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Enhanced action on mitigation, Policy approaches and positive incentives on issues relating to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation in developing countries; and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries (AWG-LCA)

Submission of views by Parties and accredited observers on modalities and procedures for financing results-based actions and considering activities related to decision 1/CP.16, paragraphs 68.70 and 72.

Addressing Drivers of Deforestation Through Population Health and Environment Programs

Sustainable Population Australia thanks the LCA for this opportunity for input.

We request that population growth is acknowledged as a major driver of deforestation and forest degradation.

We observe that population growth is also a major driver of impoverishment of rural people in developing countries, and it is their impoverishment that drives them to use increasingly marginal land hitherto left as forest due to its low agricultural potential;

We propose that voluntary, culturally appropriate measures to reduce population growth in communities interacting with forests be included as a modality for reducing emission from deforestation and forest degradation.

We are concerned that the language around “financing results-based actions” may too narrowly target actions with short-term outcomes that are not sustainable in the long term, while neglecting actions that effectively reduce drivers of deforestation, whose short-term impacts are not measured in terms of forest conservation.

Metrics relating to drivers of deforestation should be accepted as outcomes, as well as metrics relating to forest carbon stocks.

It would be inappropriate to use carbon trading to finance measures with indirect metrics. This only stands as an example (among many) of the limitations of carbon trading for financing appropriate mitigation measures, particularly in relation to land use and land use change. Financial mechanisms must allow the most effective measures to be supported, not merely the measures most suited to the constraints of a carbon market. The latter favour large private corporations over farmers and communities, and can only achieve success by limiting traditional access to forest resources. They also favour treating symptoms rather than drivers, by demanding direct metrics relating to carbon stocks.

Forests caught in the poverty trap

We argue that rural poverty is primarily a result of overpopulation, resulting in scarcity of land and water resources. Population density in most rural regions of least developed countries has increased more than four-fold in the last fifty years, far outrunning the substantial development gains in agricultural productivity, market access and service delivery in these communities.

In many rural regions, population has stabilized only by the emigration of young people to urban slums. The ballooning needs of the urban poor are diverting the limited aid capacity of governments and NGOs, further reducing services in rural regions. At the same time, urban demand for fuel and building materials provides greater incentive for rural communities to ‘cash in’ their forest resources. There can be no happy ending while population growth continues apace.

We further contend that a large proportion of population growth is due to coercive pregnancy. Women are denied access to education and economic opportunities, forced into marriage very young, deprived of access to health services or required to be accompanied by their husbands, and subjected to cultural norms and social pressures that value them only for their large families.

The direct benefits of later, fewer and wider spaced pregnancies for the health of women and their children, and for the economic and food security of families, are substantial. At the level of community and nation, the UN estimates that “for every dollar spent in family planning, between two and six dollars can be saved in interventions aimed at achieving other development goals.”ⁱ If interventions are justified to change cultural norms in relation to natural resource use, the justification is at least as great to change cultural norms about birth control and family size. A wide range of culturally appropriate programs have proven successful in the past, and demonstrate that communities voluntarily embrace population stabilization when they are included and empowered as change agents.ⁱⁱ

Integrating development and conservation

We draw your attention to the relatively recent expansion and success of Population Health and Environment (PHE) programs. These programs excel in engaging with communities in vulnerable environments in an integrated manner that addresses their needs for health and livelihood while enhancing their commitment and capacity to protect their environment and the inheritance of their children.

We commend to you, as examples of best practice,

- WWF (World Wildlife Fund) PHE programs:
<http://www.worldwildlife.org/what/communityaction/people/phe/populationhealthenvironment.html>
- PHE Ethiopia Consortium www.phe-ethiopia.org

The lost decade

Due to political lobbying and a misinformation campaign by certain religious extremists, in the mid-1990s it became politically unacceptable to identify population growth reduction as a

goal for development and health interventions, and to use metrics relating to birth rates or population numbers in reporting program success. The 1994 UN Conference on Population and Development in Cairo dictated that women’s reproductive health and rights must be the exclusive goal of population interventions (instead of essential goals along side population stabilisation, as the vast majority of programs already upheld).

The ironic result of the Cairo Agenda has been to greatly undermine women’s reproductive health and rights, by decimating support for family planning programs. Between 1995 and 2007, international assistance for family planning dropped from \$723 million to \$338 million.ⁱⁱⁱ As a proportion of total aid for population assistance, it dropped from 55% to only 5%, as the total program was expanded by the response to HIV-AIDS (Figure 1). This expansion also drew national capacity within developing countries away from family planning programs.

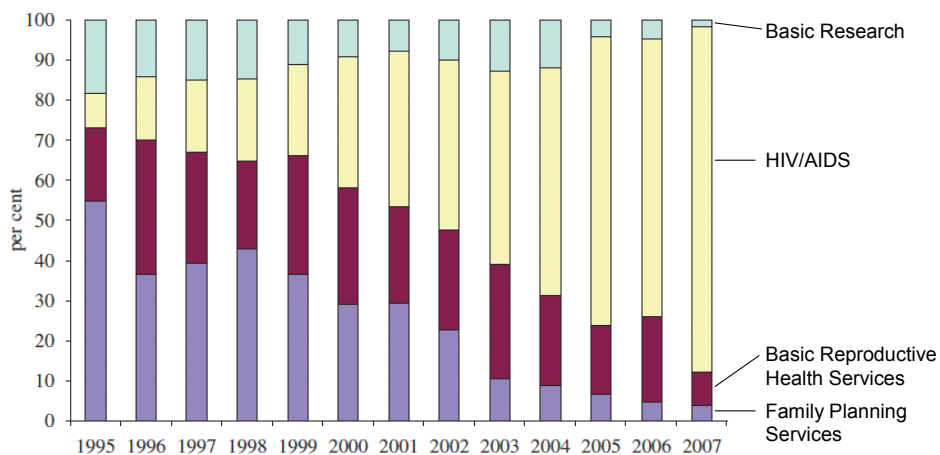


Figure 1. Allocation of international funding for “Population Assistance” (Sinding 2009)^{iv}

This was despite the overwhelming success of purely voluntary, non-coercive programs in many countries in reducing family size, liberating women from unwanted pregnancies and improving the economic situation for families and nations. Although the challenges posed by population growth are widely acknowledged, and the impact of reproductive health programs and girls’ education on birth rates openly recognised as a good thing, actually *intending* to do this good thing became abhorant.

This situation is analogous to insisting that forests should never be valued for their carbon storage, as this would be an affront to the intrinsic value of their biodiversity. Such a view would contend that we should only protect forests via biodiversity programs and, while celebrating the avoided emissions that may result, never *seek* to avoid them, nor indeed measure the outcome in terms of carbon stocks. Most people would agree that such a position would not serve the cause of biodiversity but rob it of valuable opportunities. Similarly, we should see that the cause of women’s reproductive health and rights is not served by the taboo on population numbers.

To say that this strategy has been a failure is understatement. It has been a catastrophe.

As a result of this taboo, neither population stabilisation nor access to reproductive health care and contraception were included among the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). At the first review of the MDG in 2005, it was realised that population growth threatened every

other goal.^v Belatedly, universal access to reproductive health care was added as a dot point under Goal 5 – too little, too late.

The fertility decline established in sub-Saharan Africa by earlier family planning programs has stalled, and birth rates in many rural areas have actually increased.^{vi vii}

The global population trend has decisively changed course. The number of people added to the planet each year peaked in 1988 and was showing steady decline, but from 2003 to 2010 the numbers increased each year. This is not a course consistent with the UN's medium projection. Only renewed attention to family planning can achieve even the medium projection, let alone a lower outcome.

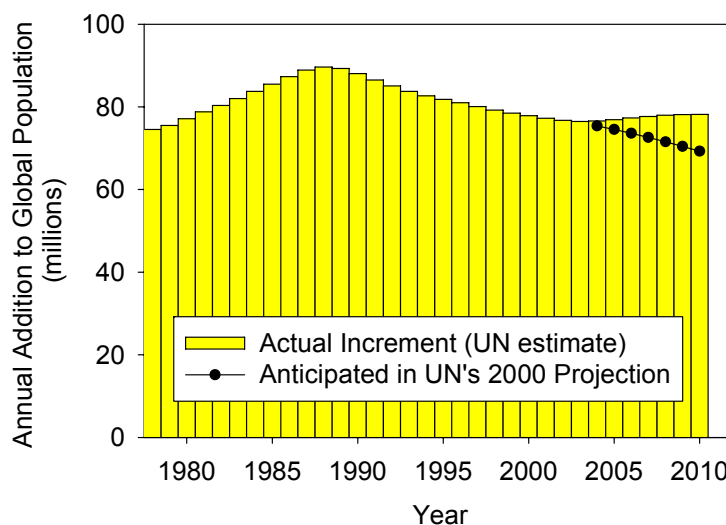


Figure 2. Annual increment in global population, according to estimates published in the UN 2010 revision.

To claim that choice of family size is a right in which we should not intervene is to deprive women of reproductive freedom, and to condemn the next generation to be poorer than their parents. It also casts aside the rights of many species, such as those who inhabit threatened forests.

Omission as a barrier

It must be recognised that the climate change agenda, and the funding flows that will result from it, constitute a *game changer* in the development landscape. Issues not identified as climate change response (either adaptation or mitigation) will struggle for political attention and funding.

The Millennium Development Goals were the last game changer. Their omission of aspirations for population stabilisation has contributed substantially to the renewed surge in global population.

We beg that the climate change treaty not repeat this mistake.

To date, the lack of mention of population measures as a modality for climate action has proved to be a barrier to project inclusion.

Among 41 National Adaptation Plans for Action (NAPAs) submitted in 2009, 37 identified population growth as a factor affecting climate change impacts, yet only six recognized family planning or reproductive health as part of an adaptation strategy, two included family planning and reproductive health in projects submitted for priority funding, and none were funded.^{viii}

Possible reasons for this omission are many, but include the lack of fit with guidelines provided to countries, and with criteria for project selection. Emphasis was also given to activities with outcomes measurable directly in terms of climate resilience in the near term. By failing to fit in the boxes provided, and by having predominantly indirect and medium-term (but nonetheless large) impacts, priority could not be given to population measures.

Omission from the treaty text is thus a barrier. Inclusion of non-coercive measures to enhance population stabilization among modalities would provide political support for such project components, and allow appropriate metrics to be used in evaluating programs.

What we measure guides what we do

Metrics such as prevalence of contraception use among women of reproductive age, age of marriage, age of bearing first child and average gap between children, can provide short-term feedback on program achievements. Crude birth rate, total fertility rate and population growth rate follow on. Progress in reducing domestic violence against women, increasing women's rights and access to land title and economic opportunities, and educational attainment of girls all have recognized indirect impact on birth rates.

However, without identifying population growth as a driver of climate change vulnerability or deforestation, there is no place for such metrics nor the programs to effect change in them.

Conclusions

1. We ask that you acknowledge population growth as a driver of deforestation in the text.
2. We ask that you include voluntary, non-coercive measures to reduce population growth as a modality for forest protection, emphasising the need to protect livelihoods and food security on a finite land resource base.
3. We suggest that you look at Population, Health and Environment (PHE) programs as an appropriate model for integrating population in conservation and development interventions.
4. We stress the need for financial support for action on drivers, not only outcomes, and the need to recognise appropriate metrics of progress other than carbon stocks.
5. We suggest that international trading of carbon permits is an extremely poor mechanism for funding forest conservation, because of its emphasis on outcomes rather than drivers, and because it does not readily support community development interventions. Public finance, which may be raised by taxing carbon in developed countries, allows much more robust and equitable interventions.

We trust that you will take this information into consideration in the wording of the LCA treaty document.

Jane O'Sullivan

For Sustainable Population Australia

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