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Mexican Population Reaches 104 Million

by LADB Staff
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Mexico's population reached 104 million in 2003, although the growth rate has slowed in the past three years. In an update on its five-year population program (Programa Nacional de Población 2001-2006), the Consejo Nacional de Poblacion (CONAPO) said the country's population has increased by 4 million since President Vicente Fox took office in 2000.

The growth rate has slowed to 1.10% this year, compared with 1.27% in 2000, said the CONAPO report. The update, presented by CONAPO director Elena Zuniga, projected the Mexican population would grow to 111 million in 2010, 127 million in 2030, and 130 million in 2050. "Under this scenario, it will be necessary to create about 2.1 million jobs and construct 11 million homes annually to meet the needs of the population," said the CONAPO report.

Among the trends anticipated for the next several decades is an increase in life expectancy, currently at about 76 years and projected at 77.9 years in 2006. There are 7.6 million Mexicans who are 60 years or older, 7.3% of the population. That number is expected to increase to 36.4 million by 2050, or about 28% of the population, said CONAPO.

The population growth has been accompanied by a surge in the number of Mexicans living in extreme poverty. Recent statistics published by the Secretaria de Desarrollo Social (SEDESOL) indicate that the number of Mexicans living in extreme poverty rose by 4.7 million between 1992 and 2000.

The SEDESOL report said the growth in the poverty rate was partly because of the economic policies of the neoliberal governments of Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994) and Ernesto Zedillo (1994-2000), but it was also a function of the increase in population. "Because of the demographic growth, the absolute number of people in extreme poverty grew from 19 million in 1992 to 23.7 million in 2000," said the report.

President Fox raised a storm of controversy in June when he claimed that poverty levels had begun to decline during his administration, based primarily on a reduction in malnutrition levels. That assessment was criticized by members of Fox's center-right Partido Accion Nacional (PAN) and the opposition parties (see SourceMex, 2003-06-25).

Some critics reiterated those criticisms in the wake of the release of the SEDESOL report. "The Fox government is following the same policies as the PRI administrations, which made their decisions according to the dictates of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the US," said Jorge Serrano Limon, who heads a civic group. (Sources: Reforma, El Sol de Mexico, 07/21/03; Milenio Diario, 07/24/03; La Jornada, 07/29/03; El Universal, 08/06/03)