

# QUAKER CONCERN OVER POPULATION

## NEWSLETTER 13

AUTUMN 2023

### **An Analysis of Three Decades of Increasing Carbon Emissions: The Weight of the P Factor**

It was good to join with American Friends from the QEW Population Working Group to discuss an academic paper “An Analysis of Three Decades of Increasing Carbon Emissions and The Weight of the P Factor” by Lucia Tamburino and Giangiacomo Bravo from Växjö, Sweden and Philip Cafaro of Colorado State University, USA which looks at the relationship between increasing carbon emissions and population.

The total environmental impact of the population has been based on multiplying the number of people by the individual environmental impact of each person in the population. The impact of an individual can be determined by considering their available resources and the technology available to mitigate the environmental impact of their lifestyles. The paper considers the common perception that when considering carbon emissions population is less important than other drivers such as technology or affluence. This gives the impression that as most population increase is in poor countries with low individual environmental impact scores there is little significant consequence on sustainability of increasing population size.

Using World Bank data the authors examined the relationship between population changes over 3

decades and carbon emissions in all countries. They grouped countries into low income, lower middle income, upper middle income and high income countries. Total emissions were highest in the upper middle income countries (51% of global emissions) and lowest in the low income countries (0.6% of global emissions). Upper middle income countries had the highest per capita increase in carbon emissions. The rate of increase in per capita carbon emissions is greatest in the upper and lower middle income groups and lowest in the high income countries. Low income countries have around 8% of the world’s population.

Analysis is complicated by considerable differences within countries and by richer countries having carbon emitting manufacturing done in poorer countries. The analysis does not mention the carbon emissions associated with transporting goods around the world, maybe because it too difficult to assess. Low income countries are at greatest risk of environmental change as population increase determines land use with consequent deforestation of rain forests and expansion of subsistence agriculture. Population growth in low income countries is one of the barriers to increasing per capita income. Escaping poverty is a key element of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals with an inevitable consequence that per capital carbon emissions will rise. Maintaining or reducing population size is essential for the sustainability of the whole global population.

*Martin Schweiger, Leeds Meeting*

## **Members' Evening, 26<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

At the members' evening on 26 July, Marc Okunnu gave a talk entitled: *Considerations in Strengthening Family Planning Programmes for Development in Sub-Saharan Africa*. There were 19 participants, including some American Friends from our sister organisation Quaker Earth Witness.

Born in Nigeria and now based in the UK, Marc has worked for over 43 years in population and reproductive health, mainly in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). He has been involved in the non-medical aspects of family planning with a focus on program development, organization, governance, and management, and was Africa Regional Director of the International Planned Parenthood Federation. He has introduced many NGOs to strategic planning and led training to build their capacity for effective action, including mobilization of resources which was the focus of his talk.

Marc began by pointing out that, given the finite nature of the earth's resources, in the long term overpopulation is inevitable unless either timely action is taken, or nature intervenes. Although family planning dates to ancient times, unfortunately its practice has become controversial, becoming linked with the eugenics and racist population control agenda. Today, despite better understanding, there is much that continues to undermine wider acceptance of the need for family planning.

The importance of family planning for development is the same everywhere:

- Reduced fertility helps create favourable conditions for economic and social development.
- Improved health and survival rates for children gives them more chance of becoming productive adults.
- Contraception empowers and expands life options for women.
- Fewer people leads to reduced pressure on limited resources.

Negative reactions to family planning in Africa arise from both external and internal sources. Among

external concerns is racism: the perception that the white, powerful, and well-resourced countries of the global north are pushing family planning programmes on the resource-starved, powerless global south. Another worry is domination: that one tribe or ethnic group is seeking control, privilege, and influence over another.

Internal concerns include the worry that resources such as land will be allocated depending on population size, with the conclusion that it desirable to have as large a population as possible. Some religious groups disapprove of family planning while others encourage it. Further worries stem from ignorance and fears about contraceptive safety. Other factors may be disapproval of individuals including husbands, and traditional and religious leaders.

All of these worries need to be addressed if family planning programmes are to be successful. Although studies have documented the high levels of awareness and knowledge about FP in SSA, disapproval on any of the above grounds can be an impediment. Nevertheless, such concerns are gradually diminishing, partly due to significantly improved child survival rates and changing attitudes due to modernization and urbanization.

From small beginnings, over the last 50 years family planning programmes have evolved at all levels from international to local and rural to urban. They are better targeted and studies show that, at least in some SSA countries, family planning is making more progress than previously thought. The contraceptive prevalence rate (CPR) is the proportion of women of reproductive age who use (or whose partners use) contraceptives. Southern Africa leads the CPR with 50.9%, eastern Africa at 33.5%, middle Africa at 22.5%, and west Africa at 19.6%.

Family planning involves much more than just contraception and/or abortion. It attends to wider family health, especially for women, and may also specialise in youth-friendly facilities and services. In designing family planning programmes, it is important to look carefully at what has worked and what has not. Marc gave many details of how this must be considered at all levels. Political will and

supportive leadership are critical, as is sustained advocacy, public education, and community engagement. NGOs play a critical role as partners in advocacy, programme development and implementation. It is important to have sensitive, responsive and accessible services with effective strategies, organization, and management. Public-private partnerships have been important, as have sustained and ample financing and funding.

He also gave pointers to strategies and actions to be considered. These include developing capacity and committing resources, reaching out to young people, ensuring reliable contraceptive methods, and aiming for equity in reducing the unmet need for family planning.

Marc ended by telling us that one hundred years of effort in all aspects of family planning programs have shown that, although progress is not fast, it is occurring. Funding for family planning programmes must ultimately come from Africa itself, but lack of consensus among leaders about the critical role of family planning in development leads to low prioritization and inadequate resources. Thus, external (donor) funding will continue to be a major factor for some time to come.

In the questions after the talk, topics included how to answer accusations of racism, vasectomy, girls' education, and the situation of family planning in Nigeria. Asked for suggestions of non-profit organisations in SSA that would benefit from donations, Marc suggested national member associations/partners of the International Planned Parenthood Association, which has demonstrated ability to integrate family planning with other issues of concern, such as youth and women empowerment, and climate health. Other organisations concerned with this topic are Marie Stopes International (MSI) and Population Services International (PSI).

For those wishing to delve further into this topic, Marc has written a book "THERE IS ONLY ONE PEAK: Contributing to Sexual and Reproductive Health Development in Sub-Saharan Africa", published by Black Tower Publishers in 2020.

*Caroline Series, Warwick Meeting*

## 'Why blame the poor?'

A recurring response when we speak of population growth is to point out that the present crisis is caused by consumption, and that those in the developing world are not responsible for that. This is often expressed as 'why do you want to blame the poor, or people of colour, for something that we in the developed world are responsible for?' and this is sometimes accompanied with an accusation of racism.

It is perfectly true that the huge bulk of consumption takes place in the developed world. However, those in the developing countries would like, perfectly reasonably, to partake in the level of consumption that the developed world does. But if the whole world consumed at the rate of the developed world it would require the resources of three planets to support us.

If justice were done, and the world's wealth was evenly shared, we would all live at a level slightly below the present level of Botswana. Imagine yourself to be a candidate for election. How would you set about convincing the public that a cut in consumption to that level was necessary? It couldn't be done in a democracy. And if it took a quarter of a century to achieve that, the world population would have grown from 8 billion to about ten billion in the same time: so we would need to make a further reduction to compensate. This means that as things stand the undeveloped world has no possibility to reach the levels of consumption we enjoy in the developed world.

So we are compelled to consider population growth. Whether we could make it safely through the bottle neck, I don't know. Our tool would be enablement, and this would have to be worldwide. It would be necessary to confront all those forces that conspire to encourage growth of population. This includes religious bodies, Catholic and Evangelical: populist governments: growth economics: social conventions: pressure from relatives. We would need to make contraception available world-wide, free and without question, and we need the education to go with it. We also need to make abortion available on demand. Experience shows that such measures actually reduce the frequency of abortion. Experience also

shows that women welcome the possibility to not be baby producing machines.

That would be a start, but we need to go much further.

*Roger Plenty, Nailsworth Meeting*

## **IUSSP Debate**

Several QCOP members attended the online debate "*The population of humans that can be supported sustainably on the planet at a reasonable standard of living is below 4 billion*" organised by the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP) on October 18th.

The 'yes' side argued that 4 billion was a maximum reasonable size, while the 'no' side preferred not to put any upper limits while appearing to think that current numbers are sustainable.

The debate was moderated by Stan Becker of Johns Hopkins University. All four speakers were academics who gave brief but dense presentations, followed by questions from the audience. On the 'no' side were Jacques Emina, Kinshasa, DRC and Timothy Guinnane, Yale while on the 'yes' side were Anastasia Pseiridis, Panteion, Greece and Frank Götmark, Gothenburg, Sweden.

The 'yes' side presented a well-argued case, pointing out that experts have suggested 2-3 billion would be desirable if want to ensure the survival of other species. There were alarming graphics of the proportion of resources taken up by agriculture and livestock. On the 'no' side, Professor Emina seemed unconcerned about the six-fold increase in population in the DRC since 1960, with corresponding rapid decrease in ecological reserves, even suggesting that AI could help accommodate yet larger numbers.

At the end of the debate, it was disappointing that 38% of the audience still did not agree with the 'yes' side. Do they really think the earth can support such huge numbers?

*Caroline Series, Warwick Meeting*

## **Difficult Questions Over Population.**

This booklet is still available for £3.50 (£5 incl UK postage). From [jmrr57@outlook.com](mailto:jmrr57@outlook.com).

## **2023 Events Diary**

**Members evening: Wed November 15<sup>th</sup> at 7.30pm on Zoom:**

"How can QCOP members raise and discuss population issues with other Quakers?" Share your views, knowledge and experience with other like-minded Quakers, on raising one of the biggest issues of our time. This meeting will be based on your input, please get in touch with QCOP Committee ([qcop.contact@gmail.com](mailto:qcop.contact@gmail.com)) if you would like to lead on any aspect of the discussion. Members will be sent a Zoom link.

## **Membership Secretary**

We are pleased to welcome David Tinsley back to the committee in his new role as membership secretary. He can be contacted at; David Tinsley, QCOP Membership Secretary, Quaker Garth, 21 Kirkgate, Settle, BD24 9DX

## **Donations**

QCOP is always grateful for donations. Instructions are on the website under 'About'. Thank you.

## **Our Newsletter**

The opinions in this newsletter are the views of the contributors and do not necessarily represent those of the Editor or QCOP. Editor: [jmrr57@outlook.com](mailto:jmrr57@outlook.com)

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