



# Population and Sustainability Network

73 Charlotte Street  
London W1T 4PL  
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0)20 8673 8963

Fax: +44 (0)20 7792 9163

[cbm@populationandsustainability.org](mailto:cbm@populationandsustainability.org)

[www.populationandsustainability.org](http://www.populationandsustainability.org)

Population and environment: Why they matter together: by Ben S. Malayang III,  
Ph.D.

The Philippine STAR 03/03/2005

Here is a number of extracts from a long article:

When "population" pops up in ordinary conversations in the Philippines, the topic usually centers on numbers (how many we are now – about 83.7 million as of mid-2004). Or we talk of the rate we are increasing over time (presently 2.0% each year without counting migration - referred to as Rate of Natural Increase). Some would note that this is higher than other Catholic countries like ours, like Columbia (1.7%), France (0.4 %), Italy (-0.1%) and Spain (0.1%). Or the conversation can go into the more controversial aspect of how we can control our population, such as to whether we should promote artificial contraception or not. Some would compare that the prevalence of the use of artificial contraception in the Philippines (33 % among married women) is much lower than in other Catholic countries like, again, Columbia (64 %), France (69%), Italy (39%) and Spain (53%). We make the comparisons because we see that these other countries (and do most countries with smaller populations relative to the size of their land and seas from which they derive their basic wealth) are generally much more prosperous than us. But beyond these, we frequently talk of "population" as something that really does not concern ourselves.

We are concerned about our children and how many we need to feed, clothe and send them to schools and to doctors for check-ups, but "population" is something for government to worry about. Many would say that the government should worry about our population, but not for us to do so ourselves. It really does not matter to us personally.

Then, too, beyond talking about it, most of us hardly take environment as our personal worry. We say that the government must do something about it because we worry about how a bad environment will increase our doctor's bills, lower the market value of our homes, or allow toxic pollutants to seep into our foods, the air we breathe and our drinking water. But the "environment" itself is something we hardly fret about most days in our lives.

- Population exerts a generally net negative pressure on the environment.

.....  
But one problem remains: each human represents from birth to date a certainty of consumption but only a probability of production. That is, every human being is sure to need something to survive and to live a life but is not sure if he/she would be able to put back into Nature more than what he/she takes from it. And if our population is both large and rising fast (to a point when it becomes harder to fully feed, clothe, ensure health, and educate our children), the probability increases that more of us would be net takers from Nature rather than net givers.

....

- The symptoms of net negative human pressures on the environment are escalating.

There are many other indications of increased human pressures on our environment. For example, our mangrove cover has declined from over 500,000 hectares in 1908, to less than 150,000 hectares today; our soils are getting more salty in many areas, or more acidic in others, or exposed to inorganic pollutants from agriculture and mine tailings.

## Network Co-ordinator:

Catherine Budgett-Meakin

## Members

ActionAid

African Foundation for  
Population and Development, Nigeria

African Women's Economic Policy Network

All-party Parliamentary Group  
on Population Development  
& Reproductive Health (UK)

Best Foot Forward

Centre for Alternative Technology

Centre for Population Studies at  
London School of Hygiene  
and Tropical Medicine

Commonwealth Women's Network

Department for  
International Development (UK)

FPA (Portugal)

International Institute for  
Applied Systems Analysis

International Institute for  
Co-operation between Peoples

International Planned  
Parenthood Federation

National Centre for Epidemiology  
and Population Health, Australia

National Wildlife Federation, USA

New Economics Foundation

Oxfam

Philippines NGO Council on  
Population Health & Welfare

School of Public Health  
University of California

The Sexuality Information and  
Education Council  
of the United States

Sierra Club, Canada

United Nations  
Population Fund

Women's Environment and  
Development Organisation

World Wide Fund for Nature

## Sponsor:

Margaret Pyke Memorial Trust  
The Advancement of Medical Education &  
Research in Sexual & Reproductive  
Health

Reg Charity No: 1064672

Company No: 3438741

[www.margaretpyke.org](http://www.margaretpyke.org)

And the air we breathe in many of our cities are every increasingly laden with dusts and other dangerous pollutants (like carbon dioxide, sulfur oxides and nitrogen oxides).

- A weakened environment generally weakens the ability of human populations to meet their needs.

Conclusion. Population and environment are not apart from how we are able to pursue a quality life. They are a part of it. We might deny their impacts on our personal lives and choose to disregard the evidence of science; that is our choice. But it does not make the impacts untrue if, as most scientific studies suggest, they are, in fact, true. And if only because they might be true, let us at least think about them as two issues that do matter to us personally.

The author can be reached at: [beniim@yahoo.com](mailto:beniim@yahoo.com) .