

## FREQUENT DEBATES

**Perception:** Population growth is the problem.

**Questions raised:** "Why look at consumption? What about population? Isn't that the real problem?"

**Response talking points:**

- Population is one factor in the global EF, along with consumption and the type and environment impacts of technology.
- Consumption is critical because 1 person living at a US lifestyle of 9.57 hectares has a footprint 4.35 times bigger than someone living at the level of the average 2.2 hectares .
- Reducing our EF is not about abandoning all cars and electricity. It's about considering *how we can live well with a smaller impact*. For example, walking more might not only be good for the EF, but be good for our health as well. Connections like this help us understand the relationship between our own well-being and that of the planet.
- Finally, a more equitable distribution of resources worldwide would provide better access to education and health care for women in the 'developing' world. This is the most effective way to reduce population growth rates.

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**Perception:** US is the model for the world; They should be like us.

**Questions raised:** "The US lifestyle is a model for developing countries; they're trying to get what we have. Hasn't all our technology made life better? People are living longer than ever."

**Response talking points:**

- We have the opportunity, now that we've seen the results of developing economies around the use of fossil fuels and other non-renewable resources, to help developing nations build strong economics based on sustainable use of renewable resources.
- Health care and nutritional advances have increased life expectancies over the past century. Diseases of affluence (obesity, heart disease, diabetes) are on the rise around the world, in part because of the increased consumption of convenience and processed foods in 'developing' countries. Real advances in quality of life would involve not only living longer, but also healthier.
- Meanwhile, 800 million people are malnourished and tens of thousands of people die from preventable causes such as malaria and water-borne diseases. According to the UN, the cost of providing clean water and sanitation is estimated to be \$2 billion, yet world military expenditures exceed \$900 billion per year. Similarly, the US and Europe spend \$17 billion on pet food each year, while the annual cost of providing basic health care and nutrition for everyone is \$13 billion.

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**Issue:** Equity: "We have it all; who are we to say they shouldn't?"

**Questions raised:** "The US and the developed world has all the conveniences--cars, air conditioning, etc. Isn't it a bit arrogant for us in rich nations to suggest to developing countries that they not develop along the same lines?"

**Response talking points:**

- First, it's important to distinguish between 'development' (an improvement in the **quality** of life) and 'growth' (an increase in quantity of economic output). Although the words are often used interchangeably, in reality, growth and development do not always go hand in hand. For example, a holistic look at environment and social indicators shows that since the 1980s, overall quality in these areas has decreased even as economic growth as increased. Thus, 'more' is not always better.
- Given that, the real question is, *How can all countries make real, qualitative improvements in ways that don't contribute to environmental overshoot?*
- The countries with the largest per capita footprints have a leadership responsibility in this regard. They can use their technological, economic, and political power to promote real development in environmentally sustainable ways. Energy and the impacts of fossil fuels is a critical example. Countries such as the US could support a rapidly-growing country such as China to 'leapfrog' over fossil fuels and transition to renewable energy.

