Public Conversations Project
Family Institute of Cambridge

Laura Chasin, M.S.W.,
Director
Margaret McCarthy Herzig,
Executive Director

Carol Becker, Ph.D.
Richard Chasin, M.D.
Sallyann Roth, M.S.W.

Institute Address:
51 Kondazian Street
Watertown, MA 02172

Office of the Directors:
Two Appleton Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
(617) 491-1585, 547-5988

09. 17
P 739.
4200

Population, Environment and Women's Health:
An Exploratory Meeting on Tensions and Possibilities

March 19, 1993

003573

Report to Funders

The Ford Foundation
The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation
The Moriah Fund

CONTENTS

1- Desarrollo
2. Poblacion
3. Salud

I. Background and Preparation

A. History

In January of 1993, representatives of the Public Conversations Project were asked to meet with a small group of funders and NGO leaders to discuss whether some of the skills and methods utilized in the Project's dialogue facilitation work, and in the brainstorming retreats that Laura and Richard Chasin have convened over the years, might be productively used in an effort to bring together representatives of NGOs concerned with population, the environment and women's health. The goal of this effort would be to help people in these networks to consider whether their current working relationships embody significant obstacles to a productive planning process for the UN Conference on Population and Development and, if so, whether sufficient resources (e.g. motivation, common goals) exist to allow them to work together to overcome such obstacles.

The Public Conversations Project proposed and received funding for a single one-day exploratory meeting. The participant group was limited to fifteen people, evenly balanced with regard to the three (somewhat loosely defined) networks: population, women's health and the environment. In order to promote a safe atmosphere for wide ranging discussion of inter-network and intra-network strains, it was agreed that funders would not be present at the meeting, that they would not receive information about who declined to participate, and that the report they received would not link particular ideas with particular participants.

B. Phone Interviews and Warm-up Materials

In order to prepare our team to design and facilitate the meeting, the Project Director, Laura Chasin conducted two rounds of telephone interviews. First, she interviewed some funders and others who were not themselves potential participants in the meeting, but who were willing to consult with us about our planning process. She then conducted interviews with potential participants, most of whom accepted our invitation. Those who did not accept the invitation cited scheduling problems and agreed to be interviewed about the concerns and perspectives they would have brought to the meeting had they been able to attend.

Those who expressed interest in attending the meeting received a letter of invitation outlining the goals, structure, and probable groundrules of the meeting, and communicating our hopes about the nature of the event (e.g., that it would be an off-the-record dialogue among individuals without formal presentations or debate). A table distinguishing dialogue from debate was enclosed with the invitation. A sample of the invitation and the table appears as Appendix A.

Shortly before the meeting, we sent participants a set of warm up materials which included: 1) a participant list; 2) CVs of participants; 3) specific proposals

on groundrules and guidelines; 4) a worksheet listing the "strains and challenges" cited in the full set of telephone interviews; 5) a second worksheet listing the "desired outcomes" of the meeting that were mentioned in the interviews; 6) a worksheet inviting reflection on the qualities of meetings that work and don't work; and 7) a cover letter orienting participants to the enclosures and asking them to consider what they might like to say about themselves that would help others understand their commitment to the issues they would address at the meeting. A sample of the warm-up packet appears as Appendix B.

II. An Overview of the Meeting

A. Agreements and Guidelines

After Laura Chasin made some welcoming and orienting remarks, the facilitation team proposed and got agreement on a tentative agenda and schedule for the meeting, on groundrules (pertaining to confidentiality, right to "pass," no interrupting, etc.) and on guidelines for productive discussion (asking questions arising from genuine curiosity, sharing the floor, using respectful language, etc.). Proposed groundrules and guidelines were quickly agreed upon. Participants had had a chance to review them, as they were included in the warm-up packets.

B. Introductory Go-Round

Participants were asked to share something about themselves that might help others understand their commitment to the issues they care about. Several people spoke in a very personal way about critical moments in their lives including:

- "underdog" experiences of various kinds,
- the civil rights movement,
- the women's movement,
- world travel at an especially impressionable age,
- frightening experiences with illegal abortion,
- direct or empathic experience of the limitation of choices in conditions of poverty, and
- positive and negative family models regarding values related to feminism and the environment.

Some participants included in their opening statements expressions of concern that would resurface in later discussions. Three recurring themes that surfaced at this early point in the meeting pertained to:

- ways in which population is (or is not *only*) a "women's issue,"
- frustration felt by some women about inadequate attention to women's needs and perspectives in population programs,

- the responsibility of policy makers and activists to exercise care when entering into the decisions of others about sexuality and reproduction, and
- more generally, the need to remember always that policy affects "real lives," i.e., it is "not just words."

C. Hopes for the Meeting

The facilitators asked the participants each say something about their hopes for the meeting. One person offered as a hope for the meeting that "we can be as honest about the issues as we have been about ourselves." Many spoke about improving relationships among the organizations and having a chance to reflect on their own visions and roles. Some participants hoped to:

- develop trust,
- bridge chasms and form alliances,
- offer and receive validation of others' perspectives through understanding roots in their experience,
- determine whether tensions reflect value differences or tactical differences,
- find ways to understand similarities *and* respect differences,
- "have a civil conversation,"
- find "common ground," and,
- "export any plan that emerges."

D. Reflections on Meetings

Participants were reminded of the worksheet they had received asking them to reflect on the qualities of successful and unsuccessful meetings and were asked if they had thoughts about this to share "popcorn" style (i.e., not in a go-round). The main ideas expressed are reflected in the following table:

SUCCESSFUL MEETINGS	UNSUCCESSFUL MEETINGS
• Careful planning and recruitment of participants	• Not enough research about who should be there and what conflicts may arise
• Realistic hopes and agenda	• Expectations too great
• Focal points that are concrete enough to make agreement possible	• Abstract topics
• Participants strive to move beyond their victimization experiences to empowerment	• Participants are stuck in their experiences of victimization
• Participants speak for themselves and exercise caution when making assumptions about others for whom they speak or who will be affected by their actions	• Participants speak for others without adequately understanding and acknowledging differences among those for whom they speak

1. Process

The facilitators asked the participants to identify the strains that have been most vexing and challenging to them personally and to have a discussion among themselves about those strains. Participants were asked to speak succinctly (with recognition that they had heard many of each other's "arguments" before) and to limit their responses to each other to questions that fostered clarity and questions that arose from genuine curiosity. As participants spoke, the recorder listed the strains on newsprint.

During the last half hour of the morning session, participants were asked to identify one or more "top themes" for further discussion. It was suggested by the facilitators that the top themes be discussed at four separate lunch tables. After a discussion of various possibilities, the group decided to stay together and seek to clarify similarities and differences among their central goals and visions. Several participants reasoned that the groups and networks could not address questions about whether or not they could or should work more closely until they knew the extent to which their visions were compatible and what they each meant by "population."

During lunch, representatives of each of the three networks spoke about their "vision" while representatives of the other two networks listened.

After lunch, a less structured discussion continued the process of identifying and discussing areas of tension and possibility.

2. Themes

The following themes arose during the late morning, lunch, and early afternoon sessions of the meeting.

> 1) Some people urged that the policy making process be more closely connected to the people whose lives it affects. This has implications for getting more people at the table and for empowering people in local communities to make their needs known, to develop solutions, etc.

> 2) It was suggested that some women's health advocates and minority groups are likely to need validation of past abuses in population programs before they can move from a "victim" position to participate in a constructive discussion about population. They want "concrete evidence" that their concerns are taken seriously. (Some are afraid to say that population is a problem.)

> 3) Some of those whose primary focus has been on population feel under-appreciated for the work they've done on issues of central importance to women's health advocates.

4) Some feminists said that they care deeply about whether women are seen as a "means" or an "end" in population policy. Some participants expressed a desire to discuss in depth ways in which either view alters policy on a philosophical and pragmatic level.

5) It was noted that complicated and difficult power relations exist not only among the networks but between them and Congress. One participant said that a "huge gap" exists between what is needed to address root causes of the problems on all the agendas -- problems of poverty, injustice, and equity -- and what is politically achievable. It was noted that the Clinton administration offers all of the networks more opportunities to "do something real."

6) It was noted that the entry of environmentalists as a strong force threatens to bring discussions about population and family planning to the public sphere whether or not the population and women's groups are ready. A tension was noted between the desire to keep these discussions in small policy circles, where "understandings" have developed over the years (e.g., We're not selling out abortion), and bringing it to the public sphere where consciousness-raising may occur and more voices will be brought to the table, but where insensitivities and simplistic explanations may prevail (e.g., that the Third World or women are to blame for over-population).

7) In discussions about strains among the networks, attention was called to inequalities in power. Concern was expressed about one network "co-opting" the other.

8) Environmentalists are viewed by some as the "gorilla at the table": inadequately informed (needing to "reinvent the wheel"), driving the public policy process, and in the eyes of some women's health advocates, too likely to support population programs without adequate concern for women. One environmentalist noted that environmentalists have a history of success with programs involving compulsory behavior.

9) It was noted that the environmental movement has changed significantly over the past decade; it is no longer interested only in "wild places," but also in public health and justice. It was specifically noted that the environmental justice movement is gaining strength and it is not "rushing" to get involved with population.

10) It was suggested that women of color are likely to think of the environment as including people. It was also suggested that "women of color" is a phrase that suggests much more homogeneity than should be assumed.

11) Different opinions were expressed about the relationship between a) reproductive freedom and access to services; and b) population stabilization. Some people felt that the former is likely to take care of the latter.

12) It was argued that sustainability is an inherently interdisciplinary issue which does not lend itself to either/or propositions: many factors are involved (e.g., consumption, equity, deforestation, living standards, dependence on coal, population growth rates); some simplistic analyses are offered but they do not represent the environmental movement as a whole.

13) Some people speculated that "friends" are more likely to be enemies now that Republicans and the Right to Life movement are less powerful.

14) It was suggested that each of the networks should be thinking about how they will respond to fundamentalism, which will be a factor in Cairo.

15) Several people indicated that a prerequisite to exploring linkages among networks is clarification of concepts, goals, and vision. It was apparent that words like "population," "environment," and "family planning" had different meanings to different people. Some participants indicated that some of these terms needed to be deconstructed or "unpacked" before a productive discussion could take place. For example, what definition of "population" makes it a woman's issue or a women's and men's issue?

16) Regarding Cairo, there was an interest in avoiding the kind of polarization that happened in Rio. It was noted that not all women's organizations have the same values and goals.

17) It was suggested that those who take leadership positions in all of the networks take it upon themselves as leaders to try to prevent conflicts among themselves by staying in communication and offering each other constructive criticism about words and actions that create or exacerbate tensions.

F. Ideas about Next Steps

The following proposals were made for next steps:

1) Move beyond old history and figure out "how to get family planning right." It was recommended that this discussion begin with women's health groups and population groups and involve environmentalists later, before the public education phase. Family planning service providers should be included from the start. The discussion should address performance indicators. This project could serve as an opportunity to "operationalize commitment to women's issues."

2) Get 6 or 7 people to sit down with the various policy papers that have been drafted in recent months and hammer out differences. For example, figure out how to deal with the issue of targets, and develop an understanding of what works for whom and why.

3) Develop some consensus about what we know about fertility.

4) Discuss sustainable development in anticipation of Cairo.

5) Attempt to close the gap between vision and political achievability: Develop strategies for bringing the issues to the public.

6) Form an interdisciplinary group to assess what we know about the relationships among: population, consumption, technology, development, quality of life, etc.

7) Bring together a group or groups like this for longer periods of time and for a series of meetings so that trust can build and complicated issues can be addressed.

8) Figure out how to address fundamentalism.

III. Follow-up with Participants

Within about three weeks after the meeting, we had follow-up telephone interviews with most of the participants. From these calls, which usually lasted about forty-five minutes, we learned what participants most appreciated or found problematic about the meeting, and what topics and ideas were on participants' minds as they reflected on the experience. The comments listed below were made in follow-up calls. They are paraphrased or summarized to be succinct and to preserve anonymity.

Comments highlighting appreciation for the process of the meeting and the new learning that occurred

I was impressed with the level of openness in the introductory go-round.

I was encouraged that people were trying to understand each other. People who I felt were inflexible bent a lot.

The personal sharing put people's views in a larger context and helped us understand the depth of the other's views.

I had a theoretical grounding in the conflict between women's health advocates and population groups, but now I have a deeper understanding.

I was moved when people spoke about their personal lives. People often debate abstractly. I was struck by the lives lived at the root of the political positions.

It was interesting to see how people misunderstood each other's meanings.

The mix of people and the high level of engagement made it interesting, full, and productive.

People were more respectful than usual. It was possible to be heard without people jumping all over you. Often people speak to speak. Here people were trying to communicate.

I was impressed by how hard [two participants] tried to understand each other.

To build coalitions you need to understand organizational dynamics, and the meeting helped me to understand the dynamics better.

I have new hope for connection between [my network and another] based on a new understanding that [the other network] is not "a monolith."

I became aware of linkages between international and domestic issues related to family planning.

I appreciated starting with a personal focus. I saw some colleagues (not all) differently.

This was a chance to talk in a less contentious way. Ties could be formed so that relationships can be improved.

Usually people feel they have to talk efficiently, so they don't listen. This was different.

The personal sharing allowed people to gain appreciation of each other. If we meet again, I won't be as dismissive as I might have been.

It was useful to hear about fears.

I was initially skeptical about the time devoted to process, but I learned that it was worth it. It allowed a diverse group to start a discussion.

I think we learned that our differences are not as great as we thought and our own particular "snapshot" is not the only one that exists.

People revealed more than I expected; it was a safe atmosphere.

I found that I could [give up an assertion I normally make] and frame the issue [in a more complex way].

I got insight into what motivates other people.

It was valuable, satisfying, and stimulated some new thoughts.

I experienced a diversity of opinions in groups I normally lump together.

I came to appreciate how little we discuss fundamental issues and how often we operate on assumptions about what other people are thinking.

It was an opportunity to reflect. We don't do enough of this. We think we are supposed to provide answers rather than frame questions. So much time is spent in competition. I don't know the implications of the meeting for my organization, but it was an opportunity to work on myself.

I was excited by the idea that we might work together on the nuts and bolts of family planning.

It was more pleasant than I expected. It was honest, yet civil.

Comments on aspects of the meeting that were most problematic or limiting

The outcomes/goals were not as clear as they could have been.

Time spent on process led to a sacrifice of detail. I wish we had gotten down to specifics.

There was a lot of politeness, but I don't think collaboration is possible.

There was too much list-making and too little dialogue.

About 50% of what I heard was "old stuff."

It was frustrating to have the "means/ends" discussion interrupted.

I hoped for more concrete outcomes.

Apart from the personal sharing and a couple of specific interactions, there was no new information.

The facilitators could have been more active and inserted more questions.

Things were left hanging that I hoped to get resolution about.

The process was more respectful but the ideas were the same.

It was frustrating not to follow through on interesting points.

We needed more time to move forward. People reverted back to old ways.

It was discouraging to see rigidity and purity in this context.

The lunch conversation seemed disorganized. I didn't like having formal conversation over lunch.

I would have liked to go deeper when a difference came up. We went wider rather than deeper.

I would have liked more discussion of ends and means and more exploration of the barriers among us. Do different choices about what is primary or secondary need to create walls among us?

We should have met outside of Washington.

We needed more time for depth, more breathing space for conversations, more chances to follow up on points that were made.

It was frustrating. With all of our history, we need a series of meetings, like once a month over a period of six months.

There wasn't enough time for constructive socializing and networking. A weekend would have been better.

Interesting questions were raised, but not discussed.

I would have preferred a smaller group.

I'm an introvert. Meeting all day is difficult. I need time to process.

Comments addressing the question: What, if anything, ought to happen next?

We need to find a way to help people who have been critiquing past and present programs to take responsibility for shaping new designs.

We need to continue sharing our personal reasons for doing what we do. It's a passion, not a job.

In future meetings we should do something new, like have the facilitators act like they're Tim Wirth, asking the participants to design a successor agency to AID.

We need to address such knotty issues as fundamentalism, migration, and immigration.

We should meet to discuss how to "get family planning right."

We should discuss the costs of "litmus tests," e.g., regarding abortion, and try to work out ways to share broad goals and work on different things.

A smaller group discussion should take place about areas of disagreement.

We should work on communication strategy to influence public opinion.

We should work on ways to take advantage of Tim Wirth's interest in input from people like us.

We should try to document abuses in the past and present. We need to get the facts on the table so that what has happened and is happening can be acknowledged and corrected, and future abuses can be prevented.

In a follow-up letter to participants (see Appendix C) we shared with them some of our thoughts and questions and a draft of this report.

IV. Our Reflections on the Process

The time and attention we paid to the process of inviting participants, interviewing them, and preparing "warm-up" materials for them enriched the process in many ways. The pre-meeting interviews with each participant educated us about the strains and the possibilities in the relationships among the three networks. The materials we developed shared the highlights of the interviews with everyone and allowed the meeting to begin with a collective sense of the range and substance of the issues to be discussed.

- finding a way to manage our conflicts so that they do not damage family planning, women or the environment
- agreeing to reduce or omit actions that create confusion in the policy making process and/or play into the hands of the opponents of goals on which all would agree
- agreeing about a code of behavior (e.g. to stop negative mind-reading or accusing others of operating from bad motives, using certain arguments)
- slowing down the speed with which people throw each other into negative boxes
- agreeing not to ignore issues of race, class, women's status/male dominance
- committing to include more minority players at the table
- agreeing to deal with the fear and polarization that exist
- agreeing to let new ideas come onto the population agenda
- agreeing to develop a less compartmentalized, more holistic approach to population
- developing a new vocabulary that is free of the specters of the past and fears of the future
- discriminating between "population" as a concern and "population control"
- making the needs of women a part of every issue and discussion rather than a separate and isolated topic
- developing a clearer understanding of who our adversaries really are
- agreeing to define the target audience as the assembled governments rather than as a particular constituency
- beginning to support each other's efforts, to mutually value and build on each other's expertise
- recognizing that we need each other

A WARM-UP QUESTION

In the light of all that has happened since you received our invitation and learned who the other participants are and, keeping in mind how this meeting is set up differently from others you have attended, what now are your hopes and desired outcomes for our meeting? What could happen that would make you feel it had been worth your while to come?

DESIRED OUTCOMES, WISHES AND HOPES FOR THIS MEETING
(Compiled from recent phone conversations)

• having a chance to "reflect" rather than "present"
• finding a framework for an intelligent conversation
• having a chance to be heard
• increasing my understanding of "where people are coming from" and what they are trying to accomplish
• understanding the emotional currents that were stirred by Rio
• learning how people think and envision above and beyond their institutional position
• learning about other people's perceptions of our situation
• learning about others' views about ancillary issues like migration and development
• developing a better understanding of differences and sufficient respect for differences to drop the tussle about being right and wrong
• developing respect for those with whom we disagree
• having an honest exchange that does not gloss over important differences
• addressing the underlying fears attached to the practical implications of different policy positions
• increasing understanding of differences and commonalities among the advocates in all three networks, of what is held is common and what is outside "the circle of commonality"
• learning if there is sufficient agreement to transcend disagreements or if the areas of disagreement are so great that the overlap of interests is not enough to allow us to move forward together
• finding "some connecting threads of understanding"
• finding common ground
• taking a step in the direction of developing common policy priorities
• identifying areas where people can work together
• agreeing to put aside differences about rationales and work together for increased allocation of resources to family planning, female literacy and other empowering programs
• joining forces about issues of choice
• finding a way to work among ourselves so we can be more credible abroad
• developing a more positive and cooperative approach to policy and programs among the Cairo-involved NGOs
• developing an agreement in principle to try to develop some kind of consensus statement on international population policies that could be circulated to governments and presented at Cairo
• arrival at Cairo with a common agenda to lobby the governments there to increase allocations for both family planning and programs that benefit women
• figuring out what kind of agreements need to be reached in advance of Cairo and what needs to happen to reach such agreements
• finding ways to coordinate our actions where consensus of views is not possible

The invitation fully described the kind of event participants were being invited to and what would be expected of them. We explained that we would design and facilitate the meeting to create a safe environment for participants to speak with a full voice and listen respectfully. We alerted participants that the meeting was not designed for debate or persuasion. We believe that this orientation to the nature of the meeting contributed significantly to the participants' readiness for the first go-round which many participants said was the highlight of the day. In follow-up calls several participants mentioned the personal sharing in the opening go-round as enabling of new conversations and relationships. Some commented that as the day progressed, however, a fair number of "old conversations" resurfaced and often crowded out the new ones. We have had a number of thoughts as to how "new conversations" might be better supported and sustained in future meetings.

• We would explicitly invite group members to alert us and one another when the conversation took a turn in an "old" direction.

• We would intervene more actively to help the conversation stay "new" and productive. An example of such an intervention at the 3/19 meeting occurred when one participant said that he felt "heard differently from what he means" by another participant. The facilitator asked him to say how he believes he is heard, how it differs from what he means, and how he would like to be heard. In follow-up calls, some participants identified the exchange between these two participants about their language and meanings as particularly new and useful.

• We would more strongly urge participants to work in small groups in the middle of the day. This meeting taught us that if fifteen participants have only one day together for an exploratory meeting, small group work is necessary if depth of discussion on any particular topic is desired.

• At the 3/19 meeting, we agreed to a lunch task that required the presence of the facilitators. We did not appreciate until too late that by going along with this we were depriving ourselves of the midstream consultation with one another that we had originally planned. We think that our work in the afternoon suffered from the absence of this consultation. If we were to run another one-day meeting with people who were, for the most part, living in the area, we would try to schedule it to include an afternoon session, an after dinner session, and a morning session. This would include two meals and an overnight break. Such breaks would give participants a chance to interact informally and reflect on what they have learned and they give the facilitation team a chance to design or redesign later sessions of the meeting.

• We learned that, even with all the pre-meeting work we did to encourage a quick start, a one day meeting does not give the facilitators and participants enough time to develop the agenda by "emergent design." Next time we probably would arrive with a proposal for agenda topics which the group could amend to its satisfaction. An alternative would be to have participants fill out cards at the end of the morning session indicating topics they would like to pursue in the afternoon. The facilitators would use the cards to generate a

proposal for the second half of the meeting. This would maintain the spirit of emergent design while empowering the facilitators to develop proposals in an efficient manner.

• We would devise better ways to define our roles in relation to each other so that each person on the facilitation team, in each phase of the meeting, could feel maximally prepared, helpful, empowered and supported.

We look back on the meeting with appreciation for the participants. We were encouraged by the extent to which so many of them were able to share their personal stories, listen openly, communicate honestly, and raise important questions about different meanings. We feel privileged to have worked with them.

SAMPLE COVER LETTER
3/19 Meeting "Warm-up" Materials

March 15, 1993

Dear participant,

I enclose a packet of orientation and warm-up materials for our meeting on Friday, March 19th. I remind you that we will meet at the Carnegie International Center, Eighth Floor, Room A, 2400 N Street, NW. **We will begin promptly at 9am.** Our rooms will be available at 8:30 and we urge you to **arrive early** enough to give yourself plenty of time for greetings, settling in, and having muffins and hot beverages before we start.

The enclosed materials are arriving a few days later than we had hoped. The interviews with each of you were so richly informative that we decided to take the time to compile headlines of some of what we learned from you. This packet contains two inventories covering a range of themes mentioned in the telephone interviews. They are drawn from talks with consultants and with those who are unable to come as well as with those who are coming.

Appended to this letter you should find the following:
- A list of participants
- Proposals on Procedure
- Worksheets
    Worksheet #1: An Inventory of Strains and Challenges
    Worksheet #2: An Inventory of Desired Outcomes
    Worksheet #3: Meetings on This Issue that I Have Attended
- Additional copy of the debate/dialogue table
- Short CVs or bios of most participants

You are strongly encouraged to do the following before you arrive:

1) Make notes on the three worksheets

We may or may not work with them directly during our time together. However, we think that engaging with them will focus your thoughts in a relevant and productive manner and help us get off to a fast start.

2) Familiarize yourself with the Proposals on Procedure

This will expedite group decisions in the opening phase of the meeting.

3) Think of an autobiographical postscript you could add to the materials you (hopefully) sent us to distribute to others. Specifically, what might you say about yourself or your life that would help others to understand your deep commitment to the issues before us? Do you have any central concerns or commitments that don't come through in your bio that might be useful to share with this group?

4) Familiarize yourself with the CVs of short bios of other participants.

As the conveners and facilitators of this meeting, we see its goal as advancing the participants' understanding of how environmental, population and women's health groups can best relate to each other. However, this is *your* meeting. Therefore, if the group wishes to train its energies in a different direction, then we will help you do so. Our task to keep the process moving and productive. We have included a copy of the debate/dialogue table to refresh your memory about the kind of exchange we hope to facilitate.

Until Friday,

Laura Chasin

Proposals on Procedure

A. Basic Groundrules

We regard the right to pass and confidentiality agreements to be essential

1. The right to pass. We all agree to allow any participant who is not ready or willing to answer a question, simply to decline responding to it, with no explanation required.

2. Confidentiality. Although we will follow any set of confidentiality agreements you wish, we recommend the following for an "off-the-record" meeting.

• We are each free to repeat what *we* say here to others who are not here.

• If we refer to what *others* say, we will only do so in a manner that could not allow them to be identified, even by a friend. Specifically, if we refer to remarks made by any other person, we will refer to the author in *generic terms only*. Example: "One participant said..." or, at the most specific, "an environment/population/women's health participant said...". In other words, we will omit names, organizational attachments, and other specifics, including gender, that would allow a speaker to be identified by a knowledgeable listener.

• We agree that in talking about what another participant says here, we will honor the spirit of respectful speaking that we hope will characterize this meeting.

• We agree that if, at the end this meeting, anyone requests that something they said not be repeated at all to anyone , we will honor this request.

B. Additional Guidelines

The following are submitted for your consideration, not as the last word. They have been helpful in dialogues on highly polarized issues. Some of them may be useful in this meeting.

• Agree to refrain from interrupting; listen until the prior speaker is finished.

• Agree to use respectful language.
When describing a perspective other than your own, try use the language of the people who hold that perspective. For example, we asked "pro-life" activists to describe their opponents as "pro-choice," not "pro-abortion." An extension of this effort may be to leave behind conventional terms that carry heavy historic baggage, and seek wording that reflects a fresh view.

• Agree to talk *to* one another, rather *at* each other; avoid preaching, soap boxing and other kind of persuasive speech or debate.

• Agree to avoid unnecessary talk *about* people who are not present or groups that are not represented here.

• Agree to ask questions that come from genuine curiosity; avoid rhetorical questions and questions that are statements in disguise.

• Agree to be succinct and to the point.

• Agree to cooperate with the facilitators to make sure that everyone has an equal opportunity to be heard.

• Agree to make constructive suggestions if you do not like the way the meeting is going.

C. Audiotape Request

We would like to make an audiotape of the meeting so that we do not have to take detailed notes. As family therapists, we routinely videotape our work with clients. Over the years we have developed mechanisms for the safe storage and handling of tapes and strict guidelines for their use. One reason the Public Conversations Project has evolved as effectively as it has is that we have had the opportunity to review videotapes of each dialogue session and to decide in a detailed, word-by word, way how to improve what we do the next time.

We do not think that video tape is necessary in this situation. Since it is possible that we may facilitate additional meetings with members of one or more of the three networks attending, we want to err in the direction of having detailed access to what happens on the 19th. However, we would like to do this in a way that does not inhibit the participation of anyone present.

Therefore, we request that we be allowed to audiotape the meeting with the following understandings:
• That if a participant wants the tape turned off while they make a particular statement it will be turned off.
• That if a participant wants us to erase any section, we will do so.
• That if transcriptions are made false names will be used.
• That the tape and any transcriptions that are made will be for the eyes and ears of Project members and their consultants only. These consultants will not include any funders or activists of any of the networks present.

D. Written Materials About This Meeting

One issue that may come up at the end of the meeting is what written material the group might like to have, such as typed up pages of newsprint, or a short summary that could be revised and amended by participants.

Our only commitment is to prepare a brief written report to our funders. We will be guided by the group's wishes and confidentiality agreement in determining what this report can and cannot include. For example, the group may ask that we prepare a general report that does not indicate who said or did what.

STRAINS AND CHALLENGES

WARM-UP TASK #1A

As you read through this list, we recommend that you check those strains that you have experienced <u>directly</u>. There is space at the end to add any others that are true for you and have been omitted or inadequately named.

INTERACTIVE/SYSTEMIC

_____ Mistrust among all groups and some groups more than others (e.g., reciprocal distrust between population and women's reproductive health groups).

_____ "Communications disconnect."

_____ Tendencies to the tussle about being "right" and "wrong."

_____ "Polemics" that are so strong people find it hard to acknowledge the validity of other positions.

_____ Patterns of blaming others and imputing bad motives to those who have different views.

_____ Fear of violating maxims of "political correctness" which sometimes makes conversations inadvertently superficial and encourages "lip service," distancing, and private complaining.

_____ Habits of preaching, soap boxing, and talking <u>at</u> one another.

_____ Habits of over generalizing which lead to using stereotypes, ascribing guilt by association, and otherwise "rapidly throwing each other into negative boxes."

_____ The doubts of some groups about mainstream population groups and how meaningful changes in their language really are.

_____ Different levels of fear that working toward clearly defined, urgent demographic ends will also encourage the use of means hostile to women or reduce women to means to demographic ends.

_____ Different levels of fear about an impending "population crisis."

_____ Tensions relating to the presence of minority players "at the table" who feel that their participation is not welcome and that they are not heard.

_____ Tensions stemming from the difficulty of teasing apart race and class issues.

_____ Gender based tensions and distrust between male and female players.

_____ Generational tensions.

_____ Conflicts about perspectives and priorities <u>within</u> the same organization.

_____ Conflicts <u>within</u> each of the three networks (e.g., mainstream environmental groups *vs.* the economic justice movement; women who think population growth is a vital concern *vs.* those who do not; the demographically oriented *vs.* the family planning oriented).

_____ Resentment of environmental groups who have "burst onto the scene" and are suddenly speaking on behalf of women while "ignoring women's health groups who have been at it for twenty years."

_____ Habits of dichotomizing that increase polarization (e.g. "You're either for women's reproductive health or you're a "population controller".)

_____ The tendency of debate to polarize, highlight the extremes, and ignore and obscure the shared concerns of those in the middle (e.g. those who view family planning and feminist concerns as compatible.)

_____ Increasing temptations to fight among ourselves now that "the bad guys" are perceived to be gone.

SUBSTANTIVE

_____ Different starting points.

_____ Different knowledge bases.

_____ Disagreements about what the "facts" are.

_____ Different interpretations of the facts.

_____ Different analyses of the role population growth plays in environmental degradation.

_____ Different views of human nature.

_____ Different values.

_____ Disagreements about what the "problems" are. (These disagreements underlie many disagreements about how to "solve" them .)

_____ Broad *versus* narrow definitions of the problem (e.g., a "narrow" approach may define the problem as high fertility and the solution as family planning, while a "broad" approach sees the problem in the context of development, impacts of US policy on gender bias, income distribution, human rights, etc. and sees the solution as empowerment of women).

_____ Different perceptions of what strategies are called for (e.g., top-down *or* grass roots strategies, radical social reconstruction *or* incremental policy change, beginning with a broad vision and moving to specific proposals after building trust *or* moving directly to concrete actions on behalf of shared goals).

_____ Temperamental differences between those who prefer to work towards a well defined goal (and call those who do not "impractical") and those who prefer a more holistic approach (and call those who do not "narrow").

_____ Tensions between ideological and pragmatic approaches.

_____ Tensions stemming from differences between inside-the-beltway and beyond-the-beltway orientations.

_____ Tensions between those who use macro perspectives and those who use micro perspectives.

_____ Skepticism as to whether individual rights are compatible with any macro perspective.

_____ Conflicting images of and preconceptions about developing countries.

_____ Disagreement about what "development" means and/or how it should be measured.

_____ Tensions between those who view population as the heart of the matter and those who see it as a distraction from dealing with consumption.

_____ Tensions between those who are concerned with making reproductive health care part of comprehensive medical care and those who say there is not enough money to do this and we should focus on getting contraceptives to those who want them.

_____ Tensions around if and how much to make abortion rights a central part of the population agenda.

_____ Tensions related to the absence of attention in all three networks to aspects of the North/South conflict about development that do not pertain primarily to women.

_____ Strains related to a reluctance of almost all players to address issues of (im)migration.

_____ Pressures to come up with simple problem definitions and solutions.

_____ Tendencies to focus on one piece of the puzzle and avoid the big picture. Some strains may result from compartmentalized approaches to the problem which make it hard to converse with people from the South who have a more holistic approach.

_____ Unequally distributed understanding of important factors (e.g., actual living conditions of women in developing countries, the history of the last three decades' efforts to develop a population policy, the track record of family planning programs and how they actually operate now, what demography suggests about the relationship of fertility to different variables).

_____ Reliance on words that have become so value laden that they make it hard to convey the meaning intended (e.g., "population," "control," "family planning.")

_____ Lack of a common set of phrases and descriptors

_____ Lack of a terminology that helps us focus on what women really need.

_____ The use of logic that is not understood by others to assert the (dis)connections between population, development and environmental impacts and variables.

_____ Pressures on some environmental groups to hurry up and figure out what the "right" "side" or approach is.

HISTORICAL

_____ Competition for the historical record. Different perceptions of what the "history" is.

_____ The legacy of those who have wanted to control population growth for racist reasons.

_____ Historical conflicts between some women's and population groups.

_____ Strained personal relationships between some players.

_____ A reluctance to let go of the past for the sake of the future.

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC

_____ Strong-willed players who have staked their careers on particular views.

_____ Desires to defend "my institution" and "my position."

_____ Jockeying for power in a changed political context that gives all networks more access to the administration.

_____ Competition to fill a political leadership vacuum in the women's community in the domain of international lobbying and legislation.

_____ Strains related to the absence of international women's reproductive health groups in the policy making process.

_____ Uncertainty about how US "leadership" can/should be exercised in the post-Cold War world.

_____ Competition for media attention.

_____ Competition for money (recently intensified by the availability of new foundation funding).

_____ Foundation policies that invite players to accentuate their differences from other players and do not reward collaboration.

_____ The dependence of some players on government funding which is perceived to constrain their ability to criticize US policy.

_____ Resistance to change (e.g., to new programs and new ways of defining "success") in the US family planning bureaucracy. Lack of sensitivity to women's issues in AID and lack of responsiveness to criticism.

_____ Fears that the most radical reproductive health advocates will "bring down all of family planning."

_____ Fears that "when push comes to shove" in the policy process, what will "give" will be women's interests.

_____ The impact of large differences in economic and political power among the three networks.

Additions:

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

_____ _____

WARM-UP TASK 1B

Now we ask you to review those items you already marked and star or circle those you think could be discussed most fruitfully in the group that will be meeting on Friday.

Public Conversations Project
Family Institute of Cambridge

Laura Chasin, M.S.W.,
Director
Margaret McCarthy Herzig,
Executive Director

Carol Becker, Ph.D.
Richard Chasin, M.D.
Sallyann Roth, M.S.W.

Institute Address:
51 Kondazian Street
Watertown, MA 02172

Office of the Directors:
Two Appleton Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
(617) 491-1585, 547-5988

May 24, 1993

<u>Sample of Follow-up Letter to Participants in 3/19 Meeting</u>

Dear participant,

We are writing to thank you for participating in our March 19th meeting. As our team reflected on our experience of those who were there, we were struck by how hard each of you works, how much you accomplish, and how often your efforts go unacknowledged.

When we asked you all to share your reflections on the meeting with us in follow-up calls, we promised that we too would share some of our observations and reflections. We include them here in the form of questions. Some of these questions may have little resonance or relevance for you. Others may strike you as fresh and worth pondering. We will resist the urge to call you to learn about your thoughts on these matters, but if you are inclined to comment or offer us feedback, we would welcome hearing from you.

QUESTIONS

What terms do you usually use to articulate your fundamental perspectives on population, women's health and the environment?

Do other people understand and use these terms in a different way than you do?

What do you think these other people do not grasp about your usage?

What questions could they ask you that might allow them to deepen their understanding of your perspective, of what these terms mean to you?

Is there something that you do not understand about how they use these terms?

What questions could you ask them that might help you deepen your understanding of how they think?

Are there terms, assertions or ways of speaking that others use to describe your views that are incomplete or incorrect?

Do you think those who use them know how you react when they speak that way?

If they do know, what might influence them to persist?

If they do not know, are there risks in letting them know?

What are the risks and advantages of viewing population as properly in the domain of women?

What are the risks and advantages of viewing population as actually in the domain of men?

What views remain unexamined when population is viewed in either one of these way?

What are the risks and advantages of viewing population as properly in the domain of women *and* men?

Have you felt silenced or constrained by assertions that one gender "owns" the issue?

What would it take for you to speak with less constraint?

Would it be productive or counter-productive to do so?

Feminists believe that the most important objectives include the health, education, power, and freedom of women.

Will achieving these objectives accelerate or impede the achievement of "targets" that are sometimes set forth by "population people?"

How do population targets foster or impede feminist objectives?

Which environmental objectives seem more consonant or disconsonant with feminist or population goals?

Are some of the values underlying each set of objectives theoretically consistent with each other, but strategically useful to portray as antagonistic?

Are some of these values theoretically contradictory, but strategically useful to portray as congruous?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of maintaining polarization on these issues?

What have you or others done to make possible conversations that bridged differences?

How do you account for your having done so?

For others having done so?

Which stereotypes about "population people," feminists and environmentalists are most offending to them and you?

How do you, in your speaking, perpetuate such stereotypes?

How do you, in your silence, perpetuate such stereotypes?

What would be the risks of your acknowledging what you find valuable about the work done by other individuals, organizations or networks?

What could the benefits be?

How do you respond when you appear to be disdained by those whose means and ends are similar but not identical with yours?

Is it more productive to reveal or conceal your response?

Which requests for cooperation from one organization to another have felt to you like an attempt to "co-opt"?

Have there been significant occasions when being co-opted has meant losing personal or organizational power but advancing the cause?

Have there been significant occasions when co-operation has meant gaining personal or organizational power but retarding the cause?

Will the open admission of past abuses of family planning practices foster or impede family planning work in the future?

When are bottom-up approaches to policy making strengthened or weakened by their opposition to top-down approaches?

When are top-down approaches strengthened or weakened by their opposition to bottom-up approaches?

Is the big picture (overall theory) a better or lesser guide than the local description (individual experience)?

When has it been useful for "macro" and "micro" views to diminish the value of the other?

When has it been useless or destructive?

Do you know anyone who operates with both "macro" and "micro" frames of reference in mind?

What have been the advantages and disadvantages or doing so?

We hope that you find some of these questions evocative to yourself and to any colleagues with whom you may chose to share them. We imagine that had we had the time, similar questions might have been posed and answered in the full group. It might be interesting to imagine how some of the others present might have replied to them. We have found the process of developing them one in which we have come to more fully appreciate the complexity of what you are undertaking.

We enclose a copy of a draft of the report which we have prepared for our funders. If, in your opinion, this report includes inaccuracies or does not adequately honor the confidentiality of the event, please let us know in the next two weeks so that we can revise the report before sending it to the MacArthur Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the Moriah Fund.

On behalf of all of my colleagues on the Public Conversations Project, I want to thank you very much for all you contributed to the meeting on March 19th, and for the time you took to talk with us before and after the meeting. I hope our paths will cross again.

Appreciatively,

Laura Chasin