



World Chronicle

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Population Changes

In the past 60 years, the world population nearly tripled and people were expected to live a third longer. Are we in the middle of a population explosion and what does the future hold?

In this edition of World Chronicle, Joseph Chamie, Director of the United Nations Population Division, discussed future trends in world population.

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ANNOUNCER: From the United Nations in New York, an unedited interview programme on global issues. This is **World Chronicle**. And here is the host of today's **World Chronicle**.

JENKINS: Hello, I'm Tony Jenkins.

When the United Nations top demographer, Joseph Chamie was born in 1944, the entire world population was 2.3 billion people. Women had an average 5.1 children and life expectancy was just forty-three years. Sixty years later, the world population has nearly tripled, the number of children women have has been cut in half and people are expected to live a third longer. The second half of the twentieth century was the most dynamic demographic half century ever recorded.

After a distinguished career at the United Nations, Mr. Chamie is about to retire from the Organization. He will leave his post as Director of the UN's Population Division within a few weeks. What can he tell us about future trends in world population?

Joining me to talk to Mr. Chamie is Susannah Price of the BBC...and Linda Fasulo of NBC News.

JENKINS: Joe Chamie, welcome again.

CHAMIE: Thank you.

JENKINS: Talk about a roller coaster.... I noticed that in one of your projections, you're saying that three hundred years from now, the population of the world could go back again to where it was the day you were born – about two point three billion. What accounts for these huge fluctuations? After all, when you first started in this line of work, you were predicting that the world population would reach about twelve point two billion. Your latest figures have lost about three billion people...where have they gone? Why is this happening?

CHAMIE: Well population change is very simple. There are only three ingredients: mortality, fertility and migration. And...ah...for most countries, migration is relatively secondary for most countries. So it's fertility and mortality. With low mortality the real engine is fertility and that's what accounts for these differences. And they're very...

JENKINS: Fewer women having fewer babies? That's the bottom line is it?.

CHAMIE: Exactly. Lower birth rates, the lower replacement explains why we would be going three hundred years back to two point three billion. And it's a very small difference that would account for that two point three billion; a quarter child less than the replacement level of two point one would take you to two point three billion. A quarter child more – two point three five children above that – over three hundred years would take you to somewhere near thirty six billion.

JENKINS: Wow! We're talking about a difference of about thirty four billion people.

CHAMIE: Yes, and it's even worse than that. If things stay as they are today – no changes in fertility globally, all the countries maintain their levels of today - in the year twenty

three hundred, the world's population mathematically would be a hundred and thirty four trillion people. Clearly you're not going to be able to stand the rates of today and the countries that are very high – will be coming down, or the rates will come down either because of lower fertility or mortality will go up.

JENKINS: It's already coming down.

CHAMIE: ...They're coming down – good news.

JENKINS: Why is that happening?

CHAMIE: They're many reasons bringing down fertility. One, of course, is mortality rates have come down; that's a pre-condition – you have to have mortality rates coming down. Second, people are moving to cities, life is changing, children are not as needed as they were on farms and agricultural work. Third, women are becoming educated – once they become educated, they join the labor force – they are delaying marriage, they're delaying their first birth. Tastes have changed. Now all those ingredients put together – and effective contraception to boot – means that people are choosing smaller families because that's what they want – and we're seeing this globally.

JENKINS: Ah. But we are not seeing it absolutely everywhere and I think that leads into what you were going to ask about isn't it Linda?

FASULO: Exactly. For instance, we know that in Africa, the birth rate is still rather high – it's probably five or six children per woman. Yet, there are countries in Europe and Russia where it's not quite replacement value and thus those societies will lose population. What can be done? Why is Africa – particularly Sub-Saharan Africa being left behind, and what can be done to give them more opportunities?

CHAMIE: You're absolutely right Linda. The highest rates of fertility are in Sub-Saharan Africa - - there are a few other places in South Asia but they have the highest, and they are probably going to be the last region of the world to go through the demographic transition.

JENKINS: Which region?

CHAMIE: Sub-Saharan Africa - - O.K? The rates in Northern Africa have come down...and they're coming down in Western Asia, they're coming down in South Asia, irrespective of culture, ethnicity all the rates are coming down. But Sub-Saharan Africa has particular specific conditions.

FASULO: So what are those impediments?

CHAMIE: One of them is - - they've had higher mortality. So people have had to have more children to make sure that some survive. So we have to bring down the mortality rates.

And now we have an AIDS epidemic that's hitting very heavily in Sub-Saharan Africa. Especially in the Southern cone of Africa: South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe and other countries have very high rates of HIV prevalence. Therefore, in order to have replacements for the children that will die, you have to have lots of children. Second, in the past many of the people have suffered from infertility. They haven't been able to have the children that they want, so you ask them if they want to have more children, they say yes, we wanted more, some have died – I've become infertile, I've had an infection. So with the improving mortality in health, some say they that want more children. But what will happen eventually, as they achieve better health, longer life expectancy, moving to cities and educating their children, they'll start seeing tastes change, desired family size will go down; instead of being six, it will go down to four. Then instead of four, it will go down to three or two and that's what we've seen. We've seen the Republic of Korea, we've seen it in the Islamic Republic of Iran, we've seen it in Brazil, we've seen it in Mexico. Irrespective of the region, the culture, ethnicity, we've seen the rate come down and it's basically modernization, education and the changing role of women. Women are basically the one's that give birth to children. And when you educate them and get them employed and you get them economically independent, they make choices – which are generally – one or two children.

PRICE: But it seems over the next fifty years that you're still going to have countries, especially India, China where there's going to be a huge population explosion, and areas in Europe where it's going to go down. What does that mean in terms of resources, in terms of the inequality between the rich and the poorer countries? And also, how much will Europe actually need people from those countries where the population is booming to come in and provide the labor force?

CHAMIE: Yes you are absolutely right there is great diversity. Ninety eight percent of the growth of the world's population is occurring in the developing world. Very little is occurring elsewhere; in fact Europe's population peaked....

JENKINS: ...Excuse me...is Susie right that the population is booming in India and China? I thought that they had actually been quite successful in starting to cap their population growth.

CHAMIE: Well, our projection indicates that India will add another half billion people – five hundred million people - over the next fifty years.

JENKINS: That's a large growth...

CHAMIE: Pakistan over the next fifty years – despite the fact that Pakistan now is a hundred and fifty-five million and China is one point three billion - over the next fifty years

Pakistan will add more people than China. O.K.? Pakistan will move up the list and become the...our projections indicate the fourth largest country in the world. We're expecting to see – we're not done with the demographic transition – this growth, this rapid growth that we had in the twentieth century is not finished. We anticipated finishing during the twenty first century. But there is great diversity and you see some countries growing very little or negatively growing; they're about forty-three countries that are projected to decline. One is declining now – the Russian Federation, it's a very large country on the decline in population size and virtually all the Southern tier of Europe – their declining. Europe's population peaked at seven hundred twenty eight million - that includes Russia around the late nineties – and they're going down. Also, you have countries in Sub-Saharan Africa that are growing very rapidly and Western Asia as well. So we're going to have great growth and this has consequences because the countries that are growing the most rapidly are the poorest. On the other hand, you have countries that are declining and ageing and they're facing shortages. Italy for example, is projected to decrease fifteen percent total population by mid century, but forty percent of its labor force. So they're going to have to make adjustments: Economic adjustments, social adjustments, and political adjustments. And this means immigration possibly, longer working age for hiring, age of retirement, less benefits and perhaps more taxes for those countries.

JENKINS: Well we need is to get into all of those things because actually this is – this is a good story/bad story – sort of a story, isn't it? I mean – it is good that the trends overall are dropping, because it wasn't so many years ago that we were talking about having an unsustainably large population on the earth that the resources were going to be exhausted. So the overall global trend is good that it's coming down. But the mismatch that you have just described of the poorer countries continuing to expand quite rapidly – even as their fertility rates starts to drop – whereas the rich countries are going to see that populations and some of them are already seeing their populations in decline - that has got to have political consequences. Do you - is it your job as a demographer to say what those potential consequences could be? I mean, you talked about immigration right at the top of the show. Presumably, one of the things that the richer societies could do to even up the situation would be to open their borders to immigration. Presumably, the poorer countries would like to send some of their population overseas so that they don't face problems. But the political consequences – I mean I could see even wars coming out of this. Those are the sorts of things that you look into?

CHAMIE: Well we don't look at the wars, but we do look into the economic, social and political consequences of these changes. For example, by mid century the population of

Iran will overtake Russia's. The population of Palestinians would be larger than the Israelis, the population of the Moroccans would be larger than the Spaniards. The population of the Philippines would be bigger than Japan. You know a lot of demographic crossovers in population changes. All these have consequences; the ageing of population has consequences - healthcare, pensions, many things. So yes we look at those consequences but the overall conclusion that I have stressed is we've had success. This is a success story.

JENKINS: Well do any of these rich countries perceive a shrinking population as a success story as a good thing?

CHAMIE: The countries that see their population declining, such as the Russian Federation, the Republic of Korea have said this is a major challenge for them, and they do not see necessarily as beneficial, and they're trying to reverse this. Italy is in the same situation – many of them would like to see their population stabilize, increase the birth rate and so on. So there has to be some adjustments. It's like your weight. You can be overweight, you can be underweight - you're trying to get a nice harmony and that that's what the countries are trying to do - get a nice balance between that.

JENKINS: I'd settle for underweight...(all laugh)... Linda

FASULO: Regarding the optimal. Is there an optimal size? Is there really a consensus about what the optimal size of the world should be in the next fifty or one hundred years, so that, indeed it's sustainable and that that there could be a maximum quality of life enhancement perhaps for those people?

CHAMIE: There's no number that's optimum. It's a function of technology, social organization, environmental constraints and if you look at it – we have countries now, people just cannot move at will going across borders. You have to have an invitation to come into a country. So countries that are very densely populated in areas, people aren't necessarily eager to move there. Areas that are less densely populated people may be eager to go, it has to function, weather, climate as I said. There is no optimum. We're at six point three billion today, the world could handle seven, eight - but distribution is a problem. The issue is the distribution of the goods and services and welfare; so you have some that are doing very poorly and some that are doing extremely well and that inequality and inequities is what we are dealing with in terms of development and globalization - how to get a balance between the countries so the standards of livings are more reasonable and the diversity isn't so great where it creates political tensions and stresses among the countries.

PRICE: In terms of the migrations and populations from the more ever-populated areas, is there a tension do you think between the fact that these countries will need the work

force, they will need in Europe, they will need the people to come in. But also, especially post 9/11 the fears about security, the fears about allowing people coming in without check. Is that something that will likely be an issue in the coming years?

JENKINS: Absolutely. That's a big issue. Since the bombings and Europe, Washington, Madrid, Bali and other places, security and who's coming in is a concern. But everyone is being checked. You can be an American in any airport you go to and they're checking you, they're not asking you if you're an immigrant. They're checking everyone. Remember Timothy McVey wasn't an immigrant, he was a local. And the same occurs in many of the countries. So issues of security are now more prominent. In addition, every country wants to monitor its border. It's not really acceptable, tolerable to start having people coming in without documents or overstaying, undermines the confidence of the public, with the government, it starts creating all sorts of difficulties, it creates problems often for the migrants themselves because they are afraid to register and have services, have medical care. So it doesn't matter if it's the European Union, the United States, Canada, Brazil, Mexico, India, China, every country wants to monitor its borders and I think they should. We should have a legal system that's in operation and it should be orderly and well mannered. Otherwise, you'll have a free for all, people breaking the queue, coming in, people asking for different things – and the public will lose confidence in the government's ability to manage migration.

JENKINS: Interesting...let's hang on a moment...This is World Chronicle and we're talking about future trends in world population with Joseph Chamie, Director of the United Nations Population Division.

JENKINS: Joe, it seems to me that another of the ways that you could tackle this problem is by devising a new economic model. In some ways it is already happening, we hear a lot these days in the developed world – especially in the United States – about outsourcing. The problem that you are talking, describing with ageing populations is that there aren't going to be enough replacement workers contributing to pensions, state pension plans, to pay the pensions of these large number of ageing people. To deal with that problem, there are essentially two techniques it seems to me. One is you open your borders in a controlled regulated way – if you like, but nevertheless you do it and you allow the immigrants in and you continue to sustain the size of your labor force so that you can pay these peoples pensions. The other way is you shut your border and you try and encourage your native born population to have more babies. Some nations already tried doing that. Have they been successful? Can you tell me something about that?

CHAMIE: First you should understand that you cannot really stop the ageing process through immigration. You need enormous flow; it's really politically unfeasible to stop the ageing process because it's really being determined by fertility.

JENKINS: But do you want to stop the ageing process? Or do you just want enough workers in your labor force to sustain your ageing population?

CHAMIE: What's likely to follow - it's a combination of measures. First, when they started the Social Security system in the United States for example, or they started it in Europe, the worker, the gentleman died before he reached sixty-five. In nineteen ah. Ah,.

JENKINS: You mean that was built into the calculation factor system?

CHAMIE: Absolutely.

JENKINS: Had these people, these workers paying for their pension, knowing that that a lot of them would never have the chance to cash it....

CHAMIE: You know, when President Franklin Delano Roosevelt began social security in 1935, and I think came in operation in 1940, the life expectancy for US males was not sixty-five. They died before they reached there...it's basically widow's benefits and providing for families after the death of the breadwinner. Similarly, when Bismark was thinking about this and establishing at sixty-five in the beginning of the twentieth century end of nineteenth century, sixty-five was chosen because no one really.. we're not going to reach that. We're reaching beyond that and we're going to be living much longer. The system has changed. You have to change the working lifetime of people. No one ever expected to have twenty years of leisure and retirement in our grandfather's period. They did not expect to...

JENKINS: ...You're going to have longer..

CHAMIE: Yes indeed...

JENKINS: ...The UN is kicking you out as they do everybody at age sixty...

CHAMIE: Yes, well they call it separation of service. They don't call it retirement [everyone laughs]. They could go work someplace else, but, what will happen is that the age of retirement will go up. Second, the benefits will come down; they are too generous. Third, the taxes will have to go up and then immigration will have to be looked at. A mixture of all these things -we'll be able to deal with this for most countries. However, countries such as Republic of Korea, Japan, Italy, once you start going down closer to one point two – one point one, you'll start seeing severe stresses on the economy, how long you have to work, how much money you have to pay and health care costs.

JENKINS: Joe, you didn't answer my question though...

CHAMIE: Yes.

JENKINS: There are countries I believe, like Italy and South Korea that are already trying to encourage women to have more babies as a way of addressing this problem. Am I right, and if so, have they had any success?

CHAMIE: They've had pro-natalist policies and trying to raise it, but so far, they have not been able to raise it back to replacement and most demographers do not believe that they will be able to get it back to replacement in the near future. And the reason why is that people choose according to their own interests and most women are saying, I will have one, possibly two but we are not going to three, four and five simply because we don't have the time, we are working and we need more help if we're going to have this and there's no help coming.

JENKINS: I wanted to know if the ladies are going to ask the question I'd like to ask there. Linda...

FASULO: Actually I would like to just follow-up on something you said a little earlier about the unsustainability of - I think you were leaning primarily in Western countries – where there is such an ageing population, people are living thirty or more years after retirement. You said something that I thought was very intriguing, which was that you thought that the retirement benefits were too generous. Could you expand upon that? And if you see....you know how prevalent is that around the world, and what do you think will happen?

CHAMIE: Many of these benefits were determined by Parliaments, Congress – at a time where the working population was very large relative to the retired population. And most people in Parliaments and Congress say yes, let's give more to the elderly, let's give more to these people. And they had plenty of money. You could have had ten workers per retiree, you could have had eight, twelve but now you are going down to four and five, and you are going to down to two, or less than two, as we're seeing in Italy, Spain, Republic of Korea, Japan – less than two people working age per people above sixty five. So you cannot sustain the types of benefits and costs. Some were given all sorts of extra benefits: trips abroad, health care costs, all sorts of things...

JENKINS: In many parts of Europe I seem to remember reading the retirement benefit is about eighty percent of your final salary when you retire. Eighty percent...

FASULO: ...Amazing...

JENKINS: That's a huge....

CHAMIE: These are not sustainable with the changing age structure. We've seen rapid growth, we've seen urbanization, people living longer, and now we're going to see the structure change; and this is going to have profound changes. I joke around that we were in a Toys Are Us society, and now we are moving into an "Old Are Us" society. You know when you

talk about – nappies and diapers – you are going to go from Pampers to Depends. You are going to have a changing society where people are very, very concerned. Look at the market how it is changing and responding! It's changing dramatically... shoes for women, clothes, cosmetics, healthcare, all these things are changing because the population is shifting and the demand is shifting. Smaller houses, people who are increasingly having mobility problems, disability, they'll have all sorts of safety things and all sorts of gadgets and healthcare things. And people live much longer. I mean I lived through a very fascinating demographic period. I always equate it to being a sailor during the time of Columbus. It was the most exciting period to be a demographer – especially at the United Nations. The next fifty years will be the second next most exciting half-century. We're going to see profound changes occurring in these countries – new types of arrangements

PRICE: And talking about changes, I wondered how much do you factor in advances in science and technology into your calculations? I mean, for example, living longer, the fertility age when you can have children expanding, or maybe even other ways for children that science can create. Also, even science and technology in terms of maybe you don't need an actual work force. How much more of that work is going to be done by machine or computer? Are those areas... do you kind of look imaginatively forwards?

CHAMIE: We do not explicitly look at new science and technologies and innovations, but we look at trends and we see what's been happening. For example - life expectancy - you've been gaining so many years every decade, that we've extrapolated that and see what the trend is. And we've always as demographers tended to underestimate how long people will live. And I try and correct for that..

JENKINS: So you are suspicious by nature are you??

CHAMIE: Well – we like to bring good news [all laugh], so we first don't ...don't underestimate and not be too generous and Actuaries do this as well...

JENKINS: Guess what? Neither of these ladies did ask the question that I wanted to ask, which is...why are these policies that are designed to encourage women to have more babies - not working. Are we just not offering them enough money? I mean how much are the Italians offering to a women to have an extra baby?

CHAMIE: Ummm. They were offering in France and Italy, one thousand Euros, for the child. One mayor...

JENKINS: One time payment?

FASULO: That's not very much...

CHAMIE: One time payment. And the mayor was giving ten thousand Euros.

JENKINS: How much do you think the Ital ...perhaps I should ask them? How much would you have to offer a woman to get her to say, "O.K., I'll have a second baby?"

CHAMIE: I don't think it's a difficulty having a first child and the economics will help. The difficulty is it's not simply a matter of money. Many woman will tell you that yes, it nice to have a child but I want a career. I want to be independent, I don't want to be dependent on a male breadwinner, I want to have my career, I want my achievements and so on... and that's perfectly correct – and it's their right. The difficulty comes in as how to balance this thing...

JENKINS: Well, presumably one of the things you can do then is restructure your society in such a way that working women can have more babies. For example, in this country there's no free nursery care. There is in France – there isn't in the United States – that makes it very difficult for a working woman to have a child, certainly to have more than one child. I mean that's one...of the ...an obvious thing you can do. Couldn't you?

CHAMIE: This is exactly right. And the Minister for Family in France says it's in France's interest to keep the birth rate high and it's one point nine. It's one of the highest among the developed countries – just below the United States, but it is not for free – they're paying, someone's paying for this. And there are many suggestions: one, those people that have children, give them a bigger pension when they retire. If you have two or three children then your social security payments will be larger because you raised two or three children for the work force. There are many plans. There about thirty or forty different steps governments can do. Some of them - we're seeing being done – benefits, tax deductions, allowances, childcare, pre-school, after-school, healthcare all sorts of arrangements. Bonuses...

JENKINS: Here's another question I got for you then. Is it not...Is there anybody whose saying that in fact it could be a potential good for mankind, for the planet, for the population to continue to decline? And if so, are Economists working on an economic model where you can see continued economic growth at the same time you are having a population decline?

CHAMIE: There are a number of Economists that are looking at this – especially in those countries that are declining, but the difficulty comes in as that we have no historical record where this is happening voluntarily. We've had plagues, we've had epidemics, we've had famine, locusts where the population declines; we're seeing it in Africa now with AIDS. South Africa's population is declining and it's a catastrophe because it's affecting the labour force. However, we don't have any models based on experience on what's going to happen for countries like Italy and Japan and Russia. What will happen to their societies? Will they be less innovative? Will they be more politically conservative? How will they react?

JENKINS: Well maybe they will be forced to be more innovative wouldn't they? [all laugh]

FASULO: Do you see any quick fixes that governments are perhaps ignoring, countries that are at risk of being subsumed by perhaps over-population – things that they should do immediately and the reverse?

CHAMIE: Well, people are elected to office – especially in democracies, democracies have to get votes. And it's not very popular to tell someone you can't retire at sixty-five. It's going to be seventy. You're not going to get many votes; you're not going to get many votes by saying you're going to have to pay more taxes - that's why they say taxes will be reduced. You're not going to get any votes if you say your benefits to your grandmother are going to be reduced. So, what they should be doing now is looking further in the future than simply two or four, or five years. They have to look a generation ahead, and there are many of them that are not doing that. Many are, but many are not. They have to look very far. So the time perspective is important. Second, you have to be realistic about where the money is going to come from. And many of them I think are hoping that the next administration will take care of that.

JENKINS: We don't have much time. Let's have one quick last question. Talking, going back to this idea of outsourcing jobs, could one way of doing it be to say, "Well, our population may continue to decline at home, but our economy will expand by exploiting a labor force overseas and they will be transferring money to our country to sustain our pensioners."

CHAMIE: In principle that sounds very great. But who's going to clean the streets, clean the windows, give you services? What happens is - people thought that Florida would be a great place to retire and you went down there and you'd have all these elderly people that could retire in the sun. But what you forgot about they need services: they need dry cleaning, they need all sorts of cleaning services, they need healthcare so you had young people coming in. That model...whose going to deliver the goods? Who's going to drive the trucks? Who's going to maintain those societies?

JENKINS: I am suppose to be asking the questions.... [all laugh]

CHAMIE: Yes, so it's going to be very hard simply to outsource it. If you take a country like Japan or Switzerland and they'd say, we are going to have all the money being made over there and we'll bring back the resources and we'll put it in the banks in Tokyo and Zurich, but who will do the services?

JENKINS: Wow, what a good question to end on. Joe Chamie, that's all the time we have. I'm sure Linda and Susie join me in wishing you all happiness and success in your retirement. Thanks very much.

CHAMIE: Thank you.

JENKINS: Our guest has been the Director of the UN's Population Division, Joseph Chamie. He was interviewed by Susannah Price of the BBC, and Linda Fasulo of NBC News.

I'm Tony Jenkins. Thank you for joining us. We invite you to be with us for the next edition of **World Chronicle**.

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