

The World Debate:  
"Are there too many people in the world?"

*Transcription by Arjuna Weerasinghe and Kate Mitchell*

**Zeinab Badawi:** Welcome to the **Lalbagh** fort in the Bangladeshi capital Dhaka. This fort is in the old part of the city, beautiful isn't it? And it was built back in 1678, by the then Viceroy of Bengal. It was the scene of a bloody battle against the British in the first war of independence in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and I wonder if it's going to be the scene of a verbal clash today in our debate about the thorny issue of population. Well we have assembled a panel from just about every continent in the world, whose views are as varied as their backgrounds to discuss the topic of population and whether we should have population control?

First of all from Bangladesh here we have **Dr A.K.M Nurun Nabi**, Professor of Population Science at the University of Dhaka and he is a regular contributor on the international scene, he's passionate about population control, so much so that he has restricted himself and his wife to having just one child. **Rosamund McDougall** is a Director at the Optimum Population Trust which is a British based think tank that campaigns for a gradual population decrease globally. The OPT believes the world population needs to contract to a maximum of 5 billion people which she says is what the Earth can comfortably support. From Columbia University in New York is professor **Matthew Connolly** who wrote a controversial book called "Fatal Misconception: The struggle to control world population". He says sexism and racism are often at the root of global efforts to bring down the number of people in the world. From Beijing is **Wang Shuo**; he is Managing Editor of a magazine called *Caijing*, described by the Wall Street Journal as 'the leading financial publication in China'. Wang Shuo has lived through China's aggressive one child policy, and has some concerns about the impact it's had. And **Eliya Zulu** from Malawi is based in Nairobi at the African Population and Health Research Centre. He is also President of the Union for African Population studies. He believes population is growing too rapidly, especially in Africa and that urgent action is needed to encourage a reduction in the number of people in Africa. Rosamund McDougall, are there too many people in the world?

**RM:** We are entering a period of dangerous climate change and of rapid depletion of resources, so the answer is, yes it's already populated.

**ZB:** Matthew Connolly?

**MC:** There is too much poverty on the world, there's too much poor health. We're having too big of an impact on the planet, but you can't make these kind of problems go away just by making people go away. So no, it's not a question of people not in terms of numbers. It's really about the kind of lives the people are living.

**ZB:** Ok Wang Shuo I mean China is always the country where people say that there are lots and lots of people in China.

**WS:** No I don't think so because first, how many people is too many people? I don't think anybody can give an accurate number or an accurate answer to the optimum number of the population. Second, I believe that human beings are capital not a liability and can, provided there are right systems- political system, social systems in place- human beings can be turned in to huge capital.

ZB: Eliya Zulu, what do you think?

EZ: When you look at the numbers the current numbers as well as the projected numbers that we expect to have in future it is very evident that the world has a population problem and it has too many people. And I think this is clear especially when you consider that with the current numbers the world is not able, the world is failing to take care of the people to ensure that each and every human being on the planet has a decent life. And if we are failing and then think about the numbers that the world is expected to add, the current population is expected to add in the next few decades or so you can't even begin to imagine what sort of problems the world will have. So population may not be the absolute cause of the problem, but it's clear that the world has too many people and where we are going if we don't do anything about it, it is going to be more and more problems.

ZB: Ok Professor Nabi where do you stand on this? You share their view?

PN: I agree with them, there are too many people in the world, I mean consider the number. Right now we have 6.5 billion population in the world and in the middle of the century there'll be 8 to 10 billion. What do you do with this population? Can we feed them? Can we provide them with the jobs? I don't know, I don't think so because every 5 seconds we are adding 650 people in the world and in 3- 4 days 1 million and in 3-4 years a United States and we're adding this to the population.

ZB: Matthew Connelly?

MC: These kind of prophecies, this idea that Robert Malthus had 200 years ago, if you added more people that you would just set up the conditions for even bigger famines in the future. If I seem relaxed about that is because the people who made these prophecies have been wrong for the last 200 years. In fact the amount of food per capita has been growing every year for the last 30 years.

ZB: But never mind about the projections. As things stand do you think there are too many people in the world and your answer was no.

MC: Well, I think you have to be specific who it is you would like to get rid of, because if you think, that our problem for instance is global warming then obviously people who are living an affluent lifestyle, people in the United States and Europe, people with vacation homes, with 3 cars etc- those are the kind of people you have to get rid of if you wanted to do something about global warming.

EZ: If you are not able to give people an opportunity to have a decent livelihood or a decent life, if you are going to add...when you look at Africa for instance it is projected by 2050 there are going to be an additional 1 billion people in Africa - You have to ask yourself the question "what sort of 1 billion extra people do you want to have?" Is it people who are predominantly illiterate, people who are suffering from hunger?

ZB: But don't you feel uncomfortable making that kind of argument, you don't think you might play into the hands of those who do believe as I said the subtext is there are too many brown or black people in the world, and nobody is arguing about reducing numbers in Italy or France?

EZ: Yeah, I think Italy and France- the population issue they have is very different from the problem that countries like Africa have. I think you look at a country like Niger for instance; it has a population of about 14 million; it is projected that it will have 50 million by 2050 and it's a small country and it's a poor country. If you say the numbers are not important then I don't know what you are really talking about, because you have to think about Niger; will it be able to provide for all these people, will it be able to educate its people, will it be able to break away from all the issues to do with poverty that it's facing now if it has this many additional people? If you can say yes then I will say there is nothing to worry about but I think all the indications are that you know, this is not the best situation.

WS: Right now Professor Nabi has asked a very important question 'Who will feed these people' and actually we Chinese people has been answering that question in the past 30 years. In 1978 Chinese people, the number of Chinese people was about 1 billion and people were asking who will feed these people in the future and today we have 1.3 billion and nobody is seriously asking this question again. We feed ourselves. Why? Because in the past 30 years there are 2 fundamental reforms that have taken place. One is the internal economic liberalisation and the other is the 'open door policy' especially joining the WTO. These 2 intuitional reforms helped turn China's massive population into a massive work power, and that explains why we Chinese people and in general I think, the world population can feed itself- if they have a better system, not necessarily a perfect system but a better system.

ZB: Rosamund McDougall, I mean that's the point- when you said there are too many people for the earth's resources never underestimate the power of technology and you know, updates, GM crops if they become acceptable in feeding people for instance.

RM: I know but people have been promising the new technologies now for about 20/30 years, we've had promises of nuclear fusions solving our energy problems. We actually have more people hungry in the world than we did last year.

ZB: But that's not because there is not enough food in the world, there is plenty.

RM: No. Well that's not always the case. Even the U.K is only 60% self-sufficient in food, so we have a population problem too.

MC: Are you seriously suggesting, Rosamund, that Great Britain has a population problem because it can't feed itself.

RM: Great Britain is over populated. We are twice as densely populated as China, only a quarter as densely populated as Bangladesh, where the problem is even worse and the climate problems are worse but we do have a population problem. What's

more our Government is probably the first Government in the west or in any developed country to actually have a population policy announced a few months ago. It is going to cap the U.K population at 70 million. It won't allow it to grow higher than that.

MC: Do you think that has something to do with the fear that many in Britain have of brown and black people emigrating there might change British...?

RM: That is absolute rubbish.

MC: Has nothing to do with it.

RM: Nothing.

MC: Huh.

RM: I'm sorry.

ZB: You don't think it has?

RM: No.

ZB: Clearly!

MC: Well, I find it kind of amazing, you know, that the government would impose a cap on Britain's population without it having something to do with issue No.1, which is immigration and asylum seekers.

ZB: Well at least Rosamund is consistent, she is not saying reduce the number of people in Africa or Asia, she is saying over the world.

EZ: I don't think that when we say that there is a population problem, we are necessarily saying that people should be reduced in this part of the region or not, we are talking about various regions in the world and you know, for me I'm talking about Africa for the most part. But countries should think about the numbers that they have and the numbers that they are going to have. So, the notion...I don't think that I support the idea that governments whether it's Western Governments should go to Africa and tell Africans that, you know have two children or have three children or that sort of thing. No! I think that the evidence is out there that a lot of African women who are having many children are having these many children not because they want to. It's because they don't have access to family planning.

ZB: But are you saying that high levels of population growth in Africa are the major impediment to development, that they are the main cause of poverty? Is that what you saying?

EZ: It's one of the main causes. So, I think it's quite clear. Evidence is out there that you know if you have a growing population given the sort of subsistence economy

that Africa has, that the number actually you know prevent you from achieving your. your...your ...

ZB: Is that the case though, I mean Professor Nabi. The numbers are too simplistic. I mean you mentioned the U.K. let me give you an example: U.K, Uganda; same land mass, 28 million people in Uganda, 61 million in the U.K. People in the U.K are better off than people in Uganda.

PN: I'd like to refer to Eliya and Wang. He (EZ) said that the people don't have access to family planning, people don't have access to education, people don't have access to resources and what he (WS) said that from 1978 the population comparison he made, I mean, in 1975 when there was a debate in Bucharest on the issue of development versus contraception, China was against contraception. China led the 3rd world countries in favour of development. China said that development is the best contraceptive but right after 1974 coming back home in 1975 they formulated the population policy. Why? Because they realised that if we sit now with this population without thinking of a good plan or a good system, so we will be nowhere. Take the example of Bangladesh: if we cannot achieve the net reproduction rate (net means one woman reproducing another woman to replace the population) if another one is not achieved by 2010 we will not be able to stabilise our population by 2050. If we just delay by just 10 years we will have 250 million population in 2085.

ZB: Is this really about population and numbers or is it about other factors; poverty and so on and governments which are inactive or irresponsible? It all seems you're saying population, population is a big problem, at least you on this side (Professor Nabi). Is it and what is it guilty of?

EZ: Population is one of the key factors that you have to take into account. Of course issues to do with governance are very critical in Africa whether you talk about corruption or the money going into improving people's lives.

ZB Why do you have to take it into account? People talk about Africa Eliya, they think of HIV, AIDS, malaria and people dying, high maternal mortality rates, children dying before the age of 5. Surely that's the problem there?

EZ: But the evidence – you asked the question earlier to say why should women in Uganda be reducing their fertility? It's not up to me or the Government of Uganda to tell them but the evidence shows that the women in Uganda do not want to be having the seven children that they are having. So as a responsible Government you need to help these women to achieve their reproductive goals. That's what it's about; it's not just about numbers or because it's in Africa. Every government has to look at its population and look at its capacity to provide for that population and make decisions to help the population on how not to have excess children that they don't want to have.

ZB: Rosamund what exactly do you think high population rates growth rates actually cause? What are the problems they create?

RM: First of all because I am involved in the environment it causes massive environmental stress. Here in Bangladesh, which is an extreme case, there is low lying land. You will be subject to floods which could inundate up to 50% of the land.

Z.B: But that's an extreme situation.

RM: But every country is different obviously. So there are some countries where there are ample resources and who are not particularly stressed or causing much stress and some countries where the reverse is true. Can I just pick up one point of Eliya's. By allowing women contraception you can solve quite a lot of the population problem without actually having to go any further as there are 200 million women in the world who do not have access to contraception that works.

MC: China is a great example. China had a fertility rate of over 6 children per woman in 1970. By 1980 it was less than 3. This was before the 1 child policy. Before they imposed the policy, parents were already choosing to have families half the size. Why? Because they wanted to. When people have choices in their lives - especially women; when women have access to education, when they become literate, when they can pursue careers they choose to have smaller families. It has a huge impact on fertility rates where you go from 6 to 7 children per woman with no education to 3 or 4.

ZB So, increased prosperity/reduced poverty provide better education?

MC: education...particularly education

ZB: and health facilities for people and then population levels come down

MC And that's something we want to do anyway. Of course we want to have more girls in school. But what we don't want to assume by having access to contraception and even by paying people to use contraception and to be sterilised as has happened in Bangladesh and India and China and penalising those who refuse by kicking them out of public schools and public housing as also happened in many countries. We shouldn't assume that that's actually going to control fertility rates because the fact is we don't know how to control populations even if we wanted to.

NK: I think we are getting the wrong message here. I mean when we are talking about too many people we are not just talking about the numbers. We have considered the resources, you've considered your wealth and other facilities you have. If you cannot manage with those limited resources what do you do? You try to manage your population you try to plan your population in such a way that they can have their own skill. I mean how do you do that? I mean you rightly pointed out that the government has a role to do that. The government can only provide avenues.

ZB: I still don't know if I have had the answer from any of you which is how far is it that high population rates in countries which are an impediment to development or do you do what Matthew suggests which is increase prosperity and in that way

provide and education and that way women have fewer children. That's what happens in every successful situation. Can I have a perspective here from China?

WS: The richer places in China especially in coastal areas in big cities like Shanghai and Tianjin. The local registered people, the population of these areas, the number has been shrinking for the last 15 years. This has only been compensated by immigrants from other parts of China and that's the richest place in China and the population is shrinking so that's very significant.

ZB: Wang Shuo brings up an interesting point here of course because as we know in some parts of the world the problem is not too many people but too few in countries in Eastern Europe, Italy and so on have a shrinking population. That is something do you think that should enter the discussion on the global population crisis?

MC: Well if you actually knew how to plan a population I think you would win the Nobel Prize because no-one knows how to plan populations. It's never been done. The only example, the closest anyone has come has been through the course of policy just like China for example with the one child policy but even then that tended to have the most pernicious consequences that were completely unforeseen. So conversely, we don't know how to make people have more babies.

ZB: Rosamund Mcdougall, in those countries with a decline in population, you're happy with that presumably? You think it's a good idea?

RM: It depends which country you're talking about. Some parts of Eastern Europe populations are declining very rapidly. I've been told that Bulgaria will be empty in a 100 years so I don't think the Bulgarians feel too happy about that. But this is such a small proportion of what's going on in population trends that it is insignificant and the trend is in fact (and this is even taking into that account family planning services improve) we are still expecting another 2 ½ billion people by 2050 and I don't see how by any criteria that can be sustainable.

ZB: Ok, but those countries with shrinking populations, if you were being consistent you should say that's a good thing? Is it?

RM: It's for every country to decide its own population policy but in a world context if you were being purely technical you could say that any decline helps, in a mathematical sense.

ZB: But you could have lots and lots of old people who are not productive and cannot do very much in the country.

NK: Well shrinking population will happen here as well, if you can induce this population with those conditions and development. What is development? Development is a composition of some indicators. If you raise your income, if you give literacy rate a priority and the social indicators like health, the people of Bangladesh will also be reduced to an extent you can't even imagine.



ZB: So the shrinking population is going to be a phenomenon which affects more countries. It's quite a big problem already isn't it?

MC: It's going to be a massive phenomenon. Rosamund said it was insignificant. Well if you believe those projections and you do because you quoted the projection for 2050, the UN is projecting that 150 countries in the world will have below replacement fertility by 2050 and they together will make up 4/5 of world population. So the remaining part of the world population that is still growing may not actually have enough people to replenish all the rest. We may then be competing for immigrants from other countries. Now, whether you think that is a crisis or not, I'm not sure that I would see it as a crisis. I think there are a lot of things you can do. People can work longer. They don't have to retire.

Z.B: Let's see what's happening in China, Wang Shuo, because you have got an ageing population.

WS: Yes I want to add another point on ageing because ageing and shrinking are closely related. In China we do not have to face a shrinking problem in the near future but we are already an ageing society. In 10 years our younger generation will have to support at least 4 parents and at much as 8 grandparents and their own children. Can you imagine that? I do worry for them. Today we have 12% of the population beyond 60 years old and how to support them in the future even though we have a large population with a large portion of them at a working age - this is a severe challenge and getting more severe day by day.

ZB: Rosamund that's what going to happen if your dream comes true. If global population comes down to 5 billion you're going to find that there are fewer and fewer workers to sustain an ageing population.

RM: That's true but the definition of age is very, very different now.

ZB: But you can't go on working until you're 95 can you?

RM: No of course it's a real problem with the numbers of elderly people but between the ages of 55 and 65 there is no reason why people cannot carry on working.

ZB: But where did you get that from because that's what you get isn't it – countries full of octogenarians. I mean they can't drive the buses or work in hospitals and the rest of it.

RM: No country would be full of octogenarians and there is one real basic fallacy in the idea that you can solve the ageing problem by population growth, by having more children at the bottom because what happens is those children at the bottom also grow old and then in 70 or 80 years time you will also have a larger older population so it doesn't work.

ZB: Eliya you wanted to come in here?

EZ: Having more aged populations is also a consequence or progress. I think people are living longer and so on so people also have more opportunities to save for their futures. So the problems are a bit different although governments still have to take that into account as to what will happen, what sort of provision for pensions they will have to make for the older population later on

ZB: Let's just press the pause button here. We've touched on whether there's such a thing as the global population crisis and the twin phenomenon of both declining and increasing populations. So even if you accepted that there was a problem and you wanted to do something about it, can governments actually achieve very much because as we've already touched on it, it is a path which is fraught with difficulties. When everybody talks about birth control and trying to keep populations down your mind turns to China but you've got issues haven't you (WS) with the one child policy. You think it's had some bad effects.

WS: One child policy became official in 1979 and since then the Chinese economy has been growing steadily so people are arguing that one child policy has contributed significantly to the economic growth. Basically that is true.

ZB: They were right to do it? It has brought prosperity?

WS: From an economic perspective that's true. From a social or religious perspective this may not be true. Traditionally speaking Chinese people have big families and our society is based upon big families and relations between families. But today there is no such thing because every family is very, very small; 2 parents, one child. Today in China we have children who will have fewer and fewer children who in the future will support their parents. I think that is a burden you cannot assume. For many people who want more children this is big trouble. In China you may choose to have more than one child but you will have to pay a huge price for it. Not everybody can do so and maybe if you are rich enough you can do so but that make other people who are poor very unhappy and this is very unfair.

ZB: Eliya Zulu, I mean, if you want to reduce populations, look at what has happened in China, people there valued their children but because of the one child policy they couldn't have them, people in Africa love having children too....

EZ: I think, yes, a lot has been written and said about the one child policy in China but again the issue is I think countries have to look at their situation at any given point in time. The main, the sort of framework really for helping counties and addressing population issues was laid out at this conference in 1994 in Cairo, the World Population conference where it was resolved that instead of looking at the population in terms of numbers we should really look at it from a reproductive perspective in terms of allowing couples to have the children they would like to have and the governments to provide the mechanisms for the couples...

ZB: So you don't set a limit, your view is that you don't set a limit as China has done, you don't say 'one child, two children, that's what we'd like you to have'?

EZ: You don't set a limit and evidence has shown that in any given country, once you empower women, once women realise that the decision of how many children to have and when to have them is their own if they have contraception rather than thinking it is up to God, once that sort of a process sets in motion then the end result is that fertility will continue going down.

ZB: Ok Professor Nabi, is Bangladesh perhaps a better example for countries in Africa to follow, because you have brought down the number of children in families from 7 to 2.7 in the last 40 years, precisely because you have made family planning available, better education and health facilities for women?

PN: Yes, I would like to say two things 1) the debate that we are having whether we have family planning or not, reduction of population or not I mean, things will happen in the world whether you induce or not and whether you like it or not. For instance, the completion of the demographic transition occurred in Europe in the last 200 years, it took 200 years to complete, but for other developing countries it is taking 40 or 50 years. If you wait for 200 years for it to complete, because that will happen, it's a must, if you wait 200 years where will Africa go and where will Bangladesh go? That's why the government has taken a strategy to balance the book. That's family planning that's not reduction only. Education and reduction, education and reduction, we have come...

ZB: Which has worked; development and education and so on. Matthew Connelly you say that history is littered with examples of efforts to try to control populations and you don't think it's been great?

MC: No, well the problem all along has been that economists don't know where babies come from.

ZB: Don't they? Well they're not as clever as they think they are then.

MC: No, they don't have a theory that explains, much less predicts why people have children and if you don't know why people have children and when, then you can't shape their behaviour in a way...

ZB: Well surely we know, I mean, in countries like Africa where there isn't a welfare system and so on, children are your security and you have plenty because you worry that some will not reach adulthood and so they're your future really...

MC: Every case has a different explanation...

ZB: Well, most countries broadly speaking, in the developing world, like children because they can't get any kind of welfare system.

MC: Well I like children and I don't have any at all.

ZB: Oh, well you know what I mean, when you say that people don't know why they don't have children surely there is a very compelling reason why they do in the developing world.

MC: The problem there is that when you hear these individual cases like for instance why Bangladesh went from 7 to 2.7 children, why Russia is now at 1.3, why Korea is even lower, you get a different reason for every single case and the reason for that is that we don't have a unified theory of fertility that explains or predicts why people have children and if you don't know why people have children then you can't create programmes that are going to... unless...

ZB: What about the programmes then that you have studied? I mean by and large you say that they are littered with sexism and racism and all the rest of it?

MC: That's what I was going to go on to say, unless you are going to use the power of the state to compel people what you think are better choices. A number of people on this panel have said that they're not talking about the government telling people how many children to have but the fact is in the course of the last 30 years, dozens of different governments have told parents how many children they should have and not only that but they have used incentives – paying them money to be sterilised, they've used disincentives, fining them, kicking them out of public housing, kicking their kids out of school and it works to a certain extent but the effect, 1) tends to be temporary and 2) it often has the most unexpected consequences; so the big one in the case of China is the male/female ratio. The fact that.....

ZB: Too few women, who are all these Chinese men going to marry when they grow up? What is the ratio? 124/100? Lots of Chinese are going to Africa and marrying Africans apparently.. .

WS: Its 106/100 and that's still a lot

ZB: It's projected to be as much as 124/100 in the next few years.

WS: I didn't know that.

ZB: Yes, in a few years.

PN: Well, I think we are going to solve the problem.

ZB: Well, they're all going abroad to marry aren't they?

PN: Well they will find a way out because if we take a static view of this everything this probably cannot be solved, I mean, look at the rainy season, we have enough water, sometimes flooded and in the summer we don't have water what is that supposed to mean, is that a problem that's the nature of summer....

ZB: So you think that it's not a problem? That there is female foeticide going on in China when a woman is pregnant and finds out it's a girl, she gets rid of it?

PN: It is the Chinese people...

ZB: But is that something you defend then? I mean is that alright, there is female foeticide going on in countries when they think they would like to have a boy and they discover it's a girl?

PN: No, no..

ZB: But that's what happens when you have that kind of control.

PN: I know, but it is the Chinese society which will find a way to resolve this thing..

MC: The history of China's one child policy, like the emergency period in India...

PN: Yes, it happens in India too....

ZB: Well, they had the sterilisation programmes in the 70's.

PN: Yes in India the sex issue is imbalanced so they will have to find a way out to resolve that.

MC: So we're going to wash our hands of it?

PN: No, no..

ZB: Rosalind MacDougall?

RM: Well, nobody I think on this side is in favour of any coercive methods of family planning and nobody I speak to is in favour of any coercive...

ZB: Well what about financial incentives then, Rosalind? To have fewer or more children?

RM: Well interestingly, in Europe, 22 countries in Europe have introduced incentives for people to have more babies but there is not much sign that it is working because women do tend to...

ZB: So you think it's a good idea that governments act in that way and offer money basically to have more or fewer children?

RM: I think its peripheral; it's really a cultural thing and a concern about the impacts of having large families on the wider world that matters.

ZB: But do you think it's a good idea or not. I mean if you think about public policy and that kind of thing. Is it something, as a think tank, that you think is a good idea?

RM: You could do things like in the, for example, in the UK you could raise the benefit for the first child, I think it is already tapered in fact, for the second child you get half the money....

ZB: Subsequent children get less...

RM: No, at the moment...

ZB: The first child gets the most and then subsequent children get the same, yes.

RM: Yes, so it is worth thinking about that sort of thing, but I don't think it is that that really makes the difference

ZB: What does make the difference then?

RM: The difference really is individual needs and wants, access to family planning and in terms of the environmental impacts it really matters that people understand the effects of large family size continued over generations. If you have 18 children over 10 generations you're going to.....

ZB: Yes, but nobody has 18 children now do they? You're being a bit extreme there.

RM: Well yes, it is extreme but if you have four children and your four children have four children it is really quite simple multiplication, it expands the worlds population quite quickly.

MC: What matters in terms of the impact on the environment is not the numbers of people, it's the amount of resources that they're consuming.

RM: It's both, its one multiplied by the other

MC: Well let me give you an example. If you took a population like Bangladesh for instance, where people live in large multigenerational houses and then you transitioned to a different kind of society where people tended to live in ones and twos and threes; even if that society was smaller in number it would actually be consuming more material goods because the number of households, the number of households would have increased, and the number of households worldwide is now increasing at twice the rate of population growth and that, if you think that were going to have a problem because of its impact on the environment, it's the number of households, its not the number of people.

RM: So Americans would like to live 100 to a house, is that a solution?

MC: Do Americans want to live 100 to a house? Absolutely not! They've been building mansions and subdivisions and driving SUV's and it is completely unsustainable.

RM: I agree with you but it's not the answer to have a 100 people per house.

MC: What I'm saying is, why is that when people talk about over-population, they don't look to the suburbs of the most affluent counties and the kind of lifestyles that people lead there, why is that they look at Bangladesh?

ZB: Well, he's looking at Bangladesh himself.

PN: When you have this size of a population you have a threat to your national security as well as to your international global security. I mean, too many people living in a city having nothing, it creates anger inside. If you have more people having less it creates a mental state where you have a chance to have it, and when you say that consumption product will come, well fine, consumption product will come, you like it or not, with the development of science and technology.

ZB: OK, well looking briefly at Bangladesh's efforts to reduce its population, would you say it's been a success?

PN: Well, with the present condition you can consider Bangladesh as a low fertility country.

ZB: Some people say that when you look at problems of populations shrinking in one part of the world and increasing in another part, one solution would be why not get populations, people, to move, migration to go to the richer countries? I mean you have a lot of internal migration in China for instance, is that one way perhaps of solving population in-balances?

WS: I believe so, the internal migration in China can prove it the coastal area of China is much richer than the other parts of China but also has a much lower birth rate, the area of Shanghai and Tianjin the local register population is shrinking in the last 15 years and they are only compensating with the immigrants from the other parts of China, today there are 150million migrant workers working in the big cities and it is good for them and it's good for the cities they are working in.

ZB: Eliya Zulu, do you think it's a good idea? Migration, from the countries that are overpopulated, as in Africa, to go to Europe for instance?

EZ: I think the whole issue of population again, to go to the initial problem that we started discussing, I think it's a problem to the extent that there is no free mobility of people from various parts of the world to the other, to the extent that there is no equitable distribution of resources or opportunities and so on. But I think the truth is that the countries that are having the shrinking population problem will not be willing to take anybody who can go there so I think you can't have an argument that it's ok for some populations to grow rapidly because others don't have enough people. Because most of these countries, a big chunk of their populations are illiterate people and the developed countries tend to get the highly skilled people to go there, and if you promote this migration, then the end result is that the counties that are actually the developing countries, the ones who are having the rapid

progression of growth issues, the ones that are poorer are going to even get poorer as more of their personnel or human resources are going to shift to the west.

ZB: But it's really helped Bangladesh hasn't it Professor Nabi, so much money....

PN: Migration is a positive indicator of social development. The only reason we cannot use that as vehicle is because of the immigration policy of other shrinking populations. Because, if you look at the history of American immigration policy, the open policy was up to 1917, then the restricted policy came up to 1965, and then after what happened? So if you have the global mobility that you mentioned then I think then you will have less things to talk about with incentives and other things.

ZB: Rosalind McDougall, is migration perhaps part of the solution when we talk about population?

RM: It's part of the solution in some areas of the world but the numbers are simply too vast for it to be any kind of long term solution, the numbers of people who might need to migrate or want to migrate in the future; it won't work unless you actually stabilise the population at the same time.

MC: I think that if you look back at history and I do, I admit it, I'm a historian. But the reason is that because you can't use the future as evidence. You know, what may be may be, but you can't use the future to say that this can't go on or we're not going to support this many people and so on. But if you look back through history, what you see is that the way in which the world is divided up now to keep people separate and not equal is a relatively recent invention. If you go back 100 years, people were moving around the globe with much more freedom than they have today, and so if you believe that capital and goods and ideas ought to be able to circulate around the world and make the world a better place, then why can't people? So I think that's the way we're headed.

RM: I think that's a very fundamental point which is that you're implying that we cannot take evidence about the future.

MC: We can't use the future as evidence.

RM: Just look at what is happening with climate change. If we do as you say, and do nothing, what will the consequences be, because we're not allowed to take the future as evidence?

MC: Well, why do you say I want to do nothing? I want to reduce consumption because that's what's causing global warming.

ZB: Well, let's just finish with a final question to all of you, yes or no. Eliya Zulu do you think that world population is going to continue growing?

EZ: The world population is going to continue to grow for a long time to come, even when fertility rates go down quite a bit because there is a momentum that has



already been established and I think it's very, very important that governments should be there to help people.

ZB: Wang Chao?

WS: The world population, this current growth I think will continue. However, in history the world population grows and then it contracts in history. For example in China today the official number for the total fertility rate is 1.8, but the unofficial but more credible number is 1.57. That means in ten generations of Chinese people there will only be a little more than 100 million Chinese people left, so anything can happen to the growth process.

ZB: Rosalind McDougall, do you think the world population will continue growing?

RM: It's inevitable that it will continue growing but it could grow more slowly if people made the effort.

ZB: Professor Nabi?

PN: Yes, it will continue growing, and for some countries it will grow at a slower rate and for some at a higher rate; so it will continue.

ZB: Matthew Connelly?

MC: I think it will too, but you know we've been surprised before and I wouldn't be surprised if we were surprised again.

ZB: Well thank you very much indeed, panel. We've got to stop it there. I think that certainly through this debate we have managed to contribute to a subject which many people believe has for so long been brushed under the carpet. I think we have managed to illustrate why this is a difficult subject that does present governments and policy makers with so many challenges and dilemmas. I hope you that have enjoyed and learned a bit from our very lively and timely discussions. Thank you to all of our panel, thank you to the audience here, from the Lalbagh fort in the Bangladeshi capital of Dhaka, from me Zeinab Badawi, goodbye!