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## AN APPRAISAL OF THE SOCIO-LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OF POPULATION GROWTH ON THE ENVIRONMENT

**FAGBEMI SUNDAY AKINLOLU\***

### **Abstract**

*Year in year out, population has continued to be on the increase throughout the world. The rise in population is due to several factors some of which are low mortality rate, improved medical and technology apparatus, industrialization, improved economy, fall in death rates and urbanization amongst others. However, population growth has continued to take its toll on the environment and other natural resources in the planet earth. Hence, the fear now is whether, due to the population growth, the carrying capacity of the environment will be able to sustain the trend. The thrust of this paper is, therefore, to appraise the socio-legal impact of the population growth on the environment. In doing this, the paper discusses various factors that contribute to population growth and the effect of population generally on the environment. The paper concludes with few suggestions to stem the tide of population growth globally.*

### **Introduction**

At the last estimate, the world population was said to be in the vicinity of 7 billion persons.<sup>202</sup> Similarly, there was projection that in spite of the great strides taken globally in educating people around the world about family planning and birth control, the global fertility rate still hovers around 2.5 children per woman. With this rate of growth, it has been projected that by the year 2050, the world population would have risen to 11 billion and nearly 27 billion by 2100.<sup>203</sup> In a recent article written by Elizabeth Rosenthal,<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>202</sup> On April 23, 2014, the United States Census Bureau put the world's population at 7.158 people

<sup>203</sup> Aaron Rodriguez and Tucson AZ, "The Impact of Human Population Growth" The Environmental Magazine,

available at <http://business.ethics.com/2012/09/29/1443-the-impact-of-human-population-growth>, accessed on 18/4/2014 at 7.43pm. The above figure was as at 2011. However, the last estimation up to 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2012 put the world population at 7,017,846,922. See "The World Population and the Top Ten

Nigeria's population was put at 167 million people. In the said article, Nigeria was classified as the world's sixth most populous nation.<sup>205</sup> Looking at the history of population census in Nigeria, the above figure is likely to be accurate. For instance, the Nigerian population has continued to be on the increase since the first most popular census conducted between 1952/53. In those years, Nigeria's population figure was put at 30.42 million people and in 1963, the figure had risen to 55.7 million. Although, the 1963 population figure was contested in court on the account of purported gross irregularities, the Federal government accepted the figure and used same as the basis for all demographical calculation and projections in the country.

Another population census was conducted in 1973. In that year, the Nigerian population figure of 79.8 million released was out rightly rejected by the government due to the massive protest by Nigerians. In 1991, the military government under General Ibrahim Babangida conducted another population census. At the end of the exercise; Nigeria's population was put at 88,514,501. This was followed in 2006, when Nigeria's population was put at 140,431,790 people comprising 71,345,388 males and 60,086,302 females.<sup>206</sup>

The world's population follows the same pattern. For instance, the US Census Bureau recently estimated the world's population as follows: 2000 – 6084; 2010 – 6845; 2011 – 6930; and 2012 – 7018 with a projection that the world population will be around 9256 in the year 2050.<sup>207</sup>

Population growth has been on a higher increase due to many factors and also depends on the area, that is, the rural and the urban. The rural area can be seen as an area with less development while the urban area is already developed and possesses social and infrastructural amenities, advanced medical facilities and technology, increase in agricultural production and other factors that make life comfortable than the rural area.

The rapid recent increase in human population over the past three centuries has raised concerns that the carrying capacity of the environment may not be able to sustain the

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Countries with the Highest Population”, available at <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats8.htm>, accessed on 2/5/2014 at 8.07pm.

<sup>204</sup>. Helen Ovbiagele, “Nigeria's Increasing Population Problem Arising”. available at <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2012/06/nigeria-increasing-population-problems-arising/#sthash.sjrto2C5.dpuf>.

<sup>205</sup>. See also “The World Population and the Top Ten Countries with the Highest Population”. *op cit*, which listed Nigeria as the seventh populous Nation while the Republic of China is still on top of the list, followed by India.

<sup>206</sup>. See Extraordinary Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazette, No. 2, vol. 96 of 2<sup>nd</sup> February, 2009, p. B2.

<sup>207</sup>. See the Internet World Stats, available at <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats8.htm>, accessed on 2/5/2014 at

8.07pm. see also “World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision Press Release” Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat” May, 2011.



larger numbers of its inhabitants. Hence, due to the interplay between man and his environment, the growth in population has some socio-legal implications on the environment. These socio-legal implications are the focus of this paper.

The paper is divided into four sections. Following this introduction is the next section, which treats the various factors contributing to population growth. Section three considers the social-legal implications of population growth on the environment, while the last section is a conclusion on the paper.

## B. Factors Contributing to Population Growth

The word population in its simplest form, according to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary,<sup>208</sup> means 'all people who live in a particular area, city or country, the total number of people who live there'. Compare the above definition to the world; the world population is the total number of the living humans on Earth. According to Biraben,<sup>209</sup> the world population has continuously grown since the end of the Great Famine and the Black Death in 1350, when it was 370 million. Since that era, the world population has continued to increase at a steady rate and as at present, the world population as mentioned above is in the region of 7 billion people. There is no doubt that the human population has skyrocketed in recent times. 2000 years ago, the Earth was home to just 300 million humans, roughly the population of the United States today. Two hundred years ago, 1 billion humans lived on our planet Earth. The world population is now at over 6 billion and growing rapidly.<sup>210</sup>

If the current trend continues, we will add another 1 billion to the world population every 13 or 14 years. This explosive growth came about because of death rates which are falling faster than birth rates. The availability of antibiotics, immunizations, clean water, and increased food production yielded tremendous improvements in infant and child mortality.<sup>211</sup> For instance, the global total fertility rate or TFR (the number of children a woman is expected to have in her reproductive years) is 2.5.<sup>212</sup> This is much lower than in the past, but still greater than the replacement level (TFR of 2.1) which would lead to a stable population. In order to maintain a stable population size, a total fertility rate (TFR)

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<sup>208</sup> Hornby A. S. *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* Eighth Edition, Oxford University Press, p.1137.

<sup>209</sup> Jean-Noel Biraben, "An Essay Concerning Mankind's Evolution", *Population*, Selected Papers, vol. 4, 1980. Pp.1- 13

<sup>210</sup> See "World Population: Causes of Growth", <http://www.umec.org/ocp/Causes of Growth/info.htm>, date accessed 3/5/2014.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.* See also "Causes of Population Growth".

<http://sustainablenz.org/resources/problem/causes/population/growth>, date accessed 3/5/2014

<sup>212</sup> See the 'Causes of Population Growth', <http://sustainablenz.org/resources/problem/causes/population/growth>, date accessed 3/5/2014

of 2.1 is needed. This represents the total number of children an average woman will bear over her lifetime. The worldwide average TFR is 2.9. The United States has a TFR of 2.1. Even with a TFR of 2.1, the United States and similar countries will still see its population increase, as children born in previous years reach adulthood and begin having offspring.<sup>213</sup>

Only after TFR values have remained low for a generation or longer will population size level go off or decrease. Many countries have low TFR values; for example, China, with a TFR of 1.8; Thailand at 1.74; Cuba at 1.55. Spain has the lowest TFR in the world, at 1.15; Italy and Greece are also very low, each below 1.3. All of these countries will eventually see their population decline, if these trends continue. Other countries have reduced their total fertility rates, although they still have relatively high TFR values. Kenya's TFR dropped from 8.1 to 4.4 over the past 20 years. Iran's TFR fell from 6.8 to 2.8, and Bangladesh reduced its TFR from 6.4 to 3.1, both over the past 15 years. These countries have made substantial efforts to ensure widespread availability of family planning methods.<sup>214</sup>

Another major factor contributing to the population growth is that people now live longer than lower infant mortality. The causal factor for this has been attributed to advances in medicine and healthier lifestyle. Other contributing factors to population growth are government policy, advanced technology and provision of infrastructural amenities. While this calls for celebration since most people can now live to see their grandchildren and that the vast majority of children can survive through the formative years of their lives, there is a need for caution in view of the implication which large population will have on the other sustaining elements within the ecosystem.

Population growth is determined by the average annual percent change in the population resulting from a surplus (or deficit) of births over deaths and the balance of migrants entering and leaving a country. The rate may, therefore, be positive or negative. The growth rate is also a factor in determining how great a burden would be imposed on a country in term of the changing needs of its people for infrastructure resources such as: school, hospital, housing, road, food, water, electricity and jobs creation.<sup>215</sup>

Furthermore, a percent growth rate- sometime referred to as percent change, growth rate or rate of change- is a useful indicator to look at how much a population is growing or declining in a particular area. This indicator is useful when comparing the growth or decline of population in two different areas or regions. Percent growth rate can be used in

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<sup>213</sup>. "World Population: Causes of Growth", [http://www.umec.org/ocp/Causes\\_of\\_Growth/info.htm](http://www.umec.org/ocp/Causes_of_Growth/info.htm), date accessed 3/5/2014.

<sup>214</sup>. *Ibid*.

<sup>215</sup>. See "People: Population Growth Rate: Countries Compared", <http://www.nationmaster.com/country-info/stats/people-population-growth-rate>, date accessed 3/5/2014.



other studies besides population such as employment, unemployment or economic factors. Any number from one time and any number from another time can be put into the calculation to determine the growth rate of countries.<sup>216</sup> A good example is the comparative figures of the growth rate of the World's most populous countries conducted by the United Nation in 2010. At the end of the exercise, the table below shows the growth rates of these countries between 1990 and 2010:

Rank	Countries	Population 2010	Population 1990	Growth (%) 1990-2010
	World	6,895,889,000	5,306,425,000	30.0%
1	China	1,341,335,000	1,145,195,000	17.1%
2	India	1,224,614,000	873,785,000	40.2%
3	United State	310,384,000	253,339,000	22.5%
4	Indonesia	239,871,000	184,346,000	30.1%
5	Brazil	194,946,000	149,650,000	30.3%
6	Pakistan	173,593,000	111,845,000	55.3%
7	Nigeria	158,423,000	97,552,000	62.4%
8	Bangladesh	149,692,000	105,256,000	41.3%
9	Russia	142,958,000	148,244,000	-3.6%
10	Japan	128,057,000	122,251,000	-4.7%

Sources: United Nations Population Statistics 2010 Revision

From the above figures, there is no doubt that while the populations of countries like Russia and Japan are going down, the Nigerian population is on the increase. It is on this note that one can understand the reason for several problems be-devilling the country in terms of unemployment and crime rates. In addition to these social problems, Mabogunje also listed land management, natural resources and access to water supplies as other problems confronting Sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>217</sup> It is high time that Nigeria government embarked on drastic measures to reduce her population growth. Talking in the same vein, Ovbiagele has called on the Nigerian government, the media as well as NGO to start awareness campaign, especially at the grass root level to stop the tide of population growth in the country as panacea to unwanted pregnancies, death from

<sup>216</sup>. See "How to Calculate Growth Rate or Percent Change", <http://www.ehow.com/how-4532706-calculate-growth>, date accessed 3/5/2014.

<sup>217</sup>. Akin L. Mabogunje, "The Environmental Challenges in Sub-Saharan Africa", *African Technology Forum*, May 4, 1995.



abortion, abandoned babies, criminal activities, militancy, violence at home and on the street.<sup>218</sup>

### C. Socio-Legal Implication of Population Growth on the Environment

The environment is the totality of the places and surroundings in which we live, work and interact with other people in our cultural, religious, political and socio-economic activities for self-fulfilment and advancement of our communities, securities or nations. It is within this environment that both natural and man-made things are found.<sup>219</sup> The continuous existence of the environment is a condition precedent for man's presence on the earth as man depends on the environment for all his basic needs ranging from food, shelter, clothing etc. It is the natural responsibility of the environment to ensure that man lives a convenient life. Right from antiquity and with reference to biblical allusion, man has been given dominion over the environment to subdue it, rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves over the ground.<sup>220</sup> However, the numerous activities of man on the planet earth are affecting it adversely and placing much pressure on the natural resources which are the component elements of the ecosystem.

Viewed holistically, the relationship between environment and population is complex. Since the environment is the core of man's existence on the planet earth, anything that affects it must invariably affect the quality of his life.<sup>221</sup> According to Oyewo, factors like technology, population, urbanization and poverty have their implication on the environment.<sup>222</sup> The effect of population growth on the environment, therefore, is proportional to the number of the people living in it as each individual inhabitant of the environment pollutes the environment in one way or another. For instance, it has been said that human societies' impact on the environment is a function of three major inter connected elements or factors. This school of thought listed population

<sup>218</sup> Helen Ovbiagele, *op cit*.

<sup>219</sup> Akinbode, A., *Introductory Environmental Resource Management*, Daybis Limited, Ibadan, 2002, pp. 1-2, cited

by Obabori A. O. et al in "An Appraisal of the Concept of Sustainable Environment under Nigeria Law" *J Hum Ecol*, 28 (2) 135-142 (2009).

<sup>220</sup> Genesis Chapter 1 verse 28, the Holy Bible, New International Version, Bible Society of Nigeria, 18, Wharf Road, Apapa, Lagos, 2014, p.2.

<sup>221</sup> Lawrence Atsegbua, Vincent Akpotaire and Folarin Dimowo, *Environmental Law in Nigeria: Theory and Practice*, Ababa Press Ltd, Lagos, 2004, p. 66.

<sup>222</sup> Oyelowo Oyewo, "The Problem of Environment Regulation in Nigeria", in Prof. J.A. Omotola (ed.), *Environmental Law in Nigeria including Compensation*, Faculty of Law, University of Lagos, Lagos, 1990, pp. 98-111.

size, affluence or consumption and technology as these three factors.<sup>223</sup> Due to population size, we consume resources such as land, food, water, soil and services from earth ecosystems; over consumption uses up or severely depletes supplies of non-renewable resources, such as fossil fuels and depletes renewable resources such as fisheries and forest if we use them up faster than they can replenish themselves.<sup>224</sup> Lastly, due to advancement in technology, large societies as a result of their affluence consume more resources than small ones. For instance, United States population is about one-fourth as large as that of China and India, but United States currently uses far more energy because Americans are more affluent and use their wealth to buy energy-intensive goods like cars and electronics. But China and India are growing and becoming more affluent, so their environmental impacts will increase because of birth population size and consumption level. In spite of the monumental impact which population size has on the environment, some schools of thought have argued that advances in agricultural, medical and industrial technology have allowed global economic productivity to keep pace with rising population despite Malthusian prediction to the contrary<sup>225</sup> and point out that family sizes are naturally declining worldwide due to higher living standards and better economic opportunities for women.<sup>226</sup>

Regardless of the views or arguments against the impact of population growth on the environment, one glaring picture is that an unchecked human population growth is a recipe for doom of the planet earth and its inhabitants. Hence, amongst others, the following as some of the socio-legal implications of the population growth on the environment.

#### **i. Food Production and Distribution**

Food is one of the basic necessity needed for human existence of which without it, human life will become extinct. However, as the world population continues to grow geometrically, great pressure is being placed on arable land, water, energy, and biological resources to provide an adequate supply of food while maintaining the integrity of our

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<sup>223</sup> "Population Growth and the Environment Unit5; Human Population Dynamics//Section 5; Population Growth

and the Environment", <http://www.learner.org/courses/envsci/unit/text.php>, date accessed 23/4/2014

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>225</sup> Thomas Malthus in his famous book: *An Essay on the Principles of Population*, Harmondsworth Penguin Book,

1970 had predicted that the world population growth should be restrained on the ground that unrestrained rise in population will mean less resources for individual members leading to considerable reduction on the good life and wellbeing of the people in that society thus constituting an impediment to the socio-economic development of the society.

<sup>226</sup> Curtin Clara, "Fact or Fiction? Living People Outnumber the Dead", *Scientific American*, September, 2007 p.

297.



ecosystem.<sup>227</sup> According to the World Bank and the United Nations, from 1 to 2 billion humans are now malnourished, indicating a combination of insufficient food, low incomes, and inadequate distribution of food. This is the largest number of hungry humans ever recorded in history. In China, about 80 million are now malnourished and hungry. Statistics shows that one (1) out of seven (7) persons alive goes to bed hungry. Report from the 2007 UNICEF indicated that 10.9 million children under five-years-old die each year around the world, with malnutrition and other hunger-related diseases responsible for 60 percent of the tragedy.<sup>228</sup> It follows that as the world population expands, the food problem will become increasingly severe, conceivably with the numbers of the malnourished reaching 3 billion. Reports from the Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations, numerous other international organisations, and scientific research also confirm the existence of this serious food problem. According to Kendal and Pimentel,<sup>229</sup> the per capital availability of world grains, which make up 80 per cent of the world's food, has been declining for the past 15 years. Certainly with a quarter million people being added to the world population each day, the need for grains and all other food will reach unprecedented levels.<sup>230</sup>

More than 99 per cent of the world's food supply comes from the land, while less than 1 per cent is from oceans and other aquatic habitats. The continued production of an adequate food supply is directly dependent on ample fertile land, fresh water, energy, plus the maintenance of biodiversity.<sup>231</sup> As the human population grows, the requirement for these resources also grows. Even if these resources are never depleted, on a per capital basis they will decline significantly because they must be divided among more people. In the past, food was not the problem of Nigerians. However, due to continuous population growth, food supplies in the country are becoming acute due to a large scale of movement of people in the rural areas to the urban centres. Also rapid population growth has given rise to escalating food price inflation, which constitutes the greatest

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<sup>227</sup>. David Pimentel, Xuewen Huang, Ana Cordova and Marcia Pimentel, "Impact of Population Growth on Food

Supplies and Environment". Submitted for publication to *Population and Development Review*, New York, NY, USA, 1996, available at <http://dieoff.org/pages57.htm>, date accessed 18/4/2014.

<sup>228</sup>. Aaron Rodriquez, Tucson, A.Z, "The Impact of Human Population Growth", *The Environmental Magazine*,

September 29, 2012, <http://business.ethics.com/2012/09/29/1443-the-ipact-of-human-population-growth>, date accessed 18/4/2014. See also Pail R, Ehrlich and John P. Holdren, "Impact of Population Growth", *American Association for the Advancement of Science*, vol. 171, No. 3977, 1971, p. 1215, available at <http://jstor.org/stable/1731166>.

<sup>229</sup>. Kendal, H. W, and D. Pimentel, "Constraints on the expansion of the Global Food Supply" *Ambio* 23, 1994, pp.

198-205

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>231</sup>. David Pimentel, *et al*, *op cit*.

threat to the living standards of many families in Nigeria, most of whom spend some 60 percent of their earnings on food and merely exist on survival food budgets.<sup>232</sup> According to Agbodike, one out of every four children, under the age of three, is suffering from stunted growth due to the escalating costs of food.<sup>233</sup> Hence to curb the problem of food supply in Nigeria, he had rightly suggested the need to revolutionise and modernise our system of agricultural production to ensure adequate food supply for the teeming populations of Nigerians.

## ii. Water Shortage

Water is essential to human existence; humans and animals as well as crops need water to exist. Water is critical for all crops which require and transpire massive amounts of water during the growing season.<sup>234</sup> According to Pimentel et al, a hectare of corn will transpire more than 5 million litres of water during the growing season. This means that more than 8 million litres of water per hectare must reach the crop. In total, agricultural production consumes more fresh water than any other human activity. Specifically, about 87 per cent of the world's fresh water is consumed or used up by agriculture and, thus, is not recoverable.<sup>235</sup>

Apart from agricultural need, water is also required by man to sustain all the living organisms such as human beings and animals. However, about one billion people lack access to sufficient and clean water for consumption and for other basic domestic uses. Also in the words of Pimentel et al, competition for water resources among individuals, regions, and countries and associated human activities is already occurring with the current world population. According to them, 40 percent of the world's people live in regions that directly compete for shared water resources. Worldwide, water shortages are reflected in per capital decline in irrigation used for food production in all regions of the world during the past twenty years. Water resources, critical for irrigation, are under great stress as populous cities, states, and countries require and withdraw more water from rivers, lakes and aquifers every year.

Water shortage has also contributed greatly to diseases and health problems. Associated with this are diseases such as cholera, tuberculosis, nutrients, malaria, diarrhea, waterborne diseases and other serious diseases. Most of these diseases are more common in the developing countries than the developed ones due to opportunity for medical and technology advancement. For instance, in 2009, the World Health Organisation and UNICEF study found that some 24,000 children in developing countries

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<sup>232</sup>. Cornelius C. Agbodike, *op cit.*

<sup>233</sup>. *Ibid.*

<sup>234</sup>. David Pimentel, *op cit.*

<sup>235</sup>. Pimentel D, et al, "Environmental and Economic costs of Soil Erosion and Conservation Benefits" *Science* 267, 1996, pp. 1117-1123.



were dying each day from preventable causes like diarrhea resulting from lack of access to clean water for drinking and sanitation.<sup>236</sup> Furthermore, it has been estimated that, even 70 to 80 per cent of the developing countries' hospital beds are occupied by patients with waterborne diseases.<sup>237</sup>

### iii. Environmental Pollution and Degradation

Since the beginning of time, human activities have continuously revolved around environment whether considered scientifically or technologically, and the experiences and endeavours of man dwell with his inseparable and unceasing interaction with the environment.<sup>238</sup> According to Obabori, one of the consequences of the population growth is environmental degradation. A plethora of effects of man's activities on the environment do exist and this is made even worse as a result of a steady increase in human population which aggravates the rate and manner in which the environment is degraded through several acts of pollutions. According to Amokaye,<sup>239</sup> Africa's population continues to witness explosion. With an average population growth rate of 2.8% per annum, Nigeria's population is projected to reach about 23.4 million by the year 2025. The effect of such rapid population growth rate against the limited resources and crude technology is the imposition of additional strain on the infrastructure and increased environmental degradation.<sup>240</sup>

As a result of man's numerous acts and omissions that have resulted in total degradation of the environment through various acts of pollution, mankind became faced with the sad reality that the current rate of exploitation of the earth might lead to a very bleak or even non-existent future for the earth and its inhabitants as man required the presence of the environment to guarantee his existence. The control and regulation of the use of the environment by all countries and individuals became an essential necessity. Both developed and developing countries, rich and poor alike, educated and non-educated saw the need to protect the environment and reduce various acts of environmental degradation and pollution.<sup>241</sup>

Even the industrialised countries, with higher standards of living and greater numbers of cars, produce far more air pollution and greenhouse gases than developing countries; they can reduce environmental hazards by using technology such as

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<sup>236</sup> . Aaron Rodriquez, *et al op cit*.

<sup>237</sup> World Health Organisation.

<sup>238</sup> . Obabori A. O., *et al, op cit*

<sup>239</sup> . Amokaye Oludayo G., *Environmental Law and Practice in Nigeria*, University of Lagos Press, Akoka, Lagos

2004, pp.148-149.

<sup>240</sup> . *Ibid*.

<sup>241</sup> . See generally "Environmental Impact from Unsustainable Population Growth". Available at <http://www.overpopulation.org/impact.html>,

smokestack scrubbers, emission systems and waste water treatment plants. Developing countries do not have this new technology or the capacity to do so. For these reasons, environmental problems occur more in developing countries as a result of population growth.<sup>242</sup>

#### iv. Social Implications

Socially, rapid population growth has serious implications on education, crime rate and unemployment. In term of education, Coombs has observed that 'population explosion acted as a quantitative multiplier on the social demand for education.'<sup>243</sup> The Government of Nigeria, according to Agbodike, has stressed the issue of using education as an instrument, per excellence, to effect the socio-economic growth of the country and thereby ensuring faster development in the nation. The steady rise was, to a large extent, due to the progressively increasing growth rate of the population of the country. However, the consequence of that state of affairs can be found in rising costs of school buildings, classrooms, equipment, laboratories, books and other teaching materials which in turn have adverse effect on the economy of the country.<sup>244</sup>

The logical outcome of the above situation is that our educational system turns out low quality products and the standard of education in most of our institutions has fallen. This development, coupled with the high unemployment rate in the country, especially among school leavers, has made education unattractive, uninspiring and rather un-rewarding due to unavailability of job.<sup>245</sup> For instance, Ovbiagele rightly observed that with almost a hundred universities in the country, graduates are poured into the streets every year to chase job that is not just available.<sup>246</sup>

A fall-out from the above precarious situation is the increase in crime rates in the country. There is no doubt that criminal activities can create a sense of insecurity to people. For instance, due to the rapid population growth coupled with massive unemployment, violent crime is very high in Nigeria today and in the words of Ovbiagele, we all are at the receiving end of this nightmare as increased violence/criminal activities are robbing us of peace. Due to the bulging population, many parents on the lower social level, often in overcrowded accommodation and unemployed, are no longer able to care for their children, nor control them and raise them to become

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<sup>242</sup> World Resources Institute (1997). World Resources (1996-97) a guide to the global environments the urban environment. New York and Oxford University Press.

<sup>243</sup> Coombs, P. H, The World Education Crisis – A Systems Analysis', 1996, p. 20, cited by Cornelius C. Agbodikeop *cit*.

<sup>244</sup> See generally Cornelius C. Agbodikeop *cit*.

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>246</sup> Helen Ovbiagele, *op cit*.



law-abiding citizens. These ones become law unto themselves, and some have become a terror to their own families.<sup>247</sup>

The atmosphere of insecurity has become worrisome, as armed robbers, arsonists, murderers, rapists, kidnappers and other criminals have continued unabatedly to operate in Nigeria under the labels of Boko-Haram, Kidnappers, Ritualists and Gun-men. Recent examples of these are Yanyan, Abuja, Motor Park bomb blast and Chibok School girls' abduction incidents in Borno State on April 14, 2014. The situation has reached a frightening dimension to the extent that we no longer feel safe in both on the streets and at our homes. All these criminal activities have root in unchecked population growth in Nigeria.

Again, due to population growth, a large percentage of people live in housing units that are in poor condition. These houses are often made of temporary materials, which do not provide proper protection against temperature changes, wind or rain. For instance, Ms Rosenthal's article "Nigeria Tested by Rapid Rise in Population" painted the gory state of living conditions of Lagosians in Nigeria. According to Ovbiagele; some pictures in the article showed how 'whole families squeeze into 7 by 11 feet rooms along narrow corridor. Up to 50 people share a kitchen, toilet and sink, though the pipes in the neighbourhood often no longer carry water. In Ketu, a newborn boy is attended to by the light of cellphones, the power having gone out, at Alapere, primary school more than 100 students cram into most classrooms two to a desk'.<sup>248</sup>

Another example of social implication of population growth is poverty. Poverty is common in developing countries as well as middle-income countries. In Thailand, which is a middle-income country, about 16 percent of people are qualified as poor. This means that their income level is below 900 baht in month (23 euros). With this amount even in Thailand, it is impossible to have proper housing, food, potable water or social security.

The percentage of poor people is growing in many countries. Due to low income, the main goal for the people is to get their daily meal, water and accommodation. For these people, the environmental problems are not in the front line. Because the basic level of life will be in a bearable state, improvements in environmental conditions are impossible. At least, the proper co-operation is not possible.

#### v. Urbanisation

One of the key effects of population growth is urbanization. Urbanization is the movement of people from one place, mostly from rural areas to the cities or movement of people from where there are less economic opportunities such as good houses, road, employment and other benefits to where people perceive they can have ready access to these social amenities. Another causal factor of urbanization is availability of industries. Other factors contributing to rural to urban movement include inadequate infrastructure

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<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*

in most rural areas, shortages of required resources such as economic opportunity, government policies and social security. For instance, in Sub-Saharan Africa, the least but the most rapidly urbanizing part of the world, nearly one third (32 percent) of the population live in few large cities and major economic activities including industry, manufacturing, commercial and employment are concentrated in cities such as Accra (Ghana), Lagos (Nigeria), Moronvia (Liberia), Nairobi (Kenya) etc. Due to the above, some of our cities today are over populated due to mass movement from rural areas to cities.

Available data globally showed that in 1800 only 3% of the world population lived in cities. By the 20th century's close, 47% did so. In 1950, there were 83 cities with populations exceeding one million; but by 2007, this had risen to 468 agglomerations of more than one million.<sup>249</sup> If this trend continues, the world's urban populations will double every 38 years. For instance, The UN forecasts that today's urban population of 3.2 billion will rise to nearly 5 billion by 2030, when three out of five people will live in cities.<sup>250</sup>

The increase will be most dramatic in the poorest and least-urbanised continents like Asia and Africa. Also projections indicate that most urban growth over the next 25 years will be in developing countries.<sup>251</sup> According to David,<sup>252</sup> one billion people, one-seventh of the world's population, or one-third of urban population, now live in shanty towns, which are seen as "breeding grounds" for social problems such as crime, drug abuse, alcoholism, poverty, unemployment and other forms of social problems. In many poor countries, due to population growth, slums exhibit high rates of disease due to unsanitary conditions, malnutrition, and lack of basic health care.<sup>253</sup>

In 2000, there were 18 megacities conurbation such as Tokyo, Seoul, Mexico City, Mumbai, São Paulo and New York City – that have populations in excess of 10 million inhabitants. Greater Tokyo already has 35 million, more than the entire population of Canada (at 34.1 million).<sup>254</sup>

By 2025, according to the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Asia alone will have at least 10 hypercities, those with more than 19 million, including Jakarta (24.9 million people), Dhaka (25 million), Karachi (26.5 million), Shanghai (27 million) and Mumbia (33 million).<sup>255</sup> Lagos has grown from 300,000 in 1950 to an estimated 15 million today, and

<sup>249</sup>. "Principal Agglomerations of the World" citypopulation.de

<sup>250</sup>. Lewis Mark, "Megacities of the Future" Forbes, 2007.

<sup>251</sup>. "Nigeria: Lagos, the Megacity of Slums" 2006, Energypublisher.com.

<sup>252</sup>. Whitehouse David, "Half of Humanity set to go Urban" BBC News 2005

<sup>253</sup>. "Planet of Slums-The World Megacities" Blackcommentator.com. See further "Environmental Impacts from

Unsustainable Population Growth", *op cit* note 311.

<sup>254</sup>. "The World goes to Town". The Economists, 3 May, 2007.

<sup>255</sup>. Mike Davis, "Planet of Slums", Atimes.com



the Nigerian government estimates that city will have expanded to 25 million residents by 2015.<sup>256</sup> Chinese experts forecast that Chinese cities will contain 800 million people by 2020.<sup>257</sup>

#### D. Conclusion

In Africa, according to Ovbiagele,<sup>258</sup> we do love having children whether we have the means to love and look after them well or not. It is a status symbol. Apart from status symbol, high population is also used by government for demographic calculation and projection such as distribution of the nation's wealth, build schools, construction of road; provision of hospital and housing units, electricity and creation of jobs among others. Population figure is also useful for election results and political power. However, viewed holistically, the disadvantages of unchecked population growth far outweigh the advantages, hence there is need for caution and pragmatic steps taken to stem the tide to avoid some of the socio-legal impacts discussed in this paper.

Of course, in the past, several mitigation measures have been applied to reduce population growth. For instance, in the history of man, apart from natural calamities like earthquake, violence, genocide, pestilence, diseases, epidemics, tornadoes, famine, nasty weather and causes like war and other calamities, the most effective measures have always been family planning and birth control through the use of contraceptive to stop the tide of population growth. For instance, in China, the government put in place policies on the number of children allowed to a couple. In India, the government introduced sterilisation programme between 1975 and 1977. Under this programme, men with two children or more are forced to submit to sterilisation. However, due to criticism of the system, the policy was changed by the Indian government.

In Nigeria, during the military government of General Ibrahim Babangida, the federal government introduced the policy of four children per one woman. All the above policies are still relevant today and they should continue to be used to checkmate population growth. This call is very important in Sub-Saharan African countries where per capital income per day of average people is less than one dollar.

Also in the past, it was an abomination to see condom in the hand of people. However, with the increase in several awareness programmes being propagated by government, NGO and agencies, the social stigma attached to the use of condom is reducing drastically. Hence, the champagne on the use of condom attached to the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases like syphilis, gonorrhoea and more deadly diseases like AID/HIV should be shifted to its use as contraceptive for the purpose of controlling population growth in view of its damaging implication on the environment

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<sup>256</sup> USA, "Lagos-Nigeria Facts" National Geographic.

<sup>257</sup> "China's Urban Population to reach 800 to 900 million by 2020: Expert". People's Daily, 2004, english@people.com.

<sup>258</sup> Helen Ovbiagele *op cit*.

and other natural resources that sustain man. Finally, the Nigerian government should also encourage more women to take up paid or white collar jobs as done in Egypt to curb population growth.

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