

[COPENHAGEN BLOG: POPULATION AND CLIMATE CHANGE](#)

Copenhagen: Is Population the Missing Piece?

This blog is written by Kacey Rae Jacobs - in Copenhagen reporting for the Center for Environment and Population (CEP) www.cepnet.org - with CEP staff, on how population factors are being addressed, or not, at the Copenhagen Climate talks. She is attending the COP 15 as part of a delegation from Yale University.

Tuesday, December 16, 2009 to Friday, December 18, 2009: Report from Kasey: "I Survived COP15...But will the Most Vulnerable Survive Global Warming? A friend of mine recently started designing a t-shirt for those in our Yale delegation that would state "I Survived COP15". Humorous considering how things went logistically for NGOs, but as I reflect on the past few days I cannot help but dwell on a larger question. Will the COP15 outcome, quickly being called the 'American agreement' allow the most vulnerable populations globally to survive global warming? I am afraid the only answer I am coming up with that seems true is "unlikely".

This final week has been absolute insanity to put it lightly. NGO access to the climate negotiations was severely restricted. Of the 32,000 registered NGO's (45,000 total registered, 5,000 members of the press, 8,000 party delegates) 1,000 were given access on Wednesday, 300 on Thursday, and 90 on Friday. Despite days of effort our delegation received zero passes and therefore we moved to plan B, that is, relying on the work of a few friends who have party badges to report back and let us know the progress of negotiation, and that is how I am able to report back to CEP on the negotiations' second week. The feeling I have right now as the meeting comes to a close is that we were all hit over the heads and are still seeing stars. So what was the COP15 outcome? A Giant Question Mark that I am still trying to work out as I review the final product...*To be continued...[Kasey is currently preparing a summary of how population is incorporated in the final COP15 outcome and text – this will appear on this site soon, so check back!]*

Monday, December 15, 2009: Report from Kasey: "This morning I attended the "*Climate and Demography*" breakfast roundtable organized by the UN Foundation on behalf of CEP. The event was held at the historic and famous Hotel D'Angleterre in Kongens Nytorv square, Copenhagen. The goal of the invite-only roundtable was to release a new report by the United Nations Population Fund, *UNFPA State of the World Population 2009: Facing a changing world: women, population and climate*. Lead author and keynote speaker, Robert Engelman of Worldwatch Institute was the main event. Other notable guests and speakers include Dr. Rajendra Pachauri, Chairman of the IPCC; Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland, former Prime Minister of Norway and Special Envoy on Climate Change for the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon; Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland; Sir David King, former advisor to Tony Blair and now at Oxford; and Dianne Dillon-Ridgley, Director at Interface, Inc., noted environmentalist and human rights activist. In addition to an overview of the report by the host, UN Foundation President Timothy Wirth, a great discussion was initiated through the speakers' improvised speeches and subsequent conversations.

Dr. Pachauri discussed the recent University of East Anglia climate research email leaks and assured everyone that none of the papers mentioned in the emails were excluded from the IPCC Fourth Assessment Report despite rumors. He then quickly moved on to the importance of the report and Robert Engelman's work. In particular he discussed the need to raise up developing country peoples through education. He stressed that if we fail to do that the population will bulge to a level that the

ecological footprint outstrips the ability of systems to deal with pressure of large magnitude. When discussing human ecological footprints and consumption he countered former President Bush's notorious quote that "the American Lifestyle is not negotiable" by saying, "why not?" pointing out that many people around the world want to emulate our lifestyle and therefore the system cannot sustain the population. He stressed that when discussing these issues there is a whole range of social and economic indicators and without looking at realities would point us to a technological fix and "it's anything but that."

Robert Engelman started his relaxed keynote speech with responses to Dr. Patchauri's talk. He started off strong with a statement that the developed world will realize, while kicking and screaming, that the atmospheric commons is a right for all people. Climate change is a fundamental human problem that was caused by human activities and impacts real people. Because much of the report focuses on the role of women in communities, his message was that perhaps we should not be looking at population at all but rather we should look at the lives of women. Women are half of the world's population and therefore we have 1.5 billion agents of change for global warming. Many women are the most vulnerable to climate hazards and already feeling the changes caused by global warming because their life expectancy during a natural disaster is less than a man, they are less flexible and less mobile socially, and they receive less information than men. Women are also caretakers and "[they] have to hold many hands where men often don't have to hold any hands at all." At the same time women are the ones who can build the resilience of communities to climate change best. Women plant trees, women cultivate soils. Engelman joked that "27 U.S. Senators should go tell women in these communities that the leaked emails [from the University of East Anglia] prove climate change is not happening. I think they would see it in a very different way."

Lorena Aguilar, global senior gender advisor to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), took the floor and appropriately mentioned that "population is almost an invisible topic in the climate change debate." She mentioned that she liked the report specifically because it does not come from the usual suspects, like women's organizations, but rather from a man, Robert Engelman. Lorena focused on the negotiations and the fact that during the Bonn Climate Talks, the intercessional meetings in Germany that laid the framework for the talks in Bangkok and Barcelona, there were 39 references to gender and population issues in the draft text. After all the intercessional meetings and the opening plenaries last week there is now zero in the draft "shared vision" text. An interesting point made was the UNFCCC Secretariat, by international law, is supposed to recognize the UN mandate for gender equality through the Commission on the Status of Women but that it is not in the text currently. Something to look for as this week of high-level negotiations start next tomorrow.

An interesting anecdote on the topic of women and climate change was brought to the group by Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland. Ms. Robinson met a woman in flood-prone Malawi that mentioned other women in her community are selling themselves because the floods impact their way of life and ability to make an income. This woman however cannot do the same to survive because she is HIV positive. A striking example of how women are feeling the deep effects of climate change already and these impacts are projected to only worsen.

The last two speakers were Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland and Sir David King. Brundtland brought attention to the need to invest in people, in health and in education. Apparently 37 of the 41 NAPAs (National Adaptation Programmes of Action) cannot be implemented because of lack of funding, a reminder of Saturday's SBI Plenary Session I attended in which Lesotho requested \$2 billion for the Least Developed Country Fund specifically for implementation of these NAPAs. Sir David King compared Britain and female fecundity rate trends throughout history to those of South America and

China to draw attention to the fact that these experiences can inform present situations and that the developing world is not that different from the developed world.

Today's morning event was a nice reprieve from the Bella Center but soon after leaving I received an onslaught of emails about the UNFCCC Secretariat severely restricting access to civil society for Thursday and Friday this week due to the new number of 110 Heads of State attending the negotiations this week. The information I received from my Yale delegation is that the Convention Center was "shutting down" and one thousand people were waiting outside seeking access, some waiting up to ten hours. Supposedly some of the plenary sessions were postponed today creating confusion about how progress could be made with so many interruptions. Mid-way through the day the COP15 President announced that all plenary sessions will be closed for the rest of the week and can only be viewed by Civil Society via screens throughout the conference center.

These security interruptions and constant changing of logistics for the negotiations is making me wonder how the negotiators could possibly focus in on the task at hand. That is achieving a new global agreement that will reduce the magnitude and impacts of global climate change, a goal that I think the secretariat might be forgetting as more and more attention is put towards the big names and not the substance of the negotiations. I obtained a new draft text of the LCA and once again population and gender are still not included. Are the issues of vulnerable populations like women too controversial for the negotiators who are totally surrounded by uncertainty, both in terms of climate change and in terms of what the procedure is for them to come to an agreement, or are they just not able to concentrate due to the brewing chaos? Time is running out, as can be seen by the UNFCCC stop watch being stuck at zero since the first day of the conference last week, and I am unclear as to whether having 110 heads of state in the room will make any difference.

Tomorrow I will make my way back into the Convention Center and if I am not granted access will report on the status of the negotiations as they come through from my delegation members inside. Things have been chaotic being the head of the 60 member Yale delegation during all this chaos of protests, heightened security, rising attendance numbers, and major procedural changes but if I retained any information this morning from the release of the UNFPA report it is that women may be more resilient and adaptable than men so I think things are looking better already for tomorrow and I am confident we will still be able to track the negotiations closely despite these disruptions and report back to you. Hopefully more to come...

Saturday-Sunday, December 12-13, 2009: Kasey reports: "There are four distinct groups trying to influence talks here in Copenhagen: heads of state, NGO observers, street protestors, and the "most vulnerable populations" to climate change – all connected somehow to this tiny city of Copenhagen for very big reasons.

This weekend heads of state from the delegations start descending in Copenhagen, and their staff are in a mad frenzy to figure out the logistics for their arrival and finish their work so the negotiations can be productive and efficient this week. Amidst the frenzy there was excitement in the air with the first of the new delegates arriving. Personally I am excited that the President of the Maldives will be arriving tomorrow.

This morning an announcement was made that we had to limit the number of people who can be observers. For Yale (and my CEP reporting) that means we are going down from a delegation of ~60 to a delegation of 22 per day. We will be assigning days and times to these passes so we can rotate them amongst us. Last week facilities were overwhelmed with long lines, so this week I am sure would have

been a nightmare if they did not cap the amount of observers allowed access. Inconvenient and disappointing for those attending but completely understandable. The UNFCCC website shows that they have suspended the press accreditation process indefinitely while weeks before they were saying press accreditation could be done up until the last day of the conference.

On the streets demonstrators literally inundated the city. Protestor estimates range from 30,000 to 100,000. Overall I have heard that the 4 mile climate change march was peaceful and sought to bring about positive change, but slight blemishes have been the attention of media and conversations in the halls. Hundreds of protestors were arrested for throwing bricks and using flammable materials supposedly setting a few cars on fire. Throughout the conference center the monitors that usually show the daily schedule were showing the marchers as they made their way to the center. Beautiful aerial shots of the island were shown and occasionally up-close footage of the wave of activists coming to bring their message and their energy to the stale negotiations. Was their message heard? I think so. A friend simply stated, "I've never been in a building before that was surrounded". I sincerely hope that feeling of being surrounded while the whole world is watching remains radiating through the halls and especially in the plenary session rooms when the heads of state begin the real negotiations on Monday.

***On population:** In the texts being debated this week "vulnerable populations" (such as small island states, low-lying countries, LDCs, women and children) seemed to be caught in the middle. The Chair's negotiating text so far is lacking in the reference to these vulnerable populations specifically, or listing them out (which gives them more weight), as was done in the AOSIS text. The AWG LCA text does include women and youth as a placeholder under the capacity building section, and the enhanced action on adaptation emphasizes "that adaptation is an additional burden on developing countries, and that those particularly vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change [and the impact of the implementation of response measures] will suffer disproportionately and bear unavoidable loss and damage]" (bracketed text means those words are points of contention). Many here would argue that this text is not enough and in later text brackets show that some populations are fighting for their lives to stay in the text. The placement of brackets show that some negotiators (identities unknown) do not agree that small island developing states should be listed with the least developed countries as vulnerable. A simple deletion would mean less access to global funds, less access to adaptation assistance, and therefore perhaps a less chance of survival.*

Today was exciting and things are only just getting started. I will spend all of tonight and into tomorrow going through the most current text in detail and trying to get a grasp of how population is being treated, what parts are being threatened and what parts still will be added. The plenary sessions next week will be intense and the first real insight into what the final text will look like. More to come...

Friday, December 11, 2009: Kacey reports: "I acquired the new negotiating text proposal by the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) titled *Proposal by the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) for the Survival of the Kyoto Protocol and a Copenhagen Protocol to Enhance the Implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change*. Big news today - an impromptu press conference was held by the AOSIS Chair, Prime Minister of Grenada, Madam Dessima Williams. She had a large circle of reporters and observers surrounding her anxious to hear about the text since a copy was not released until the evening. As I received an advanced copy I was able to skim over the text so far and some interesting points included, in addition to Mitigation, Adaptation, Finance, and Technology Transfer, "Capacity Building" is added to the priorities. Additionally a new term is used throughout the text – "Particularly Vulnerable Developing Countries" - that "refers to least developed

countries, small island developing states and countries in Africa affected by drought, desertification and floods.”

In the past during informal talks there has been debate about whether or not when mentioning “vulnerable” countries it should be scaled down to the population level and specifically mention the types of vulnerable populations. The AOSIS proposal only mentions vulnerable developing countries.

For mitigation the text, if left as proposed, would commit developed countries to a collective reduction of emissions to “at least 45 percent below 1990 levels by 2020, while actions by developing countries should in aggregate aim to achieve significant deviations from baselines by 2020...” The beginning of the text also clearly spells out a long-term global goal for emission reductions. “The Parties shall be guided by a shared vision to limit global average temperatures to well below 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to long term stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere well below 350 parts per million of carbon dioxide equivalent in order to prevent additional dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. To this end, the Parties agree that global emissions should peak by no later than 2015 and will need to be reduced by at least 85 percent below 1990 levels by 2050.”

***Relevance to Population?** Quite surprising, the word “population” still does not appear in the text at all, but because of the many linkages inherent to the issue of global warming the issues of adaptation, mitigation, and capacity-building, are directly related to global and country-specific population. As populations grow or urbanization and migration arises to a greater extent in hazard-prone areas the necessity for adaptation is exacerbated. Because global fossil fuel emissions desperately need to be reduced, actions that are taken need to take into account future population and development. Capacity-building is needed for local and national-level staff to institutionalize the mitigation and adaptation strategies of the Convention and Protocol. Large vulnerable populations can easily overwhelm government staff if they are not given proper capacity-building assistance. To deal with these issues proper funding is required and numbers are not being thrown around publicly just yet by most developed countries (the European Union being an exception). Most notably is the lack of funding amounts from the United States of America.*

A more formal press conference on the new text was organized by 350.org, AOSIS, and Avaaz at 4:30 (see picture below). This press conference was open to civil society and therefore a sea of youth carrying signs that read “350” and “We Stand with AOSIS” inundated the press briefing room. In closing, Ambassador Antonio Lima of Cape Verde, Vice-President of AOSIS, stated in response to a financing question, “Is it possible to finance this? I think it is possible. But we have to have political will. If we don’t have political will we can’t do nothing. This political will is building amongst those who are going to help us.”

We will find out by December 18 if this political will builds enough for the vulnerable countries to get the assistance they need in terms of mitigation actions and adaptation support. If predictions and statements by Parties are correct we will have to wait until December 2010 in Mexico City. But I am not giving up hope just yet. Perhaps financial assistance will at least be worked out so these countries can start more rigorous adaptation measures. The next week will be gut-wrenching for all here, especially the small island states, to see how this new text and the others due to come out shortly will be combined, deleted, pulled, twisted, shredded, watered down and eventually made into international law that will govern current and future populations around the world.

More to come...

Population side events: Two population-related side events are coming up next week – first, on Monday, December 14, is a United Nations Foundation event, “Climate and Demography”, to discuss the new [report](#) from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), *The State of World Population 2009: Facing a changing world: women, population and climate* which looks at the connections among population dynamics, reproductive health, women’s

lives, and climate change as they relate to greenhouse gas emissions and societies’ resilience to climate impacts. Robert Engelman, Worldwatch Institute’s Vice President for Programs and lead author of the report, will present its key findings, with discussion to follow. Then on Friday December 18, International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) will hold a side event on how “efforts to strengthen coping capacity and resilience of most vulnerable populations are likely to be impacted by rapid population growth and other population dynamics. Can we reduce vulnerability and support adaptation by making comprehensive contraceptive services available to all who want them?” The event will feature Dr. Kelly Culwell, IPPF Sr. Advisor, Dr. Zhao Balge, Chair of the International Council on Management of Population, Negash Teklu, Ethiopia Consortium for the Integration of Population, Health and the Environment, and, Robert Engelman (as above).



Bill McKibben of 350.org, Ambassador Antonio Lima of Cape Verde (Vice-President of AOSIS), and Ricken Patel, Avaaz Executive Director at the 4:30PM Press Conference on the New Proposed Text by AOSIS

Wednesday, December 9, 2009: From Copenhagen Kasey reports: "Some of the Yale group are attending Copenhagen in the capacity of official delegates for small island developing states such as the Maldives and Grenada since they have just one or two negotiators (whereas the US has scores of representatives). Others are conducting research for countries or NGOs from outside the official negotiation team, or here for their academic research. Over the next two weeks my "CEP" blogs will provide live updates on the COP 15 negotiations with respect to "**population and climate change**": how/if it is being addressed, what is/isn't being said, who the major players are; what the major issues will/should be.

In the COP 15 plenary session Monday the main "youth" speaker pointed out powerfully that since she was born in 1992, countries have been negotiating this treaty for her entire life. Being present during the next two weeks will be both unbearable and exhilarating as the world's leaders decide our collective future on climate change.

During the opening session, to my knowledge, population was not mentioned at all. Considering it is such a well documented, central driver of climate change which plays out differently in each country, this is an interesting gap.

It is being addressed, however, in the current negotiating text, which was developed from intercessional climate negotiations since COP14 last December in Poland. It is covered in relation to vulnerable populations, adaptation, or the displacement and relocation of vulnerable populations. For example, the negotiating text, in part, centers on the implementation of adaptation to climate change, saying (paraphrase) "the adverse effects of climate change will be felt most acutely in vulnerable/developing countries, particularly in low-lying and other small island countries, countries with low-lying coastal, arid and semi-arid areas or areas liable to floods, drought and desertification, and developing countries with fragile mountainous ecosystems, and by those segments of the population that are already in vulnerable situations, owing to factors such as geography, poverty, gender, age, indigenous or minority status and disability".

New text is expected on this soon from Denmark, the European Union, and the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) (which includes some non-islands like Belize but overall is comprised of islands in the Atlantic/Caribbean and the Pacific) which represent some of the most acutely climate change-affected populations on earth. Have to run to go to an "Adaptation" event...more later". JRJ for CEP

Copenhagen: An Opportunity for Climate and Population

By Vicky Markham, CEP Director

Monday, December 7, 2009: As the world's nations meet in Copenhagen, global pressure is mounting for leaders to come to agreement on how to address climate change. This is an opportunity for the United States and the other 170 nations attending the climate forum to secure an agreement to set targets for reducing carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions and provide the financing and technology needed by the developing nations to carry it out.

There's additional pressure in Copenhagen on the US as the world's biggest energy consumer to take a corresponding lead role in curbing the CO₂ "greenhouse gas" emissions that cause climate change. This is important because with just 5% of the global population, Americans consume 25% of the world's energy, and generate 5 times the world's average per-capita of CO₂ emissions. Americans are high-energy and resource consumers in a country with a large, rapidly growing population base. As a result, the US has a much bigger "per-person" link to global climate change than any other nation. And looking forward, with 8,000 people added daily and 3 million people added each year in the US, there's real potential to reach 1 billion high-energy-consuming Americans by 2100.

The US population's disproportionate role in causing climate change has not gone unnoticed by nations now meeting in Copenhagen. Many leaders have said the US must do more to curb its emissions if it expects other countries to do likewise.

Copenhagen: Population's Role

In light of this, Copenhagen not only provides an opportunity for the US to step up to the plate and lead by example, significantly reducing its energy use and CO₂ emissions - but also to take critical steps relating to **population** in the context of the climate talks because it is associated with both the "causes" and "effects" of climate change.

The world's population is on track to reach 7 billion people in two years, just twelve years after reaching 6 billion. In the meantime, global climate change, as a result of human activities, is having unprecedented effects on the planet's sea level rise, weather patterns, species habitat and freshwater resources.

The US uniquely demonstrates how these two issues – population and climate change – are inextricably linked. America's role within the global context is especially significant: it is the third

largest country in the world in terms of population, and contributes disproportionately to the planet's climate change because it is responsible for a quarter of the world's energy use. The US uses more energy than any other country, is the biggest CO2 emitter of all the industrialized nations, and second only to China in overall global emissions. It is also the largest and fastest growing developed nation worldwide.

This unique combination - of America's high population numbers and rapid growth *and* high per-capita energy consumption and CO2 emissions - makes the US pivotal in the global climate change debate.

Meeting the energy demands of this large and rapidly growing population that consumes elevated levels of energy and resources - while at the same time reducing the greenhouse gas emissions contributing to climate change - is part of the challenge before us now.

But how do US "population" factors (such as growth, density, movement, age/income, or per-capita resource use) relate to climate change? There are several key linkages, relating both to the "causes" and "effects" of climate change:

- Population is associated with the **causes** of climate change mainly through high per-capita energy use and the associated greenhouse gas emissions. This is from large numbers of people burning fossil fuels for vehicle use, high energy consuming households and appliances, and widespread "sprawl" land development to accommodate the growth (resulting in increased vehicle use and fossil fuel burning, and deforestation which decreases the amount of trees used as carbon "sinks").
- Population is linked to climate change's **effects** when there is high population density and rapid population growth in the areas most vulnerable to climate change-related sea level rise, severe weather patterns, drought conditions including reduced snow-pack, seasonal changes, and habitat alteration that increases people's exposure to vector-borne diseases. Also, US demographic trends such as the high and fast increasing numbers of people living along the US coasts or in the arid West all exacerbate climate change's effects.

When you look at these issues from a developing country's perspective, it is most often in terms of "effects" rather than "causes". Large aggregates of people there (many of them poor, with little means to alter their situation and respond to climate change's impacts) live in the coastal or arid areas most susceptible to climate change-induced sea level rise, increased incidence of severe weather, and droughts. In addition, especially vulnerable populations living in small island states, and those who depend most heavily on the natural climate to survive (such as Native populations in Alaska and the Arctic) will disproportionately feel climate change's impacts.

Addressing Population and Climate Change in Copenhagen

At the climate talks population will most likely surface in the nations' efforts to "mitigate and adapt" to climate change, especially where large numbers of people live in coastal and arid sites most prone to climate change impacts.

In the context of the Copenhagen climate negotiations, the US can take several steps associated with population:

--First, US leaders should include population/demographic specialists among the experts at the climate change table, to inform the US stance and overall negotiations with the best, balanced scientific data on how population factors are linked to climate changes' causes and effects, and how they can be part of addressing the challenge;

--Second, the US should take a leadership role and show their support for voluntary universal access to good quality reproductive healthcare that, when combined with reducing high per-capita energy and resource use, are viable means to balance pressure on the earth's natural systems. In this case, however,

it is extremely important to recognize that we are not speaking of "blaming" high population numbers for climate change – the science demonstrates that it is a *combination* of very high unsustainable per-capita energy use *and* rapid population growth as a multiplier of the high energy use, that is the issue here;

--Third, for the world's nations at Copenhagen to acknowledge the links between population factors and climate change, and the central role population plays in various ways relating to its "causes" and "effects" worldwide, and as part of effectively addressing the climate change.

New Interactive Map on Population and Climate Change

The Center for Environment and Population (CEP), with Clean Air-Cool Planet, has just produced a new [Interactive Map on "Population and Climate Change"](#). The new map, a companion to the ["U.S. Population, Energy & Climate Change"](#) report from the Center for Environment and Population (CEP), shows US national, regional and state-by-state ranking on energy consumption, CO2 emissions, per-capita vehicle miles traveled, population numbers and growth rates, and housing units (more houses = more appliances = more energy use).

The map is a product of the [Center for Environment and Population \(CEP\)](http://www.cepnet.org) www.cepnet.org and [Clean Air-Cool Planet \(CACP\)](http://www.cleanair-coolplanet.org) www.cleanair-coolplanet.org. For a copy of the map and companion report on [CEP's website click here](#), on [CACP's website click here](#).

The [Center for Environment and Population \(CEP\)](http://www.cepnet.org) is an independent non-profit science-based research and policy organization. A CEP team is reporting back daily from Copenhagen on how population is being addressed at the global climate meeting. For more information go to www.cepnet.org.