

## CO-CONVENORS' RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUMMARIES

### Population Dynamics and Human Well-Being

- Lori M. Hunter, University of Colorado Boulder
- Susana Adama, Columbia University
- Michael Hermann, UNFPA
- Maria Amalia Souza, Socio-Environmental Fund
- Joann Castro, Path Foundation Philippines

Demographic dynamics play a pivotal role in shaping potential for sustainable human and economic development. Although population size and growth are often seen as primary culprits in sustainability challenges, more nuanced insight is necessary to achieve sustainable development goals. Key is integration of insight from scientists, policymakers, communicators, and practitioners.

This thematic session provided an overview of current research linking population dynamics (e.g., growth, aging, urbanization) to sustainable development as well as human health and well-being.

Overall, the panel generated four key bullet points that represent key policy thrusts of the panel discussion and resulting audience questions:

1. Humans are the primary driver of environmental change and, therefore, sustainable development policy must consider population dynamics. While population size and growth are important, we must also consider demographic dynamics such as fertility decision-making, urban-rural (or spatial) distribution and migration.
2. Population dynamics create challenges and opportunities. For example, urbanization creates economies of scale, young populations (age structure) create labor potential.
3. Sustainable development must include health, education and employment programs, as well as programs to enhance gender equality and the security of human rights.
4. Change will continue – population growth, migration streams, environmental decline – plan and budget for programs aiming to address these forthcoming challenges and create opportunities. Consider innovative funding including at the grassroots level.

Hunter presented research linking fertility to environmental scarcity – in some regions of the world, a shortage of natural resources leads to greater family size. In other regions, however, the opposite association emerges. Even so, key is that past research on family size and reproductive decision-making has not adequately considered environmental dimensions. In addition, she presented work linking mortality to environmental context, especially as related to AIDS mortality and natural resources as coping strategies among rural South African households. Mortality may actually intensify local environmental pressure, thereby challenging sustainable development.

Adamo provided a brief overview of migration, as a demographic dynamic, to environmental context. She presented a conceptual framework recently put forward nicely by the UK's Foresight Programme, outlining

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the variety of drivers – social, economic, political, cultural – that interact with environment to shape migration decision-making. She also presented recent scholarship revealing that much disaster-induced migration is circular and short-distance.

Hermann presented a call to action – highlighting the real challenges faced by a global population with momentum guaranteeing future growth. Economic development and consumption are intertwined with these demographic challenges, Hermann argued. He further emphasized that dynamics such as urbanization offer opportunities for working toward sustainability – and that expanding family planning access is essential to meet unmet demand for contraception and control of family size.

Souza provided background on vulnerability among rural Brazilian households and the potential for large-scale displacement due to dam-building. She described a grassroots funding model designed to give “voice” to local stakeholders whose livelihoods stand to be greatly impacted. She argued that it is key to ensure all stakeholders are engaged in environmental and development decision-making processes.

Finally, Castro offered a useful example of population-environment development linkages as they unfold in the Philippines. Evidence has emerged that linking health programs with livelihood and environmental conservation initiatives is more effective in improving well-being as compared to programs addressing only single sector concerns. She also presented an example of their effective “study tours” through which local policymakers visit development initiatives to see first-hand the needs of local residents and the impact of integrated population-environment-development programs. Such programs have resulted in substantial local policy support.