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Thriving Together: A New Initiative Combining Conservation and Family Planning Needs

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Aug 01, 2019 Thrivng Together: A New Initiative Combining Conservation and Family Planning Needs

By Kathryn Lloyd

On July 11, World Population Day, the Margaret Pyke Trust launched the Thrivng Together campaign, supported by over 150 organizations (from United Nations (UN) agencies and large NGOs like The Nature Conservancy to smaller organizations such as WellBeing International). The Trust and its partners are aiming to build a movement “to change global policy to recognize the importance of removing barriers to family planning as an appropriate cause for conservationists to embrace, for the sake of their missions, for the lives of women and children and for a better world.”

The following factoids provide some background context for this campaign.

- Projections of future world populations are very sensitive to small changes in the average number of children per mother. The most widely used UN projection is that the global population will reach 9.8 billion people by

2050, up from 7.7 billion today, with most of this increase occurring in developing countries. If the average number of children per mother dropped by just 0.5, then the global population would peak at 8.8 billion and drop to 7.3 billion by the end of this century. Given that some projections predict that there could be 11 billion people on the globe by 2100, a campaign that highlights the obstacles preventing couples from choosing the number of children they want would go a long way to respond to this challenge. If everyone had unrestricted access to reproductive health information, services and counseling it would have huge implications for human health and well-being, and for the survival of wildlife and wild places on the globe.

- Global fertility overall has fallen by 2.5 children since the 1960s so a drop of only 0.5 should be readily achievable.
- Out of 190+ countries, more than 100 have fertility levels above 2.1 children per woman and in 38 of them, fertility levels are above 4 children per woman.
- In the world, an estimated two out of five pregnancies are unintended amounting to 85 million unintended pregnancies. The world population is currently growing by 85 million people a year.
- Family planning is very cost-effective. The equivalent of an investment of a few dollars a year can protect an individual or couple from an unintended pregnancy.
- Avoiding an unintended pregnancy now has multiplier effects in future years.
- The Living Planet Index for 2018 reports that 16,704 populations of 4,005 species have declined by an average of 60% since 1970.
- The recent UN report on global biodiversity (the IPBES report) paints a devastating picture of the current threats to animals and the environment at a point in time when there are “only” 7.7 billion people (approximately 70% of the eventual projected total). One million wild species are threatened with extinction, three-quarters of terrestrial environments have been heavily modified by and for humans, and 93% of global fisheries are taking wild fish at or above sustainable levels.

WellBeing International (WBI) President, Dr. Andrew Rowan stated, “At the end of the day, there are significant benefits for people, animals, and the environment if we can ensure there is universal barrier-free access to contraception and sustainable (i.e. lower) levels of consumption. If we do that, it will naturally follow that our long-term global footprint will be reduced. By avoiding

unintended pregnancies and campaigning for sustainable levels of consumption, we all win. WBI wholeheartedly endorses the Margaret Pyke Trust's initiative to link improved family planning and more sustainable global environments."

You can read more about the campaign, its 153 supporters, and the background paper "Removing Barriers to Family Planning, Empowering Sustainable Environmental Conservation: A Background Paper and Call for Action" on the [Thriving Together](#) website.