



India suffers from the problem of overpopulation. Although the fertility rate (average number of children born per woman during her lifetime) in India has been declining, it has not reached replacement rate yet. The replacement rate is defined as the total fertility rate at which newborn girls would have an average of exactly one daughter over their lifetimes. In more familiar terms, women have just enough babies to replace themselves. Factoring in infant mortality, the replacement rate is approximately 2.1 in most industrialized nations and about 2.5 in developing nations (due to higher mortality). Discounting immigration and population momentum effects, a nation that crosses below the replacement rate is on the path to population stabilization and, eventually, population reduction.

Death rates are declining because of improvements in sanitation and healthcare. At the same time, women have a large number of children as there is a high level of infant

mortality historically.

Low female literacy levels and the lack of widespread availability of birth-control methods is hampering the use of contraception in India.

Awareness of contraception is near-universal among married women in India. However, the vast majority of married Indians (76% in a 2009 study) reported significant problems in accessing a choice of contraceptive methods.

The fact is that there are different reasons for high birth rates; religious reasons, ignorance, attempts to ensure reproductive success, and attempts to create a family labor pool (using children for income/economic benefit).

In the early 1970s, Indira Gandhi, Prime Minister of India, had implemented a forced sterilization program, but failed. Officially, men with two children or more had to submit to sterilization, but many unmarried young men, political opponents and ignorant, poor men were also believed to have been sterilized. This program is still remembered and criticized in India, and is blamed for creating a public aversion to family planning, which hampered Government programs for decades.

The lifestyle (including overall affluence and resource utilization) and the pollution (including carbon footprint) are equally important. Some problems associated with or exacerbated by human overpopulation and over-consumption are:

- Inadequate fresh water for drinking as well as sewage treatment and effluent discharge.
- Unhygienic living conditions for many based upon water resource depletion, discharge of raw sewage and solid waste disposal.
- Depletion of natural resources, especially fossil fuels.
- Increased levels of air pollution, water pollution, soil contamination and noise pollution.
- Deforestation and loss of ecosystems.
- Mass species extinctions from reduced habitat in tropical forests due to slash-and-burn techniques that sometimes are practiced by shifting cultivators, especially in countries with rapidly expanding rural populations.
- Loss of arable land and increase in desertification.
- Increased chance of the emergence of new epidemics and pandemics. For many environmental and social reasons, including overcrowded living conditions, malnutrition and inadequate, inaccessible, or non-existent health care, the poor are more likely to be exposed to infectious diseases.
- Starvation, malnutrition or poor diet with ill health and diet-deficiency diseases.
- Elevated crime rate due to drug cartels and increased theft by people stealing resources to survive.