

“From Seven to Nine Billion Souls”.

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3. From Seven to Nine Billion Souls

If we don't halt population growth with justice and compassion, it will be done for us by nature, brutally and without pity – and will leave a ravaged world.

*(Dr. Henry W. Kendall (1926-1999),
1990 Nobel Laureate in Physics)*

Today, the counter of the global Current Population Clock shows a total of more than 7,000 million¹ souls. Our numbers are still growing explosively, and by 2050, the world community will probably have increased by yet another 2.3 billion². This would be good news if the future would have a happy life in store for all people. However, the greater part of population growth takes place in the poorest countries with the least amenities and the worst governments. Meanwhile, in many rich countries where quality of life is higher, the population is shrinking. Despite economic growth, the percentage of the world population that lives in general wellbeing can decline.

According to the best researched demographic insights, there will approximately be 9.3 billion people in 2050³. The UN has based this figure on an expected decrease of 2.56 (in 2005 to 2010) to 2.02 children per woman (2045 to

¹ U.S. Census Bureau . *U.S. & World Population Clocks*. Washington, DC, May 2012.
<http://www.census.gov/main/www/popclock.html>.

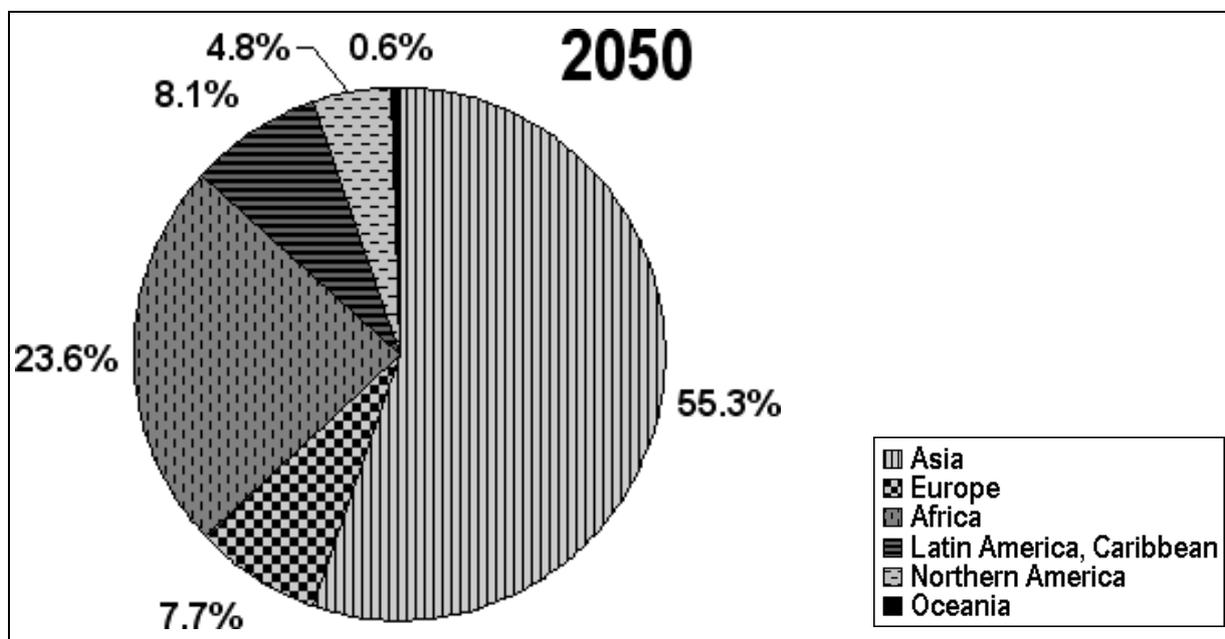
² United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. “Analytical Figures”. *World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision*. New York: United Nations, 2011.
http://esa.un.org/wpp/Analytical-Figures/htm/fig_1.htm.

³ Ibid.

2050). In the poorest countries, the UN expects a decrease of 4.39 to 2.41 (almost by half). To this end, the availability of resources for birth control and access to family planning need to be stepped up. If the current average birth rate in all countries remains as is, in 2050, the world's population will have risen to 11 billion⁴.

In nearly thirty very poor countries, the population is likely to double because the current population is very young and the amount of children per woman and man high. Figure 3.1 shows the composition of the world's population in 2050. While populations in the West, Eastern Europe and Japan shrink, those in the South and East of the world will grow.

Figure 3.1: World Population per region (2050)⁵



In the past four decades, it was assumed that economic growth would lead to a natural population decrease. But in the poorest countries and cultures, where children are regarded as a security for old age, this process of reduction is proceeding much too slowly. As a result, huge numbers of children die prematurely from hunger and disease.

It has been scientifically proven that birth control increases prosperity and wellbeing and that it diminishes poverty⁶.

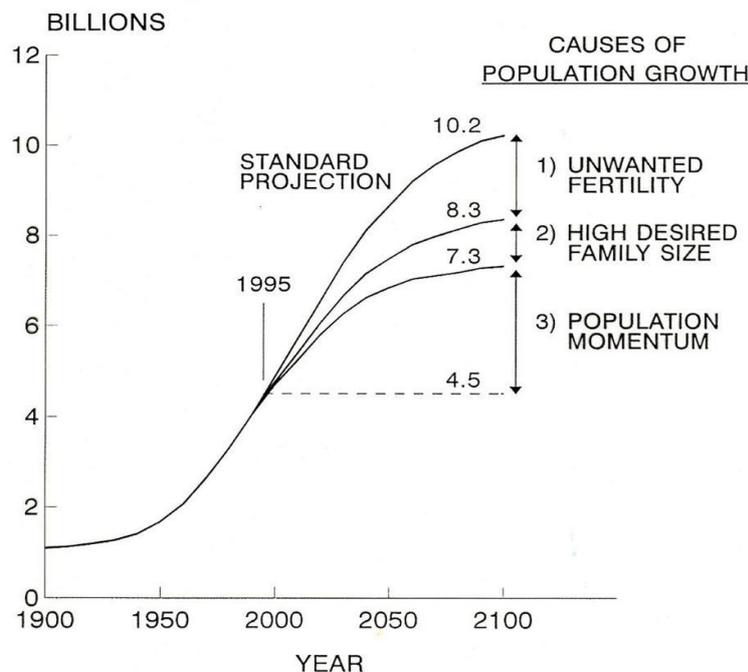
⁴ Ibid.

⁵ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. "Analytical Figures". *World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision*. New York: United Nations, 2011. http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Analytical-Figures/htm/fig_5.htm.

The population growth rate and the number of children per female will only fall if women themselves are enabled to choose whether to have or not to have children. Women and men should be convinced that there are advantages to having an average of two children per couple instead of six or ten.

Obviously, limiting population growth is not only a matter of educating and providing contraceptives. Having many children is oftentimes perceived as a token of strength and virtue, while it is especially the number of sons which enhances the parents' 'prestige'. In sum, the socio-economic situation, lack of social services, insurance and poor medical care – the reason of many new-borns' early death –, as well as religious and cultural beliefs all play a role. Therefore, in order to reduce parents' wishes to have children, various measures need to be taken, such as

Figure 3.2: Causes of population growth⁷



provision for the elderly – measures that are a relatively heavy financial burden on poor and weakly governed states.

The chart above shows how great the consequences of excessive population increase are. If from 1995 on, women would have had, or will have, no more children than they wish, there would be some 2 billion less people on earth in 2050. Moreover, far fewer pregnancies would end in the death of mother or baby.

⁶ Cates, W. Jr. "Family planning: the essential link to achieving all eight Millennium Development Goals". *Contraception*, vol. 81(2010): 460-461; Allen, R.H. "The Role of Family Planning in Poverty Reduction". *Obstetrics & Gynecology*, vol. 110(2007): 999-1002.

⁷ Bongaarts, John. "Population Policy Options in the Developing World". *Science*, 263:5148 (1994), 771-776. <http://www.sciencemag.org/content/263/5148/771>. DOI: 10.1126/science.8303293.

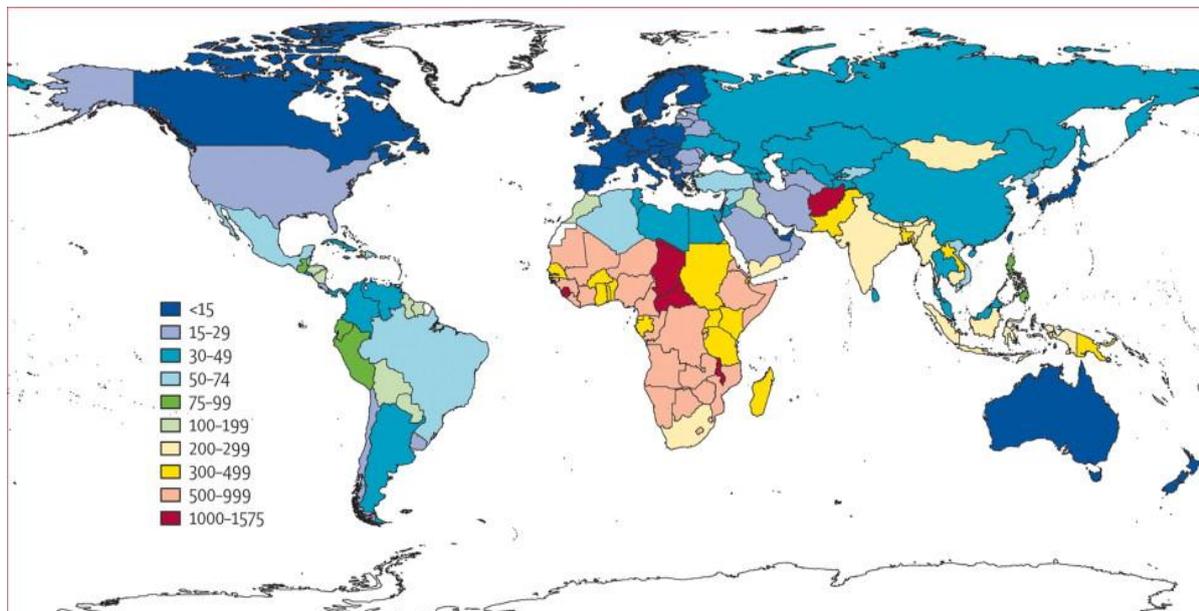
Thus, the drawing still gives a too positive image of the harsh reality.

Especially those girls and women who are underprivileged, poorly educated and oppressed by men bear many children. Very few unwanted children in poor countries receive proper care and training. Many young women die from pregnancy-related complications. Pregnant employees are frequently fired. There is large scale infection of HIV / AIDS and other sexually transmissible diseases.

Despite solemn declarations from all governments at the 1994 World Summit in Cairo that family planning should be encouraged, the financing thereof has since gone down by 36 per cent. There are some serious misconceptions at the root of this: the leadership of the Roman Catholic Church, for example, opposes medically necessary measures such as condoms. Out of “respect for life” it almost entirely states a ban on contraceptives and careful, medical, legal abortion. This has resulted in an increase in the number of unwanted children which are fed, cared for and raised poorly. Is contributing to high infant mortality from lack and terrible diseases a form of respect?

Annually, 68.000 women and girls die because of illegally, incompetently performed abortions, and millions are maimed⁸.

Figure 3.3: Maternal mortality ratio per 100 000 live births (2008)⁹



⁸ Grimes, David A., Janie Benson, Susheela Singh, Mariana Romero, Bela Ganatra, Friday E. Okonofua, and Iqbal H. Shah. “Unsafe abortion: the preventable pandemic”. *The Lancet*, 368: 9550 (2006), 1908-1919. http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/general/lancet_4.pdf.

⁹ Hogan, M.C., K.J. Foreman, M. Naghavi, S.Y. Ahn, M.Wang, S.M. Makela, A.D. Lopez, R. Lozano, and C.J.L. Murray. “Maternal mortality for 181 countries, 1980-2008: a systematic analysis of progress towards Millennium Development Goal 5”. *The Lancet*, 375:9726(2010), 1609-1623. <http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736%2810%2960518-1/fulltext>

Research has shown that the number of victims of illegal and improper medical treatment is high, and that prohibition does not lead to a reduction of abortions¹⁰. Such ‘ethical’ points of view, like those of the Vatican, which have a harmful effect on hundreds of millions of people, are also found in other religions and cultures, although it should be clearly stated that the faithful oftentimes have a better understanding of life than their religious leadership. Incidentally, not all religions disapprove of contraceptives: many Muslims are open to them.

Approximately 137 million women would want to take contraceptives, but cannot obtain them. By providing these, the mortality rate of pregnant women could be brought back with at least one quarter¹¹.

Table 3.1 shows the world we live in. In rich countries, six out of every 1000 new-borns die, while in the least prosperous countries their death rate exceeds 100. In the poorest countries in Africa, 167 out of every 1000 girls between 15 and 19 years of age give birth; in the Netherlands the comparable figure is 4. High infant mortality partly clarifies why in the poorest countries parents are motivated to have more pregnancies than in rich countries: since they assume that many of their young children will die soon, they want to have a few left to provide for them in old age.

Some politicians are of the opinion that a larger population gives them more power and prestige. The Iranian government decided in 2010, that the country must grow towards 150 million inhabitants. In 1979, there were 36 million. In cooperation with the United Nations, sound policies to promote birth control had contributed to the reduction of Iran’s population growth from 4 per cent to 1.9 between 1988 and 2006. But in 2010, Prime Minister Ahmedinijad, calling birth control ‘godless Western import’, abolished such policies and announced high benefits for new-borns in order to double the size of Iran¹².

Leaders impose their personal, often semi-religious ethics upon others. They adopt an attitude which is influenced by and dependent on religious associations, because they need the backing and votes of the respective religious leaders and their followers. Some American presidents (e.g. Ronald Reagan and George Bush Jr.) also made this mistake and even abrogated support to international organisations that were advocating birth control and the prevention of AIDS. In 2009, President Barack Obama immediately corrected this erroneous decision made by his predecessors.

¹⁰ Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (ihme). *Maternal Mortality* (2008). www.healthmetricsandevaluation.org.

¹¹ Lakshminarayanan, Rama, et al. *Population Issues in the 21st Century*. World Bank: Washington DC, 2007.

¹² “Iran gaat werken aan 150 miljoen burgers”. *NRC Handelsblad*, 28 July 2010.

<http://archieff.nrc.nl/index.php/2010/Juli/28/Buitenland/05/Iran+gaat+werken+aan+150+miljoen+burgers//check=Y>

The number of pregnancy and childbirth related fatalities, especially in Africa and very poor Asian countries, is horrifyingly high.

Table 3.1: Births and life expectancy¹³

	Child Mortality per 1000 births	Life Expectancy m/f	Births per 1000 15-19 year old females
World	45	66,1/70,5	52
Developed countries ¹⁴	6	74,2/80,9	21
Less developed ¹⁵	50	64,6/68,1	57
Least developed ¹⁶	79	55,6/58,2	103
Central Africa	109	47,5/50,3	167
For comparison: The Netherlands	4	78,2/82,4	4

Moreover, 97 per cent of maternal mortality manifests itself in poor countries¹⁷. Two million children are infected with AIDS. In addition, many lose their parents to the disease. A grave lack of teachers and healthcare workers causes the collapse of society and with it that of the state and the economy. The result is distress, uprootedness and civil war.

Countries with a very young population (of a relatively low average age) are at high risk of political violence such as (civil) war¹⁸. The correlation between population structure and the risk of civil war has been clearly indicated. Eighty per cent of the civil wars that erupted between 1970 and 1999 took place in countries where at least 60 per cent of the population was under thirty. In addition, nine out of every ten countries with young populations have an autocratic or very weak government¹⁹.

In the last decade of the twentieth century, the risk of civil war in countries with a young population proved to be three times higher than in countries with a more balanced age distribution. Countries where more than 55 per cent of the

¹³ United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). *State of World Population 2010*. New York: unfpa. www.unfpa.org.

¹⁴ Developed countries include North America, Japan, European countries, Australia and New Zealand

¹⁵ Less developed countries include countries in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia (excluding Japan), Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia.

¹⁶ The least developed countries are found in parts of Africa (especially Central Africa), parts of Asia (including Afghanistan and Nepal), Haiti and certain islands (or groups thereof) such as the Maldives and Samoa. This list is based on the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), *The Least Developed Countries Report 2010*.

¹⁷ "Maternal Mortality". Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, 2008. www.healthmetricsandevaluation.org; Hogan, M.C. et al. "Maternal mortality for 181 countries, 1980-2008: a systematic analysis of progress towards Millennium Development Goal 5". *The Lancet*, 375:9726(2010), 1609-1623.

¹⁸ Urdal, Henrik. "A Clash of Generations? Youth Bulges and Political Violence". *International Studies Quarterly*, 50. 3(2006): 607-630. <http://www.prio.no/Publications/Publication/?x=357>.

¹⁹ Leahy, Elizabeth et al., "The Shape of Things to Come, Why Age Structure Matters to a Safer, More Equitable World". Population Action Council: Washington DC. [Populationaction.org](http://www.populationaction.org), April 2007. <http://www.populationaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/SOTC.pdf>.

population is over thirty years of age prove to be more stable, more democratic and more developed.

High population increase is most common in unprosperous countries with poor governance. Inadequate governance also makes for a heightened risk of violence. A significant part of the large, young population in such countries entails scores of poorly trained and unemployed young men who are easily recruited for extremism and violence. This is all spurred on by the distribution of cheap ‘small’ arms. Weapons provide power. They can destroy not only the state, but also the smallest social communities (villages, extensive families and households).

In the long run, population structures will show further changes. The overall aging of the population, a process which is currently taking place in Japan and Europe, shall also affect a number of non-Western countries. China will soon be confronted with this phenomenon. In order to cope, all of these countries need to improve their social security, retirement and healthcare systems.

The stage between high population increase and an effectively aging population is liable to cover a timespan of several generations. In this period of demographic transition, a growing population can be an economic incentive for a country, provided that accommodations for the proper training of new generations are made at an early stage. During the transitional stage, action should also be taken to absorb the future effects of an aging population, by arranging for decent old age pension and health insurance systems. In practice, however, there is little attention for such generational policies.

Given the low priority most countries put on sex education and the provision of contraceptives, a continuation of the here outlined explosive demographic development should be assumed. The world must therefore prepare for a total population of about 9.3 billion people in forty years, which will rise to approximately 10 billion at the end of this century.



Image © Magnus Bergmar/
worldschildrensprize.org

FINALLY FREE (IQBAL MASIH²⁰, PAKISTAN)

In 1982, **Iqbal Masih** is born in Pakistan. When he is four years of age, his older brother marries, for which their single mother takes out a 600 rupee loan (the equivalent of about 10 euros) from a carpet manufacturer. This man tells her that the debt can only be repaid if

²⁰ In 2000, Iqbal Masih was awarded the first World’s Children’s Prize for the Rights of the Child posthumously. The World’s Children’s Prize, which is open to all schools, is ‘owned’ by 24 million pupils of 53,500 schools in 101 countries. In their latest Global Vote, 7.1 million of these pupils chose Nelson Mandela and Graça Machel as Decade Child Rights Heroes of the children of the world. The World’s Children’s Prize is the largest educational program in the world in the field of children’s rights and democracy. For more information, please refer to www.worldschildrensprize.org

Iqbal will come and work for him in the factory for one year. His mother agrees. She is wholly unaware that during this year the debt will be increased by a compensation for bed and board, use of materials and penalties for so called 'transgressions' by Iqbal. This would allow the manufacturer to prolong Iqbal's term of service.

Iqbal ends up chained to the factory's loom. He works for twelve to fourteen hours a day, six days a week. The meals are scanty and the beatings are plentiful. After six years, when Iqbal is ten, the loan has risen to 13,000 rupees (about 216 euros). He realizes that the debt is so high he will never be able to redeem his freedom²¹. He decides to escape. It enables him to attend a meeting of the Bonded Labour Liberation Front (BLLF). There it is made clear to him that the loan system has been officially abolished by the government and that all loans of this nature have been declared null and void.

From that moment on, Iqbal is free. Along with other children who were once slaves, he can finally attend school. Iqbal spreads the word among other children. He explains to them that they are not obliged to stay with their carpet manufacturers. As a consequence, more and more children leave their workplace, much to the fury of their exploiters. Eventually, Iqbal's mission leads to a movement involving thousands of child-slaves leaving their factories.

With great commitment he makes up for his lost school years. For example, in two years he completes schoolwork which would normally take four years, whilst not allowing the physical disabilities he contracted during his years of child labour to be an impediment. He has a curved back and kidney problems, he suffers from arthritis, from stunted growth, and his respiratory system is affected.

The BLLF invites him to travel abroad and report on child labour in Pakistan. He seizes the opportunity and recounts his story in Sweden and in the United States, which brings him international publicity. On 16 April 1995, Iqbal returns home. That very evening he is shot and killed, probably by carpet dealers.

Iqbal dies at the age of 13. In 2000, the "World Children's Prize for the Rights of the Child" is dedicated to him. He has become a hero for many children currently in bondage²².

BIRTH RELATED ISSUES AND HUMAN RIGHTS

In recent years, attention for the empowerment of women and better health care with regard to sexuality and family planning has grown. The Millennium Development Goals, for which, on paper, there is worldwide consensus, include

²¹ Bergmar, Magnus. "Laureates: Iqbal Masih". *The World's Children's Prize for the Rights of the Child*.
<http://worldschildrensprize.org/prizelaurates/iqbal-masih>

²² "Position Paper Stop Child Labour". *Stop Child Labour – School is the Best Place to Work*.
<http://www.stopchildlabour.org/Stop-Childlabour/News-Items/Position-Paper-Stop-Child-Labour>.

two important agreements: the equality of men and women's rights in all countries and cultures, and a significant reduction of maternal mortality worldwide.

Women, when given the opportunity to decide for themselves how many children they would like to have, opt for smaller families. In most countries, a greater respect for sexual human rights and health care leads to a reduction in population growth and renders a higher and happier life expectancy for children who, because of improved educational and health conditions, will also show a higher labour productivity later in life. Sexual and reproductive rights as well as health services contribute to slowing down the increasing over-burdening of environment and nature, especially in fast-growing, poorer countries.

Stemming high birth rates and encouraging a balanced population structure over a period of 12-15 years can contribute gradually to reduce the risks of violence. Thus, over time, the provision of contraceptives, sexual health care and information, and an education focused on human rights and personal autonomy instead of oppression and the abuse of girls and women all contribute to policies of development and establishing peace.

FEWER NEGLECTED CHILDREN

The main problem is not that too many children are born, but that they are provided for inadequately. Many infants die from illness and malnutrition. Children born to women who suffer from hunger have a lower brain weight and a smaller chance to become fully productive citizens. Many toddlers and older children do not receive adequate education and schooling. Large numbers of young people are unable to find meaningful work and lack sensible rules and concepts. They grow up in social disarray, in states without legal order where violence is rampant. In all of these fields, better governance and policies are needed. Each of these topics will be addressed in the following chapters.

Women and girls' independent authority of decision should be broadened. This requires better education and training of girls, but, importantly, also that of boys and men, in order to equip them with a greater sense of responsibility. Legislation and common law reflecting ancient concepts about sexuality, relationships, family formation and reproduction need to be reformed.

When aiming to achieve a balanced population structure, it is equally necessary to fight hunger and poverty. In developing countries where the income

per capita rises, the average number of children a woman has will gradually decrease²³.

If fewer unwanted and unplanned babies are born in circumstances of abject poverty, disease, violence and oppressive government, the virulent decline of the very poorest countries can be broken. Since this all begins with family planning, those who want to help alleviate human suffering can best start at that beginning.

INDERJIT KHURANA (INDIA)²⁴

Indian railway stations are bustling affairs. Travellers of all types and sizes come and go. At such stations there are also a lot of people who sell things, offer services or beg. Many of them are children.



Image: © Kim Naylor/
worldschildrensprize.org

Schoolteacher **Inderjit Khurana** wanted to bring some fun into the lives of these children and began reading stories on the platforms. First only a few children came to listen, sing and dance. But the group grew. At a certain moment, the children began to ask why they could not read the stories on their own. Why must she read to them? Thus, Inderjit began to teach them to read.

A few months later this had become the first Platform School in Bhubaneswar, an important city on the coast of North India. She had over 100 students in the chalk marked square that demarcated the 'classroom'. Inderjit began to ask other teachers to volunteer and many agreed.

In 1985, Inderjit founded the Ruchika Social Service Organisation (RSSO). The motto of RSSO is: if the child cannot come to the school, then the school will come to the child. From that moment on, the project changed Inderjit's life; for when she became better acquainted with the children and their families she noticed they lacked much more than education.

Countless children without a future live in the slums surrounding the train stations: there are those that are from very poor families, or orphans, or abused and run-aways from bad circumstances. Some beg, but most work; they clean, sell things, save bottles, search in garbage for things that can be sold or eaten, or polish shoes. They will do anything to earn a few rupees. However, there are many dangers: gangs, rape, prostitution, drugs, AIDS and other diseases. These conditions would drive most of us to despair. But Inderjit did not look the other way. Why do these children not attend school? Regular schools are absent in the slums; they are too far off, even if the children could afford to pay for school uniforms, books and the like.

Many parents and children in this community are not aware of the benefits of schooling. But sometimes, even parents who do are not prepared or do not have the

²³ *The Economist*, 31 oktober 2009. 'Briefing: Fertility and Living Standards', pp. 29-32. Print. Online: "Fertility and living standards: Go forth and multiply a lot less". <http://www.economist.com/node/14743589>.

²⁴ Inderjit Khurana received the 2007 World's Children's Honorary Award (please see note 20).

opportunity to let their children go to school. Boys are often sent away to work and earn money. Girls, even as young as 5 years of age, are sometimes left at home to mind their younger siblings and the housework.

Many of the children who come to the RSSO railway station schools tend to be a bit suspicious. Their experience is that well-dressed people do not like dirty children. They know that they are different from the neat school children they see. To most of these little street vagrants the idea of school does not occur.

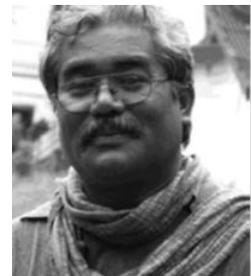
The motto 'zero barriers' means that the schools should be close to the childrens' place of residence. Education is free. Class schedules are chosen as convenient as possible, and the schools are also open to the sisters and brothers whom they take care of. This is especially necessary to facilitate girls. Because the children have much on their mind, such as making money or finding food (or drugs), or must listen to their parents or others in their community, 'zero barriers' means that them may come and go according to their own needs.

Hunger or disease may deter a child from studying. Therefore, RSSO provides food, medical care, hygiene and advice. Staff members give the children a bath every Saturday. Just taking care of the body reinforces their self-confidence.

The program of instruction starts with informal activities such as singing, acting, puppet shows and dancing. Next, conventional teaching methods are applied, so that the children will be able to maintain themselves when attending a regular school afterwards. Because most children cannot afford a regular school, special sponsorship programs are set up. Staff members also assist as mentors to promote the childrens' chances of success. RSSO estimated that in 2007, a total of about 50,000 children have been reached through the program. Ninety per cent of the children in the vicinity of these schools have visited them. RSSO now helps about 5,000 children aged six to fourteen through Platform Schools and through Alternative Schools in the shantytowns situated in the whereabouts of a station²⁵.

A DIFFERENT FUTURE FOR SLAVE GIRLS IN THE SEX INDUSTRY (THAILAND)

When he was a child in Thailand, a development employee of the U.S. Peace Corps encouraged **Sompop Jantraka** to study. He became an economist. When he was doing a study on the economic situation of Northern Thailand, it became clear to him that Mae Sai, a town in the north, was a major source for the supply of girls for the sex trade. The money poor parents received for their daughters was equivalent to several annual wages. When they noticed that their neighbours earned a lot of money because their daughters were active in prostitution, parents frequently conceived the idea to cash in on their own daughters. They were hoping



²⁵ Neyman, Patricia F. "Extraordinary People From Around the World". *Pat's Educational Enterprises*, 2009. Web. http://pats-eduent.net/xpeople_intro.htm.

for a better future for themselves and their daughters. But oftentimes, the children end up as sex slaves in a network from which it is impossible to escape.

From that moment on, Sompop was on a mission: to rescue children before they take the path of prostitution. Within a year he established the organization DEP (Daughters Education Programme), which cooperates with parents and teachers. They indicate which families are in a difficult financial position and are more likely to lose children to the sex trade. These children are offered a safe haven with education and training in meaningful occupations. Thus, the children are less prone to fall for the false promises of sex employers.