

Sustainable Planet? The Silent Crisis

We are facing a crisis. For many decades there has been a wilful blindness in recognising that the relentless rise in human numbers is one of the biggest problems we face. A problem that is driving energy depletion, climate destabilisation, bio-diversity loss, water shortage and the prospect that agriculture will be unable to produce enough food to feed us.

Already we are feeling the changes – large-scale migration, growing infrastructure pressures and overcrowding. Add to this a faltering global economy based on the impossibility of endless growth and debt. This will need to be radically rethought to keep our complex society functioning. If current birth rates persist, the UN projects our numbers nearly tripling to 21 billion by 2090.

Aid crisis

In Africa, many countries already have massive unemployment and not enough food. How will they provide all the schools, jobs, hospitals and food to sustain populations set to more than double or triple in size in 30 years?

Governments will be struggling with millions of unemployed and hungry people attracted to violence and extremism. Look at the problems already in our news in countries like Haiti, Pakistan, Somalia, Yemen and Afghanistan - all on food aid, with exploding populations and increasingly scarce resources – yet population growth is barely mentioned!

Professor John Beddington, former UK Chief Scientist, warned in 2009: “Our food reserves are at a 50-year low, but by 2030 we need to be producing 50% more food, we will need 50% more energy, and 30% more fresh water.”

Saving the planet greenwash

Many environmental organisations tell us that ‘if we each reduced our demand, population growth would not be a problem’. But our economy based on growth is driving us in the opposite direction. When you keep adding ever more people you simply drive humanity to a lower and lower standard of living.

A combination of political blindness and political correctness, religious dogmatists and an economic doctrine of 'out with limits', has undermined common sense.

Why would we think it better to create energy shortages, food shortages, lowered quality of life, a housing crisis, grid-locked traffic, bio-diversity loss, and many more calamities caused by ever increasing population pressures?

If governments won't talk population, then they are not serious about cutting emissions, ensuring food supplies and a secure quality of life for people.

Rapid action vital

Rich nations are consuming too much and populations continue to rise - with high immigration. Legitimate aspirations to raise living standards in high population countries like China and India are consuming ever-more resources. In poor countries with acute water and food shortages, populations are set to double in size in 30 years, driving social unrest on a massive scale.

There are several key challenges we have to resolve.

- Ensure good access to family planning services worldwide.
- Ensure education and understanding in schools.
- Encourage genuinely Sustainable Development.
- Incentivise welfare systems to encourage fewer births rather than more.

Moral values?

Some people believe they have a right to have as many children as they want, whether they can look after them or not and fail to see the consequences of growing populations. Many commentators wilfully promote an ever-larger population in the name of freedom of choice and growth. There will be little choice if we go on multiplying with no thought for the future.

Others claim their religion for actions that impact on others: Have large families "in the name of God"; Over-consuming resources? "God will provide" - and when the day of reckoning and collapse arrives - "It is God's will" – an opt-out from moral responsibility.

Do we plan for a secure and better life, or do we carry on blindly toward a minefield of lethal limits? Society has a right to expect its citizens to act in ways that do not endanger others. We still have a choice. Our children will not thank us for being driven to an abyss.

10,000 MORE PEOPLE EVERY HOUR WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT POPULATION

By Brian McGavin

www.sustainableworldalliance.org