

Some Facts: China's "One Child" Policy

One of the most serious social and economic problems that faced China in the '60s and '70s was population growth. Until the 1970s the Chinese government regarded a growing population as a catalyst for bringing about swift economic development. By 1963, the average number of children born to a Chinese woman was 7.5.

However, in 1979, after years of encouraging reproduction, the Chinese government began to view population growth differently. With one-fifth of the world's population, but only seven percent of the world's arable land, continuing strong population growth would bring about hardships, extreme poverty, and famine. As a result, the government implemented a policy known today as the "One Child" policy. The policy was adopted to ensure that China, a country that has historically been prone to severe flooding and famine, would be able to feed its people. The rapid population growth that occurred after the Communist Party came to power had put a strain on the government's efforts to help its people.

The policy has at times been praised as an effective tool for ensuring that China will be able to continue to support its large population. At other times it has been reviled as a tool for human rights abuses and female infanticide.

The Policy

The one child policy, never formally written into law, consists of three main points, advocating:

- delayed marriage and delayed child bearing;
- fewer and healthier births; and
- one child per couple.

Additional information is readily available by using any of the popular Internet search engines to locate "China One Child Policy."