

PROMOTION OF HUMAN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN CHINA

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Summary

China had about 20 million births annually in the 1990s. The government regards family planning as the core of promoting human sustainable development. Family planning is contributing to the advancement of Chinese people and contributing to alleviation of global resource consumption. The development of China's rural economy has accelerated and an overall improvement has been seen in the social development of rural areas. The China's State Family Planning Commission estimates that by the end of 1998, 380 million births were averted in China over the past 20 years as a result of implementation of the well organized family planning program. China's family planning has not only enabled people to have fewer children but has also promoted social progress. People can now acquire more knowledge and methods regarding family planning. Many Chinese farmers affectionately regard family planning technicians as their doctors. As China embarks on a historic transition from a planned economy to a market economy, it faces fresh challenges to its family planning program. Actions have been taken to integrate the family planning program with institutional and social control. Women and men often communicate about issues surrounding family planning and reproductive health. Premarital sex and cohabitation are not common in China, even under the existence of almost free family planning services. Working in family planning gives people a chance to attend social meetings and other community activities. People

of different ages have different thinking regarding family planning. The impoverished population in China refers to the near-destitute people who are short of food and clothes. In 1978, the impoverished population was mostly in rural China, being about 250 million and accounting for 32% of the total rural population. The essential characteristic of the poverty-stricken areas in China is inadequate development. Controlling the population quantity and at the same time improving the population quality are of great strategic significance. To improve population quality in poverty-stricken areas is very pressing in China. With China's rapid economic development, the government has made greater efforts to help the impoverished population shake off poverty. In 1992, China instituted the National Poverty Alleviation Program. From wide social practice, the government proclaimed the important law of sports in China. In 1949, China established the State Sports Council, and in 1952 the State Athletic Sports Commission. Today, activities of mass sports are very popular in China. For a hundred years, enlightened intellectuals in China have speculated visions and hopes for China practicing democracy and improving science. China has achieved great development in science and technology, greatly contributing to promotion of human sustainable development. Pluralistic politics and multiparty system are forbidden in China. In 1999, China issued more than 150 important laws. Before 1978, the legal system in China was almost absent. The development of a constitutional democracy in China is a progressive process. In 1999, China had 77 million workers employed in private enterprises, this number accounting for about 20% of total workers in China. The marriage pattern in different birth cohorts by sex has changed in China. Divorce rate in China is not high. Using contraception to control birth often starts after the first birth. It seems that further increase in the rate of contraception in China will not be not easy. The annual cumulative rate of contraception for currently married women of reproductive age is available. Because of consecutive annual reduction in the number of women in contraception, China's rate of contraception in 1985 and 1986 were slightly smaller than that of 1984. The total fertility rate of China from 6.0 children per woman in the 1970s declined to 2.5 children per woman in the 1980s. This increase in rate of contraception use indicates the importance of the preventive measures of contraception in China's successful population control. The number of induced abortions in China is very high. China's family planning program relies heavily on the IUD.

1. Population and New Conditions of Development

In January 2000, China's total population had nearly reached 1.3 billion. With this huge population, both natural resources and living standards are very important in China. China's land area is equivalent to either the United States or Canada, but China's population is 4.6 and 42 times as large as the population of these two countries respectively. According to population projections by low fertility level, China had about 20 million births annually in the 1990s. Both Romania and Venezuela have total populations of approximately this size. China's annual net increase in population size is about 15 million, i.e. approximately the total population of either The Netherlands or Mozambique. In 1994, the population of the developed world, including fifty countries in Europe, North America, Australia, New Zealand, Japan and the former Soviet Union, was 1.16 billion which was approximately the population of China in 1993. However, the average annual per capita GNP of these countries is US\$16 610, forty four times that of China in 1993, at US\$380. Thus the developed world is in stark contrast to China—a

developing country with a relatively low level of per capita income. The total consumption of China's 1.3 billion population is, however, enormous.

China participated in the International Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994. The Chinese government has given its full commitment to the Rio Declaration and Global Agenda 21 as well as the ICPD Program of Action. These agreements set international goals and standards for population, reproductive health and environmental protection in the context of sustainable development. After the Rio meeting, China was the first country to adopt its own national Agenda 21. While setting population goals as part of sustainable development, this identifies the education of girls and women as key steps to achieving a sustainable population situation. Agenda 21 set the goal of eliminating illiteracy among young and middle-aged women by the year 2000. It calls on men to share more family responsibilities, particularly family planning. The Chinese government regards family planning as the core of promoting human sustainable development. Family planning is contributing to the advancement of Chinese people and reduction of resource consumption worldwide.

The 1990s was a preparatory decade for the Chinese population and family planning policies for the twenty-first century. China's national family planning program between 1995 and 2000 carried a clear message of preparation for a new century. The program has been called an intermediary step, continuing China's commitment to control population growth while introducing an emphasis on servicing clients' needs and enabling the public to make informed and responsible decisions about reproduction. The principles and strategies of the program are to seek and balance concern over societal need to limit population size and growth with the public need to participate in decision making on their own reproduction. The program specifies that work units for health and family planning at the county and township levels should be well equipped and provided with competent staff. Governmental workers and the masses need to know their rights and responsibilities under the regulations and practices of family planning. The program represents the first stage in this transition from an administrative approach to a service approach for the policy of population control, in order to create the conditions for a sustainable population and a voluntary family planning program. The program paves the path for creating a legal basis for preventing abuses by local officials. Administrative functionaries need to enforce regulations and laws properly so as "to protect the legitimate rights and interests of the people".

China often introduces change by initially experimenting in one area and then expanding to other areas. Economic reform in the early 1980s was tested first in the "Special Economic Zones" and then replicated elsewhere. The State Family Planning Commission is testing models of expanded reproductive choice and care as well as a quality system of information, education and communication in several sets of counties in the hope that the lessons and successes from these experiments can be tried and generalized elsewhere.

New approaches meet new conditions in China. China's opening and adoption of market economy mechanisms produced double-digit economic growth rates in the 1990s and substantial material improvements in the lives of rural and urban people. For

the majority of Chinese people, meeting the basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing is no longer the principal concern. Chinese people, like their counterparts elsewhere, are increasingly interested in improving the quality of their lives, and in improved quality of service. Economic growth has been uneven, occurring more rapidly in big cities and in coastal areas where education levels and the status of women is higher. It is in these areas that the development of small family norms has been prevalent. Pockets of poverty, however, exist in every province, particularly in the western part of the country where fertility levels remain above average. Economic reforms, while increasing individual and household income generally, have weakened the traditional and collective systems of financing reproductive health services. Local government often faces a financial crisis where both the family planning and the basic health networks at the grassroots are under-funded and under-staffed. Qualified personnel leave the service in search of higher earnings elsewhere. It is necessary to devise a new system that has solid financial support from local communities.

China's economic reform has also created a large migrant population now moving to cities in search of employment. These migrants do not have residence permits in the cities and they have no ties with the urban social service networks. There are believed to be more than thirty million migrants in big cities like Beijing and Shanghai. It is clear that mortality and fertility of migrants are both higher. The existing system of population regulation is adjusting in response to all these conditions.

Rural China is greeting the twenty-first century with a brand new image. China started the second step of reform in 1985; the development of China's rural economy has been accelerating and an overall improvement has been seen in the social development of rural areas. Progress in rural areas has been achieved by discarding the state monopoly in purchasing and marketing of farm products, and by gradually lifting price controls and management of farm products. By 1998, China had built more than 100 000 free rural markets, and the transaction volume from these has risen to US\$60 billion, a 9 times increase over that of 1984. By 1999, the market in rural China was fully established. In the 1980s and 1990s, China formed a complete set of policies of reform and opening to the outside world that agrees well with rural economic development. In 1994, China's export volume of farm products had reached US\$12.5 billion, twice that of 1984. Since 1990, more than US\$900 billion in foreign investment has been poured into China's agricultural development annually with the total amount reaching US\$12.2 billion in 1994. China's supply of agricultural products has increased greatly: the gross output value of farming, forestry, animal husbandry and fisheries has increased from RMB 362 billion yuan in 1985 to RMB 2542 billion yuan in 1998. Farming accounts for 58.0% of this, forestry 3.5%, animal husbandry 28.6%, and fisheries 9.9%. Most noticeably, China's grain output has increased from 39 408 million tons in 1988 to 51 230 million tons in 1998, with an annual growth rate of 2.4%. In comparison with the 1.2% annual growth rate of the population in the same period, the grain harvest has significantly increased living standards in a country with about 1.3 billion population. The grain increase has ensured a balance in total supply and demands of agricultural products, and has promoted human sustainable development.

China's economy scored remarkable achievements between 1978 and 1999, with an annual average GDP growth rate of nearly 8%, but the economy is facing problems with

the rapid development owing to the collision of old and new economic structures. The most serious issues include price hikes, inflation pressure, and unemployment. All these affect the living standard of Chinese people, and this impacts negatively on human sustainable development. With effective measures of austerity programs, prices fell each year after 1995 to a very low level in 1999, and additionally the inflation rate in 1999 was close to zero. However, the issue of high unemployment remains to be solved in the twenty-first century. Large and medium-sized state-owned enterprises have been suffering difficulties or even going into bankruptcy, as they cannot meet the needs of the market economy. As the reform towards market economy goes deeper, workers in these enterprises have a high risk of unemployment.

2. Family Planning

There are two basic national policies in China. The first national policy is that of population control, and the second is that of environmental protection. Population control is essential to achieving China's overall economic and social development goals. There was no change in China's strong population policy in the 1990s. What is changing is the way policy it is implemented.

China's State Family Planning Commission estimates that by the end of 1998, 380 million births had been averted in China over the previous 20 years as a result of the implementation of the well organized family planning program. This represents more than the combined population of USA and Canada. This can be regarded as a great success and a favorable boost to economic growth and human sustainable development. China's family planning has not only enabled people to have fewer children but has also promoted social progress.

Since 1981, China has implemented a population policy of one child per couple, with some exceptions shortly introduced, particularly in rural areas for daughters-only couples.

The Chinese government has long been aware of the significance of population growth and the effect of the large population on the process of socio-economic development. Great efforts were made to promote family planning in some municipalities and provinces as early as the 1950s, although the situation was not considered too serious until the 1970s. China first started to promote family planning on a national scale by advocating "later age at marriage", "deferred childbearing", and "fewer but healthier births". China also puts a tremendous amount of effort into setting up and improving its network for delivering reproductive health services and for communicating educational messages aimed at motivating couples to take advantage of these services. These efforts played an important role in slowing down population growth, improving the quality of China's population, and advancement of human resources. In order to provide better services for couples of childbearing age and to avoid oversimplified practices, many plain slogans were put forward in the late 1980s calling for improvements in the family planning working style without slacking its dynamism. One of the intentions was to remedy a situation in which the program was being implemented in relative isolation, as if it were not part of the overall national socio-economic development process. Another intention was to weaken the influence of traditional notions like "more sons mean more

happiness”. Hence China’s family planning program was made a part of the national efforts aimed at bringing about comprehensive social and economic development. For this purpose, emphasis was put on three aspects in implementing the family planning program. The first was to use information, education and communication to motivate couples positively rather than to emphasize economic disincentives. The second was to promote preventive measures such as contraceptive use rather than the remedial measure of induced abortion. The third aspect was to provide continuous service and management rather than irregular and ad hoc campaigns. Additionally, the family planning program was integrated with efforts to help people increase their productivity, become well off through hard work and enjoy a happy family life.

From 1992, there has been an extensive national information, education and communication network (IEC) across China. The IEC program for family planning is also included in public media coverage. A strong IEC program was identified as a priority strategy in China’s family planning in the late 1990s. This includes both IEC and face to face counseling on contraception. More than fifty public school and education centers for family planning and thirty training centers have published over seventy popular papers, magazines, and booklets about population and family planning matters, giving people easy access to information. People can now acquire more knowledge regarding family planning methods. These population schools, established in cities, towns, and villages, are designed to deliver information services to middle school students (as a kind of puberty education) and premarital youths, as well as to pregnant, and menopausal women. Pamphlets on marriage and reproductive health are generally published in these population schools and centers.

Technical services of family planning have also been greatly improved with service centers set up in almost every town and township since 1990. Contraceptive and technical services are delivered in these centers that are equipped with ultrasound scanning machines. The centers are primarily designed for family planning purposes but, by state regulation these ultrasound-scanning machines are banned from misuse in sex identification of the fetus. Family planning technicians use the machines not only to serve couples of childbearing age, but also to help in detecting gynecological diseases. They have helped millions of women suffering from gynecological diseases, and furthermore many incipient cases of cancer have been discovered. Many Chinese farmers would affectionately regard family planning technicians as their doctors.

Counseling services are available in many cities, offered by local family planning committees and centers of technical service. These counseling services includes healthier births, maternal and child health care, reproductive health and treatment of infertility. Lack of pregnancy within three years after marriage, in couples who want children, is regarded in China as infertility. Cure of infertility and childlessness is another important duty of China’s family planning practice.

Insurance for families with only one child or two daughters in rural areas is an important part of China’s family planning program. There are several types of insurance related to family planning: (1) old age support insurance for parents of single children, (2) safety insurance for single children, and (3) old age support insurance for newlyweds. The insurance premium is usually about RMB 500 yuan for each couple,

which meets the subsistence requirement. The township pays a big part such as RMB 400 yuan while the couple pays only a small part such as RMB 100 yuan. Because of these insurance plans, single child families, two daughter families, and childless families need not worry about support when people become old and need help.

Today, China's birth rate is comparable to that of developed countries. However, much of that has been achieved through government-directed administrative measures. As China embarks on a historic transition from a planned economy to a market economy, it faces fresh challenges to its family planning program. The greatest challenge to traditional family planning practices is the diversification of individuals' interests, which make it difficult for the government to enforce a unified policy nationwide. Reforms that are taking place in the China's state owned enterprises, social security system, migration regulation system and social life add to the complexity of population management. More people are jobless. Divorces, remarriages and illegitimate pregnancies are also increasing. A service-oriented practice of family planning is the key, which is endorsed by many provinces. That is, China is seeking to transform the traditional mentality of "the government wants me to implement family planning" into one of "I want to have family planning". Family planning is becoming a new industry that provides safe, effective, economical and convenient birth control services and quality products to consumers. East China has taken the lead in reorienting the family planning program in a proactive way. Shanghai, for example, incorporates family planning management and service into community activities; Zhejiang integrates family planning with a new family-building initiative aimed at helping farmers escape poverty and become prosperous.

Action has been taken to integrate the family planning program with overall socio-economic development. That is, family planning is no longer a simple task of controlling population growth, but includes a mix of social programs, intended to change the value systems and lifestyles of the people. This "integrated approach" has gained encouraging results over many areas.

'Out of plan births' consist of births outside of the planned number of births for a community, or births that are allowed but occur outside the time that are included in a community's birth plan. In China, out of plan births are more likely to be sons than daughters because people have a traditional norm of son preference. People in China are fined for births out of plan.

The population policy of one child per couple has come into conflict with a culture that has valued males over females. The legal and social position of women has improved, as can be seen from statistics on status of women, as measured by education and employment, but attitudes and behavior toward women suggest that gender norms and roles are slow to change. Indeed, the Chinese government recognizes that the family planning program is good for Chinese society but also acknowledges that the program may have negatively affected individuals.

Family planning and marital relationships are not correlated during many surveys. Women and men in China report few couple disagreements about family size and fertility preference. Women and men often communicate about issues surrounding

family planning and reproductive health. Women's role in decision making in Chinese households has improved. Chinese women still have the view that the primary breadwinners are their husbands, and women are responsible for household chores. Premarital sex and cohabitation are not common in China, even under the existence of almost free family planning services.

Few researchers have argued that population growth in China does not need slowing, or that fertility control will not have to be a necessary component of population change. Much western criticism of the Chinese program is focused on the apparent infringement of human rights in the area of family planning. Although some of the criticism in the popular press is fairly sensationalist, many of the themes of criticism are reflected in the academic literature as well. Some have argued that contraceptive use in China is not voluntary but coerced, and that couples can be pressured at several points in their reproductive careers to delay marriage, use contraception, undergo induced abortion, and have sterilization. There is no doubt that there have been instances and even periods of coercion within the family planning program. 'Reduction of Excesses' in implementation of family planning is an important focus of the Chinese as well as the western press. It is also true that family planning in China is very different from that in any western society—the issues and questions that lie at the center of debates about reproduction and reproductive right in the west are not necessary those that are central in China.

Women and men tend to say they have the right number of children for their circumstances. The most satisfied Chinese families are those that have one son and one daughter. Those that are not satisfied tend to say they have too few children, rather than too many, but almost all people in China acknowledge that the current policy of strict population control in China is understandable. It is not easy for Chinese people in rural areas to accept the idea that the public good is more important than the individual good, but this is totally different in urban areas. This shows the difficulty of family planning in rural areas.

A number of Chinese families relate their progression and advancement from being family planning workers to becoming entrepreneurs and even village and governmental leaders. Working in family planning gives people a chance to attend social meetings and other community activities. Although family planning work is considered as arduous as the work of collecting taxes, many family planning workers feel that they are serving the benefit of the country and the people, and they get experience of dealing with people.

China's family planning has a positive effect on various aspects of family lives, including women's health, household work, adult education, opportunities for and time at a job, and ability to earn more money and more leisure time.

People of different ages have different thinking regarding family planning. Middle age people often say that they were compelled to use family planning during the early days of the program, particularly when the so-called one child policy was launched in the early 1980s. Middle aged women relate family planning with having fewer children and thus the ability to focus on earning money for the family. Younger people often say that they need to wait for marriage until they have made enough money and social status.

Once young people get married, they are happy to get all kinds of knowledge of family planning services. The population control policy in China had become more accepted in the late 1990s than it was when the one child policy was first introduced in the early 1980s.

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Biographical Sketch

Born in 1963, **Li Yong-Ping** obtained his degrees of M.A. in Statistics and Ph.D. in Demography at the University of California at Berkeley in 1986 and 1990 respectively. He was once a visiting professor at the University of Chicago in 1994 and in Indiana University in 1997. He is now a professor in Peking University.

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