Happiness, welfare and ethics: dissonant consequences and conflicting values

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Abstract: This paper draws attention to an uncomfortable ethical issue with regard to happiness and welfare. The introduction of Western healthcare to Africa has resulted in significant population growth, with implications for human and animal welfare. However, the issue of population control or withdrawing health aid raises serious ethical concerns. This paper introduces the ethical problem and the factors giving rise to it. It then provides an exploratory analysis of the various ethical positions from which this problem can be viewed, with an eye to maximising human and animal welfare. Recent psychological work on welfare is considered when discussing the different ethical approaches. The discussion highlights the fact that conflicts in values can occur, and ways of resolving these are discussed.

Keywords: welfare; animals; future generations; ethics; aid; healthcare.

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1 Introduction

"One needs to be clear whose welfare counts. Should one consider only the welfare of currently living human beings? What about the welfare of those not yet born and of those who might, as the result of one policy or another, not even be conceived? Are the interests of future generations adequately represented via the concerns of those who are now living for those who will come after them?... there is also the question of whether one should consider the welfare – or at least the pains and pleasures – of other animals." [Hausman and McPherson, (2006), pp.101–102]

One of the most pressing economic problems in the world for the last 50 years has been the poverty in sub-Saharan Africa. Aid agencies have devoted significant resources to the problem but poverty remains. Negative consequences of that aid are now apparent. Aid has had a significant impact in raising population growth (Azarnert, 2009; Cuberes and Tsui, 2007), while other authors have identified the link between western health advances and population growth (Ngalamulume, 2013; Cohen, 1995). Population growth increases the level of human activity, which increases destruction of habitat and extinction of species (UNEP, 2002). Population growth also increases the numbers of humans experiencing poverty in the future, as a report published recently by the World Health Organisation notes:

“in stagnant economies, the notion is undeniable that population growth inevitably boosts the number of poor people - as has happened in sub-Saharan Africa where the estimated number of individuals living on less than a dollar a day rose from 164 million in 1981 to 316 million in 2001.” [Cleland et al., (2006), p.3]

These consequences raise two questions. First, when considering welfare should we only consider the satisfaction of humans? What about animals? It is natural that humans place priority on their own species, but how much should a human forego for the sake of an animal? Does it matter if that animal is plentiful in number or on the verge of extinction? The second question, is should we also consider future generations? The future may not be certain, but in some cases the tide of events has operated with such consistency that the forces at work strongly indicate that many people will live a life of deprivation. When a land exceeds its carrying capacity, conflicts over resources are inevitable, and raise serious ethical questions, with implications for human and animal welfare.

Failure to give sufficient attention to the ethical dimension of development economics led to the emergence of ‘development ethics’ as a distinct discipline (Goulet, 1995). In determining welfare, development ethics emphasises the values underlying development and considers the different value systems of societies, the role of nature, and the desired changes that lead to a good society and a good way of living (Astroulakis, 2012). However, this approach has not solved the ethical problems such as that existing in Africa, as Goulet (1995, p.126), the father of development ethics states:

“Conflicts over priorities are inevitable. Cruel choices, such as whether to risk irreversibly damaging some ecosystem to satisfy the immediate needs for food or fuel of an impoverished populace, will not be eliminated; and no pre-existing answers, normative and operational, are to be found or discovered anywhere.”

To draw attention to these issues, this paper offers an exploratory analysis of a wider consideration of welfare and happiness to include animals and future generations. This article seeks to advance debate by exploring different value systems that guide aid and human and animal welfare in Sub-Saharan Africa. It considers the negative impacts of aid, conflicting value systems and draws on recent psychological work on welfare. The terms happiness, welfare and subjective wellbeing (SWB) will be used interchangeably.

The next section defines the ethical problem and how population growth is affecting the natural environment with negative consequence. Section 3 then links the problem to different ethical approaches and different types of aid. Recent research on welfare and happiness is drawn upon. Value systems that argue for sanctity of human life and maintaining biodiversity are also considered. Section 4 recognises that the negative consequences can lead to conflict in value systems. It is possible to carry two conflicting

value systems and this can lead to cognitive dissonance. Ways of resolving that dissonance that allow people to avoid the problem are explored.

2 The ethical problem

2.1 *The great species swap*

“I’ve seen wildlife under mounting human pressure all over the world and it’s not just from human economy or technology – behind every threat is the frightening explosion in human numbers. I’ve never seen a problem that wouldn’t be easier to solve with fewer people, or harder, and ultimately impossible, with more.” (Attenborough, 2009)

In 2009, Sir David Attenborough brought attention to what is arguably one of the most pressing problems in the world; the effect of the growing human population on the environment and other species. He readily recognised the need for a constraint on human population, but reducing health aid or introducing strict population controls raise serious ethical conflicts. This section briefly explains how this situation emerged.

In Africa, the human economic system and its relationship with the local ecology has changed dramatically over the last century. Prior to western intervention, each region developed a regime to suit their local conditions. For example, Johnson and Anderson (1988) describe how a semi-nomadic life-style was common in north east Africa as a means of surviving in an environment with un-reliable rainfall. Throughout Africa, economies varied their reliance on nomadic herding, hunting, gathering, pastoralism and trading of stock depending on the environmental (Ibid; Gartrell, 1988).

Colonial governments and western aid agencies dramatically changed the old economic/ecological regimes. Two related changes stand out. First is the transition from herding to crop cultivation which continues to this day. The second is the introduction of western healthcare which reduces mortality and increases population growth. These two changes are leading to a number of well recognised problems. For example, Olson et al. (2004) studied six locations in Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya, areas with population growth of more than 3% per annum. This increases the demand for food, so wetlands, semi-arid areas and grazing land have been converted to cropping. Native forests and woodlands have been reduced in size with a dramatic loss of natural environment and bio-diversity. Previously shared by wildlife and livestock herders, semi-arid lands are also coming under pressure. The demand for food and resources by the growing population has resulted in more intensive land use and competition for resources. Water is now a source of conflict between conservationists, herders and farmers.

This scenario is being played out throughout the continent with the consequence that as early as 2002 the United Nations Environment Program noted that Africa lost more than 30% of its forest since 1970 (UNEP, 2002). The lost woodland had been the habitat for wildlife, and this is playing an important role in the extinction of many species. Attempts to stop this decline through the establishment of national parks and reserves have failed. The reserves were another imposed change on local communities who previously used these areas for hunting and resources (Olson et al., 2004). Denied the right to exercise their traditional rights, local hunters were now cast as ‘poachers’. Most important, the locals were denied an important source of water, food and resources. This increased reliance on the land outside the reserves which became a competitive and over-

used resource. The consequence is land degradation and conflict. This conflict takes the form of inter-species and intra-species conflict. In some cases, ethnic rivalry between humans has occurred, while human-wildlife conflict occurs when wildlife destroy crops and harm people (World Wildlife Fund, 2007).

To locals, the reserves represented a loss of traditional resources so they did not respect their status. They regularly venture on to the reserves for food and other resources. Enforcement of laws have been ineffective with poaching, refugees, wars and claims for traditional rights all undermining the effectiveness of the reserves with National Parks converted to farmland or migrant settlement.

The United Nations Environment Programme (2002) has documented how increased human activity is damaging the environment across the continent, with serious consequences for human and animal welfare, including climate change. Deforestation increases solar radiation, local temperatures, and undermines hydrological and evapo-transpiration cycles. The loss of trees is affecting water run-off, soil erosion, the recycling of rainwater and the maintenance of water and soil quality. As a consequence drought is more common and soil quality is much reduced.

Water is a prime resource under pressure from the growing population. Increased competition for water supplies has resulted in unsustainable practices and civil conflict. The United Nations has introduced programs attempting to address the problem but have had little success because of the ever increasing tide of people. The UNEP (2002) note that "population growth and the proliferation of unplanned settlements in Africa negated much of the progress and, by 1990, only marginal improvements had been made".

Coastal ecological systems are also under threat from increased human populations and the industrialisation and infrastructure development that comes with them. The result is pollution, siltation, erosion, and invasion of foreign species.

The United Nations Environment Programme (2002) noted that the loss of habitat and competition between human and animals is contributing to a number of species being placed on the endangered list. It noted that "Natural habitats in Eastern Africa are under threat from a rapidly increasing human population and from the accompanying demands for space, agricultural produce, and economic gains from commercial and industrial exploitation". More worrying, was their observation that with populations growing at about 3% per annum the pressures are likely to increase (UNEP, 2002).

Across the African continent, a large number of species have become extinct. An estimated 123 plants and 126 animal species have become extinct while 1,771 plants and 2,018 animal species are under threat (UNEP, 2002). This can be linked to increased human activities including, illegal hunting, habitat destruction, and resource depletion for medicines, commerce and trade. The common force behind this is a rapidly growing population with increased competition for resources. The human population soared from 221 million in 1950 to 785 million in 2000, and with annual growth rates of approximately 2.4% per annum, is expected to nearly double again to 1,406 million by 2030 (UNEP, 2002). With limited resources and carrying capacity of the land, humans are enjoying rapid growth at the cost of other species; an enormous species swap.

2.2 Aid, population growth and the happiness of future generations

It is well established the human population soared in the twentieth century with the introduction of Western medical care (Ngalamulume, 2013; Cohen, 1995). Western aid is a significant source of this medical care. Sub-Saharan Africa has received more

development aid than any other region in the world for many decades (Azarnert, 2004). During the same time, it has had the world's fastest growing population (Azarnert, 2004, 2009). Not surprising, research has revealed a link between foreign aid and population growth through its effect on fertility (Azarnert, 2009) and reductions in mortality that increase life expectancy (Cuberes and Tsui, 2007). The link between population growth and the poverty is now recognised by aid agencies. For example a report published by the World Health Organisation states it "is undeniable that population growth inevitably boosts the number of poor people-as has happened in sub-Saharan Africa" [Cleland et al., (2006), p.3].

Azarnert (2004, 2009) and Cuberes and Tsui (2007) recognise the existence of a Malthusian trap and the need for development policies to consider demographic effects. However, Malthusian principles have received limited application to development policies. This can be linked to the 'Limits to growth' debate which states that the earth has limited carrying capacity. For many years, this view was discarded in response to the overly pessimistic claims of early writers. The discovery of new reserves of resources and improvements in technology discredited the whole notion of carrying capacity and Malthusian arguments. It was observed that carrying capacity could be expanded through improved technology and by exploiting resources that would otherwise be available to future generations. However, this requires technology to advance capacity at a greater rate than that demanded by population growth, and this is not occurring. For example, although improved food production technologies have been introduced to Africa, it has not been sufficient to counter the expanding food needs of a growing population (UNEP, 2002). The United Nations Environment Program note that with the exception of North and West Africa, food production has not kept up with population growth. Although agencies have succeeded in raising agricultural productivity, their gains are less than that required to match the growing population. For example, gains of 2.3% in 1998 and 2.1% in 1999 are inadequate against 2.5% population growth, with a consequent decline in per capita crop production (UNEP, 2002). There are also growing concerns with water limitations which illustrate the limits of technology. Similarly, in recent decades there has been greater awareness of the need for future generations to have sufficient resources.

These countries are experiencing population momentum with implications for the welfare of future generations. Research suggests that in order to live a happy life, people need to meet their basic needs however, increased numbers of people are failing to do this. Between 1990 and 2001, the number of people in Sub-Saharan Africa living in extreme poverty grew by 87 million; from 231 million to 318 million (Brown, 2007). The percent of the population grew from 44.6% to 46.4%.

One might think that aid can solve the problem of basic needs, but aid normally targets essential needs like food, water and health. A body of research suggests that being poor and welfare dependent results in a life of lower welfare. Argyle (1999) reveals that income and happiness is strongly related. At any given time those people with higher incomes are on average, happier than those earning less (Easterlin, 2001). Those on the poverty line lack resources to over-come many problems and this affects their psychological state (West et al., 1998). Foreign aid might contribute food, water and health, but while this aids survival, the quality of life is not high. Another line of relevant research is that on control as those dependent on others for resources have limited control over their own lives. For example, Mcfarlane et al. (1983) found the events that are most detrimental to well-being are those that threaten the sense of control. They leave the

person with feelings of helplessness, powerlessness and a feeling they are at the mercy of the environment.

Population growth has been linked to other factors that lead to very poor quality lives, in particular social instability, the loss of human rights and civil war. Collier and Hoeffler (1998) identified a link between population size, poverty and civil war. This link is particularly concerning in a region characterised by ethnic divisions, poorly drawn boundaries and recent histories of conflict. In such situations, population growth and resource competition create a volatile recipe that undermines life quality. These concerns raise a very important question "Are we fully considering the consequences on future generations?"

3 The ethics of aid

The previous section identified that population growth and changes in economic regimes, driven by the West, are leading to increased numbers of people in poverty, destruction of habitat and more animals on the endangered species list. The link between western healthcare and the population spiral has long been recognised but decisions to cut such aid or impose strong population controls confront difficult ethical arguments. The result is an impasse and the problem continues to get worse.

This section provides an exploratory analysis of the different ethical approaches to this problem, and also draws on recent psychological research on happiness and SWB. Traditional approaches to the ethics of aid are based on the work of Sen, Rawls, and utilitarianism. Other approaches are not based on welfare, but values. In this analysis, we also consider two relevant value systems; the maintenance of biodiversity and the sanctity of life. Consideration is given to three different types of aid; health, humanitarian and development.

3.1 *Utilitarianism*

Utilitarianism stems from the work of Bentham (1967) who claimed life was characterised by pleasure and pain. Bentham believed we could gain a measure of happiness by adding the totality of pleasure and pain in units of *utils*. Policy makers should aim to maximise the number of *utils*, thereby providing the greatest happiness to the greatest number of people. This has led to two approaches; total utilitarianism and average utilitarianism.

Using total utilitarianism to determine whether it is appropriate to give aid to Sub-Saharan Africa would involve adding the level of happiness for all individuals living there to gain a total and compare it to the total sum after aid was given. If there was an increase in total happiness, aid could be justified. For example, under total utilitarianism, a population of 100 million people who are barely happy (say with 1 *utils* of happiness each) would be seen as preferable to a population of 10 million where the people are much happier (say 9 *utils* each). The idea that a bigger population of less happy people is preferable to a smaller one has been labelled the 'repugnant conclusion' (Parfit, 1984), yet it bears much similarities to the situation emerging in parts of Africa.

Under total utilitarianism, it would make sense to have a larger population as long as any extra people have a life that was better than neutral. Blackorby et al. (2005) describe

a neutral life as one which is as good as one in which a person has no experiences. Above neutrality, life, as a whole, is worth living; below neutrality, it is not. They state:

“A neutral life is one which is neither worth living nor not worth living. Following the standard normalization employed in population ethics, we associate a utility level of zero with a neutral life. Thus, if a person has a positive (negative) level of lifetime well-being, his or her life is (is not) worth living.” (Ibid, p.5)

Therefore, it would make sense to provide humanitarian/disaster relief aid and health aid on the condition that the recipient goes on to live a life that is above neutral. However, economic development aid would be justified only if the life that follows is of higher quality than that before the aid was given. Otherwise, the loss of funds from donors would reduce total welfare.

However, to improve welfare, aid must be effective and there is mixed evidence on this. Sachs (2005) believes aid can end poverty while Easterly (2006) argues that aid has done more harm than good. Banerjee and Duflo (2011) acknowledge the limitations of aid's effectiveness claiming policy makers have been driven by inappropriate models, but believe progress can be made. Riddell (2007) has assessed the effectiveness of aid and concludes that we simply do not know if aid has been effective due to data limitations and the difficulty of assessing its contribution. Aid to address short term need has been successful however, long term impacts are harder to credit. The current state is probably best summed up by Oyeshola (2007) who states “various programmes and strategies were put in place. Ironically there is little to show for it”.

This would suggest that with the exception of short term health and some humanitarian aid, the welfare enhancements are not sufficient to justify taking money from richer nations who endure welfare loss. However, welfare gains can occur to rich as they feel better from giving to the poor. However, this is not normally one of the goals of aid, and to be welfare improving the benefit needs to exceed any alternative use of the funds.

Total utilitarianists would aim to increase the population regardless of the level of happiness, just as long people have a life above neutral. However, a more popular approach is ‘average utilitarianism’, in which case, it is best not to raise the total number of people, but the average happiness of the people currently existing.

Average utilitarianism implies that people's happiness levels can change substantially, however some writers disagree with this. For example, Tännsjö (1998, p.161) writes:

“The view that I am prepared to defend is somewhat pessimistic but still, I am afraid, realistic. My impression is that if only our basic needs are satisfied, then most of us are capable of living lives that, on balance, are worth experiencing. However, no matter how ‘lucky’ we are, how many ‘gadgets’ we happen to possess, we rarely reach beyond this level...”

If there are few lives with very high welfare, to maximise welfare, aid should focus on maximising population growth. Attempts at raising average welfare would be a waste of time. On the other hand if human happiness does vary significantly, it would support an average utility approach. To clarify this issue we need to consider recent literature by psychologists regarding measurement of happiness. In recent decades, there has been much progress in the measurement of welfare and happiness, however very little work has been done on the very poor in developing countries (Cox, 2012).

Biswas-Diener and Diener (2001) studied the slums of Calcutta, India and found slightly negative welfare for marginalised groups. However, they also found positive satisfaction in some areas on their lives. They were around neutral in life satisfaction. This implies that poverty does not equal misery. Cox (2012) had similar findings in a study of marginalised poor in Nicaragua. The dump dwellers, urban and rural poor were about neutral on life satisfaction. The only exceptions were sex workers who had dramatically low life satisfaction.

A number of explanations exist for why they are not miserable. First are the theories that argue that humans adapt to negative (and positive) life events. A number of studies reveal that people get over negative life events. For example, DeFraim and Ernst (1978) interviewed parents who had lost children and found that they typically report a drastic drop in happiness at the child's death, but after two to three years, gradually recover to the original level.

A second explanation is that our happiness is biologically driven and immune to external circumstances. A number of studies support this including Lykken and Tellegen's study of over two thousand twins. They found "the reported well-being of one's identical twin, either now or ten years earlier, is a far better predictor of one's self rated happiness than is one's own educational achievement, income, or status", and "it may be that trying to be happier is as futile as trying to be taller and therefore is counterproductive" (Lykken and Tellegen, 1996). This suggests that personal traits, not the state of our situation determine our sense of well-being. Liszka (2005, p.332) suggests we only need to look at own ancestors for evidence:

"Pick up any historical account of living conditions among the working class two hundred or a one hundred years ago, and it is hard for contemporary Americans to imagine being happy under such conditions. Yet there seem to have been significant numbers of happy people despite these conditions."

Liszka comes to the conclusion that on "an average and over a significant period of time, people will remain about as happy as they are now". This implies that average happiness cannot be improved by aid or any other policy, hence Liszka concludes "making decisions on the basis of supposed increments or decrements of happiness is bad policy criteria and bad ethics" (ibid, p.341).

However, more recent research suggests that environmental circumstances does play a role. Happiness drops drastically after experiencing adversity (Mirowsky and Ross, 2003). Although people adapt over time, full adaptation to the previous level does not always occur. This reveals that happiness is not entirely an internal biological matter immune to situational factors (Veenhoven, 1994). Veenhoven suggests that it is better to focus on differences in living conditions that are beyond the control of individuals. The fact that happiness drops during adversity suggests a role for humanitarian/disaster aid. Similarly, people are less happy when suffering from bad health, and this implies a role for health aid, if there are no negative consequences.

The arguments for economic development aid are less clear cut. A number of studies have found a strong relationship between wealth and SWB for the poor (Howell and Howell, 2008; Diener and Biswas-Deiner, 2002). However, the relationship decline as people gets richer. The prevailing belief is that people need to have their basic needs met after which there is little gain from having more money (Veenhoven, 1993). This implies that taking a small amount of money from the rich to the poor would not lead to a

significant reduction in welfare for the rich but could have a significant increase for the poor; creating an overall gain in global welfare.

However, the relationship is not clear cut. For example, in Argentina, the lower classes were reported to be happier than people in the upper classes (Haller and Hadler, 2006). Bangladesh is one of the poorest countries in the world but often ranks happier than more affluent countries (Camfield et al., 2009). Cultural factors can influence correlates of happiness (Cox, 2012).

The effect needs to consider different measures of happiness. Income and material wealth are strongly connected to life satisfaction (the cognitive side of happiness). However, feelings, the emotional form of happiness, are associated with psycho-social needs. Consequently, a great deal of happiness comes from relationships regardless of our material situation (Diener et al., 2010; Tay and Deiner, 2011). That is one reason why people on poverty are not living in misery.

Happiness can also be maintained despite poor living standards because of the way we assess our lives. Studies conducted in western nations reveal that we assess current well-being by comparison to what we had in the past (Michalos, 1985). This may be universal. Davey et al. (2009) studied Chinese rural farmers and found they tended to compare their current living standards with the past. This suggests that we can be happy in a poor position, as long as it is better than what we have had in the past.

A second way we assess our own well-being is by comparing our lives to those around us. Hence, if those around us have few assets, people will not feel deprived. However, wealthy westerners seeing the same situation make a very different analysis. For example, in the forward to the Human Development Report 2000, Mark Malloch Brown, the UN's development program administrator, notes:

“to be poor is to be powerless and vulnerable. Life remains a torment for children in the teeming barrio of a developing country city, for refugees caught up on a conflict, for women in a society that still denies them equality and freedom every day brings physical and psychological threats. And still too many of the 1.2 billion people living on less than a dollar a day lack even the most basic human security.” (Ibid, pp.iii–iv)

However, the research of Cox and Deiner et al. suggests this is not so. The marginalised poor are not living dramatically unhappy, unsatisfying or unfulfilled lives (Cox, 2012). Westerners who assume poverty is misery may be falling prey to an illusion by focusing only on economic factors and comparing them to western standards. They ignore the strong social relationships such as those observed in the Nicaraguan poor which contribute significantly to life satisfaction.

3.2 *Utilitarianism and future generations*

The previous section only referred to existing generations, however population growth will increase the number of people living in poverty in the future. The World Commission on the Environment and Development (1987) refers to future generations in its definition of sustainable development. With population growth, welfare of future generations will be reduced where there are constraints in carrying capacity.

Total utilitarianism might not be concerned with declining living standards in the future, as long as population growth insures that total welfare grows. Total utilitarianism will only be concerned if people in the future have negative welfare that negates the gains to existing generations. Cox's (2012) finding that poverty does not produce misery,

suggests that total welfare can grow with more people as long as those people live a life above neutral. Of course, if poverty does not produce misery, it also reduces the need to give aid. Of more concern are the increased periods of famine and serious adversity when people may experience significant negative welfare.

Average utilitarianism would show more concern if more people in the future experience a life with lower welfare. This is of particular concern given the fact that people judge their welfare with comparison to their past position. Hence, average utilitarians will be particularly concerned with the increased experiences of famine and severe deprivation.

There is room for more econometric studies to advance our knowledge of this area. The gains of welfare from the gained years of life of those people who are saved could be calculated and compared to the losses of welfare for future generations who live in poverty or experience famine. We do not just include the next generation but every generation that follows. Because there will be more people living in the future, we might expect average utilitarian measures to support restricting population to the carrying capacity of the land. Total utilitarianism will only favour cutbacks if the rate of poverty is extreme.

The problem with such a calculation is the certainty of the future and the certainty that such people will exist. Disagreements can occur over how people will be affected (Gower, 1992). We do not know their experiences, preferences and some will argue the full effect of policies. To incorporate uncertainty, it is possible to discount the welfare of future generations, using greater weights for near generations whose existence (and conditions) are more certain and lower weights for more distant generations (Ponthiere, 2003).

There is a strong possibility that future generations are under-represented when people make welfare consideration as it is easier to identify existing problems compared to those in the future that need to be imagined. The importance of identifying victims was revealed in a study where two groups were given different information about the need for donations (Small et al., 2007). One group was given general information such as "food shortages in Malawi are affecting more than three million children". A second group was shown the photo of Rokia, a seven year old girl who they were told was desperately poor and "her life will be changed for the better for your gift". This and subsequent studies reveal the "identifiable victim effect" which shows that people will respond much stronger to an identifiable victim than a statistical life. However, future generations have few representatives, and therefore rely on statistics. Long run population trends and their consequences are not made available.

A phenomenon augmenting this perception is what Young (1999) calls 'Dianisation', which he defines as "the triumph of emotionalism and image over analysis and informed debate". Princess Diana "created a spectacle of her caring which has ethical implications about how to care in a globalised world where hunger persists and environmental degradation erodes the livelihoods of the poor" (ibid, 20). Young states that ethical judgements must move beyond caring.

3.3 *Values-based judgments: sanctity of human life and biodiversity*

For those who value the sanctity of human life, there is no difference between killing someone and letting them die. This position is compatible with total utilitarianism unless poverty is so extreme that people experience negative life. However, it may not be

necessary to believe in the sanctity of life to hold this position. Goulet (1995, p.39) notes that most "individuals value life as a good, or at least a lesser evil than death or annihilation". Singer (2002) believes if we can stop anything bad from happening, including death from starvation or lack of medical care, we should do it. He believes we have a moral imperative to save the lives of those we do not know (Singer, 1972).

The negative consequence of this view is that quantity of life is placed ahead of quality of life, and welfare can suffer, particularly when there are resource limitations. However, the carrying capacity of the local environment is no problem when food and other resources can be imported from the West. The consequence of this is that the receiving nations are reduced to a state of dependency. The World Council of Churches (2001) recognises the importance of self reliance and the need for people "To procure sufficient natural resources to meet the basic needs of all in a self-reliant manner". Being reduced to a state of dependency will reduce welfare so is important for utilitarians. However, to those favouring sanctity of human life, it is irrelevant.

The current approach places humans at the centre of the development debate. For example, Lebreton (1959) describes the discipline of development as the study of how to achieve a more human economy. In a 1989 report that responded to the dismal development performance the UNDP stated "no challenge is more compelling to developing countries in the 1990s than to establish the supremacy of human beings in the development process" [cited in Bhouraskar, (2013), p.46]. By the middle of the 1990s, this had changed to sustainable human development, giving the environment new importance, but it was still an adjunct to human development.

Various arguments have been put forward to place a priority on bio-diversity, including the value that natural eco-systems provide to humans through goods (e.g., fish), services (water regulation) and amenity/tourist values (Acreman, 2004). More recently, it has been claimed that humans have a moral duty to protect wildlife, regardless of its value to humankind. It recognises that every form of life is unique and warrants respect and essential ecological processes depend upon the diversity of life forms (McNeely et al., 1990).

The proponents of biodiversity are realistic about carrying capacity, noting that people, plants and animals can be competitors for scarce resources such as water (Acreman, 2004). They also acknowledge the difficulty of the ethical problem that this presents:

"Scenes of starving and thirsty people in Sahelian African remind us of a basic altruistic need to share resources within other members of the human race. At the same time we feel that other species have a right to freshwater and we should allocated sufficient resources to conserve the biodiversity of the planet for future generations. It is not easy to develop consistent measures of ethicisms that can be used for deciding water allocations." (ibid, p.30)

Biodiversity advocates focus on keeping species alive, but existence is only one aspect of animal welfare. It does not include quality of life. This raises the question "should animals be included when we consider welfare?" Benton (1996) argues that utilitarianism can be applied to animals, as animals also suffer pleasure and pain. Dawkins (1985) states that it is possible to build up a reasonably convincing picture of what animals experience from physiological signs, their physical health, and behaviour. However, it is harder for the average human to comprehend all animal emotions compared to their own species, and the fact that animals can not engage in the market place or acquire property rights also makes it harder to assess and protect their values.

The Western tradition has given animals a low status through both its religion and philosophy. Christianity has traditionally given animals a lower position, as Singer (1985, pp.2–3) states “man alone is made in the image of God. Man alone is given dominion over all animals and told to subdue the earth”. Proponents of sanctity of life attribute humans with characteristics that distinguish them from animals and justify special treatment. This differentiation goes back to Aristotle who believed that humans are distinguished from animals by their ability to reason. However, with greater knowledge of animals, we have learned that many animals have strong commonalities with humans (Singer, 2002).

The consequence of these beliefs is a dynamic that animal rights activists call ‘speciesism’, a bias against non-human species. This bias may be biologically determined as psychologists have found a preference for genetic similarity. Psychologists have found that the more closely people are genetically related, the more likely they are to help each other (Burnstein et al., 1994). We are far more open to those who share our genes, and animals are genetically more distant than humans.

In recent years, there has been a call to consider the welfare of animals. The animal liberation movement does not argue that all lives are of equal worth or that all interests of humans and other animals are to be given equal weight, however, they argue that the ethical circle should be extended to include animals (Singer, 1985).

3.4 *Sen and Rawls*

Sen (1991) argues that quality of life is best thought of in terms of the capabilities and freedoms to lead flourishing lives. Poverty is a failure to be able to do things that give life quality, including certain basic things. The implication for development is that welfare is advanced by enhancing people’s capabilities to have a good life. This approach justifies giving aid if capabilities are raised.

Sen has assisted the United Nations develop various capability measures. The measure that the UN most commonly promotes is the Human Development Index (HDI) which includes data on real income, lifespan and education. It has provided a reasonably close correlation with subjective well-being in European nations (Blanchflower and Oswald, 2011). However, it runs the danger of ignoring cultural differences. For example, many cultures place great value in hunting and gathering foods, yet Westerners who buy their food in supermarkets do not value these capabilities and freedoms. The HDI also favours cultivated land with traded output over natural environments where hunting occurs, as the latter do not contribute to GDP. Furthermore, with the loss of native environments, future generations will lose the ability to gather food in traditional cultural methods, one of many capabilities that will be lost with population growth.

The focus on life expectancy has an emphasis on reducing mortality which increases population growth. In recent decades, life expectancy has risen dramatically in Africa, a large driver being the reduction in infant mortality. This means that more children are reaching the age of child-bearing. In 1960, more than one in six African children died before reaching the age of childbirth. By 2012, this was down to 1 in 11 (UNICEF, 2014). This means that greater numbers of women (and men) will be of reproductive age. As a consequence, UNICEF (2014, p.5) state:

“almost 2 billion babies will be born in Africa in the next 35 years. Over the same period, Africa’s under 18 population will increase by two-thirds, reaching almost 1 billion by mid century; and close to half the world’s population of children will be African by the end of the 21st century.”

The focus on life expectancy is another example of western intervention changing aspirations. Goulet (1995) observes that

“longer life appears desirable to people only after they become aware of its possibility. So long as people remain convinced that it is the will of gods that their children die in infancy or to combat certain diseases is a sacrilegious act, people will accept hard brutish reality and in their quest for wisdom will seek equanimity in doing so.”

Sen’s focus on capabilities is embedded in Western values and is not ecologically neutral. Second, applying Sen raises the difficulty of measuring capabilities and freedoms of animals and future generations which cannot be observed. We can discuss the loss of habitat for animals but it is hard to measure that loss. Rawls (1973) believed we should make such decisions behind a ‘veil of ignorance’ from which we do not know our own position. This arouses empathy for those in the poorest position, giving a strong rationale for providing assistance. When contrasted with the wealth of the West, images of starving poor present huge inequalities and inequity. However, Rawl’s veil has not been applied to animals in sub-Saharan Africa.

Rawls considered future generations in his analysis. Justice among generations requires each generation passing on enough intellectual, economic, and educational ‘capital’ so the next generation can have a reasonable standard of living. However, as with other approaches, it leaves open questions regarding appropriate actions by the present generations, particularly given the difficulty of identifying future entities.

4 Contrasting ethical arguments and consequences

Table 1 summarises the link between different types of aid and different ethical approaches. It shows that, for those whose decision making is guided by a belief in the sanctity of life, it makes sense to provide health and humanitarian aid regardless of the consequences on bio-diversity and future generations. In contrast, those guided by bio-diversity protection will not favour any aid that increases population in a region whose carrying capacity has been reached. There is of course, a difference between healthcare that increases the quality of life, such as eye operations, and life sustaining care. In all cases, it would seem that given the literature on the limited benefit of economic aid, that other uses of the funds may generate a larger increase in welfare.

A problem with this table is its broad coverage and every geographic region should be considered individually. Another fundamental flaw of the table is that it assumes the chain of causation that has existed in the past will always do so. Just because something has been so in the past does not mean that it will be that way in the future, and a number of arguments suggest that things could be better in the future if aid was better applied.

Table 1 Ethical system, aid type and negative consequences

<i>Ethical system</i>	<i>Health aid</i>	<i>Humanitarian aid</i>	<i>Development aid</i>	<i>Consequence of decision on health aid</i>
Sanctity of human life	Yes, under all circumstances	Yes, under all circumstances	No. Most likely welfare gains are greater with other use of funds.	More poverty in future and bio-diversity threats increased
Bio-diversity protection	Not if population growth threatens biodiversity	Yes, unless contributes to pop growth	No, as above	People will die at a young age.
Freedom/capabilities	Yes	Yes	No, as above	May involve trade off between early deaths, future poverty and bio-diversity loss
Freedom/capabilities Inc future generations	Needs to be calculated (TBC) – involves trade-offs.	Not if losses from habitat-based welfare exceed gains from population growth.	No, as above	May involve trade-offs as above
Freedom/capabilities Inc animals	TBC – Not if losses from habitat-based welfare exceed gains from population growth.	Not if losses from habitat-based welfare exceed gains from population growth	No, as above	May involve trade-offs as above
Rawls equity-based	Yes	Yes	No, as above	More poverty in future and threats to bio-diversity
Rawls equity-based Inc future generations	To be calculated, considering population growth	To be calculated considering population growth	No, as above	May involve trade-offs as above
Rawls equity-based Inc animals	Not if losses from habitat-based welfare exceed gains from population growth.	Not if losses from habitat-based welfare exceed gains from population growth.	No, as above	May involve trade-offs as above
Total utilitarianism	Yes, under most circumstances	Yes, unless survivors live a life below neutral	No, as above	More poverty in future and bio-diversity threats increased

Table 1 Ethical system, aid type and negative consequences (continued)

<i>Ethical system</i>	<i>Health aid</i>	<i>Humanitarian aid</i>	<i>Development aid</i>	<i>Consequence of decision on health aid</i>
Total utilitarianism Inc future generations	Yes, unless future generations experience negative welfare exceeding current gains.	Yes, unless future generations experience negative welfare exceeding gains.	No, as above	More poverty in future and bio-diversity threats increased
Total utilitarianism Inc animals	Yes, unless animals experience negative welfare exceeding human gains.	Yes, unless animals experience negative welfare exceeding human gains.	No, as above	More poverty in future and bio-diversity threats increased
Average utilitarianism	Yes, under most circumstance	Yes, if average welfare enhanced	No, as above	More poverty in future and bio-diversity threats increased
Average utilitarianism Inc future generations	Not if carrying capacity limits threaten to reduce welfare	Yes unless carrying capacity limits threaten to reduce welfare	No, as above	People will die early
Average utilitarianism Inc animals	Not if population growth threatens habitat	Not if population growth threatens habitat	No, as above	People will die early

These arguments include placing a greater emphasis on family planning education and control. For example, Sachs (2008) recognises the importance of reducing population, and argues the key to doing this is reducing child mortality. He argues that fertility rates in Africa can be brought down, quickly and voluntarily. He believes that this will occur if we improve healthcare and reduce child mortality. Parents who see all their children survive will change their mindset and choose to have fewer children. The focus on fertility control is consistent with the demographic transition model (DTM) which argues as a nation develops, its demographic structure goes through a number of stages in which initially high fertility and infant mortality are followed by a second stage in which infant mortality decreases. This then leads to a third stage in which parents have fewer children. When combined with family planning, this approach has succeeded in many countries including Bangladesh where fertility declined from 7 in 1970 to 3.4 in 1993 [Sachs, (2008), p.200].

However, the history of family planning programs in sub-Saharan Africa reveals little success, and much of Africa is trapped in stage two of the DTM (Caldwell et al., 2006). It may be that the model does not apply to all nations. In Africa, contraceptive use remains low (UNICEF, 2014) and programs have run in to a number of problems. In particular, traditional views on family structure have limited their success as people desire large families. Many couples report wanting more children than that required to stabilise the population (Bongaarts, 1994). This is consistent with Banerjee and Dufflo's (2011) observation that the poor in developing nations are not ignorant waiting for western

guidance, but willingly choose the number of children they want and the gender. This may include gender selective abortions which the western value system would abhor. Other problems with family planning programs include resistance to intervention by foreigners, ethical aspects associated with the implementation of fertility control programs including reproductive rights, and ignorance of local social and cultural circumstances (Grimes, 1998).

It much be stressed that not all of Africa is suffering to the same degree. Caldwell et al. (2006) state that, some nations have begun to move in to the third stage of the DTM. These countries, with their 2010-15 fertility figures in brackets, include South Africa(2.4), Zimbabwe (3.5), Botswana (2.6), Swaziland (3.4), Lesotho (3.1), Namibia (3.1), Kenya (4.4) and Ghana (3.9), although it could be disputed whether Kenya belongs in this group. In contrast, a large number of nations have fertility rates above 5, with Niger being the top at 7.6 (UNICEF, 2014).

Associated with the DTM is the notion of the 'demographic dividend'. This concept argues that as fertility falls, the ratio of productive people to dependents improves, resulting in a leap in productivity. UNICEF (2014) place great faith in the demographic dividend describing the potential economic benefits as 'vast' and 'potentially massive'. UNICEF (2014, p.10) argues that if sufficient investment is made in children today we have the "potential to transform the continent, breaking centuries old cycles of poverty and inequity". Of course, these extra work aged people will need to find work, and there is no evidence that enough jobs will exist. In which case, the future will be one of massive unemployment and poverty.

Sen (1981) proposed an argument that helped deflect attention from the population problem. Sen (1981) noted that famine has occurred despite the availability of food supplies, in which case the root cause is not food shortages but poor policy; the conclusion being that correct policy can rectify this situations. In 2004, Sen argued that the magnitude of the population problem is often exaggerated. Evidence in support of Sen can be seen in Ethiopia where poor land management policies have reduced output (Admassie, 2000). It is also true that food production throughout the world continues to grow significantly faster than world population. While Sen's argument is strong, there are problems applying this explanation to all occurrences of famine. It has limited applicability to regions where population growth is exceeding food production. The faith placed in developing and implementing appropriate policies can also have limited applicability in some areas as institutional weaknesses can constitute a significant barrier to the success of aid programs (Riddell, 2007).

These arguments provide a rationale for continuing with aid despite the existing negative consequences. However, it could be equally argued that placing faith in such policies that have yet to achieve the desired effect is unethical, or at least negligent given the negative consequences.

5 Resolving conflicting values

"We keep putting on programmes about famine in Ethiopia; that's what's happening. Too many people there. They can't support themselves - and it's not an inhumane thing to say. It's the case." (Attenborough, 2009)

This paper is based on two assumptions that declining mortality fuels population growth and increased human populations are negatively affecting bio-diversity, the welfare of

other species and future generations. The easiest way to resolve this conflict is to assume there is no conflict in values, to deny the chains of causation or to downplay their significance. It is an issue that arouses such emotional and cognitive dissonance that these options are highly desirable, but these issues are so pressing that we can no longer ignore their importance.

Table 1 presupposes that an individual uses only one ethical approach to this issue, whereas many people may combine approaches. For example, one may have a value system that incorporates both sanctity of human life and bio-diversity protection. In which case, a person may hold two conflicting views. For example the Millennium Development Goals included a goal to protect bio-diversity and reduce child mortality (United Nations, n.d). Of course, if you believe that other mechanisms can impact on human population such as family planning and women's education, the assumed conflict in this paper doesn't exist. However, these programs have failed to have an effect in sub-Saharan Africa, at a rate that would negate the other forces driving population growth (Cleland et al., 2006). Another possibility is population control such as China's one child policy, but the administrative and enforcement infrastructure is too weak.

There are a number of ways that people can resolve conflict between value systems. The first is to prioritise values, accepting that lower level priorities may not be achieved. A second approach, from the philosophical literature is the doctrine of double effect. This doctrine says that some negative outcomes are permissible if it is the side effect of promoting a good end. This doctrine originates with Thomas Aquinas who noted that an action may have two effects, one good and one bad. For example, you may save someone's life by killing an aggressor. In this case, killing the aggressor is a bad effect but it is permissible. There are conditions for this doctrine to apply in particular, the good effect must be sufficient to compensate for the bad effect. This brings the notion of proportionality in to the debate. The negative effect must not be out of proportion to the good effect. However, an individual making this judgement will be driven by their value system, which brings our discussion full circle. Applying this to the aid argument, each person will have their own view whether the good effect of aid compensates for the negative effects.

The doctrine of double effect also considers if the negative effect is intended or merely foreseen. It is highly unlikely that any aid provider intends the negative effects of healthcare, and for many years it was not foreseen. Early providers of aid would be unlikely to know the full chain of causation their aid would release. However, we are now at the point where causative effects can be recognised. However, the doctrine of double effect would still consider population enhancing aid as desirable as long as it is merely foreseen and not intended, and the negative effects are in proportion to the good effects.

This doctrine does not justify bad means or methods, and the notion of negligence is relevant. In recent years, the doctrine has been criticised for the arbitrary and selective way it has been applied (Shaw, 2002), and many philosophers have rejected the doctrine all together (Hills, 2007).

Psychological literature can also contribute to this discussion. The psychological phenomenon of holding two conflicting thoughts is cognitive dissonance (Festinger and Carlsmith, 1959). Dissonance can also occur when the consequences of an action is incompatible with current beliefs. When this occurs, people are motivated to reduce the dissonance through a number of ways including removing the dissonant belief, reducing the importance of the dissonant belief, adding a new consonant belief, and/or increasing

the importance of the consonant belief. In other words, we resolve the dissonance through rationalisations. For example, we may solve the dissonance by reducing the importance of the information saying that population growth is the cause. Other rationalisations that reduce dissonance include the emphasis on family planning and food redistribution arguments. It is more comforting faith in them, rather than dealing with uncomfortable facts.

Cognitive dissonance can also be reduced by studies that reveal there is enough food to feed all the world. An approach that maximises calories can be consistent with total utilitarianism, in which it is better to keep as many people as possible albeit at a reduced level of average happiness. For example, one study noted that the daily food production is 2804 calories per capita; which is 131% of consumption requirements (Daoud, 2007). This supports the idea that the problem is redistribution. However, Banerjee and Duflo (2011) revealed that food consumption is not just a case of calories. They noted that when very poor people have extra money, they don't spend it increasing calories but buying "better tasting, *more expensive* calories" [Banerjee and Duflo, (2011), p.23]. They also note nutrients may be more important than calories.

There are other welfare issues connected to such large scale re-distribution. Optimistic studies on global food production still recognise that in the future, sub-Saharan Africa will not meet its own food needs (Daoud, 2007). This will create large populations dependent on imported hand outs, simply to live. The welfare implications of this loss of self-reliance are many including loss of self esteem and self reliance. The United Nations has long recognised the importance of developing self reliance. In fact, the UNDP regularly state it as one of their purposes (Bhouraskar, 2013).

These optimistic scenarios also have disturbing implications for the environment and civil unrest. If the local populations are not content to eat just the calories given to them and seek other food sources, pressure on declining animal species will continue. Similarly, civil concerns for future generations are raised. This region is characterised by a number of features that support civil unrest, including large numbers of ethnic divisions, contested territorial boundaries and recent histories of conflict. To this we are adding a growing poor population incapable of meeting their own food needs.

At first glance, an element of hope can be found in recent economic figures that show sub-Saharan Africa has enjoyed average GDP growth of 5% over the last ten years (African Economic Outlook, 2012). As a consequence, population poverty rates have declined from 58% in 1999 to 48% in 2008. The driver of this growth is not foreign aid but demand for exports of raw materials from new trading partners including Brazil and China (ADB & OECD, 2011).

Despite this good economic news, famine did not decline. In fact it spread. In 2003, a famine was endured by 14 million people in Southern Africa (Plaut, 2003). In 2011, 13 million people in Somalia, Ethiopia, Djibouti and Kenya were struck by what the United Nations called the worst famine in 60 years affecting (Wooldridge, 2011). One year later, famine hit another 12 million people and affected distant Mali (Palitza, 2012). Economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa does not affect all people. Food security is a constant issue. Consequently, the ADB & OECD (2012) state that "improving quality of life in sub-Saharan Africa remains a daily struggle". As is common with resource-based booms, UNICEF (2014) note that, the economic growth is having an unequal affect with most of the population missing out of the economic boom. Looming behind this is the future spectre that will occur when the resources driving exports are depleted, and the resource base must support an even larger population.

6 Conclusions

This paper draws attention to issues of welfare that are more comfortable to ignore or downplay their importance. Controlling human population growth raises an ethical problem that has not been solved. Population pressure in Africa is leading to habitat loss and extinction of species. The introduction of Western healthcare has created a population spiral, which combined with a move to cultivation has destroyed balance between the ecology and human economic regime. The human population is exceeding carrying capacity in lands with high climatic variability. The consequence is growing numbers of people suffering from famine and poverty, and a decline in animal welfare. There is an ethical impasse that this exploratory paper hopes will lead to further research and analysis.

Health, humanitarian and economic aid are examined with regard to different ethical systems. The consequences of each are stated and can involve conflicts of value systems and ethical approaches. These can be solved through prioritising, believing the proportionality of benefit justifies the negative effects, or through rationalisations that resolve cognitive dissonance. However, the underlying pressure remains, particularly for nations experiencing population momentum.

This paper hopes to bring more attention to the issue and suggest areas for future research, particularly in the area of trade-offs between people dying young, loss of bio-diversity, and welfare of animals and future generations. There is little information on future generations and there is a need for work on long run population trends and their consequences. Another area requiring future research is happiness and subjective well-being in regions receiving aid. This article considered recent research which noted that the poor are not miserable and this suggests the welfare benefits of aid may be over-stated. Social relationships are an important source of well-being not included in welfare UN measures such as the Human Development Index.

Research is also needed on the welfare of people living in sub-Saharan Africa, particularly those living in poverty. There is limited research on SWB in Africa, but one study stands out. Biswas-Deiner et al. (2005) attempted to measure the happiness of the Maasai in Kenya. They surveyed ten villages in South-Western Kenya where the people lived a traditional pastoralist life. They had resisted colonial incursions into their culture and retained most of their pre-colonial language, values and practices. This included circumcision of young adults, polygamy, child marriages and a period of warrior-hood for young men. The medicine man remained an important source of leadership. It is a herding society with little link to the cash-market economy. They live in simple houses made from sticks, mud and dung. They have not received the so-called benefits of attending school, or been exposed to modern media.

Despite this archaic life-style, the researchers found that the Maasai were very happy. This research measured happiness in a number of ways including cognitive (life satisfaction) and emotion. The results were consistent. Maasai without Western intervention were happy. This raises the strong possibility that, if Africans had been left alone, they might be happy. In fact, it may be that intervention is reducing welfare for many in Africa.

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