

# Foreword

On June 30, 1999, Joseph Chamie, then Director of the Population Division of United Nations, addressed the 21st Special Session of the General Assembly in New York:

In my statement today, I would like to focus my remarks on what I have in this box in front of me. This little box contains something that is familiar to nearly all of you ... it's a piggy bank.... It contains pennies. How many? Exactly 200 pennies ... Mr. Chairman, there are three billion people who have less than 200 pennies to live on each day. Yes, three billion people, half of the world's population [then] .... Among them, 1.3 billion people do not have clean water; 130 million children do not go to school; and 40,000 children die every day because of hunger-related diseases.

Thus did Joseph Chamie dramatize the plight of the world's poor for the prosperous assembled delegates. After bringing statistics vividly to life, he urged his listeners to solve the problems of dire poverty:

without committing sufficient resources to the social and economic development of men, women and children, it is unlikely that we will be able to achieve a peaceful world with a richer life for all its people.... Mr. Chairman, while it is true that the future is uncertain, it is also true that now is the time for action .... The decisions and actions of today will dramatically affect the quality of life and living conditions of future generations.

This brief speech touches on some of the major themes and illustrates some of the approaches of Joseph Chamie's new book, *Population Levels, Trends, and Differentials: More Important Population Matters*. In the title, *More* refers to his previous book, *Births, Deaths, Migrations and Other Important Population Matters: A Collection of 135 Short Essays* that he published on the Internet from 2001 to 2020. In both books, the facts—the demographic, economic, and social statistics, the estimates, and projections—are always, but only, the starting point. Effective action in the service of the well-being of all people is the goal. Chamie combines disciplined thinking with lively, transparent writing.

Many of the 80 essays in this new collection draw attention to a neglected or unanticipated problem without specifying the solution, or solutions, to the problem. Chamie implicitly recognizes that solutions to many of the problems of political demography can be reached only through a political process.

He modestly refrains from either predicting or pretending to dictate the outcome of the political process that will be required to solve the problems he identifies. Rather, he calls for attention to the problems and for work to solve them.

Who is this Joseph Chamie, in addition to being a former Director of the United Nations Population Division at UN Headquarters? At the UN, he was the deputy secretary-general for the 1994 United Nations International Conference for Population and Development.

Dr. Chamie earned a doctorate in the sociology of population from the University of Michigan. He taught at universities in the United States and abroad and conducted academic research on fertility, marriage, population estimates and projections, ageing, urbanization, mortality, gender, international migration, irregular migration, and population and development policy.

He worked in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, including 6 years in Beirut with the UN. For some years in a rural Indian village, he worked in a national health program. He knows what he is talking about, on the ground and in academia.

After he retired from the UN, he served as director of research at the Center for Migration Studies in New York City, then retired again to Portland, Oregon. There he produces an unstoppable, unmatched stream of short, insightful, judicious essays on demography and allied topics and their larger social, economic, and cultural implications.

The essays collected here are a peerless compendium of political demography. They are clear-eyed, nonideological, and undogmatic. (Full disclosure: I am a co-author of one of them.) Their major themes are age structure, climate change, development of economies and society (if that sounds boring, then you have not read his essay on androids and sexbots), fertility (including abortion and low birth rates), population growth and stabilization, households, international migration and undocumented or irregular migration, death rates and lifestyle and vaccination, policies, and refugees.

These essays are driven by a passion to make the world better and an indignation that we act on so little of what we know. They relish controversies and address them forthrightly.

Please read, enjoy, learn, and use what you learn to take action.

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# Population Levels, Trends, and Differentials

More Important Population Matters

 Springer