

# Preserving Our Global Environment

## Discussion Questions

### POPULATION QUESTIONS

1. In the population section of the video, there is an exchange between two American Assembly participants about the best way to slow population growth. One supports boosting economic development, which would raise standards of living, decrease deaths among children, and increase education for women. The other supports the more direct approach by increasing family planning services. If you were minister of population policy in Zimbabwe, what would you propose?
2. Two new U.S. presidents have been elected since the video was made. How has U.S. family-planning policy toward the developing world changed as a result?

What do you think the U.S. policy *should* be?

3. What factors do the women of Zimbabwe take into account when they decide how many children to have?

Do North American women use other criteria?

How does population growth affect the environment in Zimbabwe?

In what ways does population growth in North America affect the environment?

Does North America have population problems? (expansion of urban areas, not enough resources, teenage pregnancy)

### BIODIVERSITY QUESTIONS

1. What uses and functions do forests provide?

Which of these provide economic benefits?

Which uses can be sustained in the long run?

Which uses give local people an economic incentive to take good care of the resource?

What incentives do the Kuna Indians have to sustainably use their forests?

How do the values the Kunas place on their forests compare to your own values?

2. Since so many species have not yet been identified by scientists, why should we be concerned about preserving them all?

How might the loss of biodiversity affect your life?

3. If you were no longer allowed to enter your local outdoor recreational area because of new laws designed to protect an endangered species, how would you react?

If you lived in a developing country and you depended on your local forest for food, water, and fuel, would your views change?

Why are settlers moving onto Kuna land?

From where are they coming?

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### BIODIVERSITY QUESTIONS...CONT.

4. Who should reap the profits from a new medicine made from a tropical plant? Should it be the local indigenous group who showed the plant to the pharmaceutical researcher? Should it be the country where the plant was found (what if it exists in several countries?)? Should the pharmaceutical company get all the economic benefits because it developed the plant into a medicine that could be widely used?

Should national governments charge pharmaceutical companies a fee to “prospect” on their land?

5. How are conflicts between protecting an endangered species and economic growth in North America resolved?

What laws are in place to protect biodiversity?

Can you think of any recent examples of conflicts between conserving biodiversity and economic growth?

6. How do the issues in the population portion of the video relate to the section on biodiversity?

What role does economics play in the decisionmaking of individuals in each case?

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### CLIMATE CHANGE QUESTIONS

1. If you were a member of Congress, would you wait for more scientific evidence before taking action on global warming? Or would you take action based on available information?

What would you do if you were president of a major car company?

2. This video strongly promotes using economic incentives, such as higher gasoline prices, to limit carbon dioxide emissions. How would higher gas prices affect your driving habits and those of your family?

How would it affect the poor?

Is it fair to people living in areas of the country that have more open space and little mass transit?

What other options would you suggest?

3. How can we have both energy efficiency and economic growth? Hisakazu Kato, from the Japanese Environment Agency, sees the possibility of global climate change as an economic opportunity. How do you think U.S. companies and individuals will react to the possibility of climate change?

4. How will population growth in the developing world affect climate change?

How will climate change affect biodiversity?

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### GENERAL QUESTIONS

1. The video begins by comparing the past national security threats of the Cold War to the emerging national security threats of global environmental problems. In what ways can global environmental problems threaten national security?

What are the possible implications of population growth, deforestation, biodiversity loss, and climate change in your life?

2. Economic growth and environmental protection are often portrayed as conflicting goals. What are the current economic costs of environmental degradation and what are the future costs likely to be?

If we were to adjust the way we measure economic growth to include the environmental costs, what types of costs should we consider? How might those changes affect the way we use natural resources?

3. If responding to global environmental issues will require international cooperation, what should industrialized countries do to contribute?

What role should developing countries play?

4. At the end of the video is a quote from Mahatma Gandhi: "Your individual actions may seem futile, but it is crucial that you do them anyway." Why?

What is your role in creating a more sustainable future?