



What is sustainable development?

- “Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” - Brundtland Report, 1987
- The three pillars of sustainable development are economic development, social development, and environmental protection - Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, 2002

Two approaches to the relationship between population and sustainable development

- People as the problem
 - Each additional person is another burden on the environment and on economic growth and another mouth to feed.
 - Paul Ehrlich, *Population Bomb*: “The battle to feed humanity is over. In the 1970s and 1980s hundreds of millions of people will starve to death in spite of any crash programs embarked upon now. [There is a need for] determined and successful efforts at population control.” Ehrlich was wrong.
- People as the solution
 - Let’s recognize the potential and creativity of each person.
 - Solution=focus on human development through education, employment, health, access to different forms of capital

Consequences of the mentality of viewing people as a burden

- Idea that there is need to decrease the number of people and decrease population growth
 - Population control: people—especially the poor—should only have a certain number of children
 - Contraception and abortion should be freely available to achieve this goal, under the guise of reproductive rights.
- Demographic problems as a result of increasing life expectancy and decreasing fertility rates→aging populations
 - No one to pay for pensions, resulting in higher taxes or other measures to continue to support older persons
 - Economies impacted by skill and manpower shortages; fewer workers available
 - Higher costs of caring for older persons (particularly health care) as opposed to costs of caring for children
- Flawed population policies and risk of coercion in violation of international law
 - China’s one child policy: well-documented evidence of forced abortion, forced sterilization, and infanticide
 - India’s sterilization camps: unsanitary, overcrowded; people paid to undergo vasectomies to “stabilize” population
 - Family planning targets might create incentives for local government officials or health care providers to coerce use.
 - UNFPA opposes targets: “Poor people with limited schooling are most vulnerable to misunderstandings and misinformation about how contraceptives work and how their choices may be directed.”
 - Article 16 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW): women and men have equal rights “to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children.”

WYA’s position: Viewing people as the Earth’s greatest resource

- Principle 2, ICPD: “Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature. People are the most important and valuable resource of any nation.”
- Incredible value of humanity: Humans are creators and problem-solvers and respond to challenges with their creativity, rather than continuing to destroy.

Person-centered solutions to sustainable development problems

- Eliminate poverty: education, nutrition, clean water & sanitation, health (particularly basic health care and child, infant, and maternal health)
- Infrastructure (roads, hospitals, businesses, technology), skills training, professional opportunities
- Environmental stewardship
- Good governance: government transparency, budget openness, no corruption
- Appropriate political, legal, and economic systems that allow people to be problem-solvers and entrepreneurs and the freedom to take risks and use their creativity to propose and develop innovations
- Recognition and acceptance of cultural values and practices that welcome and celebrate children and families

For more information, see the World Youth Alliance's Sustainable Development White Paper (October 2012), available at www.wya.net/research.