



state of world population 2011



People and possibilities
in a world
of 7 billion

The State of World Population 2011

This report was produced by the Information and External Relations Division of UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund.

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*Geography class, Eduardo Mondlane University,
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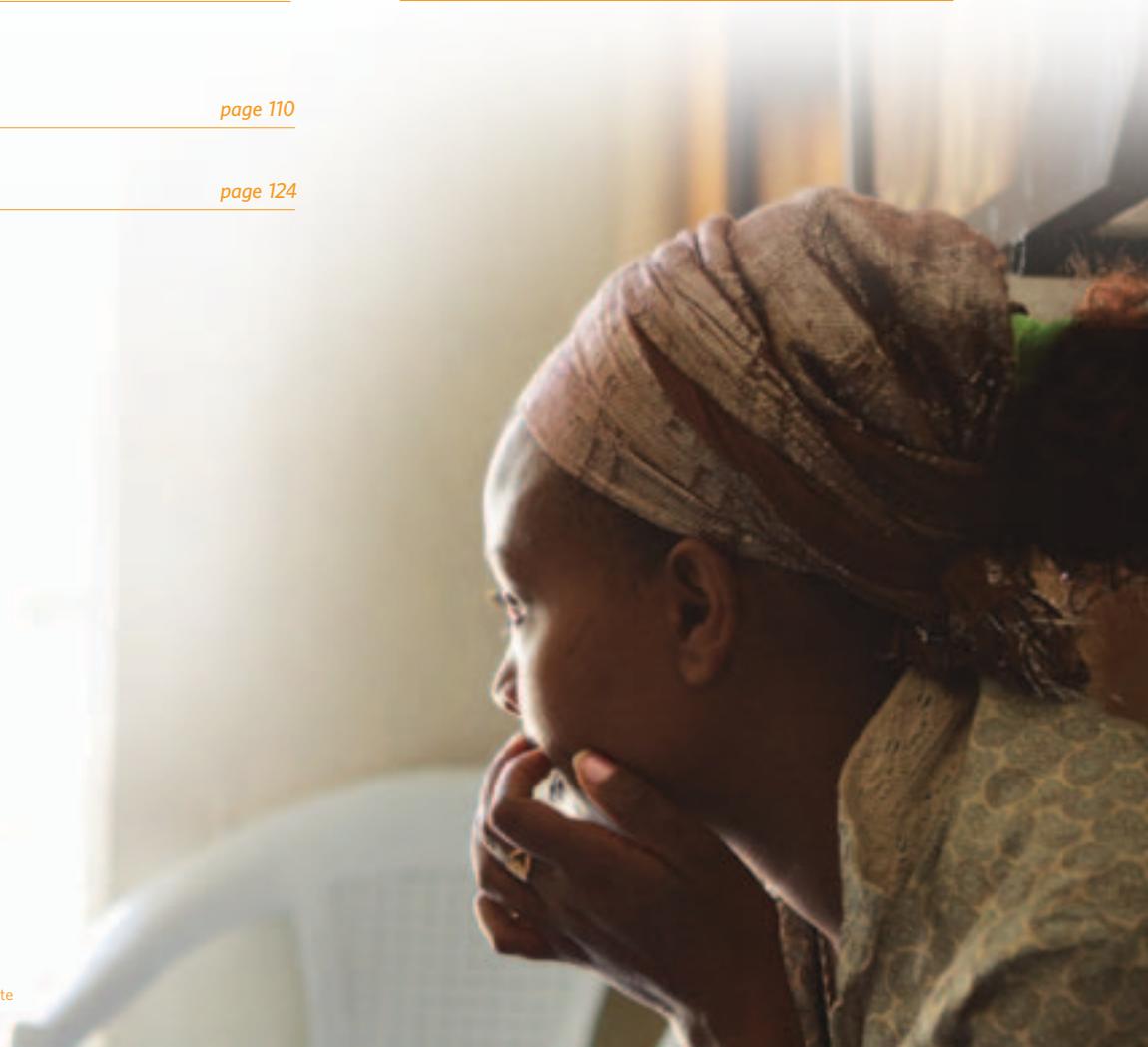
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Foreword

Seven billion people will inhabit the earth on 31 October. During my lifetime, I have seen world population nearly triple. And 13 years from now, I will see another billion added to our numbers. In my grandchildren's lifetimes, there could be as many as 10 billion people in our world.

How did we become so many? How large a number can our Earth sustain?

These are important questions, but perhaps not the right ones for our times. When we look only at the big number, we risk being overwhelmed and losing sight of new opportunities to make life better for everyone in the future.

So instead of asking questions like, "Are we too many?" we should instead be asking, "What can I do to make our world better?" or, "What can we do to transform our growing cities into forces for sustainability?" We should also ask ourselves what each of us can do to empower the elderly so they can play a more active role in their communities. What can we do to unleash the creativity and potential of the largest youth cohort humanity has ever seen? And what can we do to remove barriers to equality between women and men so that everyone has the full power to make their own decisions and realize their full potential?

The State of World Population 2011 looks at the trends—the dynamics—that are defining our world of 7 billion and shows what people in vastly different countries and circumstances are doing in their own

communities to make the most of our world of 7 billion.

Some of the trends are remarkable: Today, there are 893 million people over the age of 60 worldwide. By the middle of this century that number will rise to 2.4 billion. About one in two people lives in a city, and in only about 35 years, two out of three will. People under the age of 25 already make up 43 per cent of the world's population, reaching as much as 60 per cent in some countries.

This report provides a snapshot of how China, Egypt, Ethiopia, Finland, India, Mexico, Mozambique, Nigeria, and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia are facing diverse demographic challenges, ranging from ageing populations to high fertility rates, and from urbanization to the emergence of new generations of young people. Some of these countries are coping with high fertility rates and others are facing rates so low that governments are already looking for ways to increase population size. Some countries with labour shortages are looking to migrants to fill jobs, while others are relying on the remittances sent back home by citizens working overseas to buoy their economies. And while some countries are attracting more people to emerging mega-cities



◀ UNFPA Executive Director Babatunde Osotimehin.

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where jobs are plentiful and the cost of living is high, others are seeing waves of migration from city centres to peri-urban areas where the cost of living may be lower but basic services and jobs may be in short supply.

This report makes the case that with planning and the right investments in people now—to empower them to make choices that are not only good for themselves but for our global commons—our world of 7 billion can have thriving, sustainable cities, productive labour forces that can fuel economic growth, youth populations that contribute to the well-being of economies and societies, and a generation of older people who are healthy and actively engaged in the social and economic affairs of their communities.

In many parts of the developing world, where population growth is outpacing economic growth, the need for reproductive health services, especially family planning, remains great. The attainment of a stable population is a sine qua non for accelerated, planned economic growth and development. Governments that are serious about eradicating poverty should also be serious about providing the services, supplies, information that women need to exercise their reproductive rights.

Our record population size can be viewed in many ways as a success for humanity: People are living longer, healthier lives. But not everyone has benefited from this achievement or the higher quality of life that this implies. Great disparities exist between and within countries. Disparities in rights and opportunities also exist between men and women, girls and boys. Charting a path now to development that promotes equality, rather than exacerbates or reinforces inequalities, is more important than ever.

We all have a stake in the future of humanity. Every individual, every government, every business, is more interconnected and interdependent than ever, so what each of us does now will matter to all of us long into the future. Together we can change and improve the world.

**We are 7 billion people with
7 billion possibilities.**

Babatunde Osotimehin
Executive Director, UNFPA



A closer look at our world of 7 billion

The milestone of 7 billion is marked by achievements, setbacks and paradoxes. While women are on average having fewer children than they were in the 1960s, our numbers continue to rise. Globally, people are younger—and older—than ever before. In some of the poorest countries, high fertility rates hamper development and perpetuate poverty, while in some of the richest countries, low fertility rates and too few people entering the job market are raising concerns

about prospects for sustained economic growth and about the viability of social security systems. While labour shortages threaten to stymie the economies of some industrialized countries, unemployed would-be migrants in developing countries are finding more and more national borders closed to them and the expertise they may have to offer. And while progress is being made in reducing extreme poverty, gaps between rich and poor are widening almost everywhere.

The *State of World Population 2011* explores some of these paradoxes from the perspective of individuals and describes the obstacles they confront—and overcome—in trying to build better lives for themselves, their families, communities and nations.

Through personal stories, this report sheds light on the real-life challenges we face in our world of 7 billion. It is mainly a report from the field, from nine countries where the

ordinary people who live there, the national experts who study demographic trends and the policymakers who must make decisions based on local conditions talk directly about their lives and work: China, Egypt, Ethiopia, Finland, India, Mexico, Mozambique, Nigeria and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Together, the people profiled from these countries form a collage of the diverse human experiences, aspirations and priorities that illustrate the diversity in our world population and the trends behind it.

In conversations with people living and working in these countries, it does not take long to discover that no population issue is now seen as unconnected to others. The lives of ageing citizens, for example, are universally bound up with trends among youth. In many developed and developing countries, younger job-seekers are migrating from rural areas to cities or to other countries where employment prospects are better, often leaving older

family members behind, sometimes without the support they need to carry out their daily lives. In some of the richer countries, smaller numbers of young people mean uncertainty about who will care for the old in future years and pay for the benefits seniors enjoy.

Each of the countries featured in the report is seeing in their specific population trends, such as urbanization, longer life expectancies and rapidly expanding working-age populations, not only big challenges but also enormous opportunities to seize these moments and turn them into good news.

These trends are sometimes obscured in discussions about population size, yet it is only when scrutinizing them that many of the immediate challenges and opportunities become apparent.

China's Shaanxi province, for example, is looking for ways to shelter and support growing numbers of older people. In a mega-city such as Lagos, Nigeria, planners are trying to redevelop neighbourhoods and create more cohesive, manageable and livable communities. In Mexico City, people-friendly parks, roadside green spaces and more public transportation

YEARS WHEN WORLD POPULATION REACHED INCREMENTS OF 1 BILLION



The rapid growth of the world population is a recent phenomenon. About 2,000 years ago, the population of the world was about 300 million. It took more than 1,600 years for the world population to double to 600 million. The rapid growth of the world population started in 1950, with reductions in mortality in the less developed regions, resulting in an estimated population of 6.1 billion in the year 2000, nearly two-and-a-half times the population in 1950. With the declines in fertility in most of the world, the global growth rate of population has been decreasing since its peak of 2.0 per cent in 1965-1970.

Source: Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

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