

## **WORLD POPULATION DAY – 11 JULY**

The United Nations World Population Day is observed annually on the 11<sup>th</sup> July and aims to increase people's awareness on various population issues such as the importance of family planning, including gender equality, poverty, maternal health and human rights. This event is also a vehicle to build an awareness of population numbers and the impact they have on development and the environment which is especially relevant in this the Year of Biodiversity.

The population worldwide stands at 6.5 billion and South Africa's population exceeds 47 million. The majority of the HIV AIDS deaths in South Africa are people in the economically active category. There will be fewer income earners, skilled adults and increased socio-economic vulnerability and more people forced to survive below the bread line. Poverty increases dependence on natural resources to meet subsistence needs.

Non renewable resources, from mining activities become depleted at an ever-increasing rate and sustainable resources are often abused to satisfy short term needs and wants. The amount of non renewable energy consumed is finite and the amount of waste and pollution associated with the generation of energy increases each year. In spite of our superior intelligence, nature's law of carrying capacity applies to us as much as any other animal and plant on this planet. With the continuous improvement of modern technology we are able to produce more from fewer resources but for how long will this be possible? The progress of agriculture, mining extraction techniques, medical technology, means of travel, are all very impressive and most of us are indeed thankful for it.

Fortunately today there are many environmental and other pressure groups, each focused on one or another specific problem. Ironically, most or all of these are doomed to fail in their mission because they are treating symptoms and not the real cause. Can you think of any environmental problem that is not inextricably linked to our very high population - habitat destruction, invasive alien species, water shortage, soil erosion, pollution, food shortages and the destruction of the ozone layer?

How does one ensure improved health, education, housing, employment and financial security for each person? Sustainable living is possible if human numbers and the demand for resources are kept within the earth's carrying capacity.

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