Linking sexual and reproductive health and climate change: poisoned chalice or an opportunity for advancing rights

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Can we connect population and climate change issues to our vision of sexual and reproductive health and rights?

- This will depend on two factors:
  - What we take to be the core value and values of the ICPD agenda
  - Our skill at linking those values and priorities to environmental and climate change policies and programmes
Population and Climate Change

- Complex, Controversial, Critical Connection

- Have to recognize different consumption patterns in GHG emissions, and the use of the world’s non-renewable resources
Key complexities

- Population and climate change/environmental issues
  - Not the same thing, although there is sometimes overlap
- Population variables
  - Household size
  - Age and sex composition
  - Population density
With the exception of a few oil rich states, no country has raised itself out of poverty without slowing its population growth.

High fertility is concentrated in few countries but is particularly prevalent among the 49 LDCs, 31 of which had fertility levels above five children per women in 2005.

UNFPA “Meeting the unmet need for family planning would be the equivalent of 1% economic growth.”
Climate change: a few facts

- The increase in Greenhouse Gas Emissions over the last 150 years has already significantly changed climate. We have seen a sea level rise of over 40 mm and significant retreat of Arctic sea ice and nearly all continental glaciers.
- 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 dire of the IPCC emission scenarios.
Impact

- Biodiversity: recent estimates suggest that, due to habitat loss, pollution and hunting, ecosystems are already being hugely degraded and that three known species were becoming extinct each hour. Global warming is likely to exacerbate such degradation.

- Sustained temperature rises of 5-6°C could lead to the loss of both Greenland and the Western Antarctic ice sheets by the middle of next century, raising sea levels by up to 13m
Rising sea levels...

- At the moment, one third of the world’s population lives within 60 miles of a shoreline and thirteen of the world’s twenty largest cities are located on a coast.
- Billions could be displaced in environmental mass migration
1 Meter

Sea Level Rise
National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPA) UNFCCC

- Outline top priorities for adaptation and specific localized vulnerabilities to climate change
- Well over half of them refer to population growth/density as a factor that makes coping with the changes that climate change will bring much harder.
Five most frequently mentioned factors that will be made worse by population growth and climate change

- Population pressure on fresh water availability
- Population affecting soil degradation/erosion – implications for agriculture
- Shortage of land per capity/over grazing
- Deforestation
- High population density/migration to coastal areas, thereby increasing vulnerability
Rapid population growth undermines basic education in a number of ways

- In high population growth countries, the number of school age children can double every 20 years.

- Assuming class sizes of 40, an extra 2 million school teachers per year are required just to stand still.

- The challenge grows with time, as almost 30% of the world population is under the age of 15.
Recognising population is a sensitive issue

- History of population/family planning; global memories are long in respect of forced sterilization, transistor radios, coercion

- Population not quite polite to discuss – elephant on the table in several global development discussions at present
Where are we now with the population ‘problem’?

- UN medium projections
- Assumptions that family planning programmes are in place
- People/donors “bored” with family planning
- Commodities
The Nile

- Demand for water is increasing in all ten countries of the Nile basin.
- Nile already severely depleted by the time it reaches the Mediterranean
- Population of Nile basin set to *double by 2050*
Egypt
2006: 75 million
2050: 126 million

Sudan
2006: 41 million
2050: 84 million

Ethiopia
1900: 5 million
2006: 75 million
2050: 145 million

Uganda
2006: 28 million
2050: 130 million
Rights

- Who remembers “Development is the best contraceptive?”

- Is the right to decide freely on the number and spacing of their children truly being exercised by, for example, women living in the Philippines who have 12 children.
Top 20 Failing States, 2006

- Of the top 20, 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.
Priorities emerging from March International Policy Symposium

- Increased investment in family planning
- Consumption/population – crass either/or approach
- Child mortality association with lower fertility.
- “The end of geography” in Bangladesh
- FP already a sensible rationale; climate change adds another reason for investing in it
- Things that are good for climate change are good for health – lifestyle, meat consumption etc
Key concerns

- Health and social inequalities: climate change will exacerbate that
- Right to information – how good are we at that?
- Ugandan Minister: will be most affected by climate change; have contributed the least to it, and have least capacity for adaptation
- Creating awareness of men’s and women’s roles and responsibilities with respect to sexual and reproductive health and rights
Leadership from developed countries is needed for a binding accord

Integrated approach working with communities can make a difference

People at local level seeing links.

No resistance at community level - good community relations important

Shortcomings in funding mechanisms

Population growth drives unsustained resource use
Bihar
2001
82 million (Germany)
2061
211 million (Indonesia)

Uttar Pradesh
2001
167 million (Pakistan)
2061
440 million (European Union)
Policy considerations

- How useful is the silence on population?
  - Can we bring this issue in from the cold?

- Can we find a language that recognizes, reflects and addresses the need to emphasize resource consumption in the North at the same time as advocating increased access to sexual and reproductive health care services in the South?
The Age of Oil
Amnesty International Turkey Campaign

A player at a Turkish football match at which both teams wore 'Stop Violence Against Women' T-shirts, February 2004. The slogan on the T-shirts read: "Red Cards for violence against women."
Current international development priorities

- Climate Change
- Poverty Elimination
- Fragile States
- Global Aid Architecture
We have to: -

- Stop talking about Cairo
- Start distilling what we know is important about gender, health, rights and other key elements from that agenda
- Sensitize ourselves to demographic dimensions of key development priorities
- Say why our issues are crucial to achieving them
To ensure a fair selection you all get the same test. You must all climb that tree.