

ACTIVITY 4A :TEACHER HANDOUT

BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS POPULATION

“[The population pyramids] illustrate the historical and projected transition in population age structure in developed and developing countries. At one time, most if not all countries had a youthful age structure similar to that of developing countries as a whole in 1950, with a large percentage of the entire population under the age of 15. Given the relatively high rates of fertility that prevailed in most developing countries from 1950 through the early 1970s, the overall pyramid shape had changed very little by 1990. However, the effects of fertility and mortality decline can be seen in the projected pyramid for 2025, which loses its strictly triangular shape as the elderly portion of the total population increases.”

“The picture in developed countries has been quite different. We expect it will continue to be different. In 1950, there was relatively little variation in the size of 5-year groups between the ages of 5 and 24. The beginnings of the post-World War II Baby Boom can be seen in the 0- to 4-year age group. By 1990, The baby Boom cohorts were 25 to 44 years old, and the cohorts under age 25 were becoming successively smaller. If fertility rates continue as projected through 2025, the aggregate pyramid will start to invert, with more weight on the top than on the bottom. The size of the oldest old (especially women) population will increase, and persons aged 80 and over will outnumber any younger 5-year age group.” U.S. Bureau of the Census, International Population Reports, P25, 92-3, *An Aging World II* U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 1992, p. 15.

“Most people associate growth of the elderly population with developed countries only. Developed nations, in fact, may well have more grandparents than children before the middle of the next century. In the early 1990s, developed nations as a whole had about as many children under 15 years of age as persons over age 55 (approximately 22 percent of the total population in each category). The developing world, by contrast, has a high proportion of children (35 percent of all persons are under age 15) and a relatively low proportion of older persons (10 percent aged 55 and over). What is less appreciated, however, is that the absolute numbers of elderly in developing nations are large and increasing. More than half (55 percent, 176 million) of the world’s elderly (aged 65 and over) lived in developing nations in 1990. By 2025, this proportion is projected to increase to 68 percent (277 million).”