

# International Policy Symposium on the Connection between Population Dynamics, Reproductive Health and Rights and Climate Change

Summary Report of the Symposium, Ministerial Dialogue and  
Advocacy Kit for Integrated Approaches to Population, Climate  
Change and Sustainable Development



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commonwealth medical trust

**BMA** 

  
Partners in Population and Development  
African Regional Office

Summary Report of a March 2010 Symposium organised by PSN in  
association with Commat, together with the BMA and PPD Africa.

## Introduction and Objectives



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Session 3 panel, including from left to right: Honourable Professor David Mwakyausa, Minister of Health and Social Welfare Tanzania; Andrew Mitchell MP<sup>1</sup>, UK; Honourable Professor Ephraim Kamuntu, Minister of State for Finance/Planning, Uganda; Sally Keeble MP, UK and Honourable Professor Peter Anyang Nyong'o, Minister of Medical Services, Kenya.

The symposium was held on 1st March 2010 and was organised by the Population and Sustainability Network (PSN) in association with the Commonwealth Medical Trust (Commat), together with the British Medical Association (BMA) and Partners in Population and Development African Regional Office (PPDARO)<sup>2</sup>.

The objectives of the symposium were:

- To increase understanding among opinion leaders in the international development climate change community and within the communities most affected by climate change of the impact and significance of population dynamics on these issues;
- To craft consensus on the contribution that increased access to reproductive health, including rights-based family planning programmes, can make to climate change mitigation, resilience and adaptation programmes;
- To reduce resistance to the inclusion of population dynamics in climate change and environmental protection work.

The event included a mix of policymakers, programme managers and implementers as well as researchers. The participant list included government Ministers of Health from Kenya and Tanzania, and the Minister for Finance and Planning from Uganda, and UK parliamentarians representing the leading parties in the UK and including the current Shadow Secretary of State for International Development.

<sup>1</sup> UK Secretary of State for International Development from May 2010

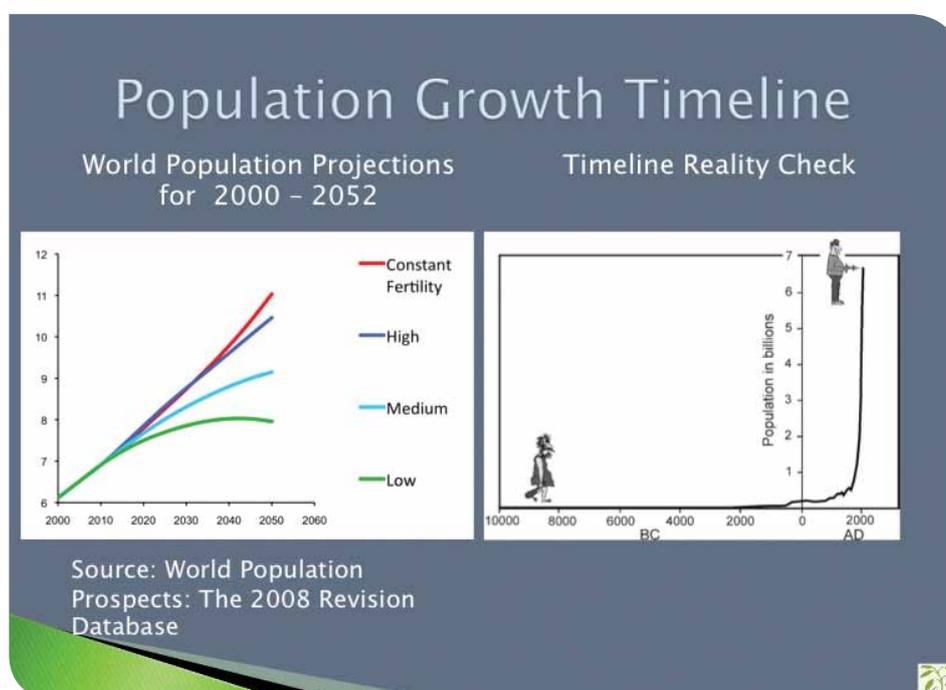
<sup>2</sup> Co-sponsoring organisations included Population Action International (PAI), the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Population, Development and Reproductive Health (APPGDRH), the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), Marie Stopes International (MSI), and University College London (UCL), and the event was also financially supported by the UK Department for International Development (which made the attendance of three African ministers possible) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

## Key Facts

Despite UN population projections that indicate that the global population continues to grow, there is still reluctance to discuss this issue in the current international development discourse, although this is slowly changing. Factors that might be responsible for this reluctance included donor boredom with family planning, which has led to acute contraceptive commodity shortages in some parts of the world.

Population dynamics and climate change: Key Facts:

- In November 2011 the world's population stood at 7 billion people; the medium term projection for 2050 is 9.3 billion.
- If fertility remains constant, the 2050 figure will be 11 billion people on the planet.
- The world did not have one billion people on it until about 1800; it passed the two billion mark in 1930. Thirty years later it had reached another billion. The most recent billion was added in 12 years.



*Presentation slide of Karen Newman, Population and Sustainability Network.*

- The increase in Greenhouse Gas Emissions over the last 150 years has already significantly changed climate;
- The twelve warmest years on record have all occurred in the last thirteen years;
- IPCC reports best estimate temperature rises of 1.8°C to 4°C. However, global carbon dioxide emissions are already rising faster than the most pessimistic of the IPCC emission scenarios.
- With respect to rising sea levels:
  - We have seen a sea level rise of over 40 mm and significant retreat of Arctic sea ice and nearly all continental glaciers.
  - At the moment:
    - one third of the world's population lives within 60 miles of a shoreline and
    - 13 of the world's 20 largest cities are located on a coast.

Meanwhile, an analysis of the National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs), within which developing countries outline top priorities for adaptation and specific localised vulnerabilities to climate change, revealed that, of 40 analysed, no fewer than 37 specifically mentioned population growth as one of the factors confounding their attempts to adapt to climate change.

To take the issue of water scarcity, in respect of the River Nile, demand for water is increasing in all ten countries of the Nile basin:

- The Nile is already severely depleted by the time it reaches the Mediterranean;
- The population of the Nile basin is set to double by 2050.

Or, to take the example of the top 20 failing states in 2006:

- 17 have rapid rates of population growth, many of them expanding at close to 3% a year, or 20-fold per century;
- In 5 of these 17 countries, women have an average of nearly 7 children each;
- In all but 6 of the top 20 failing states, at least 40% of the population is under 15.

It is, however, important to recognise the mistakes of the past in order to move forward constructively. The history of “population” programmes, inevitably associated as they are with “population control” has made discussion about population difficult. People sometimes are not even sure why, but they connect transistor radios with population in ways that leads to associating “population” with coercive programmes. This tendency must be countered by an emphasis on voluntary family planning programmes which respect and protect rights.

## Key Conclusions

*Climate change is happening now*

- “Floods, Cyclones, Drought” (Uganda) “Floods, Hailstones, Landslides” (Kenya) – while climate change is still being debated in some parts of the world, in others it is being directly experienced.
- “The end of geography” in Bangladesh – sea levels are projected to rise to alarming levels in that country.
- Climate change will exacerbate health and social inequalities.
- The Ugandan Minister of State for Finance and Planning reminded us that those who will be most affected by climate change have contributed the least to it, and have least capacity for adaptation.

*Population and consumption pressures are great and increasing:*

- “The Green revolution is over in India” – food scarcity is looming there and elsewhere.
- Population growth drives unsustainable resource use.
- Things that are good for climate change are good for health – lifestyle transport choices, reducing meat consumption etc.
- Population dynamics are not just about growth – other issues, including urbanisation, household composition, and migration need to be better understood.

*Increasing access to voluntary family planning brings many benefits:*

- Increased investment in voluntary family planning programmes makes sense for several reasons, including as part of efforts to adapt to the effects of climate change.
- Reductions in child mortality are associated with lower fertility.

*Promoting integrated population, health and climate change approaches:*

- The argument that if you care about reducing consumption, then to focus on population is a distraction is misleading and inaccurate; it isn't an either/or issue – both elements are important.
- Family planning already makes sense; climate change adds another reason for investing in it.
- An integrated approach to working directly with communities, including family planning with environmental or conservation project activities can make a significant difference.
- People at the local level are seeing the links; where community relations are good, no resistance has manifested itself at community level.
- Three elements – People, Health and Climate Change – must be addressed simultaneously.

## The main challenges in the context of Ethiopia

- Population size above 80 million
- Unmet need for family planning and large family size – 34%
- Percent of population living in rural areas
- Deforestation and land degradation
- Percent of population living on less than US dollars per day
- Near constant state of food insecurity
- Poor health outcomes





*Presentation slide of Negash Teklu, Consortium for Integrated PHE, Addis Ababa*

*Working in partnership with communities:*

- It is important to work with faith-based groups.
- Young people are important and their perspectives and needs must be included and addressed.
- The importance of good community relations cannot be overstated.
- Global Social Solidarity will be particularly important in addressing population and climate change effectively and equitably.

*The necessity of right-based approaches to advancing sexual and reproductive health:*

- Will programmes “Respect rights or drive a coach and four through them”? We must ensure that rights are fully respected and protected.
- How good are we at respecting, protecting and promoting the right to information about sexual and reproductive health and rights?
- More must be done to increase awareness of men’s and women’s roles and responsibilities with respect to sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- Unmet need for family planning is greatest among the poor.

*Political leadership and funding is needed*

- Within the UK, international development commands wide assent among all major political parties.
- NAPAs – while 37 out of 40 explicitly recognised population growth as an important factor confounding efforts to adapt to climate change, no family planning projects have been funded through the NAPAs process. There are significant shortcomings in adaptation funding mechanisms.
- Political leadership on this issue is vital, including the support of finance ministries.
- Leadership from developed countries is needed for a binding accord at the international level.

The link between population and climate change is clearly complex and controversial, but it is critical to a comprehensive analysis of the issues. We need to ask ourselves how useful the silence is on population, and to bring this issue in from the cold, finding a language that recognises, reflects and addresses the need to emphasise resource consumption in the North at the same time as advocating increased access to sexual and reproductive health care services in the South.

*We won't find the answers ...*

- If we don't have the courage to ask the questions;
- If we don't increase awareness that we have learned from the mistakes of the past; we know how important it is to respect and protect the rights of women, men and children;
- If we continue to believe that caring about rights is intrinsically incompatible with searching for equitable ways to harmonise global population with consumption of the world's non-renewable resources, and global efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change;
- If we remain complicit in the silence about population.

## Overview of the Symposium

**The agenda was divided into four sessions – first, an introduction to the issues**, including the moral mandate, the links between health and climate change, how population dynamics fit into climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, rights-based approaches and a view from the Ugandan Minister of Finance and Planning, the **Honourable Professor Ephraim Kamuntu**. He reminded the audience that the developing world contributes the least greenhouse gas emissions, that they will be most affected by climate change, and that they are least able to deal with the negative effects. Striking impressions from this session included a slide from **Anthony Costello** (UCL) showing “the end of geography” with the rise of the sea nearly engulfing Dhaka, and a slide showing deaths from HIV in South Africa due to slow mobilisation to deal with that pandemic. The message to climate sceptics: scepticism kills. **Paul Wilkinson** (LSHTM) explained how family planning is important in its own right – it doesn't need climate change for justification, but climate change adds urgency. Moreover, things that are “good” for climate change tend to also be “good” for health.

**Vivienne Nathanson** (BMA) emphasised the importance of rights and said the key is “empowerment”. **Jonathan Porritt** (Founder Director, Forum for the Future, and Symposium keynote speaker) reminded the audience that we need to get beyond the “crass” consumption versus population debate. Inadequate funding for family planning and the need for an increased investment in this area was mentioned in the first session, and was a theme that continually reappeared throughout the day.

**The second session focused on programme priorities**. Jotham Musinguzi from PPDARO chaired and **Siri Tellier** (now retired from UNFPA) spoke about the connection between climate, population, family

planning and women. She made the point that whether the global population reaches 11 billion or 8 billion in 2050 (the high and low variant projections) is important. She also compared the populations and emissions of the USA and Niger, saying that the population of Niger would need to reach 16 billion to reach the total emissions of the USA. At the same time, Niger will have a difficult time coping with its population that is doubling in size every 20 or so years. **Karen Hardee (PAI)** spoke about challenges of adaptation, including experience with National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs), the link between adaptation and sustainable development and the implications for family planning/reproductive health of adaptation funding. The point that population is recognised by NAPA countries but is not translated into projects was clear as was the need to understand adaptation funding, vis a vis development planning, as it relates to family planning/reproductive health.

**Negash Teklu** of the Consortium for Integrated Population, Health and Environment (CIPHE) spoke of integrating Population, Health and Environment (PHE) in Ethiopia. Participants were very interested in the PHE approach and asked about the role of community participation, women's empowerment and the possibilities for scale up. **Vik Mohan** of Blue Ventures presented compelling evidence about combining family planning with marine conservation in Madagascar, and the importance of having a good relationship with the community.

**The third session gave the floor to the policymakers from Africa and the UK.** The **Ugandan Minister of Finance and Planning** noted that his country is already feeling the effects of climate change – they now have a ministry for Disaster Preparedness, which Uganda has never before needed. He also identified that family planning must be given greater visibility. The **Minister of Health from Tanzania (Honourable Professor David Mwakayusa)** said that he sees the health effects of climate change – eg malaria in new areas and emphasised that culture matters. He noted the importance of understanding people's concerns, for example, that white bednets were considered “funeral shrouds” and had to be changed to another colour, and that mothers worried about their children sleeping under medicated bednets that killed mosquitoes. This served to emphasise that technology is not always enough, and behaviour also needs to be addressed, and this point is relevant for family planning too. He said that the government of Tanzania has realised that family planning needs renewed attention and that the president will be announcing the renewed focus this month. The **Minister of Medical Services from Kenya (Honourable Professor Peter Anyang Nyong'o)** said that his government is ready to do integrated programming but that they need guidance on how to implement such programmes. If there is to be a holistic approach, how do we sequence and implement the interventions? He emphasised the need for global solidarity on climate change. **Andrew Stunell, MP (Liberal Democrat) from the UK,** noted that money for climate change is, in fact, Official Development Aid, which won't change until the next funding cycle, although the financial crunch is likely to affect how much money is available. He assured the audience that the UK will reach the 0.7% target. The UK's policy is to spend on the poorest countries (China is finally being taken off this list). Another **MP, Sally Keeble (Labour)** noted that it is difficult to separate climate and development policies and that it will be important to have policies from developed countries that developing countries can support. **Andrew Mitchell, MP, (Conservative),** outlined what a Conservative government would do for development. He emphasised that there is an agreement among the parties on the need for international development – and on the need to support reproductive health. Discussion included the issue of corruption, which the parliamentarians from Africa noted sometimes had Western complicity. Viscount Craigavon, a cross-bencher from the House of Lords, gave a vote of thanks and closed this session.

**In the final session,** which was chaired by IPPF Director-General Dr Gill Greer, Jotham Musinguzi (Partners in Population), Susannah Mayhew (LSHTM), Malcolm Potts (University of Berkeley) and Karen

Newman (PSN) gave provocative presentations concluding the issues that arose during the day, and considered an agenda for moving forward. **Susannah Mayhew** recognised that today everyone had been committed to a rights-based approach to the issue. But further to this, she emphasised the importance of the right to development, for developing countries. She also stressed that rapid population growth impedes poverty eradication. **Jotham Musinguzi** called for stronger leadership and political commitment from the South. He also suggested that lessons learned in the South need to be shared: If something is working in Kenya, it may well work in e.g. Uganda. **Malcolm Potts** asked the question “What is it that reduces fertility?” and argued that fertility decline is largely driven by a woman’s ability to access modern contraception.

**Karen Newman**, coordinator of the Population and Sustainability Network, acknowledged that the relationship between climate change and population is complex, controversial and critical. She summarised the main points coming out from the day, including valuable consensus generated at the Symposium on the importance of a rights-based approach to tackling the links between population dynamics and climate change; the need to secure additional funding for family planning services that respect and protect rights; the need for climate change adaptation funding streams to be flexible enough to recognise family planning as part of effective adaptation strategies, and the need for political leadership to ensure that issues related to population growth are addressed in tandem with efforts to reduce consumption.

Many of the speakers made similar points: this serves to reinforce the importance, strength and urgency of the messages.

## Acknowledgments

The symposium organisers would like to thank other organisations that have provided support for the Symposium, particularly the UK Department for International Development (DFID) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

The Symposium benefitted from the participation of Ministers of Health or Finance/Planning from Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda, and also from the soon-to-be UK Secretary of State for International Development.

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