

And here are some bigger ideas:

3. Limit the number of children in families?

This is a good topic for discussion! Should families around the world only be allowed by law to have one or two babies rather than 3 or 4? Would this be fair? It would certainly slow down the increase in population.



But imagine if people only had one baby and the parents and grandparents all lived a long time – there wouldn't be enough younger people growing up to be nurses, doctors, bus drivers, shop keepers and politicians to help them when they are older!

China's one-child policy: In 1979 China brought in a law which said that couples living in the cities were only allowed to have one child. Whilst the population is now 250 million less than it would have been had the policy not been introduced, it has been very controversial and caused many problems.

Perhaps it is better (and easier) to reduce our consumption than it is to reduce the number of people.

Consider this:

If a woman in rural Ethiopia (a poor African country) has 10 children and they all survive (unlikely), if they each went on to have 10 children of their own, the entire family of 100 would produce less carbon dioxide during their lives than you or I on our own!

4. Provide energy from renewable sources

The manufacture, transportation and use of both luxury and essential items require the use of lots of energy. Using non-renewable forms of energy causes air pollution and uses up oil faster than it is formed. If most or all of our energy came from renewable sources instead - such as hydrogen or wind power - then impact on the planet would be much reduced.



(For more information on Alternative Energy, see Conservation Education issue 19).

5. Improve technology for food production – GM food.

Ideally we need to provide more food from the farmland that exists already. This way habitats don't get destroyed and more hungry mouths can be fed.

Some crops have already been bred to provide more food in the same spaces. These crops are called Genetically Modified (GM) crops and they have been artificially, genetically altered. For example, some are more resistant to disease and drought and some have been altered to produce more grain per stalk.

Not everyone agrees with GM crops. Some people are worried about the knock-on effect of introducing manipulated plants to natural ecosystems. Several countries already grow GM crops but it has yet to be seen if they will help to reduce world hunger.



Conclusion:

Rapid world population growth and increased consumption is causing problems. The challenge is to achieve '*sustainable development*' where everyone can have a decent standard of living without damaging the planet.

Hmmm.... Not an easy problem to solve!

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And Finally..... The Good News

Yes there is some! Some scientists predict that the world population will peak at 9 billion in around 2060 and then start to fall, with a drop to 8.5 billion by 2100. Phew! But will it be too late by then? It is unlikely that many of you reading this will be around then – but it will all be happening in your lifetime. So you can help provide a healthier planet for your children and grandchildren by doing your bit to reduce your carbon footprint now!

Useful websites:

www.peopleandplanet.net

www.100people.org

www.panda.org

www.globalissues.org