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The Economics of Population Policy for Carbon Emissions Reduction in Developing Countries

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Abstract

Female education and family planning are both critical for sustainable development, and they obviously merit expanded support without any appeal to global climate considerations. However, even relatively optimistic projections suggest that family planning and female education will suffer from financing deficits that will leave millions of women unserved in the coming decades. Since both activities affect fertility, population growth, and carbon emissions, they may also provide sufficient climate-related benefits to warrant additional financing from resources devoted to carbon emissions abatement. This paper considers the economic case for such support. Using recent data on emissions, program effectiveness and program costs, we estimate the cost of carbon emissions abatement via family planning and female education. We compare our estimates with the costs of numerous technical abatement options that have been estimated by Nauc  r and Enkvist in a major study for McKinsey and Company (2009). We find that the population policy options are much less costly than almost all of the options Nauc  r and Enkvist provide for low-carbon energy development, including solar, wind, and nuclear power, second-generation bio-fuels, and carbon capture and storage. They are also cost-competitive with forest conservation and other improvements in forestry and agricultural practices. We conclude that female education and family planning should be viewed as viable potential candidates for financial support from global climate funds. The case for female education is also strengthened by its documented contribution to resilience in the face of the climate change that has already become inevitable.

Keywords: Female education, family planning, sustainable development, carbon emissions, developing countries[Suggested Citation](#) >[Show Contact Information](#) >

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