- TFR=2.1 by 2010 and net migration halved by 1995
- TFR and net migration remain constant
Pressure on resource requirements
These differential rates of growth imply that the resources required for the pre-school and school populations, in terms of maternal/childcare as well as the provision of educational facilities, would differ immensely depending on whether the population growth continued on its present course or achieved a decline to the level stated in the National Population Policy. The greatest pressure will undoubtedly come from the population of working age, which will require an enormous increase in the creation of additional jobs to avoid a serious deterioration of the unemployment, underemployment and related problems.

Next 10-15 years critical
Thus the next 10-15 years will be critical in so far as St. Lucia's eventual population size and related socio-economic development are concerned. Emigration at recent levels cannot be relied upon as a means of alleviating growth problems. A rapid reduction in fertility is thus an important goal for the nation. Special programmes for the achievement of equal opportunities for women as well as the improvement of their status should also be given priority. It should also be noted that, after the turn of the century, the number of elderly persons are expected to grow significantly, leading to new demands on the social support system. Rapid declines in fertility could, of course, alleviate many of the problems facing the nation as it approaches the next century.
The development of the National Population Policy for St. Lucia and the establishment of the National Population Unit to implement the policy, is a vital step towards finding an effective solution to population-related problems.

It has been recognized and accepted that the basis for an effective solution to population-related problems, is, above all, socio-economic development. Population change can no longer be seen or dealt with as an isolated phenomenon nor can it be effectively influenced solely by the adoption of a narrow and purely demographic approach. It is an integral part of the process of socio-economic development. The National Population Policy for St. Lucia, which caters for the integration of social, economic and population policies, represents the kind of integrated development strategy that is needed in order to solve population-related problems.

**Integrating population in social and economic planning**

Implementation of the Population Policy involves the translation of its goals into social, economic and demo-
graphic programmes. Consideration of population factors in development programmes is of great importance since the demographic consequences may well feedback to enhance or restrain targeted social and economic improvements.

Consequently, policymakers and planners in the sectoral ministries need to realize that collaboration in the implementation of the Population Policy is one of the ways in which they can support each other in reaching their own goals, while at the same time realizing the national objectives of the Government.

Researching the interrelationships
Population factors have important impacts on all major planning sectors, but many of the linkages between socio-economic and population factors are indirect and not always visible to sectoral planners. Thus, an integrated approach to development planning would necessitate a close analysis of the interrelationships that exist between social, population and economic factors to enable the formulation of an appropriate package of programmes and policies to resolve development problems.

It would be particularly useful as well, if interrelationships are examined according to particular sectors such as agriculture, health, education, employment, family planning, as well as the role and contribution of women in the development process.
The National Population Policy of St. Lucia

The ultimate objective of the National Population Policy is to determine and achieve a population size consistent with the nation's resources and to provide and sustain an improved standard of living and a better quality of life for all St. Lucians. The main components in realizing this objective are:

- Stabilization of the population growth to ensure favourable conditions for continuous development.
- Continuation of the improvement of the health and nutritional status of all, further lowering infant and child mortality and increasing life expectancy.
- Realization of a replacement level fertility rate by the year 2000.
- Improvement of the legal, social, economic and educational status of women, providing them with the opportunity for full social and economic advancement.
- Provision of improved opportunities for education, employment, adequate housing, and improvement of conditions of water supply, sanitation and the environment.
- Development of agriculture, social services and industries.
- Decrease of rural/urban migration and easing of the increasing urban density by improving rural infrastructure, services and income.
- Utilization of census data and population projections in the planning of appropriate health and social services for the very young and elderly.
Collecting Data
The use of demographic data is an important aspect in the integrated process of planning, as it introduces the human element. Planners must be able to estimate intelligently for their programmes, not only how many people are involved, but where they will be, their age and sex distribution, socio-economic status and their access to resources.

Alternative detailed population projections by size, sex-age group, and location and projections for specific population groups are among the primary demographic data requirements for planning. The collection, evaluation and analysis of demographic data, and the timely dissemination of the results to planners, therefore, is a key link in the overall population development planning process.

Training of Personnel
Because the idea of integrating population and socio-economic factors in development planning is still relatively new, especially in St. Lucia, the proper training of personnel in this area is of prime importance. A number of training programmes should be planned to increase the understanding of socio-economic-population inter-relationships among planners, policymakers, and other support staff in government sectoral ministries as well as in the private sector. Enhancing the skills of persons in the area of data collection and analysis is also another requirement.
Awareness Creation

Creating awareness of the interrelationships of population and socio-economic factors and of the Government's National Population Policy, is a necessary tool for gaining national support and participation, as well as ensuring the policy's success. An information/education/communications programme will ensure the promotion of the policy and its objectives, improve the understanding of the socio-economic and population interrelationships and encourage the use of demographic data for planning.

Population education, targeted to school children and the general public, is also a valuable awareness creation exercise needed to demonstrate to members of the public ways in which their population-related decisions can impact on the development process of our country - whether their decisions relate to the desire to migrate, have more children, children's education, work, health practices, consumption patterns or the relative attractiveness of spending now or saving for one's old age. Of course, the reverse effect of development programmes on population-related decisions also occurs.

Monitoring and Evaluating

Finally, monitoring and evaluating these development programmes are essential to ensure that the outcomes are in keeping with the goals of the National Population Policy.
Institutional arrangements

Implementation of the Population Policy would require the collaborative efforts of policymakers from a very broad cross section of public and private sector organizations. Thus, an institutional network for active participation and effective coordination of both the government and private sectors is essential.

Given the complex nature of this integrated planning process, the multitude of tasks involved, and the need for collaborative activities among sectors, the National Population Unit of St. Lucia was established in February 1990, in order to successfully accomplish these tasks and, generally, to implement the measures contained within the National Population Policy.

A National Population Council was also established to oversee the workings of the policy.
Countries with limited resources and uncontrolled population growth, are often ill-equipped to sustain their populations, and thus, unable to cope with the resource consequences. The results are poverty, unemployment and hunger.

Planning programmes that acknowledge the links between population and development can result in improved social and economic conditions, such as improved health, education, housing and jobs for all as well as increased opportunities for women.

Hence, the concern of the National Population Policy of St. Lucia for the years ahead and beyond the year 2000, is to shape a more satisfying future for the forthcoming generations as well as encourage individuals to develop their full potential, with equal opportunities for development, and without the threat of environmental degradation. This development must be accomplished without
violating the dignity and freedom of each person, and by giving each person the knowledge and the means for a better quality of life, and an improved standard of living.

If we are to satisfy the basic needs and aspirations of our people for improved and expanded social facilities at all levels; if we are to uphold the rights of our young people and the next generation for jobs, housing, education, etc.; if we are to raise the standard of living and improve the quality of life of all St. Lucians, we have to, as a matter of utmost urgency, carefully contribute to the implementation of the National Population Policy. It is imperative that we summon the necessary financial resources, the political will, and the individual and national wisdom to implement this policy.

The decisions we take, and the guidelines we adopt and implement, will determine, by and large, the kind of world future generations will be forced to live in and the quality of life and the standard of living they will enjoy.
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