

Is There Room For Me?
A Study of Overpopulation

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Preface

The purpose of this report is to examine the effects of overpopulation on our world. “In the year 2000, the world’s population was estimated at a little over six billion people. This was more people than there had ever been on Earth before” (Mason 6). With this increased number of people came an increased demand for the earth’s limited resources. This report will look at the effects that overpopulation has on the environment.

For the purpose of this report, overpopulation is defined as when the number of people in an area exceeds the resources and capacity of the environment necessary to sustain human activities (Hopkins). “No one really knows how many people Earth can provide for” (Jakab 5). Only time will tell what that limit may be.

Overpopulation is an issue with much controversy surrounding it. Although many people feel that our planet is overpopulated, they often think that there is nothing to be done about it. “The United Nations predicts that by 2050 the world’s population will be 9 billion people” (Mason 40). Now is the time to recognize that this is a significant issue that affects everyone around the world. If we continue to sit back and do nothing about it, one day there may not be enough resources to meet the demands of this ever-increasing population.

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Summary

This report contains a detailed explanation of what overpopulation is, and why it is a global issue. A look at background information as to how and why our population has grown at an increasing rate will be reviewed. The report will also include an examination of the effects of overpopulation on our environment. “As humans, we are part of the natural world. The environment has made us the way we are. It has affected the way we look and the way we behave. We have changed the natural world as well by taking what we need in order to stay alive” (Steele 6).

Today in our world there are many experts who are researching ways to deal with overpopulation. Comments from three experts will be reviewed and their possible solutions to this crisis will be presented.

When examining a global issue such as overpopulation, it is important to look at the area of control. Who has control of this issue? It is apparent that if no one takes control or cares about this issue, there could be life long detrimental effects on our planet Earth. Since religious and spiritual views have a tremendous influence on Global Issues, it is important to examine these beliefs and determine if any solutions are forthcoming.

Three major case studies dealing with the global issue of overpopulation will be examined. How overpopulation affects Canada will also be reviewed.

For this report, information was gathered from various sources. Beginning with the internet, background information was obtained on the topic. Reference material from both the Barrie Public Library and Innisdale’s library was also

gathered. A comprehensive review of all material was completed in order to gain accurate information for this report.

It is hoped that through this report, a better understanding of the issue of overpopulation will be obtained. If it causes one person to think and change their ways, it will be helping our planet Earth. Remember, “overpopulation is not a particular number of people, but a population larger than the environment can support” (Jakab 10).

1. Background

“As humans evolved or developed, they interacted with their environment.” (Steele 8). In the past, the population was relatively small and grew slowly. The people provided for themselves, by hunting animals and gathering from the land. They followed the animals and traveled around to different places throughout the year. Over the past 200 years, the population has grown much quicker, resulting in what is termed the “Population Explosion” (Thomas 8).

In the 1700s, a philosopher by the name of Thomas Robert Malthus first shed light on the issue of overpopulation. He realized that the rate of population growth and the rate of food production growth did not match up. Malthus explained that “there are preventative checks and positive checks on population that slow its growth and keep the population from rising exponentially for too long” (Rosenberg). Preventative checks affect the birth rate like marrying at a later age, birth control and homosexuality. Positive checks increase the death

rate like disease, war, disaster and famine. Malthus, a religious man, felt that both birth control and homosexuality were wrong; however, he realized that they had to be recognized as preventative checks because they were present. Malthus assumed that potential parents would be less likely to have children if they knew that famine was present, and that their children would starve.

Thomas Malthus believed that the only economic system that could function was Capitalism. He promoted welfare improvement. When Poor Laws increased the amount of money for people, depending on the number of children they had, Malthus opposed it. He explained that “this only encouraged the poor to give birth to more children as they would have no fear that increased numbers of offspring would make eating any more difficult” (Rosenberg). He felt that this law encouraged poor people to have more children. This would then increase the number of poor workers which would reduce labor costs and make poor people even poorer. He also said that if a certain amount of money was given to every poor person, then prices would rise and the value of money would change (Rosenberg). Although this issue was not taken too seriously, it did occur to some people to further investigate this matter.

It was in the 1800s when the population began to increase significantly. During this time, there were many great changes in science and technology. The development of new medicines helped people to fight off infections and live longer. It also allowed more babies to survive into adulthood. Children were now living long enough to have children of their own and therefore increasing the population (Thomas 8). Vaccinations to protect people from polio, measles,

tuberculosis, tetanus and smallpox were developed. Antibiotics to fight off infections were also developed. These advancements helped save many lives (Bowden 10). There were better means of sanitation developed and because of this, fewer people died from diseases. Along with these advancements came improvements in farming and transportation. There were more opportunities for better food and improved health. This resulted in people living longer (Thomas 8)

The difference between populations in the past and the population now is lifespan. Since people are living longer, a higher percentage of our population is elderly (Thomas 12). In the past, people did not live as long. They died and this kept the population more in balance. Now as people are living longer, the population is increasing.

During the Middle Ages, the environment found ways to decrease the population. Deadly diseases quickly killed many people. At this time, “families had many children to make sure that some survived” (Thomas 10). Although a family may have had 10 children, only 2 of these children may have lived to adulthood. They had to have lots of children to make sure they had someone that could take care of them in the future. People who traditionally came from large families still continue to have many children today. This causes a problem because with current advancements, almost all of these children will live. This is contributing to our overpopulation. “The world is becoming more crowded every year” (Thomas 22).

Overpopulation affects many other global issues. One such issue is its effects on the water supply. “The more people there are on Earth, the more

water is needed. Over 70 percent of Earth's surface is covered in water. The trouble is that most of the water is salty, and humans need fresh water. They need to drink it every day to stay alive, and they need it for growing crops" (Steele 18). Even though 70% of our Earth is covered in water, 98% of this water is salt water in the oceans. The fresh water on Earth accounts for only about 2%, but 1.6% of this water is frozen in the polar ice caps and 0.36% is underground in aquifers and wells. This leaves approximately 0.036% of the fresh water in lakes and rivers ("How"). When there are more people using the water, it gets used up and polluted much quicker.

As the world's population continues to increase, so does its effects on the standard of living. The ever increasing numbers of people require food, shelter and water. "Today it appears there may be too many people alive for the resources available" (Jakab 8). For many people, there are not enough resources and they live in poverty.

When considering overpopulation, the issue of homelessness becomes increasingly apparent. Where do all these people live? Is there enough room to provide space for everyone? In order to house all of these people, many things are needed like wood or other building materials and land to build on. In order to build enough houses for all of the people, it greatly affects other issues as well like deforestation and land depletion. "More people mean more demand for Earth's natural resources" (Thomas 22). Many people find they do not have the economic ability to afford a substantial place to live. These people become homeless as overpopulation increases.

Agriculture and food supply is another global issue that is greatly affected by overpopulation. When more and more people begin to populate our planet, the amount of food needed increases. When people can not get food, they starve. Although the need for farms is increasing, the amount of farm land is decreasing. While the population is growing every year, more and more ground is being plowed for food. Much of the land used to plant crops is very severely eroded or depleted. Land that was previously used for farming is being used for non-farm uses, such as the construction of new homes, factories and highways (McCuen 83).

When greater numbers of people are present in areas, the health of individuals becomes a concern. When there are more people in an area, the people live closer together. This causes germs and diseases to spread from person to person much quicker, which can lead to pandemics. A disease can spread very quickly and cause much devastation when the population is large and living close together.

The main global issue that is affected by overpopulation is the environment. It is the environment that must provide people with everything they need: food, water and shelter (Jakab 5). When there are more people, more food, water and shelter are needed. "Our high usage of fossil fuels means that we are slowly draining the world of its oil, natural gas, and coal supplies" (Mason 24). When there are more people, more fossil fuels are being used. "Burning fossil fuels releases carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Fossil fuels originate from trees and plants, which naturally hold large amounts of carbon dioxide.

Once this carbon dioxide is in earth's atmosphere, it traps heat and causes earth's temperature to slowly rise" (Mason 24). Overpopulation has long lasting effects on the world as a whole:

High population growth rates aggravate poverty and impede economic development. As human numbers continue to outpace resources, Third World countries cannot cope with the consequences. The results are only too evident: mounting unemployment; spreading slums and squatter settlements; lack of access to clean water and sanitation facilities; not enough school rooms; too few doctors, nurses, teachers, and other skilled professionals; and no (or very limited) access to family planning services. (McCuen 47)

The United Nations was founded in 1945 to promote world peace. Its aim was to assist countries in determining their own future and to help develop social and economic programs (Ross). Unfortunately their mandate does not deal with resources in a country. At this time, there is no existing governing body that regulates resources. There may be various reasons why no such organization exists. Many countries are greedy and want to exploit the resources they have for their own profit. They would not want an organization dictating what they can and can not do with their resources. Some countries have had other pressing concerns like poverty, famine etc. that have prevented them from focusing on good resource management. Political conflict remains between various countries. Many countries are historical enemies and would be reluctant to

cooperate with each other. With these obstacles in place, no regulations have been set forth to control the use of resources.

We must take care of the environment. If we take away too many of the resources and damage the environment there will not be much left for future generations (Steele 40).

2. Expert

Every minute of every day the world's population is increasing. For some people, this poses no problem, but for others they feel something must be done. For an activist by the name of Werner Fornos, he feels overpopulation is a serious concern. Fornos is an internationally recognized expert on world population issues and is considered the foremost spokesperson on global population issues ("About Werner"). He feels that the increasing world population is not only affecting us currently, but that it is producing problems that will span into future generations ("Expert"). He explains that "with the growing population is the depletion of resources, like fossil fuels, water and timber" ("Expert"). Although Fornos believes that wind power is a viable alternative energy source, that is cost effective, he says that it is not being widely used ("Expert"). With increased population there are more fossil fuels used and more carbon dioxide released into the air. These gases are being trapped and held close to the Earth's surface causing the Earth to warm up. These effects of overpopulation are creating what has been called Global Warming. Fornos continues to say that "until we get the kind of leadership that pushes for alternative forms of energy, we're stuck with

facing the escalating temperatures and the changing weather patterns” (“Expert”).

Werner Fornos not only see overpopulation as a crisis, but he also presents some possible solutions to help deal with this issue. He feels that, “empowering women and greater male responsibility will help stabilize the world population” (“Expert”). By ensuring women are educated and providing them with opportunities for employment, they will feel more influential. “Universal access to knowledge and means by which to prevent unintended pregnancy will empower women, helping to stabilize the growing world population” (“Expert”).

For his work and dedication to the field of overpopulation, Fornos has received the Distinguished Alumnus Award (from the University of Maryland) and the Service Above Self Award (highest honour given by Rotary International). He also received the Order of Merit which is the highest distinction given by the German Government in recognition of humanitarian efforts. Over many years Fornos has addressed a variety of people presenting rational and humane solutions to the population problem (“About Werner”).

Werner Fornos has spent a great deal of time addressing a variety of people on the issue of overpopulation. His presentations focus on “rational and humane solutions to the population problem” (“About Werner”). Through education, he feels he is able to get his message across in hopes of curtailing this global issue of overpopulation.

More recently Al Gore shone light on overpopulation through his book and movie An Inconvenient Truth. By examining global warming he directly connects the number of people with the effects on the environment.

Over the past many years, there has been a notable increase in the average temperatures of the Earth. This increase has thought to have been caused by global warming. Global warming is the result of greenhouse gases being trapped close to the Earth's surface and causing the Earth's temperature to increase. Although some global warming is needed, too much heat causes problems. It is crucial that a balance must be found to keep the Earth warm, but not too warm ("Global Warming- Al Gore").

"The main causes for the global warming are attributed to release of greenhouse gases by human activities" ("Global Warming Facts"). Overpopulation greatly affects the amount of gases released by humans. Al Gore developed three solutions that he feels would help to solve the issue of overpopulation. Firstly cutting child mortality rates in developing countries. Families have many children, because they know that many of their children will never reach adulthood. By cutting down the number of children dying, families will not feel pressured to have so many children (Bedard). Secondly, by providing birth control information and appropriate and acceptable techniques of birth control to people in third world countries (Bedard). Thirdly by empowering women so they can participate in the decisions about childbearing (Bedard). By empowering women socially, politically and in the context of the family they will have more say in the matter (Bedard).

As Al Gore believes, “global warming is beginning now and is here to stay.” (“Global”). He has warned the people that if proper steps are not taken today against global warming, it will be too late to do anything about it.

Along with these experts, there are many other people in our world who are currently investigating the global issue of overpopulation. With their expertise, they can offer ideas and solutions so changes can be made to manage the out-of-control population.

3. Control

“The United Nations (UN) was founded in 1945 to promote world peace, assist people in determining their own future, and to help develop social and economic well-being around the globe” (Ross 4). It brings together many nations of the world to work closely together on many Global Issues. Overpopulation is one such issue that they attempt to devise means to control.

The United Nations, working jointly with various agencies around the world, are trying to implement measures to address overpopulation. Currently they have a program called Earthwatch which exchanges and shares environmental data and information with these agencies (“About Earthwatch”). They are also involved in a program called the UN Population fund. This program is collecting information on the overpopulation issue while examining family planning and birth control practices around the world (Busam). It is hoped that with knowledge can come changes.

People's behaviour is influenced by their religious beliefs. In many countries, people's religious beliefs do not allow them to use birth control or have abortions. For this reason, many families are bringing more and more children into the world, contributing to the overpopulation crisis ("Roman"). With these religious views, many people are not in control to support means to deal with overpopulation.

In many countries people do not have enough money to afford birth control. In order for women in these countries to help with the overpopulation crisis, they would need their government to provide birth control for them.

In some countries, control over the issue of overpopulation can be the responsibility of the people and the government jointly. It is up to these people of the world to work with each other. Everyone is here, sharing this earth collectively, so they must work together. "Time has shown that those who do not work with Mother Earth are punished or eliminated by Her. She blesses us only if we are wise and work with Her, if we learn to be Her custodians and to appreciate how all life forms on this planet Earth are related" (McCuen 55).

Many people in the world feel that it is their choice to have many children. Families choose to have children and therefore the issue of too many people is caused by the people. In this case, people have control over the amount of children they bring into the world and the effect they have on the overpopulated planet. In many cultures, women do not have a choice. They are told that it is their duty to have many children. For these women, they have no control. It is

important to educate the people of the world of the effects of having many children.

It should also be the responsibility of the government to help their people. It is the government who is in control that makes certain laws and policies. The government should educate the people to make smart choices about having children. Birth control should be readily available for people all around the world.

Unfortunately not all governments recognize that the world is currently overpopulated. It may take more work and individual efforts to persuade the government of this global issue and have them enact some changes at that level. Until then, "it is up to the people of this world to decide what kind of world they want to live in" (Reavie).

"Achieving a stable world population by planning cannot come about until the world's major leaders recognize that there is a world population problem, adopt a population growth rate policy, and design education programs leading to voluntary regulation of the population" (Gallant). With the United Nations working jointly throughout the world, it is hoped that some day ways to control overpopulation will be devised.

4. Religious and Spiritual Views

When dealing with global issues, there are always religious and spiritual views to be considered. The issue of overpopulation is also affected by these views. Many religions do not believe in birth control and abortion. For this reason, these people continue to produce many children without thinking about

how this may affect the earth. They believe that children are a gift from God, and that it's their duty to be fruitful (Kummer).

Some people feel that it is their right to have children and that the government should not have the right to intervene (Mason 34). For this reason, they believe that having a one-child policy, such as the policy that was implemented in China, is wrong. In some cultures, having a large family is traditional (Steele 13). They feel they need to have many children to help earn money for the family (Bowden 41). In the past with the high death rate, families needed to have many children if they wanted some to survive into adulthood. We need to be respectful of people's beliefs and traditions, while also educating them on the possible consequences of overpopulation (Bowden 42).

There can also be religious-political reasons for having children. In some areas where land is fought over for religious reasons, some people have many children in order to 'outnumber' their opponents (Busam).

The Hindu religion is the belief in unity of everything. They believe that the purpose of life is to become part of God so we can leave the World and rejoin with Him ("Major"). Hinduism promotes reproduction within marriage. Some traditional Hindu text praise large families, but Hindu scriptures praise small families. These scriptures show that the development of family planning is an ethical good. Some texts describe birth control methods, and some scriptures give advice about conception (Stacey).

The Islamic Religion was founded by Prophet Muhammad. Muslims believe that Muhammad's job as the last prophet was to formalize and clarify the

faith and make it more pure by removing ideas that were incorrectly added. The Qur'an is the Islamic text which is a written form of the words of Allah ("Major"). It is not stated in the Qur'an that contraceptives are forbidden, so many people approve of the use of them. Some people believe that birth control is prohibited because of the command to "procreate and abound in number" that is stated in the Qur'an. Even though there are varying views, the one thing that is for sure is that reproduction within the family is a religious responsibility. Most people reject sterilization and abortion because the Islamic faith prioritizes human life (Stacey).

The Christian religion believes that Jesus Christ came to Earth to die in our place and save us from sin. They believe that Jesus was the son of God and that if you ask for forgiveness of your sins before God you will be saved and join him in Heaven ("Major"). The Bible does not say much about the use of contraception. Many Christians consider contraception to be wrong because it is a barrier to God's reproductive purpose of marriage. Their belief is that the decision to use contraception should be based on a person's conscience and not from outside teachings (Stacey). The Catholic religious beliefs are very similar to those of Christians. One major difference is they have stricter rules against abortions and the use of birth control. Catholic women are not supposed to have abortions or use birth control at all.

The Jewish religion believes that there is one creator who should be worshipped as the absolute ruler of the entire universe. The creator watches over people, rewards good deeds and punishes evil ("Major"). Many Jewish people believe that reproducing is a responsibility they have and that children are

a blessing. A man may not abstain from having children or get sterilized until he has had at least one child. Judaism believes that hormonal contraception is better than barrier methods (Stacey).

The Buddhist religion believes in reincarnation and that every person must go through cycles of birth, life and death. While going through these cycles, the person will release their attachment to desire and the self. They have then achieved Nirvana ("Major"). In the Buddhist religion, wholesomeness is the main principle for moral judgment. This includes the duty of the parent. Buddhists believe it is important that parents take care of their child, and that the child can grow up with a good quality of life. Buddhism supports family planning so that people will reproduce when they are ready to be the best parent. The most popular methods are birth control pills and condoms. Buddhist people consider abortions to be the worst as it means killing another human being (Stacey).

The Mormon religion is a belief that you can achieve salvation by knowing God and his son, Jesus. Mormons attend the Church that was created by Jesus Christ while he was here on Earth, called the Later Day Saints Church ("Birth"). Mormons believe that the number of children a couple may have is a decision that should be made by the husband, wife and the Lord through prayer. The mother's mental and physical health should be considered. They believe that babies are free of sin, and therefore are a gift from God. Mormons consider abortions to be a great evil because it is the shedding of innocent blood ("Birth").

In many Aboriginal and Indigenous cultures there is access to a variety of traditional forms of birth control. Along with these come other various means

used to control births. Some women rely on breastfeeding their babies for up to 3 months in order to impede pregnancy. Some believe there is a social rule that prohibits men from having sex with their wife for many months after the birth of their child. It is also believed that these women know how to make medicines that work as birth control, induce abortion or make a woman unable to have children (“Taking”).

In the Aboriginal and Indigenous culture there is a deep spiritual connection to the environment. As overpopulation destroys the planet, these people are affected. The water and air are being polluted, trees are being cut down, habitats for animals are being ruined and animals are becoming endangered and extinct. The respect and relationship that these people have with Mother Earth is being weakened. It might be helpful for all of us to take a lesson from these people, and to remember that we are all united in sharing this great planet.

5. Case Studies

Overpopulation may result from both physical and cultural causes. Physical causes include factors such as better health care available for people, allowing them to live longer. If fewer babies are born or there is a change in the number of deaths, this also effects the population of a country. When cultural causes are considered, they can be grouped into four main categories. Overall, there may be a lack of education regarding family planning and the dangers of overpopulation. In some countries there is a lack of access to health care and

most specifically to birth control. There are also religious beliefs that may either encourage large families and / or discourage the use of birth control in family planning. Finally, many countries espouse political philosophies that encourage large families in order to increase their population and to create strong countries. In many instances, there is a combination of more than one cause that leads to overpopulation. In order to gain a better understanding of overpopulation, case studies from three different countries will be reviewed.

China

Located on the continent of Asia, China is the most populous nation in the world. With over 1.3 billion people living in China, there are great concerns about the effects of this rapidly increasing population (“Peoples”). In the middle of the 20th Century, Chairman Mao Zedong encouraged Chinese people to have large families. He thought this was important to create a strong nation. Since he was their leader, the Chinese people did what he wanted. This increase in the number of babies born resulted in an increase in the overall population of China. After Mao Zedong’s death, the government began to realize the consequences of having so many people live on the 9.6 million sq km area that China occupies (“Land Area”). They began to recognize the stress the numbers of people were putting on the environment and the effects this was having on the quality of life for the people of China.

In order to address the overpopulation issue in China, a strict family planning policy was initiated. In 1978, the government implemented a one child

policy whereby families could only have one child (“4-2-1”). “It officially restricts the numbers of children married urban couples can have to one, although it allows exemptions for several cases, including rural couples, ethnic minorities, and parents without any siblings themselves” (“Skewed”). China is trying to do their part to help control excessive population growth in their country.

With their one child policy in place, China has currently been able to limit their population growth. Although restricting the number of children a family can have may sound like a viable solution to overpopulation, China has run into many concerns over human rights violations with such a policy. For example, there is the issue of caring for the elderly. Currently in China, they classify their families as 4-2-1. Four represents the parents and parents-in-law and the two represents the husband and wife. Naturally, one is for the only child they may have. (“4-2-1”) In this structure, the husband and wife have to prepare to take care of their only child, plus their parents. As the population ages, this will create a serious problem. Now there will only be one child left to care of two parents and four grandparents. “Whether the role of the middle “2” can successfully shoulder the responsibility of their families remains a question. The changing structure of the family, together with changing social rules, may cause changes in new couples’ personal values, life goals, investments, and social status” (“4-2-1”).

China is a society that values sons over daughters. With this belief, there are concerns that in order to adhere to China’s one child policy, many families will participate in sex- selective abortions. This means that they will abort a baby if it is a girl. Many parents abandon undesirable children. These babies, mostly

girls, are left to be cared for by state-sponsored orphanages. If lucky, many of these young girls are adopted out of the country (“One”).

Another consequence of favouring male babies is population skewing. Families in China want males as their heirs. They believe that men usually make more money than females and therefore will be better able to take care of their parents and grandparents in the future. It is usually the men that parents live with in old age. Unfortunately, if this process of preferring males over females continues, it is estimated that by 2020, there will be about 40 million Chinese men unable to find a female partner. They will be unable to marry because too few girls will have been born. There is concern that men will resort to aggressive means to attract female partners. Although a one child policy may be controlling population growth, it is adversely affecting the quality of life for many people in China (Bayron).

Even though there is still an overpopulation concern in China, the one child policy is no longer in place. China is now dealing with the effects this one child policy created. New policies are changing the attitudes of people in China and now many parents are learning to value girls as much as boys. With these new policies, China will need to implement other measures to control their overpopulation.

Egypt

Egypt is a country that lies mainly in North Africa, but has a small portion of its land in Southwest Asia. For this reason it is considered a transcontinental

country (“Encyclopedia”). Egypt is one of the most populous countries in Africa. Its population grows by 1 million people every eight months or 2.4 persons every minute. This accounts for between 1/7 and 1/10 of the world’s growth (“Population”). Although the number of people that die every minute is unknown, the World Factbook reports that 4.88 people die per 1000 people every year. This is a relatively low number considering that 25.43 people are born per 1000 people annually (“World Factbook”).

Egypt’s population is mainly located in about 40,000 square kilometers near the banks of the Nile River. This is where most people live, since it is the best agricultural land found in Egypt (“Egypt”).

Egypt’s total current population is approximately fifty-eight million people. Of this total population, over twenty million are children younger than the age of fourteen. Due to the vast numbers of children, many of these children are abandoned and are forced to live their life on the streets. Some find shelter in government run centers that have been created for the homeless. It appears that children may suffer the most from Egypt’s overpopulation (Tennenbaum).

The family is the center of Egyptian life. Children are valued in the family structure. They are seen as useful workers, especially on the farm and around the home (Pallister 20).

The faith for 94% of Egyptian people is Islam (Zuehlke 48). In the Muslim religion it is not uncommon for a man to have more than one wife. “Islam states that a Muslim man may have four wives, or even more, provided he can afford to support them and their offspring, and assuming he treats them all equally”

(Pallister 20). Polygamous marriages are legal in Egypt for Muslim men (“Polygamy”). If a man has more than one wife, he will most likely have more children.

Overpopulation in Egypt appears to be caused by a combination of many factors. Egypt has improved the quality of health care which has allowed infants to live longer and children to survive into adulthood. Having more children live longer means it costs families more money. Often these families have even more children in order to have more people working and making money. The trend in Egypt is for people to have three or more children each (Tennenbaum).

A lack of education along with little access to family planning results in many children being born in each family. Many people believe that a larger family provides a better future. However, in the long term, the effect of a larger population is that it makes life harder for everyone.

The overpopulation in Egypt has created many problems in housing, employment, sanitation and transportation (Zuehlke 5). Egyptians living in rural areas make up 56% of the total population (42). Since unemployment is high in rural areas, many Egyptians have moved into cities to look for work. This has resulted in overcrowding in many large cities (14). With this large population there comes a tremendous pressure on Egypt’s natural resources and food supplies (40).

With Egypt being one of the most populous countries, it is time things change. According to the Prime Minister of Egypt, Atef Obeid, Egypt is taking steps to reduce poverty and illiteracy among Egyptian women (“Population”).

The government in Egypt has initiated a campaign to help curb population growth. In doing so, they are encouraging men to become involved in family planning. They are also encouraging women to have children later in life and to space their children's births further apart. In order to attain some of these goals, they are pushing for more contraceptives to be used routinely (Still). Another method the government is implementing in Egypt is that they are encouraging two children per family (Leila). For more than 20 years the government in Egypt has been supporting family planning campaigns (Pallister). "At least half of the married women in Egypt now use some form of birth control (Pallister). With these steps in place, it is hoped that it will give everyone a chance for a better life.

Guatemala

Guatemala is a Central American country with a population of over 13 million and whose population is expected to climb to 28 million by 2050. It is a developing country that ranks as one of the ten poorest countries in Latin America ("Guatemala"). Guatemala has the fastest population growth of any country in the Western Hemisphere. For this reason, overpopulation is an immense concern for the people of Guatemala.

Overpopulation is a problem that is caused by several factors that affect the population in Guatemala. Some religious beliefs do not allow birth control. Between 50 to 60 percent of the population in Guatemala is of Catholic religion ("Guatemala"). The Catholic Church is adamantly against the use of any forms

of birth control. With these beliefs, birth control is not a viable option for the Catholic women in Guatemala. A lack of access or education about family planning is also a cause for overpopulation in Guatemala. "Most Guatemalan women do not know anything about birth control," Garcia said. "And if they do, their husbands don't let them use it" (Feldman). In some instances, not only will the husbands not allow their wives to use birth control, they threaten them with violence if they even consider the idea. With these influences affecting the women of Guatemala, most women give birth to an average of five children. These births greatly affect the population in Guatemala and add to their ever increasing crisis (Feldman).

"Three in ten children graduate from sixth grade, and one in twenty enter high school" (Gisleson). Almost 40% of Guatemala's population is illiterate. If more people had an education they might understand the effects of having so many children. An education would help the people to make smart decisions about how many children to have and when.

There is a large indigenous population in Guatemala. These people are descendants from the Mayans who originally inhabited this area. They account for 56 percent of the total population in Guatemala ("Guatemala Country"). Indigenous people living in Guatemala believe that fertility is linked with crop production and old-age security (Feldman). For this reason, they continue to have large families, increasing to the overpopulation crisis present in their country.

The government in Guatemala understands there is an overpopulation crisis but has been unable to do much about it. This may be partially attributed to the fact that there are very strong connections with the Catholic Church in Guatemala. Furthermore, with the civil unrest in the 1980s, it created distrust amongst the people towards the government. It was felt that the people of Guatemala would not be receptive to any foreign-initiated family planning program that the government may try to implement (“Guatemala Country”). For these reasons as well, Guatemala continues to struggle under the ever increasing population.

After many years, overpopulation in Guatemala has risen to the point where the government feels they must try some measures to reduce their population. Recently, the government has started to implement family planning programs. The federal government started a \$2.3 million campaign to try “to cut infant and maternal mortality rates in half within four years” (Feldman). The campaign hopes to inform Guatemalans about reproductive health so they can make better decisions about their future (Feldman).

Experts say that overpopulation is the basis for many of Guatemala’s social problems. Approximately 44 percent of Guatemala’s population is illiterate; many are unemployed and suffer from malnutrition (Feldman). With the large number of people living under these circumstances, it is no wonder that many are emigrating to seek out a better life in other countries.

Conclusions

6. Organizations

Overpopulation is a serious problem that is getting worse every minute of every day. It is a global issue that must be dealt with immediately. “Today we are faced with a challenge that calls for a shift in our thinking, so that humanity stops threatening its life-support system. We are called to assist the earth to heal her wounds and in the process heal our own- indeed, to embrace the whole creation in all its diversity, beauty and wonder” (“Five”). With this dire need for change, many organizations have come to the forefront to assist wherever possible. Three organizations whose goal is to combat the problems associated with overpopulation are: International Planned Parenthood, United Nations Population Fund, and World Population Awareness. Each of these organizations will be discussed and ways they are trying to fight overpopulation will be highlighted.

International Planned Parenthood

International Planned Parenthood (IPPF) is a global service provider and a leading advocate of sexual and reproductive health and rights for all. It was formed in 1952. In order to deal with the global issue of overpopulation, International Planned Parenthood encourages individuals, women in particular, to take control of their reproductive lives. They believe that “sexual and

reproductive rights should be internationally recognized as human rights and therefore guaranteed for everyone” (“About IPPF”). They try to teach equality between men and women, which would help to eliminate gender biases, specifically those that threaten the well-being of women and girls. Their main goal is to show people that they do have choices. They put these beliefs in effect through all of their employees. IPPF has a global headquarters in London, U.K. and 6 regional offices spread around the world. This program employs more than 300 people. Through IPPF, approximately 36 million visits are made every year to over 58, 000 facilities around the world. These facilities include counseling, gynaecological care, HIV-related services, diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted infections, infertility services, mother and child health, emergency contraception and abortion-related services (“About IPPF”).

United Nations Population Fund

The United Nations Population Fund is an international development agency. Its mission is to promote the right of every woman, man and child to enjoy a life of health and equal opportunity. Their work focuses on the common goal of eliminating poverty in order to achieve sustainable development. “UNFPA supports countries in using population data for policies and programmes to reduce poverty and ensure that every pregnancy is wanted, every birth is safe, every young person is free of HIV/AIDS, and every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect” (“About UNFPA”).

Through public awareness, UNFPA hopes to teach couples about the better and safer reproductive choices they could make. Over time these decisions, multiplied throughout many communities and countries would change population structures and trends. UNFPA also hopes to teach governments how to formulate plans to reduce poverty and support sustainable development. They do this by assisting countries to collect population data and helping them to understand the trends shown.

World Population Awareness

World Population Awareness is a non-governmental website that believes that overpopulation is the root of most, if not all, environmental and economic issues affecting our planet today. It hopes to preserve the environment and its natural resources for the benefit of people, families and future generations. It believes that as the population increases, people of the world are consuming more than they need. This is a global issue that is getting worse every year. In order to bring about change, their website aims to educate individuals about the harm overpopulation is causing to our planet.

World Population awareness believes there may be three solutions to help with overpopulation. By empowering and enabling women to have fewer children, this could greatly affect the number of babies born throughout the world. If citizens of developed countries chose to live a simpler lifestyle, fewer natural resources would be consumed daily. Another possible means to help with this global crisis would be to tax all pollution, of any kind. Although this

would not change the number of people in the world, it would address the effects these people have on the environment. People would think twice about polluting our environment and maybe show a little more care about what happens to it. If the government were to set up programs to assist with empowering women, promoting a simpler lifestyle and dealing with pollution, it would go a long way towards combating the population crisis and its effects we are currently experiencing.

It is imperative that ways are found to make people aware of the seriousness of overpopulation. Through websites, such as World Population Awareness, it is hoped that people become aware, get concerned and take action!

7. Canada

Canada is a democratic country with a long history of freedom and equal rights ("Student"). It is a multicultural country made up of people who have come here from many different countries. Canada is home to over 32 million people from a wide range of origins and backgrounds (Hodge 5).

Many countries in the world today suffer from the global issue of overpopulation. Canada itself is not overpopulated; however it is affected by this issue. People who live in overpopulated countries are often looking for less populated countries to move to. "In the world, Canada is seen as a fair country where people are considered equal regardless of their religion, skin colour or language" (Hodge 5). Many people, from all over the world emigrate to Canada.

About 200 000 people come to Canada each year from all over the world (Hodge 58). They are looking for a better place, a less crowded place, to live and raise their families.

Many Canadians feel obligated to help out where possible. Although Canada is not overpopulated and we do not have to live the way extremely overpopulated countries live, many Canadians still care. Canadians want to help out people all around the world, so they can live a better life. Countries that are not overpopulated, like Canada and America, can help to educate the world and show people how family planning can really make a difference to their population. This is what International Planned Parenthood, United Nations Population Fund, and World Population Awareness aim to do.

Although Canada is not overpopulated, the effects of overpopulation are still felt here. The issue of global warming is affected by overpopulation. Global warming is a rise in the Earth's climate. Greenhouse gasses are trapped in the Earth's atmosphere and create a layer which traps heat. The heat is then kept in the atmosphere instead of being sent into space. Countries all around the world are affected by global warming, and Canada is no exception. Global warming will cause changes in Canada like more frequent and more severe droughts in the prairies, increased rainfall, sea levels rising, contamination of freshwater supplies by the rising sea levels, longer and warmer growing seasons, a northward movement of boreal forests with grasslands replacing them in the south, loss of habitat for animals in wildlife areas and thawing of permafrost areas in the Arctic (Klopin 90).

The world only has a limited amount of resources. These limited amounts lead to conflict between people who want the same resources. When there are more people, these conflicts become even bigger. “Conflict over scarce resources and crowding, lead to increased levels of warfare” (Patro). Canada faces depletion of their resources, as more and more people come to live here.

When there are more people, more land is needed for them to live on and more resources are needed for them to survive. This affects Canada because there are dwindling resources for everyone. “The Earth has many renewable resources including forests, water, soil and wildlife. These replace themselves naturally overtime and have done so for millions of years, but humans have altered this natural balance” (Bowden 14). Many forests have been chopped down and homes of many species of animals are being taken over by people invading these natural habitats. Overpopulation causes a strain on the natural resources and there may come a time when they are unable to replenish themselves.

“Overpopulation means that there are more people than there are resources to meet their needs. Almost all of the environmental problems we face today can be traced back to the increase in population in the world” (“Quebec”). What people do around the world affects Canada too. “More than 80% of the world’s old growth forests have been destroyed, wetlands are being drained for real estate development, and demands for biofuels take much-needed arable land away from crop production” (Lin). When this happens it has a significant impact on Canada.

It is important for the people of the world to begin examining ways to control overpopulation. Canada is greatly affected by the overpopulation crisis in many countries in the world. If this continues the environment may not be able to continue to support this population growth. Somehow the total population of the world needs to be controlled or decreased for a sustainable future (Jakab). In order to live sustainably we would need to change our habits. One such way to achieve a more sustainable lifestyle for an average North-American is explained by Rob Nevin in his article "Overpopulation: The Elephant in the Room":

Be vegan, eating mostly unprocessed, unpackaged, locally grown food, generate much less waste than neighbours, live with 4 other people in a small green designed 1000 to 1500 sq. ft. residence with energy conservation and efficiency, travel 35-100 km per week by public transit and never drive in a car, ride on a motor bike or fly on an airplane. (Nevin)

When there are more people living in an area, they use more natural resources. In Canada, when people emigrate and live here, more natural resources are consumed. More resources also need to be exported in order to support these extra people ("Facts").

Another example of resource depletion is the cod fishing crisis of 1992. Due to increased consumer demand, the cod fishing industry collapsed. Cod stocks were overexploited and destructive fishing practices were taking place. Over 40,000 people lost their jobs and the fish are still trying to recover to this day. With the increased number of people came an increase in the number of fishermen and the amount of fish required. Unfortunately measures were not put

in place to ensure the cod could reproduce and replenish themselves. The effects of overpopulation and overfishing resulted in this valuable resource being exhausted (“Canadian”)

8. Solutions

In order to consider overpopulation solutions, overpopulation must first be recognized as a problem. Our planet is facing grave challenges that demand a rapid shift in behaviour. As birth rates climb, natural resources get used up faster than they can be replaced. The increased numbers of people are polluting our air, water, and soil and the effects of global warming are being felt world wide (Simonetta). It is apparent that if the population continues to increase at this rapid rate, it will ultimately destroy the environment. If something is not done soon, it may be too late. Four possible solutions to the issue of overpopulation are found in education, access to family planning, changing the number of children families can have or to do nothing at all. Alternatives to living in our overpopulated areas will also be reviewed. Although there are many more solutions to overpopulation, for this report these four will be reviewed.

Education can provide a life-long solution to overpopulation for people all over the world. Firstly, people must be educated on the effects of overpopulation. They must be made aware of the harm they are causing to the environment and the rate at which the natural resources are being depleted. Through education, public awareness can be brought to the forefront. Raising public awareness will empower individuals to make informed choices about how

they can help the overpopulation dilemma (Lin). When considering education, the focus should be on women. Women should be educated and shown that they share equal responsibility with men. It has been reported that the more education women have, the few children they bear (Lin). If this is true, then educating women could be one possible means to addressing the overpopulation crisis affecting our planet today.

Access to family planning is another possible solution to the overpopulation crisis. “Some 200 million women who would like to use contraceptives lack access to them. Women should be educated about family planning, in order to make knowledgeable choices for their future” (Lin). While considering how to provide family planning to people all over the world, many things must be well thought-out. “To impose our values and our technology on peoples of various cultures, without examining those peoples' beliefs would be a serious mistake. It is important to understand how people feel about limiting families and how they feel about the various methods of birth control, in order to decide how to best help them help themselves in family planning” (“Population”).

A solution to overpopulation would be to provide free sterilization or vasectomy to people who can not afford it. This would reduce the number of children being born and therefore reduce the overpopulation issue. The problem with this is that these forms of birth control go against some religions, including Catholic, Islamic and Jewish faiths (“Family”). Although this may be a solution to some, it would not be a solution to all.

Changing the number of children families are legally allowed to have would certainly reduce the number of children being born; however it may greatly affect human rights. If we put a limit on how many children a woman can give birth to it would go against people's free will. Another option would be to give a financial incentive to limit the number of children a women can have, to say, two or fewer. The government would have to pay the people who follow the guidelines and have 2 or less children. This may be a good plan, but it could become very costly. The government could also turn it around and instead charge people to have children. This again could work, but it would go against human rights. Only people who had money would be able to have children. The poor people would be unable to pay the government and therefore would not be able to have children.

We can also consider that reducing population density is also possible. As far-fetched as it may appear to us now, scientists are investigation alternative solutions for sustainable living. A way to make the land less populated is to move people to new locations. There are some spaces that are not being used that we could consider for living. One option would be in the sky, another option would be underwater and a third option would be on another planet. Although these locations sound unrealistic, in the future scientists may find a way to make this living possible.

A large area of land that is not very populated is the Antarctic. The climate in the Antarctic is unsuitable for humans to live. There is darkness for 24 hours of the day, for six months of the year and sun for 24 hours of the day for 6

months of the year. (“Antarctic”). The temperatures are extremely cold there. No permanent residents are living in Antarctica, however there are many scientific bases where people stay to do research (“Cool”).

Another area of land that people could live on is the Arctic. The Arctic is the land that is located about the Arctic Circle. Although there is a lot of land located up north, the climate is not viewed as wonderful by many people. The polar climate has long, cold winters and short, cool summers with very limited precipitation (“Climate”). With these conditions, there are about four million people living in the Arctic (“About Arctic”). Most of the population is concentrated close to the Arctic Circle, with much of the land further north, uninhabited by humans. “Small communities of humans have lived in this region for thousands of years” (“Landscape”).

A solution that could be used to solve overpopulation is reclaiming land. “Land reclamation is the creation of new land where there was once water” (“Land Reclamation”). Some places around the world have used this method to create more space. A Dutch man by the name of van Oord has made two artificial lands near Dubai to create more space. One island is called “The Palms” (“Now”). This structure was made to look like the date palm tree. It covers an area of 7 million square meters and reaches 6.5 km in the Arabian Gulf. This land has over 40 five star hotels, 2500 beachside villas, 2400 shoreline apartments, 2 marinas, a water theme park, restaurants, shopping malls, sports facilities, spas and cinemas (“Palm”). The second island is called “The World.” As its name implies, it is islands that have been created to

resemble the continents of the Earth. On these islands there are private homes, estate homes and dream resorts (“Home”). This reclaimed land is good because it creates more land for people to use. The problem with this solution is that it affects the animals, land and water. The water quality surrounding the newly created land could be changed which affects the plants and animals in the water (“Land Reclamation”).

A solution that is similar to land reclamation is when entire islands are created. By creating an artificial island, large, flat areas of land can be formed in a place that is not flat. These islands are useful for airports and also just as extra space for people to live. Although this may seem like a viable solution to overpopulation, the process of creating an artificial island is very expensive and risky (“Land Reclamation”).

Another closely related solution to overpopulation is creating land over swamps. After draining swampy wetlands, this land can be used as farmland. Although this would be a good solution for a farmer, it poses a problem because it destroys plant and animal habitats (“Land Reclamation”).

If we choose to ignore this issue of overpopulation and do nothing about it, it will only get worse. The demands we are putting on our Earth will rise and eventually we will run out of resources. However doing nothing about it should be considered as an option. While trying to get rid of the overpopulation issue, we may create or worsen other issues. One factor that may be affected is human rights. Another factor that may be affected is religion. Many religions are against birth control and family planning. By trying to implement different family

planning strategies we may be going against a person's religion. This in turn would go against their human rights. We need to strike a very delicate balance, one where people's beliefs and rights are respected while trying to do what's best for the whole planet.

Overall, the best route to address overpopulation is to encourage education and family planning while being respectful of people's beliefs and traditions. The future depends on us! We need to make some smart choices now that will have a lasting impression on our world for the future. We can't afford to wait until it is too late. We can all make informed choices today that will affect our planet for tomorrow.

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