

Family Planning: Pathway to Poverty Reduction

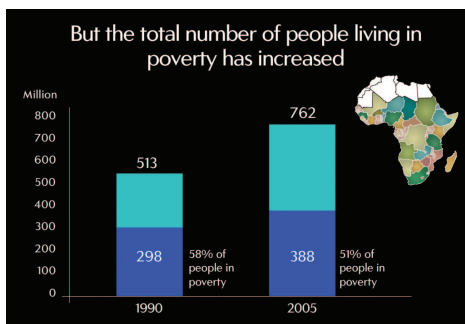


The nations of sub-Saharan Africa have seen some remarkable changes over the last few decades with improvements in health, education, and the economy.

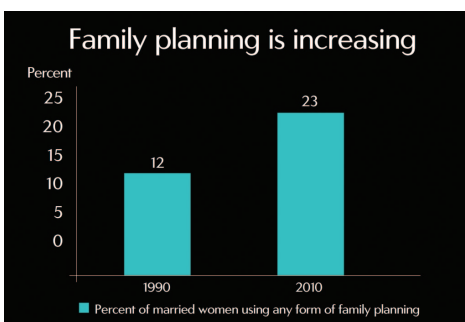


To stay on this course, UN member nations have agreed to the Millennium Development Goals, a set of global commitments designed to help countries reduce poverty and achieve their development potential.

Goal number one is to eradicate extreme poverty, and specifically, to cut in half the proportion of people whose income is less than \$1 per day.¹



Between 1990 and 2005, the proportion of people living in extreme poverty in sub-Saharan Africa dropped from 58 percent to 51 percent.² This decline is a great achievement for the continent. However, due to population growth, the total number of people living in poverty in sub-Saharan Africa has actually increased by 90 million.

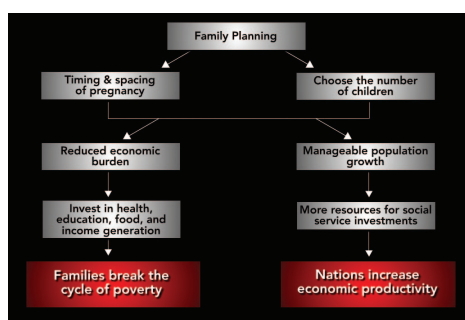


Throughout sub-Saharan Africa, there has been a substantial increase in family planning use in the last 20 years. Between 1990 and 2010, the proportion of married women using any form of family planning nearly doubled, from 12 percent to 23 percent.³



Despite this progress, sub-Saharan Africa still has the highest regional fertility rate in the world, averaging more than 5 births per woman.⁴

At the same time, 22 percent of married women in sub-Saharan Africa have an unmet need for family planning, meaning that they want to delay their next birth or not have any more children, but are not using any form of family planning.⁵



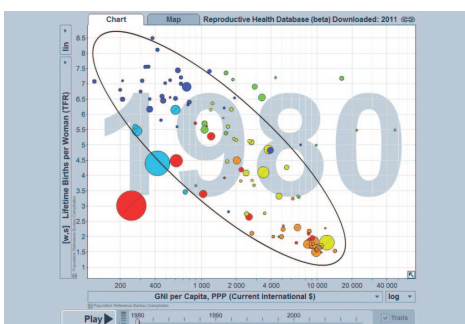
Family planning leads to poverty reduction and economic growth *both* at the family level and at the national level.⁶



Bangladesh is a unique case study because it is the only country with over 30 years of data about the economic benefits of family planning.

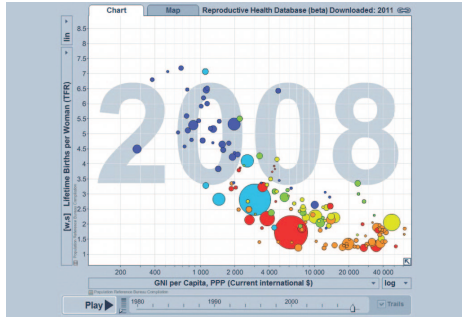
Researchers have been able to show that family planning not only helps couples to achieve their desired family size and spacing but it also directly contributes to improved economic security for families and communities.⁷

This same pattern can be observed around the world.



Looking at the Trendalyzer graph for 1980, we can see that as the average births per woman decreases, the income per person increases.

The dark blue sub-Saharan African countries are clustered toward the back of this trend—with higher levels of fertility and lower levels of income.



By 2008, all the countries of the world have moved toward that bottom, right corner. These countries have lower levels of fertility, and higher levels of income.

While the countries in sub-Saharan Africa have made a lot of progress, they are still clustered toward the back of this pack.

One of the reasons why the countries in the bottom right corner have been able to make so much economic progress is that women started having fewer children.



In today's financially strapped environment, family planning is a best buy for families, communities, and nations.⁸

The improvements to economic development and poverty reduction can be achieved in a short time, starting with families today.

Investing in family planning will help to achieve all of the Millennium Development Goals, and especially Goal Number One of reducing extreme poverty.

References

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- 3 UN, *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2010*.
- 4 Carl Haub, *2010 World Population Data Sheet* (Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau, 2010), accessed at www.prb.org/pdf10/10wpds_eng.pdf.
- 5 Guttmacher Institute and International Planned Parenthood Federation, *Facts on Satisfying the Need for Contraception in Developing Countries* (New York: Guttmacher Institute, 2010).
- 6 Academy for Educational Development, World Health Organization, Regional Office for Africa, *Repositioning Family Planning: Guidelines for Advocacy Action* (Washington, DC: USAID, 2008).
- 7 James Gribble and Maj-Lis Voss, *Family Planning and Economic Well-Being: New Evidence From Bangladesh* (Washington, DC: Population Reference Bureau, 2009), accessed at www.prb.org/pdf09/fp-econ-bangladesh.pdf.
- 8 The Disease Control Priorities Project, *Why Contraception Is a Best Buy: Family Planning Saves Lives and Spurs Development* (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2007), accessed at www.dcp2.org/file/70/DCPP-Contraception.pdf.