

Draft FACT SHEET 12. POPULATION GROWTH and
CLIMATE CHANGE, POLLUTION, WARS, DISEASES and other
threats to the planet

You'd wonder why anyone bothers with thriller block-busters, horror stories or appalling computer games when it's all there for real around them.



3. Noah climate change jpg

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES that are made worse by increasing world population from 6 billion now to 9 billion by 2050? See the other Fact Sheets:

- WATER shortages, especially of clean water.
- FOOD. Biophysical limits of food production – already past sustainability, and using up resources for the future
- LIVABLE LAND needed for more people. More land is desertifying and rising sea-levels submerge coasts – while growing populations require more earth to live on, not less.
- CLIMATE CHANGES with worse storms, winds, droughts, fires and floods, and higher temperatures will affect more people with disaster emergencies and poorer quality of life. Warmer seas will affect marine life and important currents like the Gulf Stream
- POLLUTIONS. Carbon emissions - more people mean more carbon dioxide emissions, green house effects and climate changes. Smoke from cars and industry pollutes the air including carbon dioxide emissions. Nitrogen - humans are adding about 130 to 150 million tons over the 90 to 150 tons that are produced by the nitrogen cycle. Excess nitrogen causes coastal waters and estuaries to grow toxic algae, killing fish and trapping the solar heat in the air. Pollutants of other chemicals and metals rare released into the air, soils and sewage. Many, like lead and mercury, are dangerous for children's healthy development.
- METHANE is produced by gases released by cattle, termite mounds and the bottom of rice paddies. Raising more cattle, cutting more tropical forests (increasing the amount of termites) and growing more rice makes poisonous methane concentration in the air almost double from 160,000 years ago.
- DE-FORESTATION and its consequences

- WASTE DISPOSAL – an increasing problem for land, sea and air.
- LOSS OF SOIL FERTILITY, spreading deserts and semi-deserts
- ANIMAL EXTINCTIONS – to our own loss too.
- FISH shortages and extinctions
- FERTILE LAND TAKEN for housing, increasing food supply problems, as in China
- LAND COSTS. Economic anomalies that include making the rich richer and the poor more numerous include escalating property prices from increasing demand.
- DISEASES. Globalising and mega slums facilitate spread of new and old diseases for humans, flora and fauna.
- MORE INHUMANE FACTORY-FARMING methods required to provide more protein
- CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR spreading to developing countries. Increasing consumption and despoliation as the huge numbers of poor seek the standard of living of the affluent.
- WARS OVER RESOURCES destroy permanently more resources than they kill people, and kill more civilians than they kill soldiers. Armaments and arms research waste of materials and working lives.
- INCREASED SOCIAL CONFLICT. See Russell & Russell on the psychological stresses of overcrowding for humans as well as animals.
- DEPRESSION, fast becoming the world's second most serious illness, is affected by living in a world of so many apparently insoluble problems, and reduces our power and energy to do anything about them.

There is hardly any challenge ahead which is not made worse by populating the planet to excess with humans. Restraining further growth of populations is more humanitarian and caring for life than just ripping ahead with excess for our own personal interests, ideologies and profits.

FACT SHEET 13 looks at how we could be less helpless.

