



Population &  
Sustainability  
Network

**PSN letter published in the Guardian 10.4.13**, in response to the Editorial (8 April) *Food Security: enough on our plates?*

You say food security is not just a problem for the poor and that population growth means that, every day, there are another 220,000 mouths to feed. Yet, your list of "things that could be done" did not include helping the estimated 222 million women in the world who want to avoid a pregnancy in the next two years, but who are not using modern contraceptives, mostly because they do not have access to them. Demography is not destiny; achieving the internationally agreed priority of universal access to reproductive health, including family planning, is not just a matter of human rights, it would also significantly reduce the numbers of women who die every year from causes related to pregnancy and childbirth.

What is needed is the political will to invest in voluntary family planning programmes that respect and protect rights. In a world of vast social inequalities, unsustainable consumption patterns and pressing environmental problems, not to mention the immoral and wasteful deficiencies of the global food system, empowering women and men to ensure that every child is a wanted child won't solve everything. But it is one of many strategies that must be adopted if we are to achieve food security and a sustainable future for all. Population is the denominator of all of these issues, and ignoring it, if that means perpetuating the situation whereby millions of women do not have the access to contraceptives that we take for granted, is no longer consistent with justice and common decency.

**Karen Newman** *Population and Sustainability Network*