

POPULATION MATTERS

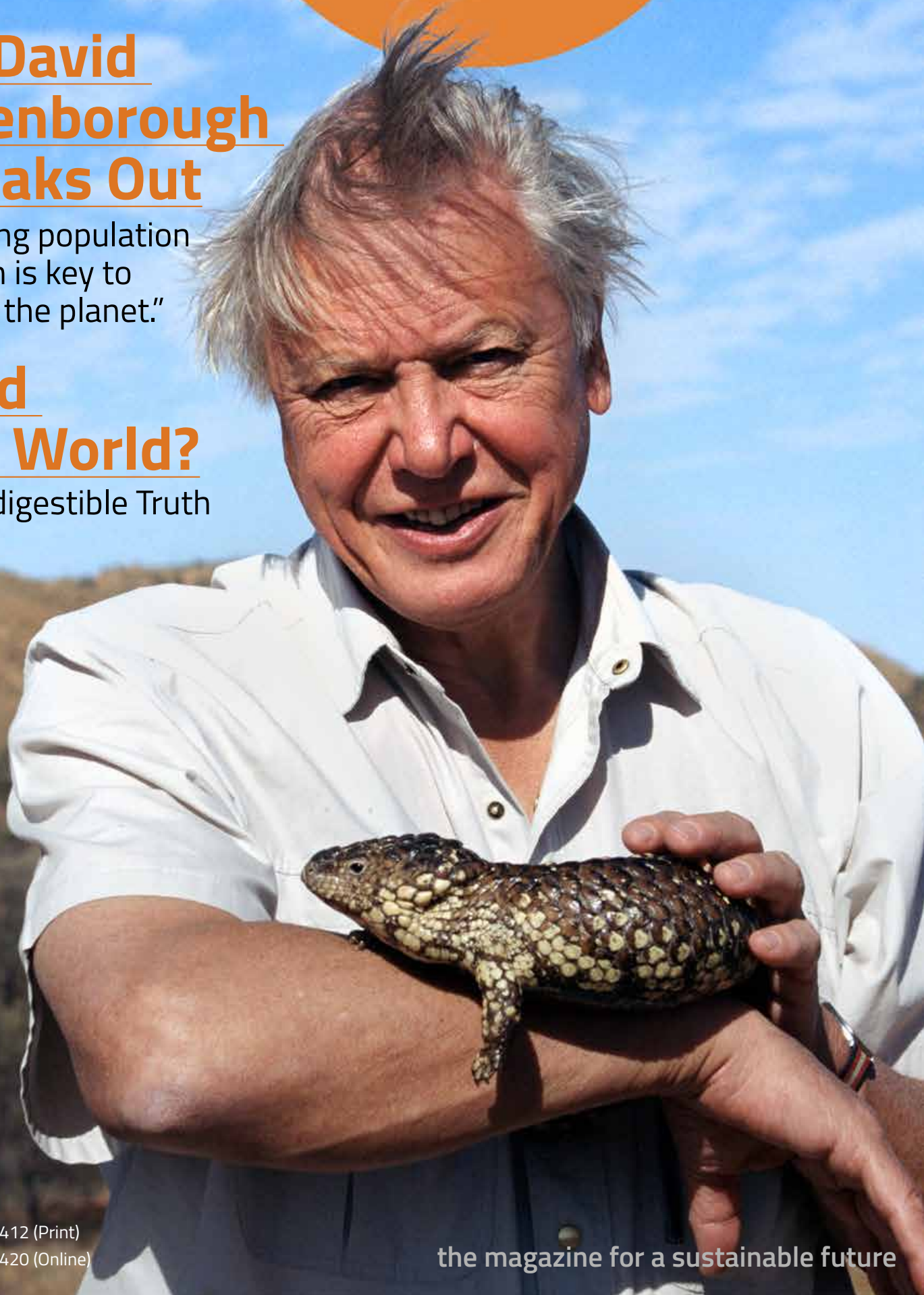
Issue 34 Spring 2019

Sir David Attenborough Speaks Out

"Slowing population growth is key to saving the planet."

Feed The World?

The Indigestible Truth



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Population Matters campaigns to achieve a sustainable human population, to protect the natural world and improve people's lives. We promote positive, practical, ethical solutions – encouraging smaller families, inspiring people to reduce excessive consumption and helping us all to live within our planet's natural limits. We support human rights, women's empowerment and global justice.

Through our campaigning, advocacy and education work we are influencing policymakers, communities and individuals to make the changes needed for a healthy planet and a decent standard of living for all, now and in the future.

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We want to believe in a positive, progressive future. But unless we reverse population growth soon, it's simply not going to happen.

From the Director

The Charm Offensive – “When we plan, we thrive!”

Wendo Aszed's words describe the work of [Dandelion Africa \(p18\)](#), the charity she set up to enable young Kenyan girls to choose when and how many children to have; objectives aligned to those of You Before Two, based in Nottinghamshire, which featured in the last edition of the magazine ([PM iss 33 p6](#)). PM is delighted to support Dandelion Africa's, 'Boys for Change' programme, through our Empower to Plan initiative (p6), where young men are learning to stand up for their sisters' rights rather than repress them. Through 'Boys for Change' Dandelion Africa is helping young girls and women escape the still-pervasive, misguided and controlling 'cultural' practices of female genital mutilation, child marriage, and multiple pregnancies; which are often maintained by older men in their communities.

'When we plan, we thrive' is applicable to PM too. At the [AGM \(p7\)](#) in November, we set out our summary strategy for the next 3 years. Our plan of action for amplifying our voice, persuading others to add theirs and putting the population issue where it belongs, at the heart of sustainability. Our stated ambition is to 'Take PM Global' over the next 3-5 years. An achievable goal or hubris? The former, given the level of support our Winter Appeal attracted, with donations topping our target more than two-fold. Many thanks to all of you who contributed, providing us with the

wherewithal to deliver actions focused on World Population Day 2019 (July 11th) in three continents, with events planned for London, New York and Lagos.

Our late Patron, [Professor Aubrey Manning \(p14\)](#), was a charming and courteous man. Never happier than when passing on his knowledge and passion for the natural world to others without ego. He called, politely but plainly, for action to staunch ongoing biological losses. Surely, he asked in his last email to me,

anyone with 'the briefest of biological thought' must recognise that human population growth is 'a key element' to consider?

He went beyond rhetorical questions: 'I do feel strongly that PM must not be reluctant to offend some people', he urged. As we know, many people too readily and irrationally take offence when faced with the facts of human population.

PM trustee, [Steve Bown \(p19\)](#), invited Wendo to talk at UCL last year about Dandelion Africa's work. In common with Aubrey, she is someone with great personal charm and charisma. Qualities

which did not prevent her challenging the predominantly European-educated audience with some uncomfortable facts. Wendo stated that almost 30% of women across Kenya are still 'cut' – that is suffer, as young girls, female genital mutilation. We were shocked by the statistic, didn't want to believe it, didn't want to hear it – hadn't the Kenyan Government banned the practice in 2011? Yes, simply driving it underground. As Wendo reiterated at several points in her powerful talk, **'This is the reality'**. A reality which campaigners, like Wendo and we at Population Matters, must speak out about if things are going to change however uncomfortable it may make some audiences.

People, particularly the decent, liberal folk who attended Wendo's talk, who support environment and development organisations, i.e. people like us, want to believe in and enable a positive, progressive future for everyone. But without curbing and stabilising population growth, you can go whistle for sustaining human rights and conserving remnant wildlife. That's the reality we must communicate to people, whilst promoting the positive, available solutions, not least universal access to education and safe, family planning. Rights as relevant for the UK as Africa. It will require charm and inevitably offending some people – truly, a charm offensive!



GLOBAL PROBLEM? GLOBAL SOLUTION?

Population Matters' stated mission is to generate awareness and action on population equivalent to or greater than that on climate change. An update from **Alistair Currie**, Head of Campaigns & Communications

Last year, we were approached by a US-based population campaigner, Rob Harding, with a proposal that we should support his call for a United Nations Framework Convention on Population. Rob's idea was simple: overpopulation is a global threat of the gravity of climate change. Following the model of the UN's Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) could transform understanding of the need to address it, and catalyse the necessary action. Rob's idea chimed with our mission and our strategic direction of travel. The question was – could it be done? And if so, how? We secured generous funding from the US Weeden Foundation enabling us to appoint two researchers, Jenna Randolph and Angelica Santorini, to conduct scoping research on the possibilities and this article is based on their excellent work.

A dedicated framework

Signed in 1992, the UNFCCC is an agreement by signatory countries to work together to identify solutions and take action to prevent human-caused climate change. The Convention was the outcome of scientific and NGO lobbying that had been gaining force

since the 1980s. It was finalised just 18 months after the International Panel on Climate Change called for it in 1990. The Convention was, however, less of an end point than a starting point. Its specific targets and responsibilities have been set by subsequent agreements (usually known as protocols), including the 2015 Paris Agreement. As last year's IPCC 1.5° Report made clear, the UNFCCC has not yet delivered all the action needed to meet its goals. Our research has established that frameworks like the UNFCCC are useful where there isn't yet full consensus on problems and solutions, as the exact mechanisms for implementation follow on from their adoption. This means that once the need for them is accepted, they can be agreed relatively quickly. Their existence also prioritises and affirms the need for action which is particularly important for attracting the vital attention and publicity that drives actual policy change. However, specific measures to address the problem don't result immediately from framework conventions, and where signatory nations do not prioritise the issue, it can be difficult to compel them to take action.

The 'piggy-back' route

An alternative approach to securing a "bespoke" treaty, is to add action on population to existing international agreements. This approach would likely be quicker, although its outcomes would probably be less comprehensive than a dedicated agreement. Our researchers identified a possible opportunity to do so in the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), which is currently under review. Like the UNFCCC, the CBD was agreed in 1992. Signatories are required to implement national strategies for protecting biodiversity. In 2010, the Convention set specific targets for 2020 – none of which referred to human population. The so-called Aichi Targets include halving the rate of loss of natural environments and ensuring that the extinction of known threatened species is prevented. As is the case with the UNFCCC, despite considerable progress, it is currently looking unlikely that most of these targets will be met.

The CBD is now establishing what the post-2020 policy and target landscape will be. The agreement on this is expected at the Conference of the Parties meeting in China in October 2020. To ensure population is considered and to lay down a marker of our engagement as stakeholders, in December, Population Matters (PM) made a formal submission as part of the consultation process for the "Post-2020" framework. Our submission calls for consideration of the introduction of a protocol on human population. We shall be developing our work related to the CBD as part of our Anthropocene campaign, including through the [PM conference](#) on April 27th 2019.

Another possible existing mechanism to generate agreement and action on population is the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The SDGs set 17 ambitious global targets to be reached by 2030, such as ending hunger, achieving gender equality and protecting life on land. The UN describes them as "the blueprint to achieve a better and more sustainable future for all". Whilst almost every goal is made harder to achieve by population growth, population is not addressed specifically.

However, high level discussions about the goals and progress towards achieving them will be taking place across a variety of international forums this year and beyond, presenting opportunities for shifting the debate and perhaps securing action.

What needs to be done

A global agreement to tackle population is possible, and undoubtedly urgent. The many options for what form it should take – and there are more than we have outlined here – each have their own advantages and disadvantages. Our research has found, however, that the exact mechanism of such agreements is often established at a relatively late stage in discussions. At this point, multiple options remain open. The work necessary to secure such a global agreement has the same

basic requirements, whatever form it eventually takes. It is essential to generate a strong international consensus that a problem exists and must be addressed. Wide and deep relationships and alliances must be formed with other non-governmental organisations throughout the world focussed on the same goal. Clearly, support from UN institutions and national governments is essential for any agreement to be proposed and achieved, and skilful, selective lobbying of those institutions and those with influence over them is vital.

What happens now

Our Three Year Strategy sets out our bold ambition for PM to “go global”. We are already reaching international audiences through the media and our online presence, and following our

work with population organisations in other countries last World Population Day (WPD) to promote the World Scientists Warning ([PM iss 33 p13](#)), we are seeking more partners, and to extend our campaigning reach even further. Our recent fundraising appeal this year focussed on our plans for WPD 2019. Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, for the first time we will be taking action on the day in three different continents, bringing a public message about the need for international agreement on population action to London, Lagos and New York. WPD will also form part of our wider strategy to develop the relationships and capacity that will allow PM to begin exerting genuine international influence and achieve the vision of an agreement to end and then reverse the population growth that threatens us all.

BE PART OF THE SOLUTION

Join thousands of people around the world already taking positive action for change. We need your support to effect real change globally and help avoid environmental disaster.

BECOME A MEMBER The bigger our membership base, the more weight our message carries. Our campaigning now gives a strong collective voice to many thousands of people who want to tackle unsustainable population.

ALREADY A MEMBER? REFER A FRIEND! If every current member encouraged just one friend to join, Population Matters' voice would be twice as loud. PM will make a donation to Empower to Plan and a project of your choice when your friends become members. £10 for one new member and a further £5 for every additional member up to a maximum of £25 for four or more members.

JOIN US ONLINE

NEW PM WEBSITE Fresh, modern and mobile-friendly, representing PM as the dynamic, relevant organisation it is.

A fantastic boost to online conversions as more than 500 additional people signed up to our monthly e-newsletter in the three months after the website was launched. You can sign up here: populationmatters.org/newsletter

JOIN 9,000 (AND GROWING!) PM FOLLOWERS ON TWITTER At least three tweets a day keeping you informed of current global population news which you can retweet to your followers.

FOLLOW OUR FACEBOOK PAGE

Help us spread the message that population matters to ever more people via infographics, articles, images and videos. Help us by sharing too.

NOW ON INSTAGRAM Posting images, quotes and infographics to illustrate how much population matters when solving our environmental crisis.



“All our environmental problems become easier to solve with fewer people and harder – and ultimately impossible – to solve with ever more people.”

Sir David Attenborough, PM Patron

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Empower to Plan Dandelion Africa Boys for Change

Rachel Musk introduces the newest E2P project

Dandelion Africa is working in the hard-to-reach parts of rural Kenya, its vision to enable those in marginalised areas to live healthy, safe and educated lives. Founded in 2010, by [Wendo Aszed](#) (p18), Dandelion Africa is creating sustainable solutions to improve opportunities for education and sexual and reproductive health for women and young people in marginalised areas. Boys for Change was developed by Dandelion Africa in response to the biggest hinderance their family planning projects faced. As most opposition came from older men; in communities where the decision makers are men, Wendo realised it was imperative that they reached the younger generations of men and boys. She created Boys for Change to teach young boys about contraception and to support women's rights as key ways of alleviating poverty in their communities.

Over the last four years they have reached 3,000 boys in 40 primary and secondary schools. Boys and young men are trained to teach both girls and boys in schools about contraception, women's rights, FGM and menstruation cycles (importantly making it acceptable for girls to attend school during their periods). They also train boys and young men about gender equality in family life and in the home. There are already results in rural communities: in 2018, eight of the villages with the Boys for Change programme in their schools chose to abandon the practice of FGM and no girls underwent the procedure! All of the 40 schools running the Boys for Change programme experienced the lowest number of girls getting pregnant during the last school year.

"Our greatest resource is working together; we must educate our young men to understand that sexual and reproductive health is a right for all women, and that when we plan, we thrive." [Wendo Aszed](#)



© Dandelion Africa

"I have learnt the effects of the harmful practice of FGM and discovered the truth. We will not accept FGM in our communities anymore, it is a violation and contributes to poverty in our societies because this practice encourages our sisters to get married early and they do not go to school."

A young Boy for Change

TAKE ACTION!

Population Matters aims to raise £3,400 for Dandelion Africa Boys for Change. The funding will train twenty young men on sexual and reproductive health and gender equality. Each of these twenty young men will mentor three other young men with the Boys for Change peer-to-peer training programme, implementing community action plans to advocate sexual and reproductive health for the girls and women in their villages. They will engage with local men and boys to ensure that they understand the importance of family planning for young women of reproductive age in the Mogotio region, increasing the uptake of modern contraceptive methods amongst these young women.

You can donate online :

populationmatters.org/empower-to-plan/Dandelion-Africa
or send a cheque payable to Population Matters with a note stating you would like it allocated to Boys for Change.



© Dandelion Africa

Population Matters News

Annual General Meeting

Thank you to all the members who attended our Annual General Meeting on 17 November. PM's new President, [Jonathon Porritt](#), gave a powerful introductory speech. With his ongoing wealth of experience working with WWF, he expressed how deeply sad and blazingly angry he was when WWF International published its latest Living Planet Report, failing to acknowledge the impact of human population growth on devastating biodiversity loss. He explained how population was a big issue for WWF when it was founded in 1961, as it was for almost all environmental organisations in those days, but gradually mutated into a taboo subject. Jonathon quoted one of WWF's founders, Sir Peter Scott who died in 1989, on the bizarre disconnect, "When we started the WWF, its objective was to save endangered species from extinction, and we have failed completely. We haven't saved a single endangered species. And if we'd put all that money we had collected into condoms, we might have done some good."

Jonathon asserted the importance of communicating about sustainable population in a progressive, intelligent, compassionate, sensitive and professional way, stating that PM is in position to set the right tone as it tackles population denialism. Quoting his fellow Patron, Sir David Attenborough, "For the first time in 12,000 years, we must face an unstable and unpredictable planet – at exactly the time that we are placing our greatest demands on it. We can still stabilise our planet, but there is not much time. It will require significant global cooperation on issues like population growth, climate change and the management of our oceans."

© Florence Blondel



Population Matters was pleased to present Roger Martin with the Jack Parsons Lifetime Achievement Award. Roger served as chair of Population Matters from 2008 to 2016, taking up the role as our first President in 2016. Roger's huge contribution in that period included persuading many of its most high-profile supporters to become patrons. Roger will be continuing to support and advance the charity's work as a roving 'Ambassador'.

The formal meeting in the morning accepted the financial statement, re-appointment of the independent examiners and approved a special resolution to amend the Articles of Association. Elections to the board saw all the current members re-elected, with Pip Hayes and Anna Hughes joining the board. In the afternoon PM's Director Robin Maynard outlined the strategic plan for 2019-2021 highlighting three key areas for campaign and resources. These are to establish a compelling and reasoned case for curbing population growth, aiming to put population at the heart of the sustainability agenda and take PM global - leveraging wider support both nationally and internationally as we lobby for a [UK Sustainable Population Policy \(PM iss 33 p4\)](#) and for a [global framework agreement on population \(p4\)](#).

Introducing Florence Blondel

© Sylvain Blondel



Florence joined PM in July 2018 as a Communications and Campaigns Intern. The role later expanded to include working with the World Scientists' Warning to create a social media marketing strategy. This January Florence joined the full-time team as Campaigns and Projects Officer. She previously worked as a broadcast journalist at NTV Uganda specialising in science, health and environmental issues. The UNFPA, Population Secretariat, and Ministry of Health in Uganda awarded her for her coverage of population and development issues, especially in underserved communities. Florence left journalism to pursue an MSc in Population and Development at the London School of Economics and Political Science. In London she has worked with Tropical Health and Education Trust, and has previously volunteered with Prospect Burma and Alzheimer's Society in communication and administrative roles.

"PM covers everything that I am passionate about including women's empowerment. That is why I am especially enthusiastic about Empower to Plan. I also enjoy the extras that come with the job, like putting together videos to tell stories, one of my passions. I am excited that PM is ready to be more active internationally."

Introducing Susie Cramp: Running for the planet

© Florence Blondel



Susie is a fourth year Biodiversity and Conservation student at UCL who is running the London Marathon on 28 April for Population Matters. She has pledged to raise £1,000 to support our work. You can make a donation at uk.virginmoneygiving.com/susiecramp

"I've always been interested in animals and plants and learnt about the sixth mass extinction at university. When I came across the London Marathon position offered by Population Matters, a charity that's all about helping the environment to help people, it seemed like the perfect opportunity. Climate change, biodiversity decline, and plastic pollution are all symptoms of too many people consuming too much. I love that Population Matters combines making the world better for everyone and reducing the impact of population."

Robin Maynard : Director

Julie Lewis : Head of Supporter Services and Compliance

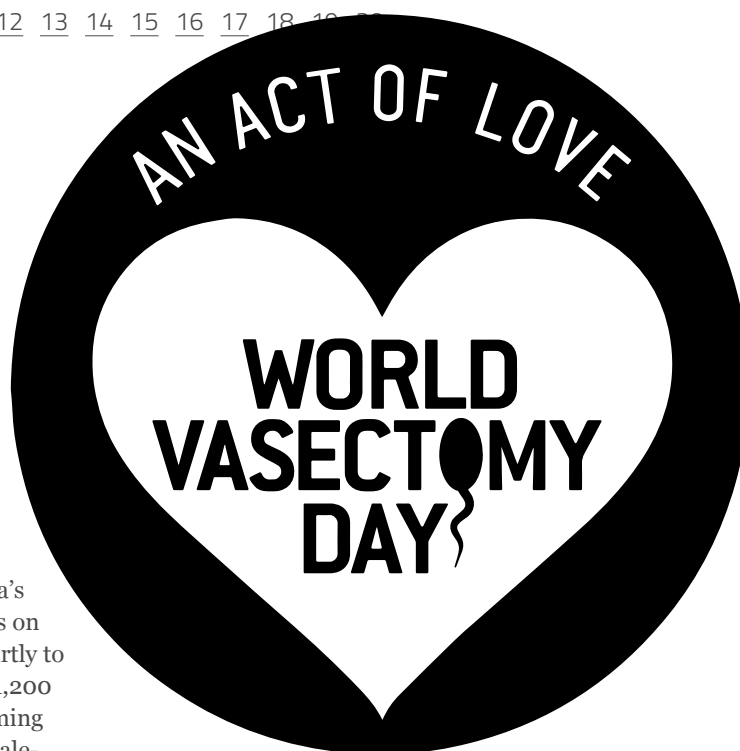
Alistair Currie : Head of Campaigns and Communications

Olivia Nater : Digital and Communications Officer

Rachel Musk : Supporter Services

Florence Blondel : Campaigns and Projects Officer

Population Matters' policy researcher **Jenna Randolph** travelled to Kigali, Rwanda in November, where she joined World Vasectomy Day (WVD) 2018 as the event's Director of Communication.



Each year WVD takes its headquarters to a different country. In 2018 WVD celebrated its 6th anniversary alongside the International Conference on Family Planning (ICFP) in Kigali. Jenna's participation was partly to make international contacts on behalf of Population Matters at the conference, and partly to support the excellent work of WVD. Today, with over 1,200 participating providers from over 50 countries performing upwards of 20,000 vasectomies, WVD is the largest male-focused family planning event. It is also a means to directly tackle issues of human rights and population growth through a growing, collective and positive movement.

Population: An Inconvenient Truth

One of Jenna's primary tasks for WVD was to produce a Facebook Live conversation about the interconnection between the environment, family planning, and population growth. 'Population: An Inconvenient Truth', was the only official ICFP conversation specifically dedicated to this issue. The guests were Suzanne York (Director of Transition Earth), Dr Charles Ochieng (Founder and Director of the Winam Safe Parenthood Initiative), and Dr Suchitra Dalvie (Coordinator of the Asia Safe Abortion Partnership and the former Director Medical of the Family Planning Association of India). Together, they covered the impact of uncontrolled population growth as a threat to security, food safety, economic development and the environment, as well as the

conflicts between population control and human rights, and how together, they might give us an idea of how to solve the world's problems. The discussion began by questioning why it has become increasingly difficult in recent decades to discuss the issue of population. Suzanne York explained how the conversation "shifted from population growth to reproductive rights after the Cairo Conference. Of course, we should be addressing women's rights, individual rights, family planning. But we are also at the point where our environmental problems are so pressing: climate change, deforestation, droughts...that we can't afford to not talk about population."

"We have to deal with the resources that are available to us on the only planet that we are able to survive on." Dr Suchitra Dalvie

WORLD VASECTOMY DAY (WVD)

WVD was co-founded by Emmy-winning and Sundance Grand Jury Prize filmmaker, Jonathan Stack and urologist and president of No-Scalpel Vasectomy International, Dr Doug Stein. Population Matters joined forces with WVD in November 2018 to call for action on the environmental impact of population growth. PM Patron Professor Paul Ehrlich expressed his support for WVD as it tackles the issue of population growth:

"Over the years we've come to believe that more information or more science is not enough to convince the world to leap into action. Our best hope lies in the universality of the internet and a story to galvanise people into action. Therein lies my support for World Vasectomy Day, now in its 6th year. Jonathan Stack and his team of creative storytellers combined with Doug Stein and more than 1,000 providers together create more impact than a book's worth of angst filled quotes."

The discussion kept returning to the seeming dichotomy between individual rights and collective responsibility. Dr Dalvie concluded, "On the one hand, as an individual, you should have the right to decide how many children you want to have. But on the other hand, there is, potentially, a role for individual responsibility and what you are contributing towards...We have to deal with the resources that are available to us on the only planet that we are able to survive on."

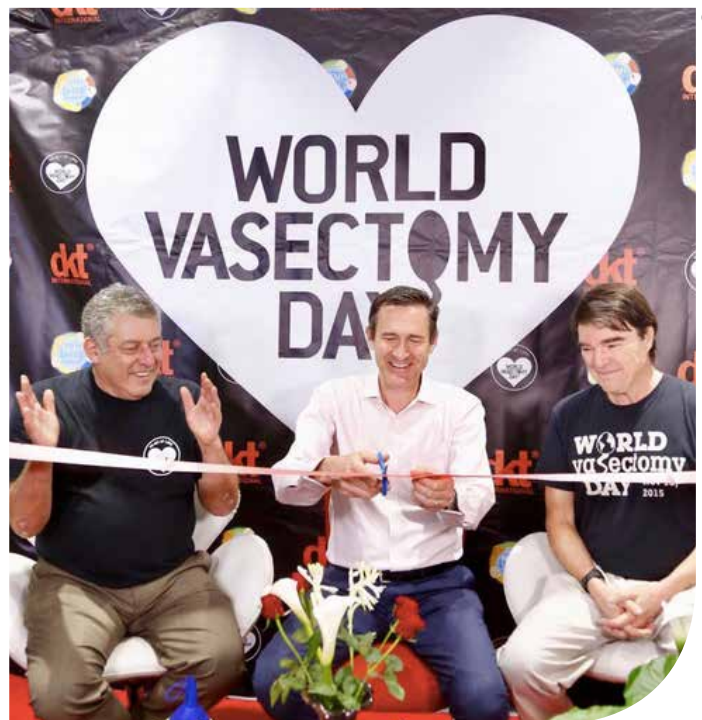
A Growing Global Movement

At the event Jenna also had the opportunity to talk with one of WVD's founders, Jonathan Stack. Jonathan travelled the world for decades as a filmmaker, first engaging with the topic of family planning in 2011-2012 whilst documenting the work of passionate vasectomist Dr Doug Stein. 'The Vasectomist' explored the inconvenient truth about human beings and the responsibility each of us holds for our own personal destiny as well as that of the biosphere. Jonathan discovered that the men who voluntarily chose vasectomies tended to talk about love and sacrifice. In May 2012 he envisioned a way to aggregate these individual expressions of love into a collective movement for social good. He brought together 100 doctors to perform 1,000

“We are at the point where our environmental problems are so pressing: climate change, deforestation, droughts... that we can’t afford to not talk about population.” Suzanne York

vasectomies in 10 countries during a 24-hour global event. 18th October 2013 marked the first WVD event in the Royal Institute for Science in Adelaide, Australia with WVD co-founder Dr Stein performing 15 vasectomies before a live audience. Simultaneously, 185 doctors from 26 countries completed 982 vasectomies. A global movement was born. Jonathan and his WVD team have travelled the world engaging in conversations with thousands of men. “While most people choose a vasectomy because their family is complete,” Jonathan told Jenna, “we began hearing more stories of men who were getting a vasectomy out of love for the planet. They witnessed first-hand how human impact was creating an imbalance. For many, the decision to get a vasectomy was by far the most compelling way to express this feeling of loving devotion.” Although population can be a taboo topic of discussion, Jonathan explained “there is often more resistance on a political and institutional level than there is on a personal level with regard to this topic. People whose lives are impacted by population size have no problem discussing the issue. Their perception is that population pressures cause multiple issues: terrible traffic, lack of jobs, too few desks in classrooms and not enough hospital beds are a few examples. Of course, there are broad social and economic conditions of injustice and unfairness at play as well, but for many the most tangible cause, and one they can do something about, is a growing population.”

NGOs have a unique opportunity to fill the void between the eagerness of many people to discuss population and the lack of cooperation by institutions and governments. Jonathan explains “WVD, although purportedly about engaging men in family planning, is ultimately about starting the conversation and making it more inclusive and more personal. We don’t measure our success just by the numbers of vasectomies done, but by the quality of the conversations we instigate.” WVD has two major goals for 2019: to take WVD headquarters to Bogota, Colombia, in partnership with Profamilia and to collaborate with the Man and the Biosphere Programme to create a specialised campaign linking personal choice with the collective effort to produce an incredible global impact.



“For many the most tangible cause, and one they can do something about, is a growing population.” Jonathan Stack



WVD offered virtual vasectomies to women



PM Patron Sir David Attenborough Speaks Out

“Slowing population growth is key to saving the planet.”

© WPP Agencies



PM Patron Sir David Attenborough continues to communicate with compassion his unflinching message regarding the destruction of the environment and the need to curb human population growth. In October during an interview on [BBC Newsnight](#), Sir David stated that slowing population growth is key to saving the planet.

Sir David represented hundreds of millions of people around the world, as he spearheaded the “[People’s Seat](#)” at the UN’s Climate Change Conference in Katowice, Poland. His address was broadcast live on Facebook with more than 16 million

people around the world watching it in the first 24 hours. His message was clear: “Right now, we are facing a man-made disaster of global scale. Our greatest threat in thousands of years. Climate Change. If we don’t take action the collapse of our civilisations and the extinction of much of the natural world is on the horizon...The world’s people have spoken. Their message is clear. Time is running out.”

In January, Sir David attended [Davos](#) to receive a Crystal Award for his leadership in the fight against climate change and to take part in a number of panel discussions on the future of our planet. Regarding the urgency around climate change he stated,

“It’s difficult to overstate it. We are now so numerous, so powerful, so all-pervasive, the mechanisms that we have for destruction are so wholesale and so frightening, that we can actually exterminate whole ecosystems without even noticing it.”

When Sir David began his career, in 1950, human population was measured at just 2.5 billion, it has tripled since then, now a staggering 7.6 billion. With a new series ‘[Our Planet](#)’ launched on Netflix this month (p15) Sir David continues to educate and inform millions of viewers around the globe about the plight of the planet, environmental destruction and its correlation with population growth.

UN Population Report: The Power Of Choice

The new [State of the World Population 2018 report](#) published by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in November highlights the importance of having the power to choose the timing, number, and spacing of children in order to promote global economic and social development. Whilst it details significant progress in many areas, it also emphasises that much more needs to be achieved.

The report confirms that high fertility (in other words, large family size) contributes to extreme poverty, high rates of maternal and child death, diminished human capital, and strains on institutions that provide services, such as education and health. No country is expected to have average fertility of more than five births per woman by 2050 but it remains above four at present in more than forty. Most countries with fertility rates of four or more have expressed an interest in reducing population growth rates, whereas most countries with fertility rates of 1.5 or lower want to increase the rates. The report notes that “Never before in human history have there been such extreme differences in fertility rates among groups of countries.”

Each year in developing countries, there are 89 million unintended pregnancies. Making decisions about pregnancy and family size depends on far more than access to contraception. Issues of gender equality, economics and geography, levels of education, and fulfilment of rights to education, security, and freedom of expression are among the many contributing factors. The report suggests that there is no place in the world today where all people are fully empowered to realise their own fertility goals and reproductive rights.

“The way forward is the full realisation of reproductive rights, for every individual and couple, no matter where or how they live, or how much they earn. This includes dismantling all the barriers—whether economic, social or institutional—that inhibit free and informed choice.”

[UNFPA Executive Director Dr Natalia Kanem](#)

Global Risks: Where Does Population Rank?

The [Attitudes to Global Risk and Governance Survey 2018](#), a follow-up to the [2017 version](#), was commissioned by the Global Challenges Foundation (GCF) to assess public perception of major global issues such as climate change, conflict and population growth. Over 10,000 adults across nine countries participated. More than two thirds of respondents consider population growth a “global catastrophic risk”. However, less than a quarter believed the issue requires “urgent” action and the number believing continued population growth will have “negative effects” has reduced from 64% to half. One in two people believe there are sufficient natural

resources for everybody to live like those in rich countries; however, according to the [Global Footprint Network](#) we would need five planets if everyone consumed as much as the average US citizen.

Developing countries tended to be more worried than developed countries about climate change, other environmental damage and population growth. In India, population growth was ranked the fourth highest global catastrophic risk. This is unsurprising as fast-growing, vulnerable countries are more exposed to the negative impacts of overpopulation, climate change, pollution and other damage. Highly

educated UK adults were more likely than those with a low level of education to think that the consequences of population growth will be positive (13% vs 7%), still a small minority of those questioned overall. This demonstrates the damage done by the intentional dismissal of overpopulation problems. It is reassuring that a strong majority of people think of population growth as a risk, but all countries, particularly those which are affluent and sheltered from the worst effects of climate change and overpopulation, must do more to raise awareness and implement ethical and progressive measures to counter unsustainable population growth.

Insect Apocalypse Threatens All Life On Earth

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An increasing number of scientific studies are now shining a light on the disappearance of insects and the serious implications for food supplies and biodiversity. Without insects, food webs collapse and ecosystem services fail, threatening the existence of all other species, including us humans. Insects comprise two-thirds of all life on Earth – they pollinate flowering plants, decompose waste, control pests and serve as prey for millions of other species. A major study published this February concluded that populations were declining in 40% of all insect species, with the rate of decline eight times faster than it is in vertebrates.

Meanwhile, scientists monitoring the abundance of flying insects in [Germany's nature reserves](#) recorded a 75% drop since 1989. The study's authors attribute the decline to destruction of insect habitat and the rise in agricultural pesticide use, which are driven and amplified by human population growth.

In Puerto Rico's Luquillo rainforest, [researchers](#) discovered a staggering 98% drop in insect biomass on the ground from 1970s levels, and an 80% decline in the leafy canopy. These trends were matched by declines in lizards, frogs, and birds that rely on

invertebrates as their primary food source. With forest temperatures in the area having risen by 2°C in the last 30 years, the researchers believe climate change to be the primary driver of this collapse. As tropical species are adapted to very narrow temperature ranges they may not be able to adapt to our rapidly changing climate – a grim implication for the world's most biodiverse areas. We are responsible for the “insect apocalypse” and for safeguarding both human and animal life on this planet, which requires ending and ultimately reversing human population growth.

FEED THE WORLD?

THE INDIGESTIBLE TRUTH

“Earth provides enough to satisfy every man’s need, but not every man’s greed”

Mahatma Gandhi

Was Gandhi wrong?

In one of his most memorable phrases, Gandhi said that the Earth provides enough to satisfy everyone’s need, but not to satisfy everyone’s greed. There’s no question that consuming at the levels and in the way that the rich world does today cannot be sustained. Our greed is indeed destroying the planet and it is vital as population campaigners that we recognise and amplify the importance of ending the reckless materialism that threatens our future. It is also vital that we address another question that is sometimes neglected because of the perception that “greed” is the only problem: how many people’s need can the Earth provide for? According to two recent reports, the Earth will not be able to meet our most basic need if our population continues to grow as it is now doing. In the blunt words of one of them, feeding more than 10 billion people sustainably is “increasingly unlikely”. The United Nations projects a population exceeding 10 billion within 50 years.

The great transformation

The [EAT-Lancet Commission Report](#), Food in the Anthropocene, was published in January to huge media attention. The work of dozens of researchers from 16 countries, it is one of the most authoritative examinations of this issue yet produced. It asks how we can provide a good standard of nutrition for our existing population and billions more without destroying the ability of the planet to keep providing enough food for the generations to come. On that issue its findings were clear – it is possible to feed 10 billion people but only if we bring about a “Great Food



Transformation”, changing profoundly the way we produce and consume food. This transformation, the Commission says, is essential if the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement’s climate change targets are to be met. Much of the media coverage resulting from it focussed on its call to eat a fraction of the amount of meat that is now common in the developed world. What most of that coverage missed was three sentences in the report’s introduction:

“Although this Commission uses 2050 as a cut-off, the issues discussed extend beyond 2050. Global population is expected to exceed 11 billion people by 2100 unless actions are taken to stabilise population growth. Healthy diets from sustainable food systems are possible for up to 10 billion people but become increasingly unlikely past this population threshold.”

Experts agree

The Commission’s report followed hard on the heels of [Creating a Sustainable Food Future](#), published by the World Resources Institute (WRI) in December 2018. It laid out a smorgasbord of solutions to tackle the challenge of increasing food production while decreasing farming emissions and avoiding converting additional land to agriculture – something vital to preserve biodiversity. Ramping up business-as-usual agriculture to meet demand is out of the question. The report states:

“If today’s levels of production efficiency were to remain constant through 2050, then feeding the planet would entail clearing most of the world’s remaining forests, wiping out thousands more species, and releasing enough GHG emissions to exceed the 2°C warming targets even if emissions from all other human activities were entirely eliminated.” World Resources Institute

The Commission and WRI’s proposed solutions are, unsurprisingly, very similar and include drastically decreasing meat consumption in rich countries, reducing food waste, reforestation, and intensifying food production via technological innovations. The WRI report, however, expands on the question of population only touched on by the Lancet Commission. Refreshingly, the authors highlight the need to curb population growth by increasing educational opportunities for girls, boosting family planning services and reducing infant and child mortality. The report is specific in promoting the achievement of replacement-level fertility rates (no more than two children per woman) globally, which is particularly challenging in Sub-Saharan Africa, the region with the highest population growth and proportion of chronically hungry people.

“Achieve replacement-level fertility rates, encourage voluntary reductions in fertility levels by educating girls, reducing child mortality, and providing access to reproductive health services.” WRI

According to the WRI, if sub-Saharan Africa manages to reduce its current fertility rate of more than five children per woman to the replacement level by 2050, its population would grow to 1.8 billion instead of the expected 2.2 billion. This would mean the growth in regional crop demand would fall by nearly one third relative to the baseline projection and farmers would need to clear 163 million fewer hectares of forests and savannahs for agriculture than expected, thereby reducing the gap between the projected level of greenhouse gases and what is needed to meet the Paris Agreement target of keeping global warming within 2°C. The WRI’s call for replacement level fertility echoes a similar policy prescription laid out in the hugely authoritative [World Scientists’ Warning: A Second Notice](#) in 2017, which has now been endorsed by more than 20,000 scientists globally ([PM iss 33 p12](#)). In fact, a reduction in family size of just half-a-child on average per family globally, would see our population peak below 10 billion and be lower than it is today by the end of the century.

Leaving no solution behind

These recent landmark studies join the critical [International Panel on Climate Change report](#) last October ([PM iss 33 p13](#)) in calling for a wide range of radical and immediate global policy changes to avert environmental catastrophe and protect future generations from its devastating effects. They make abundantly clear that no solution can be left off the table, and that those measures must include addressing population growth. The two recent food reports clearly establish how fundamental and urgent it is to implement the positive solutions to end and then reverse population growth: end poverty, empower women and girls, provide good education for all, ensure everyone has free and full access to modern family planning and encourage small families. Gandhi made his comments when the Earth’s population was less than a third of today’s. In addressing the world’s greed, we must not ignore the world’s need. These reports’ message is stark: unless we tackle population, we will not even be able to provide the most basic of all human rights – enough to eat.

“Healthy diets from sustainable food systems are possible for up to 10 billion people but become increasingly unlikely past this population threshold.”

The EAT- Lancet Commission Report

Obituary: Aubrey Manning, Professor Emeritus of Natural History, University of Edinburgh, Population Matters patron.

© Jamie Murray Grant



Val Stevens, chair of the PM Board, 2005 – 2010, remembers how she first met and was inspired by Aubrey:

In 1970, hot-off the press, I read Paul Ehrlich's book 'Population, Resources, Environment'. As a young woman with two young children, unsure how to use my geography degree – suddenly I knew. I painted an exhibition on Ehrlich's themes, and got it displayed in my local library. An Edinburgh paper reported on it, and Professor Manning got in touch, urging me to attend the meetings of the recently formed Conservation Society (he was chair of the Edinburgh branch). Aubrey suggested that I try to get my exhibition into Edinburgh library. It was accepted, and we promoted ConSoc literature about zero population growth and zero economic growth alongside it.

Aubrey was giving many talks about population growth to community and professional groups and took me under his wing. With his encouragement I started doing some of the talks myself, modelling what I said on Aubrey's format. It was scary – I'd worked in theatre where I could 'hide' behind my role – now I had to speak as myself and field questions. Aubrey assured me it would get easier and I persevered. In the early 1990s, I became active in Optimum Population Trust (OPT now PM) and was delighted to find Aubrey was a Patron. We met up at OPT conferences in London and Oxford

"A common response to population concern is that it's 'anti-human'. That's grotesque – it's pro-human – how else are we to ensure that our children can grow up into a world that has choice and opportunities?" Aubrey Manning

at which Aubrey spoke. Like many others, I followed his regular appearances in the media. His seminal BBC series [Talking Landscapes](#) and [Landscape Mysteries](#) – exploring the interface between biology and geology – were especially memorable. His relaxed, but rigorous manner brought out all the questions any viewer would have wished to ask.

My last contact was a couple of years ago when I sent him a copy of my recently completed novel. He emailed back his comments, generally favourable – but asked, 'Who on earth was this Prof. Manning who features so prominently?' Clearly my early mentor's name had become embedded in my subconscious! We had quite a laugh about it. In many ways my career and concerns were shaped by Aubrey. I feel so proud to have known him.

Robin Maynard adds:

I never had the privilege of meeting Aubrey in person – although I was due to visit him just weeks before his health declined, to discuss how to shift the conservation and environmental lobby's inertia on population. I am following up a proposal by Aubrey for a lasting legacy marking his support for our work with the University of Edinburgh. Aubrey's last emails to me revealed his compassionate but unflinching honesty:

"How can we achieve a reasonable standard of living for humankind everywhere? Surely the briefest of biological thought must see that a key element in the strategy must be to consider how many humans that means? There is this taboo about touching our subject and we must keep on at them. I know you want to approach various biological organisations and I can maybe help with this. I do feel strongly that PM must not be reluctant to offend some people."

Aubrey William George Manning, born 24 April 1930; died 20 October 2018. A memorial service for Aubrey Manning is to be held at the McEwan Hall, Edinburgh, Saturday, 13th April, 2019, 2.00pm for 2.30pm. Open to all PM supporters.

Aubrey requested that any donations should be directed to Population Matters and The Wildlife Trusts (of which he was President, 2005 -2010).

Pressing the Panda...

Robin Maynard reports on how PM has been ramping up the pressure on WWF-UK to acknowledge population growth as a key factor driving environmental disasters.

© Kimberley on Pixabay



The opening sequence of *Our Planet* has Attenborough talking directly to camera highlighting human population growth as a key factor driving ecological disaster.

Population Matters (PM) has been pressing conservation and environmental organisations for some time to accept that human population, both present numbers and projected growth, is the ‘upstream driver’ behind the collapse in wildlife worldwide and the erosion of our planet’s ecosystems. The largest and best known of those organisations is the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF). With millions of supporters globally and offices in over 80 countries, WWF is a huge enterprise. Last year WWF-US had an annual income of over a quarter of a billion pounds, four times that of WWF-UK’s £68 million (120 times greater than that of PM’s). Read their annual reports, go on their websites and there is an impressive array of activities which WWF collectively delivers.

Without their efforts our natural world would be in an even more parlous state. But parlous it is, as we know from WWF International’s [Living Planet Report](#) published last November, which gave the grim statistic that 60% of wild vertebrate globally have been ‘lost’ since 1970. The report merely confirmed the findings of its predecessor in 2016. Common to both is, what Jonathon

Porritt calls, WWF’s ‘perverse and dishonest’ refusal to acknowledge any correlation between the halving of wild populations and the more than doubling of human population over the same period. We held the Panda’s paws to the fire over that disconnect in our critique of the Living Planet Report. In response WWF-UK at least acknowledged population alongside the ‘less difficult’ issue of consumption:

“WWF-UK recognises population growth as a major driving force behind environmental degradation. Equally, the trend towards higher consumption patterns in more affluent populations results in disproportional demands on Earth’s natural resources, often at the expense of people and nature elsewhere in the world.”

PM has been doing more than just criticising from the side-lines. Late last year we became aware of WWF-UK partnering with Netflix to make a series of programmes and a feature film under the title, ‘[Our Planet](#)’, presented by Sir David Attenborough which premieres globally on 5th April 2019 (netflix.com/title/80049832). Through various channels, we have been able to input to the scripts ahead of the final edit. Last month, I was invited to a private viewing of the ‘rushes’. Given the production company was set up by former heads of the BBC Natural History Unit, the footage was impressive, with ‘no-punches pulled’ scenes of wildlife catastrophically affected by climate change. And (hooray!) the opening sequence has Attenborough talking directly to camera highlighting human population growth as a key factor driving such ecological disaster. Yet in a later section, the voice-over stated that population growth is set to plateau by 2050. An unsupported assertion which I and others present challenged. We will see if it is cut as promised. Let us hope so – and that this series opens up public debate on population as *Blue Planet* did for plastic.

SHUTTING US UP: Population Fatalism

How the population discussion is closed down

Continuing our series considering and deconstructing the 'Six Silencing Discourses' as identified by **Professor Diana Coole**, University of London, **Olivia Nater** tackles Population Fatalism.

THE SIX SILENCERS

Population Shaming Advocating the stabilisation or reduction of population is evidence of, or motivated by, morally reprehensible characteristics.

Population Scepticism Population growth is no longer a worry as birth rates are levelling off and the global population will stabilise during this century.

Population Fatalism Population may be a problem but there is nothing we can do to fix it.

Population Growth Economies thrive with more people, increasing productivity and consumption, so we need more people, not fewer.

Population Declinism Fertility rates are below 'replacement level' in many countries and we must have higher birth rates to support pensions and health services for the elderly.

Population Decomposing Technology will resolve environmental problems created by billions more people.

Population Fatalism

Population Fatalism is the belief that overpopulation may be a problem but there is nothing we can do to solve it. This distinguishes Population Fatalism from Population Scepticism ([PM iss 33 p14](#)) which does not see population growth as a problem. Population fatalists generally assume that the challenges created by a large and growing population can be met. According to Professor Diana Coole, "they are fatalist in treating population growth as a given; as an aggravating or critical factor they are powerless to change and reluctant to address." Instead of advocating solutions to population problems, population fatalists often propose measures that attempt to accommodate our ever-increasing numbers. A critical recent example of Population Fatalism is the [latest report](#) from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The report acknowledges that rapid population growth is a "key impediment" to reaching climate targets and notes the important role of female education in limiting family size, but it fails to incorporate this into its policy recommendations.

Small fertility changes cause big population changes

Reluctance to address population often stems from negative misconceptions about population campaigners and fear of being seen as supportive of coercive policies (which Professor Coole deals with under the Silencing Discourse of Population Shaming). However, there is no denying that effective measures to reduce fertility rates have an enormous impact on population growth – stating that population action does not work is just plain wrong. The [UN's median global population projection for 2100](#), which assumes continued progress in

improving access to family planning, is 11.2 billion people. Their calculations show that if every second family had just one fewer child than it currently predicts, there will be 7.4 billion of us by the end of the century – fewer people than there are now. Conversely, if every other family has just one child more than projected, we may see our numbers skyrocket to over 16 billion. According to the [UNFPA \(p10\)](#), there are still 89 million unintended pregnancies each year in the developing world (43% of all pregnancies), proving that preventing these alone would reduce population growth substantially.

Inaction is morally irresponsible

In addition to the terrible damage inflicted to other species and our natural environment, inaction on population growth causes human suffering and death. [Approximately 214 million women have an unmet need for modern contraception](#) and many regions still have an unacceptably high prevalence of child marriage, maternal and infant mortality, unsafe abortions and sexually transmitted infection rates, including HIV. [The UN's State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2018 report](#) revealed that the number of people suffering from hunger has increased over the past three years, undoing previous progress. The authors state that "The dynamics in the prevalence of undernourishment, combined with rapid population growth, have led to a dramatic increase in the total number of undernourished people." Globally, the number of undernourished people increased from 804 million in 2016 to 821 million (or approximately one in nine) in 2017. The combination of worsening climate change and rapid population growth is putting increasing strain on the world's most vulnerable communities.



Educating girls and family planning rock the world

The number of children a woman has in her lifetime usually reduces when she spends longer in education. According to the [International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis](#), African women with no education have, on average, 5.4 children; women who have completed secondary school have 2.7 and those who have a college education have [2.2](#). Several countries have successfully reduced their population growth through effective family planning campaigns. Thailand, for instance, reduced its fertility rate by nearly 75% in just two generations with a [targeted, creative and ethical programme](#) which also dramatically slashed HIV infections. [Project Drawdown](#), which identifies solutions to climate change and ranks them according to their effectiveness, found that the combination of educating girls and family planning is the number one most effective measure, translating into a CO₂ emissions reduction of 120 gigatonnes by 2050.

The urgent need to facilitate smaller families

Most environmental organisations align themselves with progressive values, including women's empowerment and education. It is time they connect the big red dots between ethical population action and environmental conservation.

A [recent study](#) led by demographer Wolfgang Lutz and published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences estimated that the drop in Africa's education spending in the 1980's caused 13 million additional babies to be born between 1995 and 2010 and highlights the urgent need for more investment in girls' education. Progress in family planning uptake has been slow – as of 2018, the FP2020 initiative had reached only [40%](#) of its goal of providing modern contraception to 120 million additional women between 2012 and 2020. Overseas aid support is essential, especially in light of recent drastic funding cuts due to President Trump's reinstatement and expansion of the [Global Gag Rule](#). In high-consuming countries too, there is a pressing need to promote and incentivise smaller families. A [key study published in 2017](#) by the Universities of Lund and British Columbia found that the single most effective action an individual in the developed world can take to reduce their carbon footprint is to have one fewer child. This action is 25-times more effective than the next most effective measure: living without a car. The more Population Fatalists convert to population activism, the faster our progress towards a happier, healthier planet. With human lives and entire ecosystems at stake, fatalism is simply not an option.

BOOK REVIEW

Diana Coole's book reviewed by David Samways (Editor of the [Journal of Population and Sustainability](#))

Should We Control World Population?



Uneasiness about the term "population control" by many concerned with global human population growth is understandable given its association with imperialism, eugenics, forced

sterilisations and other violations of basic human rights. Against this backdrop Diana Coole's 'Should We Control World Population?' aims to provoke discussion.

Legitimate concern about the violation of human rights in pursuit of population control is examined historically and conceptually with one of the key insights of this work being that rights must be seen within a wider social and environmental context. 'Should We Control World Population?' shows that reducing population size is not only achievable while respecting human rights, but is also a necessary condition for the exercise of these rights.

Coole demonstrates the intimate connections between human numbers, environmental degradation, and social justice; making a robust argument for "population control" (subject to appropriate ethical safeguards) to be included on the political agenda.

Population policy, Coole concludes, has a significant role to play in environmental sustainability, but it can also play a part in addressing inequality more widely, including that of gender, race and class. Our collective self-preservation may in part depend on controlling our population, but it will also have positive implications for the other species with whom we share the Earth and, in a very real ecological sense, on whom we ultimately rely.

Should We Control World Population?
Diana Coole. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2018. ISBN 9781509523405 £9.99 (GBP). 140pp.



When we plan, we thrive

Wendo Aszed set up Dandelion Africa in 2010. Her mission: to raise awareness and help create sustainable solutions to improve governance, opportunity for education, sexual and reproductive health and economic livelihoods for women and youth in marginalised areas of Kenya. Population Matters is supporting one of her projects, Boys for Change, through Empower to Plan.

Tessa Dickinson interviews Wendo Aszed

TD: What motivated you to take up the issues of family planning and women's empowerment?

WA: I grew up in a small community in a place called Rom in Kenya, where girls aged between twelve and thirteen went through female genital mutilation (FGM) and were married early. So I grew up thinking that was the way it was supposed to be, the community expects it of you, and you conform because you want to be accepted in your community. I was lucky enough to get a college education, but even though I was educated I didn't have access to information about my sexual and reproductive health. By the time I was twenty-two I had two children and still hadn't heard about contraception.

TD: Why did you establish Dandelion Africa?

WA: I founded Dandelion Africa because I wanted something better for the women in my community. Many women have never heard about contraception regardless of whether they are educated or not. The moment you don't have information about your body as a woman you are vulnerable to gender-based violence and FGM. Dandelion Africa was founded to challenge this - to give women a voice. There's been a misconception that women living in rural areas are not cognisant of the fact that they need to plan their families, most women here want to be able to plan their families. At Dandelion Africa we have a holistic approach which looks at livelihood, immunisation, nutrition and water, not just contraception. A woman who can access contraceptives but has no money is a woman with just contraceptives in poverty.

TD: How do you address entrenched views?

WA: If a woman says, "I only want to have three children" her husband will respond "I am the one who decides the number of children you will have." Men are the decision makers in our communities and families, so we must educate our young men to understand that sexual and reproductive health is a right for all women, and that when we plan, we thrive. We use youth peer-to-peer education: 18-24 year olds go into schools and talk about issues like sexuality, sexual reproductive health and rights, FGM, nutrition and how to look after yourself - especially if you are married and pregnant as a child or young teenager. We see dramatic changes when youth talk to fellow youth (p6).

TD: How does your work help to address poverty?

WA: Sexual reproductive health and poverty are so interlinked that if you don't address one then the other will never be addressed either. The larger the families, the more pressure there is on limited resources; many girls drop out of school because parents prioritise their sons' education. These girls are married young and start having babies aged fifteen or sixteen - it's a never-ending cycle of poverty when the families are large.

TD: What role can organisations like Population Matters play?

WA: Kenya's population has grown from over 40 million in 2011 to around 50 million to date. Poverty is increasing.



It's a never-ending cycle when we are unable to plan our families because we lack information, and we're unable to get information because we are too poor. This is why organisations like Population Matters (PM) and Chase Africa (CA) in partnership with Dandelion Africa have to disseminate the information and provide education. You give us the space to think outside the box, to be innovative and look at the bigger picture.

TD: Why is family planning important for the environment?

WA: Kenya is becoming a desert. There's pressure on the environment because we use charcoal and firewood. The larger the family, the more it consumes. There's no provision to plant trees because trees cost money. If nothing is done soon there won't be any resources left. Communities are beginning to realise that it's better for the eco-system around them if they have a smaller families.

TD: Are things changing?

WA: Yes! If you look at our community now compared to three years ago you can see many changes. Last year we gave contraception and information to 35,000 women and provided other services to 100,000 other people, namely children, youths and men. We have been reaching women in their mid- twenties and thirties – now we're trying to reach younger women and men.

TD: What does the future look like?

WA: I see hope. More women are now informed to say "I need contraceptives! I need to have the services to control my life. I need to have time for productive work to be able to make money!" Kenya has a very young population: 48% are below 19 years old. It's a population bomb waiting to happen if we don't provide the information needed.

TD: What difference does support from Population Matters make?

WA: PM and CA fund our medical outreaches, taking contraception to hard to reach communities. People ask where is the government, where are the hospitals? They are too far away and the roads are non-existent. Most women don't have time to walk the twenty kilometres to the nearest facility, nor do they have the money, because even though Kenya states that contraceptives are free – when you go to a clinic you have to pay.

Family Planning In Rural Kenya – Lomola B Three Years On

Steve Bown, Population Matters Trustee

In [2015, I visited the village of Lomola B with Dandelion Africa](#) who were providing general medical and family planning services in remote areas of Kenya; I revisited Lomola B in 2018. The changes were a delight to see, particularly amongst the local women. They were so much happier and had considerably improved their quality of life. In 2015 most women had several small children. Looking after them consumed all their time. In 2018, there were far fewer infants. The number of new children registering at the local kindergarten had fallen from 90 to 30. With free and convenient access to family planning, many women now have time to earn some money. In 2015, I attended a meeting in the partially built clinic to discuss how it would be run. Many of the villagers crowded in. The front row was made up of mothers breastfeeding tiny babies. A local person was being trained as a community health volunteer to provide basic health care and to support the Dandelion mobile clinic days. Another young man had come back to the village having completed a course on public health. When I revisited the clinic in 2018 I asked the women to put their hands up if they felt that life was better than 3 years ago. Every hand shot up, with many big smiles.

In 2015, a school was being built. The existing classrooms were very basic. The new school is impressive and provides primary education (up to the equivalent of UK year 8), with a separate classroom for each year. In 2015, the only source of water was a hill top lake, shared with the animals, 20 minutes from the village. Recently, a large fresh water tank has been installed at the school, refilled by tanker every 2-3 weeks. The speed of change in this area has been extraordinary.

The director of Dandelion, Wendo Aszed, grew up in this community – her philosophy is always to help people help themselves. She also runs health and sex education courses for teenagers which you can support through [Empower to Plan \(p6\)](#).





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