No Comment!!!
Moving Beyond “No Comment”: How to Increase Environmentalists’ Support for Family Planning

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Population Action International
Reaching out at Rio:
Explaining Population Growth and Family Planning to Environmentalists
Three Key Questions

• Do environmentalists care about population?

• If so, what’s the best way to frame family planning for them?

• How can we reach them with these messages?
Do Environmentalists Care about Population?
How do Environmentalists Feel about Population?

- Too contentious – it’s a 3rd rail issue – touch it and you’re dead!
- Not related to their key issues
- Afraid that it will distract from key work – mission drift
- Related, but they don’t know what to do about it/don’t have the technical expertise
- Population growth is good, yields power – innovation will make a difference
- Certain aspects of population are more important than others (such as migration vs family planning)
So Is Population an Environmental Issue?

• IPOS MORI, a research company in the UK, conducted an online survey February 2011
• Respondents were asked *what are the three most important environmental issues facing your country today?*
• Survey conducted in 24 countries around the world
• Approximately 1000+ individuals participated for most countries
Leading environmental concerns for USA

In your view, what are the three most important environmental issues facing your country today?

- Depletion of natural resources: USA 50%, Global 26%
- Future energy sources and supplies: USA 50%, Global 31%
- Dealing with the amount of waste we generate: USA 41%, Global 34%
- Overpopulation: USA 29%, Global 18%
- Global warming/climate change: USA 27%, Global 33%

Ipsos MORI Base: 1,001 adults aged 18-64, February 2 - 14 2011

Source: Ipsos MORI Global @dvisor
So, What Does this Mean for Us?

• There is a growing recognition that population is a key driver of environmental, development, governance, and security challenges.

• However, family planning is not a traditional tool – nor is it often considered an “appropriate” one – for responding to food, water, climate, or conflict.

• Challenge: Changing perceptions of family planning so that it becomes part of the solution to wider problems, including natural resource scarcity, lack of economic development, gender inequity, and instability.

• Opportunity: Integrate family planning into wider environmental, development, and peace-building efforts.
What’s the Best Way to Frame Population for Environmentalists?

Survey of US Environmentalists

• Conducted by Americans for UNFPA

• Four focus groups in March 2011 among environmental donors and volunteers

• Survey
  – n=869 adults nationwide, 18 years or older, who report donating either time or money to an environmental organization in the past year
  – A web survey conducted with the Knowledge Networks online sample, which is recruited through probability methods
  – Margin of sampling error of ±3.3 percentage points
Top Framework: Equity

By providing voluntary access to contraception, we enable more women to make their own decisions, to get an education, and to improve their health and the living conditions for themselves and their families.

Focus on Empowerment and Health

• Why it works:
  – Women’s issues are top priorities for U.S. assistance to developing countries
  – Claim that voluntary contraception can help women is very credible
  – Winning message with environmentalists, especially those who are very likely to be proactive on the issue
Secondary Framework: Co-benefits

- By providing voluntary access to contraception to every woman who wants it worldwide, we can begin to address global population growth, which, along with wasteful consumption, contributes to the loss of vital natural resources that we all need to survive.

- **Why it works but is secondary:**
  - Threats to environment are top aid priority – but weak connection to voluntary contraception.
  - Combining environment and population growth creates a salient message with credible connection to voluntary contraception.
  - Reactions to an environment and population framework are positive, but this framework is not the top reason for supporting voluntary contraception among key groups.
How Can we Reach Environmentalists With These Messages?
Family Planning in Population and Climate Hotspots

- High Population Growth Rates and High Declines in Agricultural Production
- High Population Growth Rates and Low Resilience to Climate Change
- Countries Experiencing All Three Variables
  - High Percentage of Women with Unmet Need for Family Planning
- Plus Current Water Stress or Scarcity
- Plus Current Water Stress or Scarcity
- No Data for One or More Variables
WEATHERING
CHANGE

Stories about climate and family from women around the world
“A woman’s life is hard enough as it is. Because of climate change, the work has increased. Some women come to my house and ask to learn about family planning. Because of the climate change, mothers have understood that using family planning and spacing their children is in their own best interest.”

Aregash Ayele, 32 years old, mother of six
Ethiopia’s Gedeo Zone
Catalytic Small Grants: Reaching Policymakers Through Journalists

Review of Malawi climate change position paper for Durban COP 17 climate meeting:

- I heard a journalist say ... “Family planning in an effective strategy for climate change adaptation in Malawi.” What is he talking about? I’ve never heard such a thing! Such nonsense!
- Well, let’s talk about this - actually research has been showing that because it increases women’s resilience, it can be an effective strategy.

harmonized longer-term adaptation strategies and national development plans.”
Meaningful Dialogue
Examining Provocative Language

• **Overpopulation:**
  – We miss issue that resources are distributed inequitably
  – Promotes a false environmental alarmism
  – Suggests that some people are superfluous—a notion that those “extra” people are bound to reject.

• **Population control/stabilization:**
  – We don’t need to control people to slow population growth, we need to meet their needs for contraception.
  – Today’s framework empowers women to make their own choices about childbearing and have been enormously successful.

• **Optimum population size:**
  – “carrying capacity” of any given area is based in part on how inequitably or wastefully resources are used
  – Depends on how we use and distribute our resources
  – Depends on the choices we make today about technology, consumption levels, economics and family planning.
Listening to Their Questions...

- What is a sustainable population?
- How informed are those working in family planning about Climate change? What is the evidence that they can use in their work to link the two?
- Can population growth provide advantages for society?
Some Conclusions

- Environmentalists can help support international programs that provide voluntary contraception.

- They are more likely to become active on the issue of contraception when we prioritize the benefits for women over the benefits for the environment or population growth; but all are ready to listen on the issue of the environment and population.

- We should use a range of approaches to convey these messages including analysis in their priority areas, telling compelling stories through film, and building capacity through training, meaningful dialogue and catalytic small grants.
Intentional Childbearing and Sustainable Development

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Dakar, Senegal, November 30, 2011

Session 1.1.13: Reaching Out at Rio:
Explaining Population Growth and Family Planning to Environmentalists
Possible paths of world population to 2050, per United Nations
World Population Prospects and Unmet Need for Family Planning

Scott Moreland
Ellen Smith
Suneeta Sharma

April 2010

Futures Group
One Thomas Circle, NW
Washington, DC 20005
United States of America
2a: Global: Contraceptive Prevalence Rate

- UN Low
- UN Medium
- UN High
- Unmet Need

Time periods: 2005 to 2050

Graph showing trends over time.
2d: Global Cumulative Family Planning Costs 2005-2050
(Billions USD)

- UN Low: 1,126
- UN Medium: 1,027
- UN High: 948
- Unmet Need: 1,116
An End to Population Growth: Why Family Planning Is Key to a Sustainable Future

by Robert Engelman

Those who ponder humanity's future in the twenty-first century generally take at face value demographic projections suggesting that the world population will reach something like 9 billion around 2050 and will then stabilize at about that level.¹ The widespread belief that this 30 percent increase from today's 6.9 billion people is inevitable undermines consideration of the role of population size in climate change, water scarcity, biodiversity loss, rising energy prices, and food security. Contributing to this is the related view that efforts to prevent population growth would require coercive government policies that constrain couples from having the children and the family sizes they want. While some analysts are confident that the world can feed, house, and otherwise support 9 billion or more people, others are less certain, and voices of caution about population growth are heard more often than in the past.¹ A logical application of the precautionary principle in the face of current environmental problems would suggest that humanity could more easily accomplish these feats in an environmentally sustainable manner with a smaller population.

In Brief

The widespread assumption that world population, now at 6.9 billion, will inevitably grow to 9 billion by midcentury is wrong. Population could peak before then and at a lower level, ameliorating environmental risks associated with climate change, water scarcity, biodiversity loss, and food and energy insecurity.

The equally widespread belief that an earlier, lower population peak would require coercive “population control” is also incorrect. Population growth rates and average family size worldwide have fallen by roughly half over the past four decades, as modern contraception has become more accessible and popular. The average number of children born to each woman worldwide is not much higher than replacement fertility, an average that would eventually end population growth. Yet more than 40 percent of all pregnancies are unin-
All Pregnancies vs. Unintended Pregnancies, 2008

The graph shows the number of pregnancies in 2008 compared to the number of unintended pregnancies. There were approximately 200,000,000 pregnancies in 2008, with around 50,000,000 of those being unintended.
World Total and Replacement Fertility Rates, 2010, with Calculated TFRs Minus Births from Unintended and Never-Wanted Pregnancies
World Total and Replacement Fertility Rates, 2010, with Calculated TFRs Minus Births from Unintended and Never-Wanted Pregnancies

Range of possible fertility reduction with intended pregnancies.
For further research

• More, better data (e.g. more countries) on unintended pregnancy and its outcomes
• Standard definitions of terms (e.g. unintended, unplanned, unwanted)
• Rigorous separation of never-wanted from mistimed pregnancies, based on uniform criteria
• More exploration of implications of mistimed pregnancies (e.g. proportions followed with intended pregnancies and when)
• Robust integration into population projections
The Sierra Club’s Mission Statement is to:

**Explore, Enjoy, and Protect the Planet**

To practice and promote the responsible use of the earth's ecosystems and resources;

To educate and enlist humanity to protect and restore the quality of the natural and human environment;

To use all lawful means to carry out those objectives.
Sierra Club’s Global Population & Environment Program

- Voluntary family planning
- Basic rights for women and girls
- Resource consumption
- Youth leadership
Sierra Club’s Global Population & Environment Program

Work with domestic & international partners to foster healthy communities by advancing sustainable development solutions.

Access to Family Planning
How do we combat climate change?

Adaptation

“An adjustment in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli or their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities.”

Mitigation

“An anthropogenic intervention to reduce the sources or enhance the sinks of greenhouse gases.”
Who bears the brunt of the effects of climate change?

“A pregnant woman's risk of malaria increases due to changes in her hormone levels and immune system. First-time mothers are especially vulnerable. Pregnant women suffering from malaria are at increased risk of anemia and miscarriage, and their babies are at risk of stillbirth, prematurity, intrauterine growth retardation, and low birth weight.”

- Population Reference Bureau
Stabilization Wedges

Sierra Club’s Global Population & Environment Program

Work with domestic & international partners to foster healthy communities by advancing sustainable development solutions.

Access to Family Planning
Women’s Rights
Empowering Women
Women’s Literacy and Fertility Rates

Source: UNFPA
Sierra Club’s Global Population & Environment Program

Work with domestic & international partners to foster healthy communities by advancing sustainable development solutions.

- Access to Family Planning
- Women’s Rights
- Reduce Consumption
Developed nations account for 75% of the world’s pollution
+ 61% of all meat eaten
+ 76% of all trees cut down
+ 68% of all energy used
Sierra Club’s Global Population & Environment Program

Work with domestic & international partners to foster healthy communities by advancing sustainable development solutions.

Access to Family Planning
Women’s Rights
Reduce Consumption
Empower Youth
Youth Action for the Global Environment

The fate of the world is in your hands... and your pants!