



# Population Matters Corporate Strategy 2016/17-2018/19

## Introduction

1. This strategy describes our values, principles and mission. It is used to guide our operational plans, which describe how resources will be applied to achieve our mission. It is reviewed every three years or as required to ensure that it remains relevant as circumstances change.

## Situation

2. Our understanding that humanity and all living species share a planet with finite resources drives this strategy. The more humans that there are, the less resources there are for each individual and for all other species.

3. World population exceeds 7.4 billion and has doubled since 1970. It is projected to continue to increase throughout this century and beyond<sup>1</sup>. Species biodiversity and their populations measured in WWF's Living Planet Report<sup>2</sup> have declined by over 50 per cent over the same period, principally as a result of increasing human population and its demand for resources. Population growth is one of the main drivers of climate change, while also reducing scope for mitigation and adaptation to its impacts<sup>3,4</sup>. It makes almost all environmental problems harder and ultimately impossible to solve, and undermines social and economic development, especially in the least developed countries<sup>5</sup>.

4. Sustainability is a function of population size, productive capacity and per capita consumption of resources. The contribution of each factor varies across different communities. Consumption patterns are highly inequitable both within and between nations, with developed countries presently accounting for a disproportionate share of global overconsumption. Globally we are depleting non-renewable resources without regard to the needs of future generations and currently consuming the renewable resources of one and a half Earths<sup>6</sup>. This is increasing as developing countries adopt developed countries' lifestyles. Demographic momentum means that this unsustainable consumption needs to be reduced by a large amount and as soon as possible<sup>7</sup>, especially if less developed countries are sustainably to improve the living standards of their citizens.

5. Population growth is not irreversible or inevitable; individuals and couples can choose to have fewer or no children. Small changes in fertility rates can make a huge difference over time; our numbers could be 7 billion or 14 billion at the end of the century depending on choices made today. Demographic momentum

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<sup>1</sup> (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2015) – median variant

<sup>2</sup> (World Wide Fund for Nature & Zoological Society of London, 2014)

<sup>3</sup> (IPCC, 2015)

<sup>4</sup> (O'Neill et al., 2012)

<sup>5</sup> (United Nations, 2015)

<sup>6</sup> (Global Footprint Network, 2015b)

<sup>7</sup> (Bradshaw & Brook, 2014)

means that reducing population to sustainable levels is a process that will take several generations even if we start now; large reductions in fertility rates are therefore urgent.

6. The UK's population growth is amongst the highest in Europe due to natural growth and net immigration and, in Scotland, a policy to encourage population growth as part of an economic strategy<sup>8</sup>. It cannot be supported by its own resources<sup>9</sup>. This has resulting environmental, cost of living and quality of life impacts both locally and globally.

## Our Vision

7. Our vision is of a future with decent living standards for all, a healthy and biodiverse environment, and a stable and sustainable population size. We believe that this can be achieved through public education and consensus building, as well as through appropriate public policies, such as expanded access to family planning services, public education and incentivising of sustainable reproductive and consumption choices.

8. Sustainability means living within the constraints of renewable resources. It means the convergence of living standards to address the gross inequalities in wealth both within and between societies, while tackling the unsustainable consumption of resources needed to secure the future of our children and future generations. It also requires respecting natural ecosystems on which we depend and which sustain what is left of our planet's wildlife. Only by tackling unsustainable consumption and reducing our numbers can we ensure acceptable, sustainable living standards for all in the long-term.

## Our Mission

9. Our mission is to promote smaller families and sustainable consumption to achieve a sustainable population in the UK and globally.

## Values

10. Our values are the ethics to which we subscribe. Our activities will be consistent with these values:

- We believe in the value of healthy and diverse ecosystems, and of just and sustainable human societies.
- We believe that we all have duties to the community and to future generations to act in ways that do not undermine the protection, fulfilment and advancement of fundamental rights and freedoms; in a world of limited resources our reproductive and consumption choices are of critical importance to discharging these fundamental moral duties.

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<sup>8</sup> (Scottish Government, 2015)

<sup>9</sup> (Global Footprint Network, 2015a)

- We believe that everyone has a right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being, and to an international order in which fundamental rights and freedoms, including gender, sexual and reproductive rights, can be fully realised.

## Principles

11. Our principles are guidelines that define *how* we conduct our activities. These are that we:

- Seek to work within the mainstream of politics and society.
- Focus on population within the wider context of related issues, including in particular over-consumption, gender and social inequality, and environmental degradation.
- Are independent, but seek to work with others.
- Make claims based on sound evidence.
- Are a learning organisation.
- Adopt professional standards.
- Follow a scientific approach to solutions and foster research.

## Strategic summary

12. Our summary of the situation is that:

- Population Matters through its primary focus on advocating a sustainable population is distinct from developmental, environmental, and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHRs) NGOs. However, collaborating with such organisations offers potential synergies and avoids unnecessary duplication of effort.
- Population momentum and the compounding effects of population growth and resource demand have a negative effect on long-term sustainability and the quality of the environment. This means urgent and sustained public and private action is required at both local and global level to mitigate the damage caused by population growth and unsustainable consumption.
- There is limited recognition that overpopulation is primarily about resources, of which space is only one factor, and minimal public awareness that reversing unsustainable population growth is possible, but will require a long-term effort.
- Environmental and socio-political discourse generally accepts population growth as a ‘fact of life’ rather than the result of conscious and unconscious choices, which can and must be changed for a sustainable global population to be achieved.
- Government at all levels has the capacity to influence attitudes and behaviour through public education, service provision and incentivising more sustainable reproductive and consumption choices by individuals.
- Experience has shown that direct engagement with politicians who are not already supportive is normally unproductive. Public awareness of overpopulation as a critical social, economic and environmental issue is a precondition for population growth and unsustainable consumption to be addressed as a political issue.

- For these reasons, we believe that public education is the key to creating public demand for political change and to influence individual life choices in favour of a sustainable population.

## Outline of the Strategy

13. The strategy comprises three components:
- **The strategic main effort.** This provides the focus for all operational planning.
  - **Lines of operation.** These are separate but mutually supporting operational activities, which contribute towards delivering our mission.
  - **Common supporting activities.** Common supporting activities support the organisation in delivering its operational activities.

## Main Effort

14. The main effort dictates the principal task that we apply our collective effort to, in order to achieve our mission. It does not exclude activities in other areas, but unless the situation changes and the Board choose to change the main effort these will be supporting activities.

15. Our main effort is to create a level of public awareness and governmental action on overpopulation and unsustainable consumption that is equivalent to that achieved for climate change.

16. This is aimed at both the public and politicians. However, the focus will be the education of the general public and civil society in order to create the necessary grassroots support and actions for effective political engagement.

## Lines of operation

17. The lines of operation are:
- **Campaigning and advocacy.** Planned campaign and advocacy activities will support the main effort. Responses to transient topical opportunities will link these issues to local and global population growth and, where possible, to the main effort. We will primarily focus on matters that resonate with our UK supporter base, but will periodically review whether it is possible to run credible campaigns in support of our overseas members.
  - **Education.** This develops awareness of population sustainability and ways of addressing the problem in a local and global context amongst the public in order to support our campaigning efforts and individual behavioural change.
  - **Research.** This is our contribution to the development of and access to the knowledge and science of population sustainability<sup>10</sup>, which must be developed for a sustainable future. It involves an

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<sup>10</sup> This includes new economics, environmental ethics, attitude change etc.

approach that integrates global and local aspects; however, it will also focus on support of our campaigning and advocacy efforts.

- **Developing alliances.** We will work with partner organisations in order to achieve mutual goals to demonstrate the wide-ranging impact of population issues on other areas of public concern.

## Common supporting activities

18. The common supporting activities of the strategy are:

- **Communications.** This includes all aspects of ensuring that all levels of the organisation disseminate a co-ordinated and positive message.
- **Resourcing.** This includes all aspects of ensuring that Population Matters has human and financial resources to meet its purposes including, but not limited to:
  - Effective engagement with members and the public to maintain and grow membership.
  - Sustaining, increasing and diversifying income from membership and other sources.
  - Ensuring that the organisation is appropriately staffed (within budgetary constraints) to support its operations and development, and that we make the most of volunteers' efforts.
- **Governance.** This includes, but is not limited to, the legal obligation of the Board to ensure that Population Matters operates in line with company and charity law and in line with its articles of association. Other activities include:
  - Reviewing and strengthening risk management, including risks to operations, information, and organisational and personnel sustainability.
  - Reviewing and, where necessary, proposing amendments to the articles of association every 10 years or at any time if there are major socio-political changes that may affect the need for or relevance of the organisation.
  - Regular engagement with members and supporters to retain and grow membership.

## References

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