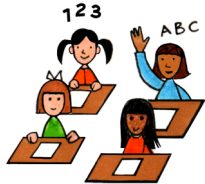


## Solutions

Aldous Huxley once said 'Facts do not cease to exist because they are ignored'. Let's face it, the issue of overpopulation won't go away by ignoring it, or crossing our fingers and hoping for the best. It needs to be tackled immediately. How can this be done?



Education appears to be the answer. Dr Albert A. Bartlett says people must first be educated to realise that our current rate of population

growth and consumption of resources is not sustainable. Educating girls also seems to have promising results and appears to lead to smaller families. Economist, Gene Sperling, stated in a study of 72 countries 'The expansion of female secondary education may be the single best lever for achieving substantial reductions in fertility'.



Providing people with access to family planning services can also reduce the population. 201 million couples currently don't

have access to the services they need to reduce the size of their families. The United Nations predicted that if they did have access to the required family planning services then 52 million unwanted pregnancies, 22 million induced abortions and 1.4 million infant deaths could have been avoided.

Could technological advancements save us?

After all, some technology optimists have talked about colonising the moon and other planets to



create more space for us here on Earth! Unfortunately, this technology isn't available to us right now and we have run out of time. We need to

carefully examine the allegations made by

technology optimists who assure us that science and technology will always be able to solve all of our problems.

## Population Success Story

I have worked at several religious schools that speak of children being a 'gift from god'. Subsequently, the average family will comprise of five or more children at these schools. Religion aside, if you talk to your average person about the one child policy in China they will express outrage. 'How dare they take away the human right to give birth! That is just inhumane' they may say. The Australian government even provides a \$4,000 incentive for women to give birth! One can start to see how emotionally charged and difficult tackling the population issue can be. Trying to decrease the population is a huge challenge that can seem impossible at times.

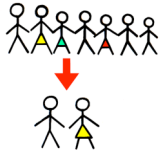
Reducing the population to ensure a sustainable planet can however be successfully and humanely achieved. Iran is living proof of this. Lester R. Brown in his book *Plan B 2.0* discusses how Iran dramatically dropped its population growth rate from being one of the world's fastest to one of the lowest in the developing world. In 1967 the Shah had put in place family planning programs but when Ayatollah Khomeini assumed power in 1979 these programs were quickly dismantled. Khomeini began advocating for larger families to increase soldiers for Islam (with the goal of having 20 million). The result was Iran's population growth rate reached its peak in the 1980's and this started to have a negative impact on the environment, economy and unemployment.



Leaders also started to wake up to these problems and the overcrowding in Iran. In 1989 the government restored the family planning program, in 1993 a national family planning

law was passed and Iran broadcasting was made responsible for raising awareness of population issues as well as the availability of family planning services. Religious leaders also got involved in promoting smaller families. Contraceptives were made free of charge. Couples were required to take a class on modern contraception before receiving a marriage licence. Iran also started an effort to educate women. Female literacy rose from 25% in 1970 to more than 70% in 2000.

Countries everywhere have little choice but to aim for an average of two children per couple. The earth simply cannot support any more than this. If we are serious about doing something about climate change, we need to tackle the big issue of exponential population growth. If we choose to ignore it, our actions will be equivalent to crossing our fingers and hoping for the best (business as usual).



The result of all of this was a typical Iran family dropped its size from 7 children to less than 3. Between 1987 and 1994 Iran cut its population growth rate by half. The

important thing to note here is that if a country based on a tradition of Islamic fundamentalism can do this, then any other country can do it too.

