



Endangered Wildlife Trust

Position Statement on Population and Sustainability

The Endangered Wildlife Trust's (EWT) mission is to conserve threatened species and ecosystems in southern Africa to the benefit of all people. This statement represents the EWT's position on Population and Sustainability.

1. Introduction

The World Bank estimates that the population of Sub-Saharan Africa will increase from 853 million people in 2010 to 1.9 billion people in 2050. This 220% population increase, in merely 40 years, means successful conservation will become progressively harder to achieve.

2. Population dynamics and its impact

Population dynamics refers not only to population growth, but also family size, urbanisation, migration and other factors. The EWT acknowledges that fast changing population dynamics is one of the greatest challenges we face in maintaining biodiversity. As David Attenborough has said, *"All our environmental problems become easier to solve with fewer people, and harder — and ultimately impossible — to solve, with ever more people. [Where] women are in charge of their bodies, where they have the vote, where they are allowed to dictate what they do, and [where there are] proper medical facilities for birth control, the birth rate falls."* In this quotation lies the problem and heart of the solution.

3. Problems for conservation organisations

Other international conservation NGOs seem to have policies of not having population policies. The reason for their reluctance is that a concern about population is often associated with support for the oppressive population policies of China or India; needless to say the EWT does not support such policies which flagrantly breach human rights, but if people were to speak more knowledgeably about this issue, the population taboo could be lifted.

How many people know that the fertility rate in the Islamic Republic of Iran fell from around 7.0 births per woman in the early 1980s to 2.1 births per woman in 2000, or that this was the largest and fastest fall in fertility ever recorded? Iran achieved this rapid fall by improving access to voluntary family planning, empowering women and improving education. China's so-called one child policy, on the other hand, was not only oppressive and reprehensible but also less successful and slower to reduce fertility than Iran's population policy which involved voluntary not coercive family planning actions. Population policies rooted in empowerment have been proven to be more successful, even if they are less well-known.



4. Solution

We know that improving sexual and reproductive rights and services, improving women's rights, improving education and increasing access to livelihood opportunities is the faster way to reduce population growth. All those actions are critical in their own right and no organisation supporting such changes can be rationally criticised. Sensitively handling the population topic in a way which supports and protects rights is not only the only moral way to proceed, but it is also the most successful way to limit the impacts of population dynamics on the environment.

The "Population, Health and Environment" approach, or PHE, is an interdisciplinary programme design responding to the interconnected challenges faced by ecosystems and the communities dependent on them. These challenges include poor health, family planning needs, environmental degradation and food insecurity. This holistic approach seeks to reflect the way in which pressures affecting people and their environment are connected, and often work to compound each other. This can result in a vicious cycle, with unsustainable natural resource use, environmental degradation and deepening poverty impacting and interacting in increasingly negative ways. The sustainable management of natural resources is difficult for communities with significant unmet family planning needs, with growing numbers of people placing increasing pressure on resources, and poor health outcomes limiting the ability of communities to engage in biodiversity conservation. Dwindling natural resources are in turn likely to lead to poor health outcomes and deepening poverty.

A woman empowered to choose the number and timing of her pregnancies, with access to contraception and who can act on her choice because women's rights programmes have led to greater equality, will have fewer and healthier children. This frees her to take an alternative livelihood opportunity, if one is made available. With fewer mouths to feed, fewer natural resources need to be harvested, benefiting food security and the environment. An employed woman can invest in her children's education and nutrition, which in turn is overwhelmingly likely to result in those children having greater health and educational opportunity and lead to generational falls in fertility.

This result requires the integration of multiple expert partner organisations. There are currently no PHE programmes in South Africa (and only a handful globally). We believe that the EWT, and our partners, are the only NGOs seeking to bring PHE programmes to South Africa.

5. Evidence

In the Philippines, where human population density and growth were known to drive unsustainable patterns of marine resource extraction, a PHE programme was established to: (a) improve coastal resource management (**CRM**) with traditional conservation actions; (b) support alternative livelihoods among fishermen to reduce fishing pressure; and (c) ease population pressures by expanding access to reproductive health (**RH**) services. Implementation enabled academic research on the impacts of PHE programmes as villages were divided into three groups: (a) villages benefiting from CRM improvements; (b) villages benefiting from RH improvements; and (c) villages benefiting from CRM and



RH improvements. Results showed that the villages benefiting from CRM and RH improvements enjoyed greater CRM and RH results than in the villages benefiting from only CRM or RH improvements in five of nine indicators and performed equally as well for the remaining four, the conclusion of the research was that this “strongly suggests that the CRM+RH approach yields a larger impact on human health and food security compared to the [single sector approaches].”

In Madagascar a further PHE programme has had similar successes integrating RH services into existing community based marine conservation activities where, in a period of only three years, there was a rapid increase in contraception uptake with research showing that the small, but environmentally significant coastal communities, avoided 355 unwanted pregnancies as a direct result of the PHE programme, with the ecological footprint prevented as a result of the initiative amounting to greater than 267 global hectares.

6. The EWT's response

The EWT used World Population Day, 11 July 2014, to announce its acknowledgement of the impact of human population dynamics on our environment. On the same day the EWT announced the appointment of David Johnson, who had spent the previous two years researching the impacts of population dynamics on South African ecosystems, species and communities, to incorporate actions relating to sexual and reproductive health, women's rights and other related matters in the EWT's programmes. Since then, the EWT has decisively taken action, we have accepted the existing evidence and committed to take action based on this research and not merely talk. In the last ten months we have:

- 6.1. Partnered with leading expert NGOs in the population, sexual and reproductive health, women's rights, education, and livelihood generation sectors to finalise the design of a range of integrated conservation and population programmes;
- 6.2. Joined the international Population & Sustainability Network (**PSN**). This leading population NGO's select group of global members includes the UN Population Fund, UK government department DFID and the International Planned Parenthood Federation. Given the reluctance of conservation NGOs to speak about population issues, it is no surprise that the EWT is by far the largest NGO undertaking on-the-ground conservation work to join this network;
- 6.3. Been granted funding by the UK Prosperity Fund, administered by the British High Commission in Pretoria, to implement a project designed for border communities along the border of Kruger National Park. Our project will be completed with our women's rights NGO partner. In addition to the EWT's illegal wildlife trade interventions there will also be community capacity building (for adults and in schools) to increase access to and knowledge of family planning services and other population, health and women's rights issues;
- 6.4. Been requested to resubmit an application to Comic Relief. With PSN, Pathfinder International (one of the world's largest NGOs working to improve sexual and reproductive



health services) and other partner organisations the EWT sought funding for what was acknowledged by numerous population experts as a major development in PHE. Comic Relief was excited by our application although raised some questions (largely due to the scale of the application). Ordinarily applicants are not permitted to resubmit applications but Comic Relief invited us to do so and a revised application will be submitted in May 2015. We were the sole applicant who was invited to resubmit; and

6.5. Sought funding from other funding partners, with the results of applications to implement integrated conservation and population programmes pending from the Commonwealth Foundation and the US Ambassador's Special Self-Help Programme (to expand the project funded by the UK Prosperity Fund) and the Emirates Foundation (for a new project site at Groot Marico in the North West province). We are also in negotiations with SANParks and the De Beers Foundation on the implementation of an adapted version of the UK Prosperity Fund project (with greater emphasis on family planning in rural clinics) in areas adjacent to the Greater Mapungubwe Trans-Frontier Conservation Areas in Limpopo, some of which fall in footprint of the park's expansion plan.

7. Conclusion

In the last year the EWT has repeatedly and publically commented upon the links between human population dynamics and environmental threats. The EWT has not only committed to acting in this field but has put that commitment into effect by partnering other expert organisations, designing integrated projects to counter the impacts of population dynamics in areas of environmental concern and successfully sought funding to implement those projects. Our trustees have committed to seeking to place greater emphasis on population themes across our programmes. We have been advised by the Population & Sustainability Network that we are likely to be the largest NGO in the world, which undertakes on-the-ground conservation, to make this commitment. We are keen to make new partnerships with funding partners who share our vision to take action.

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