

## Humanae Vitae as a bulwark against Malthusian policies, notably in Africa

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The core of Malthusian thinking is that human beings are nothing more than consumers of resources. Therefore an increase in population is inherently detrimental to nations because population growth will always outpace resources.

However, with thorough and extensive research, this basic spine or core of Malthusianism has been refuted.

But this has not stopped the spread and propagation of this type of thinking in the last 2 centuries, to the point that it has led to a powerful neo-Malthusian school of thought which seeps into policies, resolutions and funding decisions.

And there is no place where Malthusian theory and thinking is being formulated into nation-wide policies as much as it is across the African continent.

It has not gone unnoticed that in a world where many nations are experiencing dangerously low birth rates and pockets of demographic winter, the African continent has higher birth rates. The average birth rate for all the African countries considered together is about 4.5.

But the question is why? Why does Africa have a higher birth rate than other continents? Is it because we don't have enough knowledge of contraceptives or the availability of these artificial drugs and devices ?

I grew up in a small town in the south eastern part of Nigeria where the new life is welcomed with much mirth and joy. In fact, in my village, we have a special "clarion" call reserved for births, it is known as the *oroonu*. The first day of every baby's life is celebrated by the entire village with dancing (real dancing!) and clapping and singing - a sort of "Gloria in excelsis Deo."

Allow me to assert that this world view is at the root of the African lack of zeal for contraception as surveys have shown time and time again lower contraception uptake, higher desired birth rate as well as a high rate of contraception discontinuation so put all these trends together,

Africa has a much lower contraception usage, hence leading to the current birth rate.

The interpretation to this is population increase.

In response to this, the wealthy and powerful developed world of donors, since the year 1996, has spent more than \$100 billion to the developing world in order to slow its population growth.

And about 70% of this goes to Africa.

Currently, Africa's donors spend about \$9 billion every year to fight the imaginary enemy that is the fertility of African women.

\$9 billion is an astronomical amount of money and I can tell you that we see and feel the effects of the foreign donors' desperation and pressure on our nations.

And I will talk about 3 points where we are feeling the effects of this pressure:

### **1. Prioritisation in the Project of Development**

-We are having the prioritization of "family planning" over many glaring basic needs we have in our countries.

There are many instances where a hospital that does not have life-saving antibiotics, is fully stocked with donor-provided-contraceptive drugs and devices that are not even being widely accepted by the women, which then expire and are then wasted. Millions of dollars worth of resources.

-We are having the introduction of national and supra-national "reproductive health" bills and policies, there are many examples of this but one recent example is the reproductive health bill that has been tabled a number of times now at the EAC- East African Community. These reproductive health bills openly target young African children - proposing that contraception be made easily available to children who are still minors. It may not come as a surprise to those gathered here today that a minor can access contraception through their school but the outrage is that countries where there are hardly any books in the school library, countries where there are many schools without libraries or even basic books, now are able to provide an array of contraception to girls.

This is a case of misprioritization and it is all too common.

### **2. Health Risks and Side Effects**

There are real health risks associated with artificial contraception.

-Thousands and perhaps millions of African women have experienced mild to moderate to fatal side effects. And this shouldn't be a surprise given the fine print of the pharmaceutical companies that produce them. These side effects range from weight gain to hair loss to bone density loss to loss of libido to nausea to vaginal discharge to life-threatening blood clots. Women have allegedly died as a result of contraceptives given to them for free by western entities.

-What is perhaps worse is that there is hardly ever full and informed consent when these contraceptives are administered especially in rural communities and there is absolutely no clear legal cause of action for African women.

### **3. The Possibility of African Nations following the path of child-limitation policies**

In a number of African countries are talks at various levels of society to impose policies that will force families to limit the number of children they are allowed to have.

I have heard this talks associated to Rwanda, Ghana, my own country Nigeria , South Africa and the list goes on.

No country has so far implemented this but there are already national debates.

This possibility should strike fear into any person who has paid attention to how China's one-policy has played out.

Contraception is a potential weapon that can be wielded by the all powerful governments. And we know that governments are all powerful from our shared experience of the Covid pandemic. If and when any government decides to control the people, they certainly can do it.

Mind you, all of these have happened in recent decades, but as far back as 1968, Pope St Paul VI wrote in his prophetic encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*,

**“Let it be considered also that a dangerous weapon would thus be placed in the hands of those public authorities”**

**“Who will blame a government for tackling its nation's problems with measures of the kind claimed to be morally permissible for married people to solve some family problems?”**

**“Who will prevent public authorities from favoring the ways of preventing conception they think more effective, or indeed from ordering everyone to use them whenever the authorities think necessary?”**

Pope St Paul VI saw the horrific possibility and rightly pointed to this weapon that can and has caused so much irreparable damage in our modern world.

I am grateful that the Church has continued to uphold this prophetic and audacious document , in spite of constant attacks from all corners of this modern world - the powerful political powers, the medical world, the very loud radical feminist movement, the joint international community, there is persistence and insistence on artificial contraception as a *sine qua non* conditioned for women’s welfare , good healthcare and (in the case of Africa) full development.

But amidst the push, *Humanae Vitae* continues to be a bulwark and protective wall around the dignity of millions of people in every part of the world but in a special way in the world of the poor and underprivileged, in Africa .