

CULTURE OF LIFE

## Africa resists: No to contraception, Yes to *Humanae Vitae*

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LIFE AND BIOETHICS

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Few remember that Paul VI, in his firm condemnation of contraception, was clearly aware that the various techniques that prevent the conjugal act from retaining its procreative meaning would be increasingly used by neo-Malthusian agencies, with the

intention of putting a brake on what, in their view, would constitute the great calamity of world society: overpopulation. *Humanae Vitae* already saw clearly the great “temptation of the authorities to oppose radical measures to this danger” (§ 2).

**Not only a diagnosis, but an actual denunciation had been expressed by Paul VI's pen:** "Consider also the dangerous weapon that would thus be placed in the hands of public authorities, heedless of moral requirements. Who will be able to reproach a government for applying to the solution of the problems of the community what is lawful for spouses to apply to the solution of a family problem? Who will prevent rulers from favouring and even imposing on their people, whenever they deem it necessary, the method of contraception they consider most effective?" (§ 17).

**Today it is clearer than ever** that Paul VI's fear has become an everyday reality. And what reminds us of this is above all the African experience, which was given voice during the Congress dedicated to *HV*, organised on 19-20 May by the Jérôme Lejeune International Chair of Bioethics, and of which the videos of the speeches and some written reports are now available (see [here](#)).

**Obianuju Ekeocha**, biologist and president of Culture of Life Africa, began with a great, but often forgotten, truth: “There is no place where Malthusian theory and thought is translated into national policies as much as on the African continent”, a continent that has become synonymous with uncontrolled and irresponsible population growth.

**Africa actually has the highest rate of children per woman (4.5):** a mirage for Italy, whose population is now on the verge of extinction. But why does Africa continue to have these birth rates? Ekeocha's answer is anything but defensive: “Why do we know so little about contraception? Is it because we have no education? Or that we do not have access to chemical contraception? No, contraception fails to break through, at least in parts of Africa, because of the attitude we have towards children”. Children are still considered the fulfilment of married life; children are a celebration. The high birth rate is in fact also matched by a low use of contraception and a high rate of contraception discontinuation. This is why there is a push to spread subcutaneous contraceptive implants, as shown by a massive campaign in Kenya in 2021.

**We are talking about insane sums of money, amounting to around USD 9 billion a year,** “to fight the imaginary enemy of African women's fertility”, Ekeocha explains. Money earmarked solely for this purpose: “There are many cases where a hospital that does not have life-saving antibiotics is fully stocked with contraceptive drugs and devices”. In the same way, 'reproductive health' projects are flourishing, which now

directly target African children, making contraception easily available to them in their schools. Schools in which very often “there are hardly any books in the library” or there is actually no library at all.

**And then there are the health risks linked to contraception:** “weight gain, hair loss, loss of bone density, loss of libido, nausea, vaginal discharge, potentially fatal blood clots”. Damage exacerbated by 'mobile clinics', which come to a village, “implant contraceptives and move on. If you have a problem, you have to go to your doctor, who is 1-2 miles away. Imagine what that’s like for women who have had blood clots as side effects”.

**Father Apollinaire Cibaka Cikongo, rector of the University of Mbuji-Mayi**, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, also denounces “the destruction of sexuality and the family initiated by the West for several decades, in particular with regard to contraception and abortion even in our most remote villages, sometimes with the painful or self-interested assistance of the medical and the charitable institutions of the churches”.

**The most recent case took place in Bulengo**, in the village of Goma, in the former Belgian Congo. From 11 April to 11 May, the DRC’s NGO Ipas launched a safe abortion **operation**. Dr. Célestin Iyango, head of the organisation, said it was “to provide care related to abortion, family planning, and the management of sexually transmitted infections. We had more than two hundred cases of requests for access to care for safe abortion”. Abortion and family planning as care: decidedly 'Western' language.

**P. Cikongo denounced the absence of microscopes in many hospitals**, while there are “all the most modern means of contraception, which are distributed free of charge and sometimes by clerics”! Just as in any village in Africa it is now possible to access sites with pornographic material for free. The big financiers are not interested in the real problems of the African peoples, but in achieving the goals of their ideological agendas. And they do it with blackmailing and neo-colonialist methods, making "development aid, public or private, subject to the acceptance of anti-values on family, sexuality and procreation, with popular or educational projects contrary to natural law and the foundations of traditional black African culture", explains the cleric. And he reports a personal experience: “Many projects have not been funded because we have declared that there are no LGBT people in my village”!

**That is why *Humanae Vitae*** “is above all an example of the autonomy and freedom of discernment and decision that black Africa must regain and protect against the

ideologies, pressures and blackmail of modernity”, Cikongo explains.

**He is echoed by Ekeocha**, who reminds us that Westerners are certainly not shielded from the blackmail of the major powers. To think that certain things will never happen here, that we cannot end up in versions similar to China's 'one-child policy', is a huge mistake. "If you think that governments don't have this power and that this will never happen, think what they did for two years [holds up a facemask for all to see, ed.] They will be able to impose that every woman must install a contraceptive inside her". Applause from the hall. "If and when a government decides to control the population, they will certainly be able to do so. They will push their populations in directions we cannot even imagine". Exactly as happened during the pandemic, and now with the so-called climate emergency.

**"We must be grateful to the Church** that continues to present the teaching contained in this encyclical. Whatever the pressure from governments and the pharmaceutical industry, the Church continues to stand firm. In Africa, contraception is a human rights issue. If the teaching of *Humanae Vitae* is lost, people will no longer be protected; so let us stand up and defend *Humanae Vitae*", Ekeocha concluded.

**The sad news** is that today we have to defend *Humanae Vitae* from Churchmen who occupy positions that are far, far too high.