

A PORTRAIT OF
- SNAPSHOT -

POPULATION, CONSERVATION AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

When you think of the problems facing conservationists, what comes to mind - habitat loss, fisheries depletion, energy consumption, urban sprawl? What about human population growth? It may not be the first issue that springs to mind; however, our growing numbers present a great challenge to the conservation of natural resources.

While population growth is a key issue, understanding and addressing it is not always easy. To help out, we have collected some facts as a starting point. We hope they will help you understand population trends and their relation to resource conservation as well as commonsense ways we can help slow population growth

The Numbers

- World population is currently 6.7 billion and growing.
- As of 2008, we add nearly 80 million people to the planet each year. Scientists now predict we will reach a population of 9 billion by 2040.
- Current U.S. population is 305 million.
- Worldwide, we rank third behind China (1.3 billion) and India (1.1 billion).



number will at least double by 2050.

Fisheries

Currently 76 percent of the world's fisheries have been over fished and fully exploited. Industrial fleets have fished out at least 90 percent of large ocean predators, including tuna,

marlin and swordfish, in the last 50 years.

Air

Since 1970, total global emissions of greenhouse gases have increased by 61 percent, largely due to population growth. Even with a 40 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in the developed world, at the current rate, global population growth alone will undo those gains.

Biodiversity

Tropical forests contain more than half of the world's remaining biodiversity. Many areas are being threatened by population growth rates that are well above the global average.

Resource Impacts

The number of people only tells part of the story. The effects of population growth on natural resources are complex and varied. For example:

Forests

Human activity has cleared about half of the world's original forest cover and we lose an additional 18 million acres of forests per year along with 14 million acres that are degraded.

Water

A little over 1 billion people lack access to safe water. According to conservative estimates, that



Finding Solutions

Though overall trends of population growth and resource consumption may seem overwhelming, some sensible solutions have already proven helpful. One solution is to increase women's access to health care, education, and economic opportunities.

All over the world, women have the main responsibility for raising children and acquiring basic resources for their family. Women often collect water and household fuel. They also make up more than half of the world's agricultural workforce. To perform all these roles, women need increased social, economic, and educational opportunities. This includes the ability to choose, in partnership with men, family size and spacing. In fact, one of the most cost-effective development programs, historically, is the provision of reproductive health care, including family planning.

Starting in the 1960's, family planning became more available around the world. Since then, fertility has dropped to just over 2.5 children per woman. This is less than half what the fertility rate was in 1969. In addition, the cost of providing family planning services is very low relative to the benefits. Research shows that for every dollar invested in family planning, governments save as much as \$16 in reduced health care, education, and social services costs.

Hearts, Minds, and Money

Investing in reproductive health care and family planning has resulted in great benefits. However, need still far outweighs supply. Approximately 15 percent of married women in developing countries have an unmet need for family planning and more than half a million women die each year from pregnancy-related complications.

Surveys show that 69 percent of Americans support U.S. funding for family planning programs in developing countries. In addition, 92 percent of Americans believe in the fundamental right of individuals and families to determine the number of children they will have.

While favoring funding, most Americans also greatly overestimate the amount of money the United States gives. On average, Americans estimate that development aid makes up more than 20 percent of the federal budget. Actually, less than one percent of the budget goes to international assistance. In 2007, the U.S. Agency for International Development spent \$436 million on family planning programs. That is equal to about \$1.43 per American, per year.

People may also be concerned that U.S. funding supports abortion services. By law, U.S. family planning funding cannot be used to support abortion. In addition, research shows access to family planning helps prevent abortions. For example, in Russia, increased access to modern family planning methods resulted in more than a 30 percent drop in the abortion rate. In Hungary, after modern contraceptives were introduced, there was a 60 percent drop in abortions. With each \$100 million investment in international family planning services 2.1 million unintended pregnancies are avoided, there are 825,000 fewer abortions, 70,000 infant deaths are averted and 4,000 maternal lives are saved.

Sources available upon request.