



Written by [Rebecca Terrell](#) on September 21, 2009

## Global Warming: Since People Are the Problem, Just Get Rid of Them

In November, the World Health Organization (WHO) will release a study on population growth and climate change that claims contraception plays a key role in combatting global warming.

One of the lead researchers in this study is Leo Bryant, an advocacy manager with the family planning group Marie Stopes International. He and his colleagues find that, though poorer nations have relatively low carbon emissions, overpopulation taxes natural resources already degraded by global climate change, exacerbating the effects of famine, drought, floods, and rising sea levels.



Bryant published an editorial in the *Lancet* medical journal on Friday, summarizing results of the study. He and his colleagues collected information from 40 of the world's poorest countries about their plans to adapt to climate change. Most of them linked rapid population growth to negative effects on the environment. Since Bryant claims 95 percent of the world's population growth is forecast to take place in developing countries in the next 40 years, he recommends these nations' policymakers focus on establishing widespread reproductive healthcare services and educational programs. The services are recommended because, according to Bryant, 200 million women across the world want contraceptives but cannot get them.

Population control and abortion advocates are hoping that this issue will be highlighted at the upcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference scheduled December 7 and 8 in Copenhagen, Denmark. Roger Martin, chair of the Optimum Population Trust, said, "The potential for tackling climate change by addressing population growth through better family planning, alongside the conventional approach, is clearly enormous, and we shall be urging all those involved in the Copenhagen process to take it fully on board." He made those comments in a statement last week marking the release of the London School of Economics report, *Fewer Emitters, Lower Emissions, Less Cost*. That report contained findings similar to those in the World Health Organization study and claimed that contraception is almost five times cheaper than current technology used to combat climate change. "The taboo on mentioning this fact has made the whole climate change debate so far somewhat unreal. Stabilising [sic] population levels has always been essential ecologically, and this study shows it's economically sensible too," said Martin.

Karen Hardee, senior researcher with Population Action International (PAI), also hopes to bring SRHR (sexual reproductive and health rights) issues to the forefront in Copenhagen. In an interview on Friday she said that climate-change policies focus on technological solutions at the expense of social sectors and called for "more people-centered global and national adaptation approaches that meet the full range of people's needs."



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Not all environmentalists blame overpopulation for the supposed woes of Earth. Simon Butler's June 2009 article "Ten Reasons Why Population Control Is Not an Answer to Climate Change" published in *Links - International Journal of Socialist Renewal* contradicts several points in the WHO and PAI reports. In fact, Butler claims population control hinders the green movement. He says, "Blaming too many people for driving climate change is like blaming too many trees for causing bushfires." He maintains that runaway population growth is a myth, explaining that the rate of growth has been gradually decreasing worldwide since the 1960s. He said that overpopulation is a centuries-old scapegoat for the world's problems. "In practice, there has never been a population-control scheme that has had acceptable environmental or humanitarian outcomes," he said, pointing out that China's one-child policy has not solved environmental problems in that country while forced sterilization and female infanticide run rampant.



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