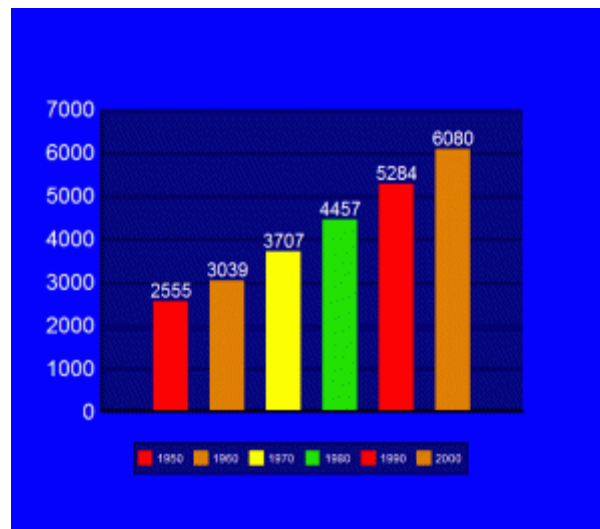


POPULATION GROWTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION



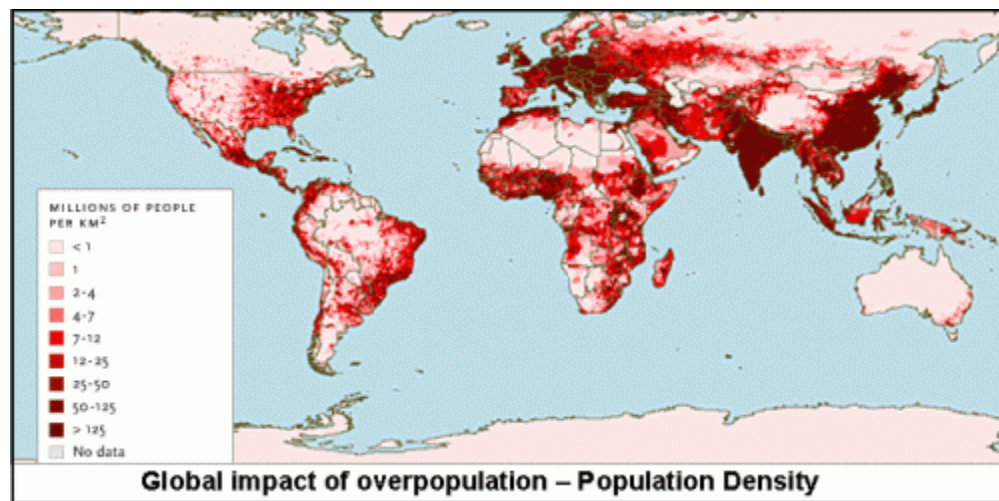
Population is an important source of development, yet it is a major source of environmental degradation when it exceeds the threshold limits of the support systems. Unless the relationship between the multiplying population and the life support system can be stabilized, development programs, howsoever, innovative are not likely to yield desired results. Population impacts on the environment primarily through the use of natural resources and production of wastes and is associated with environmental stresses like loss of biodiversity, air and water pollution and increased pressure on arable land. Human population issues are extremely important when it comes to our way of life and our future on this planet.

Poverty is said to be both cause and effect of environmental degradation. The circular link between poverty and environment is an extremely complex phenomenon. Inequality may foster unsustainability because the poor, who rely on natural resources more than the rich, deplete natural resources faster as they have no real prospects of gaining access to other types of resources. Moreover, degraded environment can accelerate the process of impoverishment, again because the poor depend directly on natural assets.

Lack of opportunities for gainful employment in villages and the ecological stresses is leading to an ever-increasing movement of poor families to towns. Mega cities are emerging and urban slums are expanding. Such rapid and unplanned expansion of cities has resulted in degradation of urban environment. It has widened the gap between demand and supply of infrastructural services such as energy, housing, transport, communication, education, water supply and sewerage and recreational amenities, thus depleting the precious environmental resource base of the cities. The result is the

growing trend in deterioration of air and water quality, generation of wastes, the proliferation of slums and undesirable land use changes, all of which contribute to urban poverty.

Direct impacts of agricultural development on the environment arise from farming activities which contribute to soil erosion, land salination and loss of nutrients. The spread of green revolution has been accompanied by over exploitation of land and water resources, and use of fertilizers and pesticides have increased many fold. Shifting cultivation has also been an important cause of land degradation. Leaching from extensive use of pesticides and fertilizers is an important source of contamination of water bodies. Intensive agriculture and irrigation contribute to land degradation particularly salination, alkalinization and water logging.



Environmental degradation is a result of the dynamic inter-play of socio-economic, institutional and technological activities. Environmental changes may be driven by many factors including economic growth, population growth, urbanization, intensification of agriculture, rising energy use and transportation. Poverty, still remains a problem at the root of several environmental problems.

It would not be exaggerated if stated that the major international wars to be fought in the future will continue to be over natural resources. Power conflicts and self-interest will perhaps mean that, there will be gross violation of basic rights and death or misery for millions of innocent people. Throughout history, most wars have had trade and resources at their core, fueled by imperialistic motives. In future as well, perhaps this pattern is likely to continue, as resources get depleted, distributed unequally and wasted in these wars (hot and cold), additional conflicts and contention will arise through access to even more limited resources. We see numerous causes of poverty, and many are found in unfair economic and trade agreements from wealthier nations and institutions. While it might be an over-simplification to say the poor are victims, a lot of poverty, if not the majority is caused by factors which the poor themselves often have no control or choice over.

Human population issues are extremely important. Elements affecting population have been identified, and now it is up to the governments of developing countries to guide their people through the demographic transition as quickly and painlessly as possible. It is crucial that we assist and monitor these countries in order to further educate ourselves and preserve both us and our planet. Religion, women's rights, male pride, societal status, and birth control are some of the major social variables that affect human populations, especially in developing countries.

As stated above, a growing population poses some serious environmental threats. More people means less forest, water, soil, and other natural resources, but more waste, pollution, and greenhouse gases. This suggests that climate change may be sped up by population growth if we don't do something soon. Alternative resources, conservation, improved environmental technology, and better education about global warming can ease our impact on the earth and serve as a new frontier for our future generations. We now know so much about human population that it seems as if we can easily control it. In the end, though, the prospect of the human race is up to the people, not the government. We will decide how far we are willing to go to preserve our earth for its future inhabitants. If we make population a priority, and assist countries in need of help, then we should be able to guide ourselves toward a stable level of development and growth.

Source : <http://saferenvironment.wordpress.com/2008/08/16/population-growth-and-environmental-degradation/>