

# MOTHER

Caring for 7 Billion

## Discussion Guide

### Included

**Part 1 – Introduction**

**Part 2 – Facilitator Guidelines**

**Part 3 – Discussion Questions**

**Part 4 – Current Issues around  
Population**

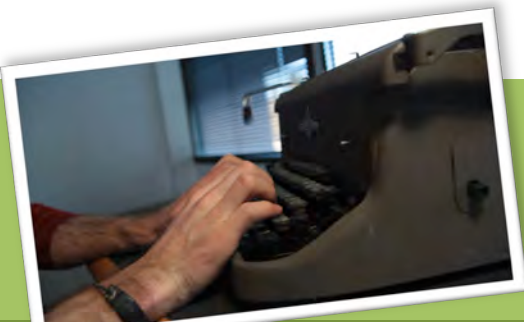
**Part 5 – Population Facts**

**Part 6 – The Population Bomb**



This guide is provided as an accompaniment to *Mother: Caring for 7 Billion* and supports facilitators as they engage community members, students and other interested in creating a dialogue around the issues highlighted in the film.

Note for Educators: Teachers can use these questions as a springboard for discussions about population as it affects their community and the world.



**Mother** approaches the topic of population from the perspective of culture, the economy, the environment and human rights.



# Introduction

Outstanding themes, underscored throughout the film and worthy of discussion, include:

- Population growth since the beginning of human history
- The history of the population movement
- The evolution of the population discussion
- Population growth's impact on the environment in wealthy countries and emerging economies like China
- Population growth's impact on wealthy and struggling societies
- The past abuses of governments trying to lower population growth
- Why people stopped talking about population growth
- The population pressures in the US with the economy, taxes and job creation
- Pressure that people feel to have children
- Population issues currently facing Ethiopia
- How the status of women affects population
- Social change through entertainment
- Empowering women to reduce poverty
- Cultural barriers facing women and gender equality
- Social entrepreneurship and micro loans
- Girl's education as an important first step
- Comprehensive solutions to solve overpopulation

# Facilitator Guidelines

Before convening a group, view the documentary in its entirety. Become familiar with this guide, which provides discussion questions, tips on how to negotiate controversial issues, and supplemental information and resources to further discussion.



- There are different lengths. The middle/high school has the 45 and 55 minutes version, the University/PPR has the 45 and 60 minutes versions. The PPR has only the 60-minute version. Decide whether participants should watch the entire film or film segments individually or as a group. (If you are presenting clips, select those that are appropriate for your audience.) A group viewing of the entire film more time in order to allow for thoughtful discussion time. If participants watch the film individually, they can then attend a post viewing session that allows for sufficient discussion. (Session lengths will vary depending on group composition and the your familiarity with participants.) Regardless of the viewing and discussion formats, if possible, provide participants with reading and supplemental materials that familiarize them with the film's content, issues, and topics.
- For community screenings, smaller groups of five to eight members are ideal. You can divide a large group into two smaller ones, each with a different facilitator.
- Moderate discussion where appropriate, but do not try to control the flow of dialogue or defend the film. Pay careful attention to the individual making comments, and assist them in clarifying statements if needed. For example, restate the perspective and ask others to paraphrase their thoughts. If participants disagree with each other, ask them to explain why. Be sure all participants have a chance to share their thoughts. This may require setting time limits.
- If appropriate, point participants to resources that provide additional coverage of the film's key topics.



# Discussion Questions

The discussion framework depends on the group. Most of these questions are geared towards students in a classroom. Please feel free to choose and adapt questions as you feel is appropriate for your audience.

You might first invite participants to provide immediate feedback on what they have viewed. Questions to prompt this discussion include:

- What did you think of the film?
- What stood out for you?
- What did you learn about population?
- Did the film reinforce something you already knew about population? Explain.
- Describe something of your experience that the film reflects.
- Describe anything in the film that you feel might have been left unsaid.

You can continue the discussion with some or all of the in-depth questions that follow. (Or, depending on the group, begin the dialogue with these.)

## Intro and History

1. What were your feelings watching the population curve traveling through human history in the opening of the film? How did this surprise or concern you?

## Population Bomb & Earth Day

1. After watching the old footage of starving people in Asia in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, how does this help give a historical perspective surrounding the fear of not enough food production to feed rising populations? How would you react to this situation?
2. Why do you think that population is not being discussed by environmental groups?

# Population Impacts

## A. Environmental Impacts

1. What kind of things do humans do that can cause the extinction of species?
2. Which species do you think are more susceptible to human activity and why?
3. How does consumption affect the environment?
4. How can limits be put on consumption or waste production or should there be limits?
5. Are people able to “self limit” their own consumption? For example, can fishermen be expected to limit their own catch of a certain endangered expensive fish because it is the right thing to do or should there be laws to keep the fish population from disappearing?

## B. Resources and Waste Impact

1. As the world population gets richer - 50 million new middle class each year - how can richer countries help these emerging economies like China decrease the negative effects of consumption and waste production while still increasing their standard of living? Is there anything the richer countries can do to lessen the stress on the planet in anticipation of the growing demands on resources from these emerging economies?
2. How do you see this increased competition for resources influencing and complicating foreign relations and trade between rich countries? How about rich countries and their relationship with poor developing countries in countries that are resource rich, like Africa?

## C. Immigration

1. As the number of climate refugees increases in conjunction with rising global temperatures and worsening droughts, what can richer countries do to help all those people? What would that help look like?
2. What are the different feelings concerning immigration by supporters and opponents in North America and Europe?
3. How can emigration help solve overpopulation in poorer countries? Would this solve rising global population?

## D. Food Production

1. The Green Revolution brought many western technologies, including fertilizer and pesticides, to developing countries that dramatically raised their food production in the 1960s and 70s. If another Green Revolution were to happen and if population continues to increase, what other resources might be depleted. How can this be avoided?



2. How do fossil fuels play a part in food production?
3. Since grain markets around the world are tied to the same price, how will an increase in demand effect competition for food?
4. Richer countries, such as Saudi Arabia and China, are buying or leasing land around the world to raise livestock and crops for their people. Some are located in South America, Africa and even in the U.S. This is euphemistically called "Land Grabs". What kind of problems can occur with foreign countries coming in to do this kind of activity?
5. One of the catalysts for the Arab Spring is attributed to riots over rising food prices. In the summer of 2010, Russia had a record heat wave with ensuing droughts and fires that caused a 30% decrease in grain exports to North Africa. The lack of a basic necessity like food can cause large numbers of people to go out in the street and demand change. What are the different ways that climate change and a large population affect governments and societies?

## Beth's Family Decision (55 & 60 min only)

1. How do you think children are affected by rapid population growth in developing countries?
2. What are some reasons, aside from population, that JP (Beth's husband) would want a smaller family?
3. What are some advantages and disadvantages to having a large family that influence family size in the U.S.? How about in developing countries?
4. There is a show on a cable network that features a family with 19 children. If every child in that family had the same number of children (19) and all of their offspring did the same for each generation (30 years), how many generations would it take before their family population would reach a million people, a billion?

## Don't Talk About Population

1. What are some reasons that the UN is revising its population projections upward in developing countries, like Ethiopia?
2. What are some reasons that the UN is revising its population projections upward in developed countries like the US?
3. What are some reasons that governments may want to limit their population growth?
4. What are some of the human rights abuses by countries like India and China when they tried to lower their population growth?
5. In Japan, the population density and congestion is very high. Why would Japan be concerned about a decreasing population?
6. In some countries, people get a full pension after 30 years of work. This could be reached as early as age 48. What are the criticisms of policies that pay for people to retire at such a young age? What are some potential solutions?
7. If older workers stay on the job longer, what issues arise with younger workers entering the workforce?
8. Creating new Jobs or employment is a major issue in an economy. In 2011, in the U.S. 150,000 new jobs need to be created each month to keep up with population growth. One potential solution that has been proposed is more job sharing. What are some difficulties in implementing this type of solution?
9. How would delaying retirement help the economy when population is decreasing?

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Most Populated

1. As stated in the film, if everyone on the planet lived the American lifestyle there would need to be almost 6 planets required for the resources and to absorb the waste with nothing left for other species. Why is that?
2. How does importing ecological services through trade create inequities in the world?
3. Why do poor countries say the problem with population is overconsumption of natural resources in the richer countries? What do you think of this?
4. The U.S. population grows by 2.7 million a year. Most of this growth comes from legal immigration. What are the pros and cons of immigration?
5. The estimates are that one average American consumes as much as 30 Ethiopians. What ethical issues arise with a number like that? What can Americans do to decrease their consumption without compromising their quality of life?

## Grow Like Us

1. What are the problems associated with an economy that needs constant growth?
2. What issues arise from considering people as “consumers”?
3. What are some of the costs associated with growth (building new neighborhoods) that you might not have considered before watching this film?
4. Why do some people benefit from population growth and others don’t?
5. What kind of ethical issues arise when GDP indicators of growth are viewed as positive improvements to an economy?
6. What is the function of an economy in a society?
7. What are some other types of factors that should be considered when judging the health of an economy?
8. What kinds of things outside of the current GDP affect the economy? ie. crime, education, environment, people without healthcare

## Off to Ethiopia

1. Ethiopia’s population is expected to triple in the next 40 years. What would be the impact on children in Ethiopia with that high of growth rate?
2. Why do you think that more child-focused organizations are not talking about rapid population growth?
3. What kinds of problems occur in developing countries when population growth is very high?

## Invisible Barriers

1. How did birth control help women in the US improve their status in society?
2. Why do you think that Childfree by Choice couples face stigma about choosing not to have children?
3. Why do you think that the U.S has the highest teen birthrate in the developed world?
4. What are the types of challenges that teen parents and children born to teen parents face?
5. Since this film was completed in 2011, the number of unintended pregnancies in the U.S. has risen to almost 50%. What are some cultural and social reasons for this large number?
6. The film stated several cultural barriers that women face when trying to limit their family size which are:
  1. They have heard it is dangerous
  2. Their male partner is opposed
  3. Their religion is opposed.
  4. They are leaving the number of children up to God.

Typically a village has goods/commodities that are affordable and deemed important to the people in the village. How do you think that these cultural barriers influence the availability and use of birth control? What can be done to overcome these barriers?

7. Abortions are illegal in most countries in Africa, even so, there are a large number of illegal abortions each year that kill and do a lot of damage. What are the ethical debates surrounding abortion and how is this similar or different from the history of abortion in the U.S.

## Population Media Center

1. How does Population Media Center succeed in getting out social messages?
2. Given their success, what does this say about the influence of entertainment in a society, good and bad?
3. Why is it a better model to have local writers creating stories to enlighten their people instead of outside groups?
4. What are the advantages of villagers learning new ideas about equality, fairness and social justice on a radio or television show?
5. What is social engineering and does this term apply to Population Media Center's work?
6. How can this program be expanded in some rich countries to solve problems? Can you think of any issues that could be addressed in this way?
7. Why do you think that PMC's approach is so successful to inspire behavioral change when typical informational approaches have failed?



## Status of Women

1. How can improving education for all children and changing the attitude and expectations of girls improve the entire society?
2. Recent studies have stated that the countries with the most terrorism and overall conflict also keep women in the most subservient place. What do you think about this correlation? What factors work together to undermine women's rights?
3. What forces want to keep the status quo and keep women in a subservient position?
4. What are some excuses that some people give for refusing to give women more education and the freedom to decide their own lives?
5. The women's movement in the U.S. faced a large opposition to allowing women the right to vote, own property or work outside the home. What can we learn from the U.S. movement as countries try to help women in other parts of the world.
6. Some in the religious leadership in the U.S. publicly state that the demise of the family and society is due to the women's movement ie. the right to use birth control, legal abortion and the right to work outside the home. Why would they say this and what would you say to them?
7. The right to have children is a basic human right. What ethical issues arise when governments try to control population by giving families quotas or when they pay people to be sterilized.

## Conclusion

1. Over consumption and pollution has a huge effect on the planet; what are some of things this that people can do starting today to decrease their consumption and pollution?
2. How can countries in Europe like Sweden that invest large amounts of resources into people help model to other countries the benefits of a stable population? Sweden enjoys a very low poverty and crime rate and also has a highly literate workforce. They have caring policies that includes; universal health care and paid maternity and paternity leaves.
3. In most countries in Europe, birth control is free and available in their universal health care system. How does the price and availability of birth control in the US affect the rate of unplanned pregnancy?
4. Why is important for aid agencies and governments to work together to bring aid to developing countries. What are some reasons they don't do it now?
5. How can having more women in leadership positions help bring about change?
6. The percentage of women in the U.S. Congress is about 14% and in Sweden it is near 45%. What are some policies and programs that women might be more interested in supporting?

# Current Issues Around Population



If the UN's goal of achieving universal access to contraceptives and reproductive health care is to be achieved, the U.S. and other donor nations need to boost their support for international family planning.

In the next several months, Congress will be making important decisions regarding U.S. support for international family planning.

Funding for the current year (FY2012) is set at \$610 million, but Congress will soon begin work on a budget for FY2013, which begins October 1, 2012. For several years now, the International Family Planning Coalition has asked Congress to boost the current level of support to \$1 billion. Without such a boost, tens of millions of women in the developing world will continue to lack access to the contraceptives they need to prevent unwanted pregnancies.

On the international scene, world leaders will meet in Rio de Janeiro this coming June for a UN-sponsored Conference on Sustainable Development.

Coming 20 years after the historic Rio Earth Summit, "Rio+20," as it is often caused, will give world leaders an opportunity to chart a new course for Mother Earth. U.S. and other delegates to the upcoming conference need to make a firm and renewed commitment to global sustainability.

If you care about the future of the world, it's time to "send a message" to Rio. Tell your representatives in Congress that the U.S. needs to take a leadership role in promoting a sustainable world.

If the international community is going to achieve the U.N.'s goal of universal access to contraceptives and reproductive health care by 2015, the United States and other donor nations must do their part. Tell your representatives in Congress that the U.S. must boost its support for family planning, not cut it.

***Current Issues Around Population Courtesy of: The Population Institute***



# Population Facts

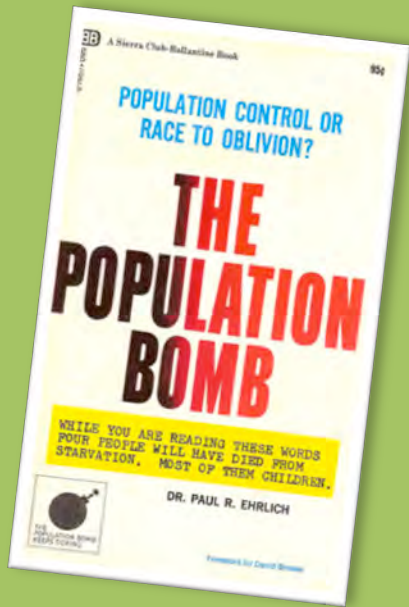
We have compiled the following selection of facts and talking points to assist you in leading a discussion group about the film. Feel free to use them when helping organize and promote your screening event.

- If the international community is going to achieve the U.N.'s goal of universal access to contraceptives and reproductive health care by 2015, the United States and other donor nations must do their part.
- Every \$1 billion spent on family planning meets the contraceptive needs of 60 million women, averting nearly 15 million unintended pregnancies and 4 million unsafe abortions.
- Family planning saves lives, empowers women, fights poverty, combats global hunger, and helps to protect the environment.
- World population will reach an estimated 7 billion before the end of the year, and could reach 10 billion or higher within half a century.
- In order to feed an expanding population, farmers in the developing world will need to double food production over the next 40 years, and they will face numerous obstacles, including rising temperatures, increased risk of drought and flooding, loss of farmland and topsoil, and the escalating costs of fuel and fertilizers.
- Too many young people in the developing world are at risk of acquiring a sexually transmitted disease, including HIV-AIDS. They need sexual education and access to condoms.
- Preventing unwanted pregnancies empowers women, saves lives, fights poverty, combats global hunger and helps to protect the environment.
- Expanding access to contraceptives and reproductive health services is a win-win proposition for women, their families, their communities, and the planet.

- Some analysts argue that if there is a population crisis it is because women are having too few children—a so-called “birth dearth.” A quick look at the demographic reality shows that the era of population growth is far from over—and high fertility rates are still prevalent in many developing countries. The majority of the world’s population lives in countries whose high birthrates all but guarantee population growth for decades to come.
- Projected population growth in least developed countries greatly exceeds projected decline in the more developed regions. Developed countries such as the Russian Federation, Romania, Belarus, Ukraine and Bulgaria are projected to experience the most population decline, decreasing by 24 to 35 percent by 2050. Developing countries such as Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia, and Uganda are all projected to grow by around 200 percent or greater by the year 2050. Niger is projected to grow by almost 275 percent.
- Under the United Nations most commonly cited “medium” demographic projection, population is expected to reach 9.2 billion by 2050—an increase of 2.5 billion people.
- One-half of the world’s population is under the age of 30.
- Rapid population growth, which correlates closely with young populations, can undermine countries’ stability, governance, and economic development. For example, 86 percent of all civil conflicts from 1970-1999 occurred in very youthful countries.
- Widely spaced births and smaller family size allows families and governments to invest more in each child—helping to ensure access to education and health care. Over time, this raises household and government savings, improves productivity, and stimulates economic growth.
- Planned families and spaced births are healthier for women and their children. Access to family planning services could prevent nearly a third of the 500,000 annual maternal deaths related to pregnancy in developing countries. Poor reproductive health conditions account for one-third of the disease burden among women of reproductive age worldwide.
- While the world population continues to grow by 79 million people annually, 215 million women in developing countries seek to postpone childbearing, space births, or stop having children, but are not using a modern method of contraception. One-third or more of married women in Ethiopia, Haiti, Yemen and Uganda have this “unmet need.”
- The demand for family planning services will grow by an estimated 40 percent by 2050 as a record number of young people reach reproductive age.

*Facts courtesy of: Population Action International and The Population Institute.*

# The Population Bomb



*The Population Bomb* was a best-selling book written by Paul R. Ehrlich and his wife, Anne Ehrlich (who was uncredited), in 1968.[1] It warned of the mass starvation of humans in the 1970s and 1980s due to overpopulation, as well as other major societal upheavals, and advocated immediate action to limit population growth. Fears of a "population explosion" were widespread in the 1950s and 60s, but the book and its charismatic author brought the idea to an even wider audience.[2][3] The book has been criticized in recent decades for its alarmist tone and inaccurate predictions. The Ehrlichs stand by the basic ideas in the book, stating in 2009 that "perhaps the most serious flaw in *The Bomb* was that it was much too optimistic about the future" and believe that it achieved their goals because "it alerted people to the importance of environmental issues and brought human numbers into the debate on the human future." [1]

*The Population Bomb Writings Courtesy of: Wikipedia*

[WWW.MOTHERTHEFILM.COM](http://WWW.MOTHERTHEFILM.COM)

[INFO@TIROIRAFILMS.NET](mailto:INFO@TIROIRAFILMS.NET)

## How You Can Help To Spread the Word

- Donate to Population Media Center or Population Institute ask that funds go to help promote Mother to schools across the country and the world.
- Reach out to your contacts in the media and ask them to watch Mother.
- Contact your local film festival and ask that Mother be screened there.
- "Like" Mother on Facebook.
- Get together with other groups and organize a screening of Mother on your college campus.