

POPULATION MATTERS

Issue 39 Autumn 2021

Every step counts

Moving towards a better world by empowering local communities across the globe

We can change the world

Meet our amazing and inspirational 2021 Change Champions

The Choice Manifesto

Celebrating positive choices for people and planet



ISSN 2053-0412 (Print) ISSN 2053-0420 (Online)

#MAKEITPOSSIBLE

Contents

About us

Population Matters is a UK-based charity working globally to achieve our vision of humanity co-existing in harmony with nature and prospering on a healthy planet. We drive positive action through fostering choices that will help achieve a sustainable human population and regenerate our environment. We promote positive, practical, ethical solutions – encouraging people to choose smaller families and inspiring people to consume sustainably – to enable everyone to enjoy a decent quality of life whilst sustaining the natural ecosystems upon which all life depends. We support human rights, women's empowerment and global justice.

Population Matters is a registered charity in England and Wales (1114109) and a company limited by guarantee in England (3019081) registered address 135-137 Station Road, London, E4 6AG. Population Matters is the working name of the Optimum Population Trust Registered trademark.

Magazine

Printed in the UK by Jamm Print & Productions using vegetable-based inks on 100% recycled paper.

Design, infographics & illustrations: Miller Design

Editor: Anna Harris

Cover image: Forest walk: Women for Conservation, Colombia

Population Matters Magazine is produced twice a year by Population Matters, 135-137 Station Road, London E4 6AG

Registered charity: 1114109 Tel: 020 8123 9116
For further information, e-versions and back copies log onto populationmatters.org/members-magazine

Stay connected

populationmatters.org

[PopulationMatters](https://www.facebook.com/PopulationMatters)

[PopnMatters](https://www.instagram.com/PopnMatters)

[popnmatters](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCp0matters)

[PopulationMatters](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCp0matters)

t: 020 8123 9116

e: enquiries@populationmatters.org

ed: magazine.editor@populationmatters.org

a: 135-137 Station Road, London E4 6AG

WORLD
POPULATION
THIS ISSUE:
7,894,970,000

WHEN YOU HAVE FINISHED READING
THIS MAGAZINE PLEASE RECYCLE IT
BY PASSING IT ON

3 From the Director

Robin Maynard looks at how the media still refuses to address the population issue and why courageous voices deserve to have their stories told.

4 News round-up

Population news stories, Earth Overshoot Day, and a special message to our supporters.

6 PM Change Champions

Our new awards recognise those who are shining a light on the issues surrounding unsustainable human population.

9 Why I choose to be childfree

London Group campaigner, Radhika Sivarajan, shares the personal experiences that have shaped her choice.

10 The Choice Manifesto

Empowering people to have the freedom to choose small families. Plus, view snapshots from our Global Small Family album.

12 There's no Plan(et) B

PM's Olivia Nater urges those in power to confront the key issues and adopt achievable, positive solutions.

13 Pushing for change

PM's Andrew Howard outlines our work to propel population up the biodiversity agenda.

14 Procreation for the nation

PM's startling report on Poland's pronatalist agenda – and the fight back.

15 Grassroots action, tangible change

Empower to Plan partner, Family Medical Point, is changing community attitudes towards family planning.

16 Access all areas

Find out what goes on behind the scenes at Population Matters.

18 Will 2050 be a year to celebrate?

What will the world be like in 30 years? Can you help us make a better future possible, for people and planet?

19 Q&A with Sara Inés Lara

The founder and Executive Director of Women for Conservation, Colombia, explains the organisation's work and its future plans as a new Empower to Plan partner.



10



14



15



19

From the Director

While the media seems content giving airtime to billionaire space barons, it's neglecting important stories that directly impact on people and planet – stories that we're proud to feature in this issue.



"It doesn't make sense that we don't talk about population growth" is a phrase on my lips almost every day in some context or other, frequently when listening to BBC Radio 4's flagship morning news programme, *Today*.

I'm still waiting for a response as to whether – as part of their recent series highlighting the top, available actions individuals can take to cut their carbon footprint – the *Today* programme will include the powerful, personal choice open to most (but not all) people in rich, developed, high consuming countries like the UK to have a smaller family or indeed be childfree. I'm not holding my breath for a reply. A former colleague, who works within the corporation, sympathised with my frustration, referring to a psychological, institutional block: "Population is really hard for western meejah."

NOT JUST TALK, ACTION

Well, they make it hard for themselves by holding on to outdated perceptions and ignorant assumptions as to who, where and how many of their potential global audience want not just to talk about population, but to see international, national and individual action on the issue. As readers will find in this edition, the opening quote is not mine, but that of Sara Inés Lara of Women for Conservation, our latest Empower to Plan partner, meeting the demand for family planning and reproductive choice in parallel with conservation training

To raise the issue of population, family size and women's choice in communities and countries where traditional values, patriarchal religions and nationalistic governments hold sway, takes courage.

amongst the 'megadiverse', but under pressure, rainforest communities of her native Colombia.

Closer to home, it's the pronatalist, anti-choice regime of Poland's 'Law and Justice' party that's suppressing open dialogue about women's rights, choice over whether to have children or not (apparently something only the male-led Catholic Church can pronounce on), and, via an Orwellian Ministry of Truth draft of a sex education curriculum that uses the word sex only twice! The courageous work of our upcoming partner, Ponton, in pushing back against such regressive forces is another story deserving of greater media attention.

To raise the issue of population, family size and women's choice in communities and countries where traditional values, patriarchal religions and nationalistic governments hold sway, takes courage – and we celebrate those brave individuals, activists and organisations through our World Population Day, 'Change

Champion' awards. We also acknowledge our supporters from across the world, who put themselves forward as people who have chosen to have a smaller family or to be childfree. Individuals such as Radikha Sivarajan of our London Group, who, having seen the deforestation of the Keralan rainforests where she grew up due to population pressure, and whose mother prioritised her and her sister's education, has made that conscious choice.

BALANCE AND BIODIVERSITY

This single issue of our magazine showcases a wealth of inspiring human stories, with people recognising the need to balance our population within the limits of our Earth and sustain its incredible biodiversity. A conjunction of the human right and need for conscious choice over our fertility with the imperative to halt what scientists have described in peer-reviewed, published papers as 'biological collapse.' PM's biodiversity campaign has been pushing this conjunction and the benefits to people and planet of addressing it through our lobbying of policymakers at the national and international level.

ADDRESSING INEQUALITIES

The money needed to end the worst gender inequalities globally, and so address the unmet need for contraception, enabling hundreds of millions of women globally to choose to have fewer or no children is, as Olivia Nater points out on page 12, about the same as Amazon founder Jeff Bezos's estimated fortune. The self-promoting 'space baron', who blew \$5.5 billion just for five minutes in space, garnered more airtime from the BBC and the world's media than all the stories above combined, despite their much greater, direct impacts on people and planet. It's about time the media served ecological, not egotistical, needs.

Robin Maynard

Director, Population Matters



Population Matters news round-up

Young people considering smaller families to protect the planet

A new opinion poll by Population Matters has found that almost a third of people aged between 18 and 24 say concerns about the environment have made them want to have fewer or no children. In the 25 to 34-year-old group, around a quarter have the same views.

In an important sign that the value of smaller families in protecting the environment is being increasingly understood, 31% in the 18 to 24-year-old age bracket said that concern around the environmental effects of having children, such as the carbon emissions they may produce, is influencing their decision to have small families or to choose to be childfree.

Shockingly, the Yonder poll of more than 4,000 UK adults revealed that more than half of 18 to 35-year-old women who have chosen to be childfree

feel they're judged negatively for their choice (54%).

Childfree Jenny Chapman says: "We hear a lot about the positive impacts of choosing plant-based diets, cycling, and giving up flying – that's all really good but the impact of having children dwarfs these choices. I'm so lucky that I've been able to make the very personal decision to be childfree, although being called selfish continues to baffle me." Among men of the same age who have made the same decision, only a fifth (21%) felt they had been judged negatively.

Commenting on the results, PM Director Robin Maynard said: "It's deeply disappointing to hear that the childfree and parents of one child still face criticism and negativity. Having one



Photo by billow926 on Unsplash

fewer child is the top eco-action for taking the heat off our planet and securing a better future for children everywhere."

[Turn to pages 10-11 for details of our Choice Manifesto >>](#)

The world is not enough...



Population Matters marked this year's Earth Overshoot Day with a vibrant event in London's Trafalgar Square. Our giant Earth balloons were accompanied by a stark message: from today, we need two Earths.

Earth Overshoot Day marks the date when humanity's demand for ecological resources in a given year exceeds what Earth can regenerate in that year. The earlier it falls in the year, the more of Earth's resources we are using up. Last year, there was a 10% contraction

in footprint over the previous year due to coronavirus lockdowns, and the date fell on 17 August. This year, it fell on 29 July, revealing no real progress on sustainability as the world returns to 'normal'.

"Earth Overshoot

Day highlights the need for strategies that increase resilience for all," says Global Footprint Network CEO and Population Matters Expert Advisor Laurel Hanscom. The organisation calculates that if every other family had just one fewer child and motherhood was postponed by two years, then, by 2050, Overshoot Day would be moved back by 49 days because there would be two billion fewer of us than predicted.

[For more on our response to Earth Overshoot Day, see page 12 >>](#)

Earth Overshoot Day by numbers

121%

increase in world population since 1970

-68%

decline in average population size of vertebrate species since 1970

61%

of humanity's Ecological Footprint is carbon

1.7

The number of Earths, in terms of ecological resources, humanity is currently using

19

The number of years of zero natural resource use it would take to reverse the damage we've caused through our overuse

2050

If we #MoveTheDate by five days each year, humanity would be using less than one planet within 30 years

Source: overshootday.com

CORRECTION: In the spring edition of *Population Matters*, we stated that "60% of all mammal species on the planet are farm animals and 70% of all bird species on Earth are farmed poultry". To clarify, the latest findings state that 60% of all mammalian weight on Earth is made up of livestock, mostly cattle and pigs, 36% is humans and just 4% is wild animals.

Code red for humanity – but key solutions still not addressed

Photo by Karsten Winegeart on Unsplash



The latest major UN climate report has issued a dire warning about the worsening climate crisis. With the UN Secretary-General calling it a “code red for humanity”, the report highlights the undeniable human impact upon our planet and shows we must

drastically cut emissions to avert catastrophic warming.

Previous reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change have explicitly stated that population growth is one of the most important drivers of increases in CO2 emissions from fossil fuel combustion – and that potential high population growth was a key impediment to hitting the critical target of limiting global warming to 1.5°C.

[Find out how we're pushing population up the biodiversity agenda on page 13 >>](#)

“The real reason everything is happening is there's too many people. The planet can't sustain seven billion, let alone 10 billion. It's such a complex problem.”

Actor William Shatner on why 'Humanity won't survive to reach a Star Trek future', featured in *The Big Issue*, 17 July 2021

Child brides in the USA

Photo by Ivan Jevtic on Unsplash



Since 2000, nearly 300,000 girls – some as young as 10 – have legally been married in the United States, according to a new report by Unchained At Last, an organisation which combats forced and child marriage in the US.

Equality Now, which works to achieve legal and systemic change to address violence and discrimination against women and girls, reports that child marriage is currently legal in 44 states. Only Delaware, Minnesota, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island have set the minimum age at 18. What's more, 20 US states do not require any minimum age for marriage if there's a parental or judicial waiver.

PM's Outreach Coordinator, Florence Blondel, says: “To attain the UN Sustainable Development Goal number 5, ‘achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls’, the world, developed and developing, must end child marriage as well as early and forced marriage. Wealthy nations such as the US have no excuse for inaction.”

A message to our supporters

As our 30th anniversary year comes to a close, it feels like the right time to reiterate what we stand for and exactly why we're here...



■ We believe that population is one of the most important, but neglected, contributors to almost all of the major problems facing us today. In particular, that means the multiple environmental threats our planet faces, but an unsustainable population also contributes to poverty, conflict, resource depletion and a poorer quality of life for many people.

■ Action to address a global population of 7.8 billion people and growing will help people, the living things around us and the planet we live on. That action is simple, positive, and improves people's lives: lifting people out of poverty, providing education, empowering women and girls, providing modern family planning to all and promoting the choice to have a smaller family.

■ Addressing population is not the only solution to the challenges we face. There is much else that needs to be done – but adding ever more people to the billions already here makes each of those other solutions harder to achieve.

■ The role of Population Matters is to spread that message, encourage smaller families, and ensure that positive, ethical, and empowering action to achieve a sustainable population happens.

Thank you for your continued support and for helping us work towards a just world, in which everyone has a decent standard of life and the opportunities they deserve, and the natural world is healthy and flourishing. If you'd like to find out more, watch the short film **Population Matters: What we do** on youtu.be/FwZ1vcNOLQc

Spread the word – Population Matters!

Emblazoned with the Population Matters logo and thought-provoking messages, our range of t-shirts, sweats, and accessories, which are ethically made in a wind-powered factory, will help stir up conversations about the impact of population on the planet.

Browse the PM shop and check out the full range at populationmatters.teemill.com



MEET OUR 2021 CHANGE CHAMPIONS

To mark this year's World Population Day, we gave awards to individuals and organisations whose work shines a light on the issues surrounding unsustainable human population.

WOMEN'S CHAMPION WENDO ASZED

Wendo is the founder and Executive Director of Dandelion Africa, a grassroots organisation based in Kenya that focuses on women's health and economic empowerment. Dandelion Africa has several highly successful initiatives, including its 'Boys for Change' and 'Girls for Leaders' programmes, which encourage young people to embrace gender equity and sexual and reproductive health needs and rights (SRHR) services.



"Thank you, Population Matters, for this award, it means a lot to me and the community we serve. Women in rural areas face socio-cultural barriers that influences their utilisation of SRHR services. The world is changing and so must the options women have in ensuring they get the highest standards of health attainable. Reproductive health, for us, is not an option, it is a priority."

Wendo Aszed



FAMILY CHOICE CHAMPION EMMA GANNON

Emma is a *Sunday Times* bestselling author, speaker, novelist and award-winning host of the podcast *Ctrl Alt Delete*, which has reached almost 10 million downloads. Her debut novel, *OLIVE*, challenges the assumption that all women should follow the same path and celebrates the childfree choice.



"I wrote *OLIVE* as a way to connect with all the women in my life and those who may read the book: the women who choose to be mothers, the women who long to be mothers, the women who aren't sure and the women who don't want to be mothers at all. I am thrilled to be receiving this award by Population Matters, I'm in awe of the work they do in bringing important themes to the forefront of conversation."

Emma Gannon

Every 7 July, the annual UN's World Population Day aims to focus attention on the urgency and importance of population issues and globally beneficial solutions – and it's an event that Population Matters enthusiastically supports.

In recent years we've delivered a range of activities – from driving a truck-mounted mobile digital display of the live 'population clock' around

the streets of London, to running events in three continents – in Lagos, Nigeria, London, UK and New York, USA – and producing a report and video on the crucial links between population and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

For 2021, we launched something new – our **Change Champion Awards** – to acknowledge inspiring change-makers for their progressive, effective

and brave work promoting reproductive rights, the empowerment of girls and women, defending the environment, and enlightening the public about the challenges we face.

Our winners each received a uniquely designed award plus a £500 donation for the charity or cause of their choice. So, without further ado, we're delighted to present our inspirational Change Champions 2021...



YOUNG CAMPAIGNER NATSIRAISHE MARITSA

Natsiraishe is an inspirational 17-year-old taekwondo enthusiast who is fighting child marriage in her small Zimbabwean village. She teaches underage girls taekwondo to build their confidence and hosts discussions to warn her community of the harms of child marriage to discourage girls from getting married early.

"I am humbled and overwhelmed. It is an honour to be a recipient of this award. I appreciate this gesture greatly – it motivates and inspires me and makes me feel that I am not alone in this journey of bringing a change to human attitude. My chief aim is to see girls getting educated and empowered with life skills."

Natsiraishe Maritsa

MEDIA STORY KOHINUR KHYUM TITHILA

Tithila is a journalist and writer for the *Dhaka Tribune* and *Ms. Magazine*. Her article – *I'm a Bangladeshi woman who decided to be child-free. We exist* – confronts the stigma against childfree women.

"For too long, patriarchy has been telling us that we are 'less of a woman' if we do not give birth. I wanted to challenge this idea. Women opting out from motherhood are not emotionally stunted, not ripping apart the fabric of the society and not pushing the human race to extinction. I know Population Matters seeks to celebrate the choice to have a small family and be childfree and this award means a lot to me."

Kohinur Khyum Tithila



SHINING A LIGHT 8 BILLION ANGELS

8 Billion Angels is a feature-length documentary, filmed across the world, and produced by PM life member Terry Spahr. Its central theme is explaining the population problem and looking at positive solutions.

"Producing this film was a way for me to not only raise awareness and understanding about the devastating environmental and social impacts of unsustainable population growth, but to also promote uplifting 'solutions', including embracing small families, empowering women and educating girls. Population Matters was an inspiration and source of support throughout my journey and I look forward to working with them long into the future."

Terry Spahr

EARTH CHAMPION KOMB GREEN SOLUTIONS

KOMB GREEN Solutions is a community-based organisation located in Korogocho, Nairobi, Kenya. Korogocho is home to up to 200,000 people and is one of the largest slum neighbourhoods in the area. The team was formed in 2017 by young people who wanted to turn their back on crime after 50 of their peers lost their lives to mob justice, gunfights, and police killings. It specialises in cleaning up the Nairobi River and building safe green spaces for the community, along with conducting outreach activities and helping prevent unwanted pregnancies by distributing free condoms.

The restoration of the riverbanks entailed removing solid and human waste that had piled up for nearly 20 years. It took a year to remove and the team then planted grass and bamboo trees. The 'People's Park', opened in 2018, is the only resident-initiated green zone along the Nairobi River. In partnership with Nairobi City County Environment Department, KOMB GREEN is developing initiatives to help people stop pollution, including building septic tanks, and increasing the area of river restoration.



"Receiving this Earth Champion award means we, as KOMB GREEN, now have an obligation to continue to learn and grow within and beyond our professional development in taking care of our Mother Nature. This award means that our efforts towards environmental conservation are being recognised worldwide through Population Matters. It will energise us to do more, to continue to reach for the stars, and to set our eyes on our next goal: to make the environment a comfortable place for the generation to come."

KOMB GREEN Solutions



ONLINE CAMPAIGN GLOBAL FOOTPRINT NETWORK

The GFN's Footprint Calculator is a science-based online tool that allows everyone to calculate their ecological footprint and find out how many planets would be required if all 7.8 billion of us shared their lifestyle. This eye-opening tool not only confronts people with the truth about our critical environmental situation, but also gently encourages everyone to take positive action to shrink their personal footprint. Pictured are Chief Science Officer David Lin and CEO Laurel Hanscom.



POPULATION MATTERS SUPPORTER STELLA WRIGHT

We could not hand out awards without acknowledging our amazing supporters. Stella Wright is a member of PM's London Group whom we applaud for her contributions, especially her work on the group's social media channels and her interview with our President, Jonathon Porritt, about his long career as an activist and campaigner, featured in the spring issue of the *Population Matters* magazine.



SPECIAL AWARD THE DUKE AND DUCHESS OF SUSSEX

In choosing and publicly declaring their intention to limit their family to two – first mentioned by the Duke in his *Vogue* interview with PM patron Dame Jane Goodall in 2019 – the Duke and Duchess are helping to ensure a better future for their children and normalising the choice to have a smaller family. Our award recognises the couple for taking this enlightened decision, and for its effect in helping to bring the relationship between family size and environment into public debate.

Photo Northern Ireland Office CC

“The philosophy of PM resonated with us”

Campaigner with PM’s London Group, **Radhika Sivarajan**, explains why her personal experiences have shaped her decision to be childfree.

I grew up in Kerala, India, and I am a Dalit, belonging to the lowest social group of the Hindu caste system. The Dalits population is more than 200 million, and the caste system dates back over 2,000 years. The abolition of caste-based untouchability in India in 1950 has not taken away the discrimination against Dalits. Even today there remains much prejudice to the extent that career progression is blocked, and most Dalits do not receive higher education. Caste atrocities are regular occurrences in different parts of the country and range from social exclusion, untouchability, murder, physical assault, rape, and sexual abuse.

EDUCATION AND OPPORTUNITY

However, despite being Dalit, my mother was educated. She was determined to limit her family to two children so that they might have the opportunity to receive a good education themselves. She became a schoolteacher, which also gave us a chance to rise out of poverty. My sister and I were fortunate to be educated to degree level, and my sister has a master’s degree. I met my husband in Kerala, and we married there nine years ago. We both work as software engineers. We moved to the USA in 2014 and then to London in 2018.

“My mother was determined to limit her family to two children so that they might have the opportunity to receive a good education.”

POPULATION AND BIODIVERSITY

My childhood was spent in the middle of a tropical forest district called Idukki in Kerala. It lies in the Western Ghats mountain range, which runs parallel to the western coast of the Indian peninsula and is one of the world’s top 10 biodiversity hotspots.

However, over recent decades, this area has experienced heavy deforestation for infrastructural and developmental activities to support the increasing local population.

According to the World Wildlife Fund’s *Living Planet Report*, approximately 50% of the forest area has been lost since 1973, including wetland. As a result, 84% of wetland species are estimated to have become extinct. By 2012, the place I grew up in had become a city with the population increasing and wildlife numbers dwindling. Witnessing such



enormous biodiversity loss due to population growth and urbanisation had a huge impact on me.

MY CHILDFREE CHOICE

I read an article on ‘*Reproduction and the carbon legacies of individuals*’ by Paul A Murtaugh and Michael G Schlax of Oregon State University, which further influenced me not to have children – a decision that my husband and I took jointly. My husband and I had already decided to be childfree due to concern over the future – knowing the impact of reproduction on climate change solidified our decision.

My father passed away and both my mother and my sister support our decision. However, many Indian friends and extended family consider my decision is indicative of not wanting to become a fully responsible adult, or else they assume that I am child-free due to fertility problems. I’ve even had people ask me who will look after me when I am older, as if the only reason to have children is to provide healthcare in later life. I always respond that I married for companionship and romance, and no one can really argue with such an answer!

DISCOVERING POPULATION MATTERS

My husband first met Martin Earl (Coordinator of Population Matters, London) outside Birkbeck College, distributing leaflets, and became very interested. The philosophy of Population Matters to have smaller families as one of the resistance measures against climate change resonated with us. Encouragingly, since I joined in 2018, the group has started to interest younger members. We’ve also introduced social media and we’re planning to use this to further strengthen the appeal to, and involvement of, younger people.

FIND OUT MORE

The London group now has 600 members and runs stalls at various fairs as well as events in central London and zoom meetings in support of Population Matters’ campaigns. To find out more, email londongroup@populationmatters.org



WHAT DOES FAMILY MEAN TO YOU?

PM's new **Choice Manifesto** is a celebration of positive choices about the size of our families – and a statement of support for those who don't yet have the freedom to choose.

'Family' is a word that can have many different meanings. People have all sorts of ways of defining what a family is – it could be your legal or blood relations, close friends, and even your pets. As the old saying goes: 'Family is what you make it'.

Of course, it's this freedom of choice that's key. And, while many people on the planet can choose the way their family is structured and defined, that opportunity is still denied to

millions. It's for this reason that Population Matters has created the Choice Manifesto.

We want to spread the message that what sort of family we have is a deeply personal choice, that everyone has the right to make freely, without coercion or judgement. And that when we make informed choices, such as having smaller families, we also have the opportunity to help protect our precious planet.



Snapshots from our Global Small Family album

We're also building a Global Small Family photo album to show that 'family' has many definitions. Here are just a few of the people around the world who've signed up and shared their story about what their family means to them.



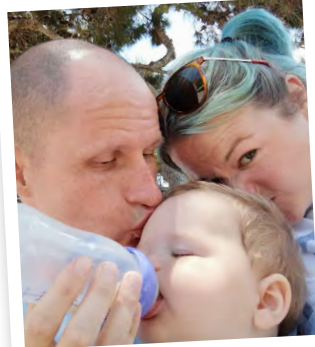
Natalija, The Netherlands

"Even though my husband and I both absolutely adore kids and are in privileged situation to be able to have more, we've decided to have only one. The world is heavily overpopulated and those of us privileged with the freedom to choose should make sure that our choices are responsible."



Asha, USA

"While I absolutely love children, I decided not to have my own. Not having children is the biggest gift I can give to ensure the existence of wildlife and our beautiful planet Earth. In addition, I can live my life to the max without fear or reservation."



Jillian, Malta

"We have chosen to have one child for many reasons including the impact we have on the planet, as well as having more finances to dedicate to the future of our child and to protect our mental health as a family – being a parent is tough!"



Tasha, USA

"My husband was a foster child and we both have successful careers. When asked why we've chosen to be childfree, I reply: 'We have a population problem and want to reduce our carbon footprint'. If they say: 'What if your child can make a difference?' I say: 'There are no guarantees, but by choosing not to have children, that's my guarantee'."

The Choice Manifesto

We believe that:

- All relationships should be healthy and consensual.
- Everyone should be free to receive modern sexual and reproductive healthcare.
- Everybody must be free to choose if and when to have children.
- The choices we make about having children matter for the future of all of us.
- There's more than one kind of family, and people can define theirs however they wish.

The single most effective measure any individual in the developed world can take to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions over the long-term is to have one fewer child

By signing up, you're showing your commitment to:

- Supporting the empowerment of women and communities that don't have the opportunity or the freedom to make choices about family size.
- Celebrating and supporting the choice to have a small biological family to help humanity live in harmony with nature.
- Making informed and considered choices about whether to have children and, if you choose to do so, how many children to have.

Join the growing family of people around the world who have committed to planning for a small family size and empowering others to have the same freedom of choice. To sign and share our **Choice Manifesto**, using the hashtags **#GlobalSmallFamily** and **#ChoiceMatters**, visit populationmatters.org/join-global-family



Gregory, UK

"Having one child means that there's time for us as a couple as well as our children. We're able to give our child more in terms of time than we would be able to if we had more children – and the bond between the three of us often draws comment. We're also able to afford to buy more sustainable foods and fuels."

Craig, USA

"My father lectured about overpopulation when I was a kid back in the 1960s and 1970s. I am an only child, and had an absolutely wonderful, low-stress childhood. My wife and I never considered having more than one child. When I was a kid, the skies were filled with butterflies and birds, both of which have plummeted in numbers. I believe for kids today to have a world worth living in, the kindest and most loving gift we can give, is the decision to either be childfree, or have no more than one child."



Becca, Wales

"I've got two hands and two children, so, even if it's just me with them, I've always been able to keep them safe and close. There's enough time in the week for them to have their own interests and for me to take them to the activities that they want to do, and still have time for myself."



Alma, Kazakhstan

"I'm raising my daughter alone. I choose a small and happy family where everyone has their own time. We are responsible for future descendants – we will leave, and all the hardships and problems will remain for them."



Chinnamani, India

"We decided on a childless marriage. If needed, we are open for adoption. We don't like to add pressure by bringing one more life through us."



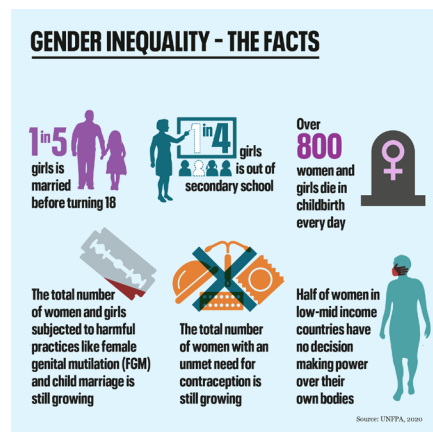
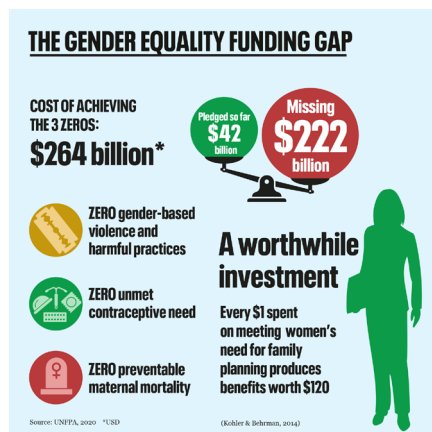
Gayle, UK

"I'm childfree by choice. My family is just me and my cat, Greebo, and I'm happy with that."



Despite urgent calls to avoid a return to our destructive pre-pandemic status quo, we're still hurtling in the wrong direction. It's high time for those in power to confront the uncomfortable truth and address the solutions, urges PM's **Olivia Nater**.

There's no Plan(et) B – but there are solutions



Our action in Trafalgar Square on Earth Overshoot Day (see page 4) was to draw attention to the fact that, on 29 July 2021, humanity had already used up all the natural resources the Earth can regenerate within a year. This is a stark reminder that our relationship with nature is fundamentally broken.

A SHORT-LIVED REPRIEVE

Since the first Overshoot Day on 30 December 1970, the date has consistently fallen ever earlier, reflecting our growing population and consumption levels. Last year was an outlier, however. With the global-scale decrease in human activity due to Covid-19 offering a temporary reprieve for nature, Overshoot Day was on 22 August 2020 – almost a month later compared to 2019 – meaning we briefly, and inadvertently, moved a little closer to living within our planetary boundaries.

Despite all the calls from the environmental movement to seize this opportunity to 'build back better' we have sadly, yet predictably, gone back to moving further into the red. This is particularly ironic when you consider that the way we treat nature is the reason we ended up with such a disastrous pandemic in the first place.

THREE PLANETS BY 2050

We essentially need two planets to sustain humanity in its current state. If we continue on our current trajectory, we'll need three planets by 2050. Despite some megalomaniac tech billionaires' obsession with the idea of colonising new planets, there's no other capable of supporting Terrans (Earth's inhabitants) within any reasonable distance of our solar system, if at all. The only true – yet unpalatable to our growth-obsessed society – solution is to cut back. When we entered overshoot in 1970, our population was less than half as big as it is today, and consumption levels were significantly lower. Meeting the UN's crucial Sustainable Development Goal of ending poverty will mean consumption in large parts of the world needs to increase. Returning to sustainability therefore requires ending and reversing population growth, and dramatically changing the way we live in overconsuming wealthy nations.

The latter includes redesigning cities and downsizing homes, reducing meat and energy consumption, flying and driving less, and buying less stuff. Industry needs to play its part too, by decarbonising, reducing pollutants and improving efficiency.

NEGLECTED SOLUTIONS

Giving up things we take for granted is not popular, and the population issue is also widely avoided, despite the available

positive and highly effective solutions, especially the empowerment of women and girls (also a UN Sustainable Development Goal). When women are free to use contraception, pursue education and a life of their choosing, they have fewer children.

Yet, despite the tremendous knock-on benefits of advancing women's rights, this crucial step is horribly neglected and underfunded. According to the UN, only 16% of the funding needed to end the worst gender inequalities – including child marriage, gender-based violence and the unmet need for family planning – has been pledged. The missing amount is \$222 billion USD, which sounds like a lot, but is less than a sixth of annual global military spending and close to Amazon Founder Jeff Bezos' net worth – the man

who recently spent \$5.5 billion on a casual four-minute space flight. Jeff, Elon (Musk) and Richard (Branson) please heed this message – there's no Plan(et) B, but investing in women's rights really would be one giant leap for humankind.

“When women are free to use contraception and pursue quality education and a life of their choosing, they have fewer children. Despite the tremendous knock-on benefits of advancing women's rights, this crucial step is horribly neglected and underfunded.”

FIND OUT MORE

Choosing a small family and consuming sustainably are the most important choices you can make to help conserve resources and protect the environment, but there are many other ways you can help. Be inspired by visiting populationmatters.org/what-else



PM tackling biodiversity loss on multiple fronts

Scientists have established that we're in the middle of a sixth mass extinction driven by human activity. PM's **Andrew Howard** looks at slow but tangible progress in recognising the need to tackle population growth to address this unfolding disaster.

Over recent years, numerous authoritative scientific papers, reports and reviews have identified human population growth as an indirect driver of biodiversity loss. While other factors also contribute and must be addressed, not least unsustainable consumption patterns, addressing population must form a critical part of the package of solutions. However, given the biodiversity crisis we face, the translation of this strong scientific evidence into policy at national and international levels has not seen the progress it warrants. Yet PM's advocacy work on the population factor has made inroads in several significant areas.

NEW INTERNATIONAL BIODIVERSITY PLAN

The failure to address population under the 2010 United Nations Aichi Biodiversity Targets, which expired in 2020, undoubtedly contributed to the failure to achieve any of the 20 targets. It's therefore helpful that the draft *Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework*, the international plan published in July to combat biodiversity loss, recognises that future success will depend on addressing the full range of direct and indirect drivers. Without mentioning the population factor directly, the plan refers to a major scientific report of 2019 which itemised population growth as an indirect driver.

UK PARLIAMENT REPORT

In late June, the influential Environmental Audit Committee (EAC) in the UK Parliament published its report, *Biodiversity in the UK: bloom or bust?*, which refers directly to evidence submitted by PM. Calling on the UK

Government to do more to address the population issue, the report states that humanity's demands on the biosphere are also related to human population numbers. The EAC report leans heavily on the findings of *The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review*, a report commissioned by the UK Treasury from leading economist and PM Patron, Sir Partha Dasgupta, which we wrote about in the spring edition of *Population Matters*. Published in February 2021, it called for "transformative change" in our consumption patterns and addressed the issue of growing human populations having significant implications for our demands on biodiversity.

EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

The EAC report also explicitly highlighted PM's view that empowering women and girls to make choices about their bodies and their lives through the provision of voluntary, human rights-based, modern family planning enhances people lives and benefits the Earth and its biodiversity. Backing a major PM campaign call, the report also called on the UK Government to reverse its harmful cut to overseas aid for family planning.

In a policy submission in July to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity on its draft *Gender Plan of Action* (GPA), PM urged that the GPA address the importance of access to voluntary, human rights-based, modern family planning services, if it is to support the gender-responsive implementation of the *Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework*.

BIODIVERSITY IN EUROPE

In June, PM submitted written evidence to the consultation on the International



WAKING UP TO REALITY?

■ Are people in power finally waking up to the impact of population and the fact that the main force altering the planet is us? Encouragingly, the UK Parliament's Environmental Audit Committee report, June 2021, stated: "Humanity's demands on the biosphere are also related to human population numbers."

■ Driven by our rapid population and economic growth, habitat loss and overexploitation of natural resources are the primary causes of biodiversity loss – which is now happening up to a thousand times faster than for millions of years before.

■ The Earth's plants and animals have continued to evolve over the 65 million years since the last mass extinction. But many scientists consider the huge reduction in biodiversity since the emergence of humans is now on the scale of another mass extinction. This is known as the Anthropocene or sixth mass extinction.

■ WWF's *Living Planet Report* estimates that we've lost 68% of all vertebrate wildlife populations since 1970. During that time, our population has more than doubled, to over 7.8 billion today.

Union for the Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) draft *European Work Programme 2021 – 2024*. As a new member of the IUCN, it was gratifying for PM to hear that the IUCN European Regional Office has accepted that population must be taken into account in biodiversity conservation; and is going to integrate our comments into the next draft. PM stands ready to assist with this encouraging development.

Wybór nie zakaz/ CHOICE NOT PROHIBITION

PM's **Catriona Spaven-Donn** and **Monica Scigliano** examine the effects of Poland's pronatalist agenda and how upcoming Empower to Plan partner, Ponton, is fighting back.



Photo by Łukasz Koneczka on Unsplash

Poland has never been a haven for sexual and reproductive rights, and, since the nationalist Law and Justice (PiS) party's ascension to power in 2015, women have faced even more hurdles. Due to large-scale emigration and a low fertility rate, Poland's population is ageing and slowly declining. PiS has exploited this situation, claiming that low birth rates are an existential threat to Polish identity and survival.

PRESERVING THE NATION THROUGH PROCREATION

Bolstered by extreme-right Catholic organisation, Ordo Iuris, the government blames Polish women, who they claim are selfishly choosing careers over their duty to preserve the nation through procreation. According to the Polish Minister of Education, Przemysław Czarnek, women should prioritise having children ahead of professional careers because that is what "God called on them to do".

In an attempt to entice women to have more children, the government spends 41 billion zlotys/£7.5 billion each year in monthly payments to parents. This has failed to significantly affect the birth rate and the country has turned to more regressive pronatalist measures.

Polish women must now obtain a prescription for emergency contraception which, in delaying the drug's administration, directly impedes its efficacy. Doctors are emboldened to abuse the conscience clause, which allows them to refuse abortions on moral grounds, to also deny provision of contraception.

And earlier this year, the government enacted a law that prohibits abortion on the grounds of foetal abnormality, which had been one of only three cases in which abortion is legal and served as the basis for 98% of all abortions.

In pursuing its pronatalist agenda, the government's education curriculum's optional sex education module, 'Preparation for Family Living', was developed by theology professors at the Catholic University of Lublin, who link contraception and masturbation to sex addiction. In direct contrast to the government's religious doctrine, the Warsaw-based Ponton Sex Educators Group is calling for an objective, fact-based education curriculum. They hold workshops and provide counselling hotlines for young people to discuss key issues such as contraception, consent, pregnancy, LGBTQI+ identities and violence prevention.

In Poland we have some of the most restrictive abortion laws in Europe and some of the worst access to contraceptives in the entire continent.

Antonina Lewandowska, Ponton sex educator

Poland's 'Stop Paedophilia' bill, if enacted, would not only outlaw sex education, but also prohibit educators, midwives, and doctors from discussing safe sex or prescribing birth control.

As an upcoming partner of PM's Empower to Plan project, the Ponton

Group is looking internationally for support. "In Poland, we are a country of reproductive absurdity. We have some of the most restrictive abortion laws in Europe and the worst access to contraceptives in the entire continent. However, things are changing," says Antonina Lewandowska, Coordinator of Astra, the region's Network for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, and Ponton volunteer sex educator. "Young people want change. And, in these dire times, having people from outside Poland who are interested and want to support us, such as Population Matters, is uplifting."

FACTS AND FIGURES

150,000 The estimated number of Polish women who travel abroad for abortions each year.*

2 The number of times the word 'sex' is mentioned in the government's new sex education curriculum.

170 The number of times the word 'family' is mentioned in the same curriculum.

18,600 people reached through Ponton's online platforms.

430,000 people attended more than 400 demonstrations across Poland in October 2020 to protest against the change in abortion law, making it one of the largest demonstrations since the Solidarity movement of the 1980s.**

Sources: * The Guardian, **CNN

In the spring edition of the magazine we introduced a new Empower to Plan partner, Family Medical Point. PM's **Catriona Spaven-Donn** provides an update on this inspiring organisation's achievements.

Grassroots action is leading to tangible change

When PM began working with Family Medical Point (FMP) at the end of last year, our crowdfunding Empower to Plan campaign raised £5,000 to help the team in Abaita Ababiri, Uganda, reach out to marginalised fishing communities along the shores of Lake Victoria. Thanks to your generous support, this not-for-profit, grassroots organisation has been undertaking vital work to enhance access to sexual and reproductive health services and combat gender-based violence.

Public health expert, founder and team leader at FMP, Moses Odongo, told us: "When FMP received the funding, we set out to generate public support among fishing communities on the uptake of family planning services and raise awareness about associated gender-based violence against women."

A TARGETED APPROACH

As Moses explains, this is a transformational change, which requires a targeted approach. He says: "Many women in fishing communities fear using contraception due to gender-based violence and negative community attitudes. PM's support has enabled us to recruit volunteers to lead community engagements. The volunteers joined men at the fishing docks and landing sites and introduced family planning



into the conversation. These non-structured discussions gave the volunteers the opportunity to listen to the myths and misconceptions that the fishermen held and respond with factual and scientifically-proven information about family planning. The volunteers also engaged women of reproductive age with information, including avenues of recourse when their rights are violated."

The FMP team also designed a campaign – *#HerChoiceHerRight* – to disseminate key messages through community radio broadcasts, t-shirts, banners, posters and brochures.

Moses adds: "It's crucial that the messages keep reaching the target and that we continue to empower the community-based champions and build influencers among the men. Our thanks go to Empower to Plan supporters and Population Matters for supporting us as we lead this community transformation."



WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES A DONATION MAKE?

■ **£5,000** was raised to support FMP in reaching **1,759** community members and **725** young people.

■ **1,425** men and **334** women were educated by FMP's community mobilisers about women's rights and the economic value of family planning for women's health, the family and community.

■ **34** peer educators were trained to work directly with village health teams and local leaders to help victims of violence. They referred **119** women to FMP for additional support, including family planning and counselling services.

■ **11,300** people were reached through FMP's community radio broadcast campaign over the course of the *#HerChoiceHerRight* project.

■ **20-30%** increase in the number of women seeking family planning services at FMP's medical centre. Local police reports indicate a drop in reported cases of gender-based violence associated with family planning.



PM's innovative scheme uses the

EMPOWER TO PLAN

power of crowdfunding to support grassroots NGOs that work to improve the lives of women, girls and communities, safeguard human rights and protect the natural world. For more details of our Empower to Plan partners, visit populationmatters.org/empower-to-plan

Population Matters –

Ever wondered what goes on behind the scenes of this small but mighty charity? Here's an insight into exactly what the PM team gets up to...

“No two days are the same and it's great to have a wide and varied role as part of the PM team,” says **Andrea Holmes, Administration Coordinator**. As well as providing support to PM Director Robin Maynard and managing his busy diary, Andrea offers admin and HR support to the wider team, organises meetings and travel arrangements, takes minutes at Board meetings and assists at PM conferences.

Keeping track of **Robin Maynard, PM Executive Director**, is no mean feat, as the man himself admits: “My day often begins reacting to an item on *Today*, the BBC's current affairs radio programme, which usually sets me off on a furious ‘Why can't they see the connection between our burgeoning human population and X, Y, Z issue?’ internal debate. Armed with a coffee, I head out to my tiny cube of a garden office and start working through my ‘To Do’ list for the day.”

RIISING TO THE CHALLENGE

While Robin finds the daily challenge of raising awareness and catalysing action on the population issue tough – “we're a small organisation, and not many others are working in our field. That means that when we campaign for changes, we're often doing it on our own” – he reveals that it's PM's extended team (based in six countries), members (4,000 and counting) and supporters (18,000 worldwide) that keeps him upbeat and focused: “Working on this ‘elephant in the room’ issue is challenging, but hugely rewarding. My days are energised by the noticeably growing public interest in our work, and the real difference PM is making, notably through our Empower to Plan projects, helping people transform their lives, livelihoods and environments globally.”

Paying tribute to the PM team, Robin says: “My role as Director is diverse and I'm fortunate to have a supporting circle of colleagues, beaver away on their own strategic areas; delivering PM's campaigns; extending our outreach; looking after our members and supporters; initiating fundraising; and



“I've witnessed the blossoming of PM from a small and committed group of volunteers with virtually no budget, to an operational team spread over three continents with a budget of £1 million.”

Julie Lewis, Head of Finance & Supporter Services

maintaining the admin systems which keep the good ship, Population Matters, steaming forwards!”

The longest serving crew member is **Julie Lewis, Head of Finance & Supporter Services**, who reveals: “I've witnessed the blossoming of PM from a small and committed group of volunteers just over 10 years ago with virtually no budget, to an operational team of full and part-time staff spread over three continents with a budget of £1 million. My role combines the financial and administrative

management of the organisation with oversight and delivery of services to supporters and members. On the finance side, this has developed from a simple book-keeping function to the preparation of accounts and an Annual Report, with a growing and diversified funding stream supporting our targeted campaigning activities, increasingly supported and underpinned by dedicated research.”

DELIVERING OUR OBJECTIVES

This extension of activities has brought with it new challenges. Julie says: “Arranging funds transfers to some of our smaller Empower to Plan partners working in remote corners of the world is time consuming, but the reward is in the genuine joy and gratitude with which the funds are received.” Julie is assisted by **Gabriel Emordi, Finance and Administration Officer**, who has 20 years' experience in the charity sector, and has been tasked with migrating the financial, banking and payroll related data into PM's new accounts system. Julie adds: “I like to think of our role as oiling the wheels of the growing and accelerating machine that is Population

this is us



Matters, facilitating the seamless delivery of our charitable objectives.”

Assisting with the smooth running of the organisation are **Supporter Services & Fundraising Database Coordinators Hannah Perl** and **Fran Box**, who check data to ensure personal details are correct, analyse surveys, respond to enquiries and send out welcome packs.

Of course, a huge part of running a successful charity is fundraising – which is looked after by **Izi Clery, Fundraising Manager**. She says: “I’m responsible for all charitable income generation – from memberships and appeal donations, to developing relationships with major donors and writing formal applications to trusts and foundations. I also plan the themes of our appeals and devise income targets, liaise with the campaigns and communications team, assist with PM’s Empower to Plan programme’s crowdfunding element, and work with Robin to develop approaches to potential funders across the world.”

GETTING THE MESSAGE ACROSS

Leading the charity’s campaigns and communicating PM’s powerful messages is the remit of **Alistair Currie, Head of Campaigns and Communications**. Whether that’s encouraging people to choose smaller families or pushing the UK government to give more aid for family planning, Alistair’s role is to get the message across. He says: “I’m responsible for ensuring our communications get as many people as possible, interested in and engaged with what we do – whether that’s a politician in London, a schoolgirl in the Philippines visiting our website, or a reporter wanting an interview on climate change. I also manage relationships with the media – sometimes a call from a key journalist on a short deadline can throw your plans for the day out of the window!”

Alistair’s team consists of dedicated people who know their subject and can identify campaign opportunities – and amplify PM’s voice. These include **Olivia Nater, Digital and Communications Manager**, who leads all of PM’s digital content and channels, including the website, social media, and mailing list. She says: “I support our campaigns through

diverse activities, from seeking out and digesting the latest research on relevant topics and writing articles and copy for online and print, to creating graphics for Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram and overseeing video projects, as well as setting up new online petitions, assisted by our new **Social Media Intern, Megan Murison**.” Olivia’s busy role also includes reaching out to potential external collaborators, and producing PM’s monthly email update.

New joiner **Teo Zglimbea, Campaigner**, has already been getting stuck in, organising the recent Earth Overshoot Day demonstration in Trafalgar Square. She says: “I came up with the concept, which was two giant inflatable Earth spheres with a banner that read ‘From today we need a second Earth’ and worked with our London Group activists to execute it.”

CAMPAIGNS AND LOBBYING

Developing and implementing other key campaigns is undertaken by **Andrew Howard, Senior Campaigner**, who also works on lobbying strategies on biodiversity and climate change. He says: “I draft and submit consultation responses in order to get population acknowledged by international bodies, which often involves reading long, dry policy documents. A recent success was to get some of our issues incorporated into the new International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) European Work Programme 2021-2024. I also draft letters to UK Ministers and environmental NGOs on the subject.”

Another recent joiner, **Catriona Spaven-Donn, Empower to Plan Project Coordinator**, is thrilled about her new role, revealing: “There are thousands of community-based organisations working on sexual and reproductive rights, family planning access, women’s empowerment and environmental protection. I build on my previous knowledge of and experience in the non-profit sector by researching and reaching out to organisations internationally. This year, we’re launching crowdfunding campaigns for five new projects across three continents. It’s hugely exciting to extend PM’s networks and support community-led programmes.”



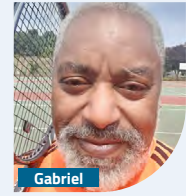
Andrea



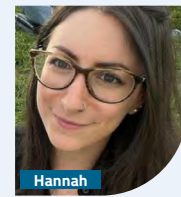
Robin



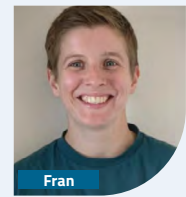
Julie



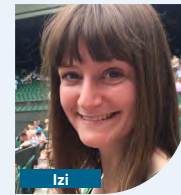
Gabriel



Hannah



Fran



Izi



Alistair



Olivia



Megan



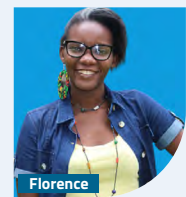
Teo



Andrew



Catriona



Florence

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

PM also benefits from the experience and skills of award-winning journalist and digital storyteller **Florence Blondel, Outreach Coordinator**, who says: “I’m tasked with finding likeminded individuals and organisations and building relationships with the main aim of advocacy. This helps us ensure that more people appreciate the interconnections around population, biodiversity, climate change and young girls’ and women’s rights.”

#MAKEITPOSSIBLE



What will the world be like in 30 years?

In our anniversary year, we're looking ahead another 30 years to 2050 – one of the most significant milestones for reshaping humanity's impact on our planet before it's too late. Can you help us make a better future possible?

2050 is the year the world has set its sights on for reaching net-zero carbon emissions – when the amount of emissions produced and the amount of gases removed from the atmosphere are balanced. And – when you consider the scale and pace of change that's needed – 2050 is fast-approaching.

FACING UP TO THE FACTS

- The United Nations (UN) projects that without further action to slow population growth, **our population is likely to reach 9.7 billion by 2050** – that's almost 2 billion more people than there are today.
- Global energy demand is expected to increase by 50% over the next 30 years as a result of both population growth and economic development.

THERE ARE SOLUTIONS

- Project Drawdown's authoritative research on solutions to climate change concludes that empowering voluntary actions to bend population growth down would save 85Gt of emissions by 2050, making it the second most effective solution in limiting global warming to 2°C, and the fifth most effective in limiting warming to 1.5°C.
- This means that **empowering women and girls is a more effective climate**

solution than electric cars, and solar, offshore wind, wave, and tidal power.

- Addressing population is not a substitute for other climate mitigation actions but an essential accelerant: minimising population growth through ethical, voluntary means will help to reduce emissions, protect carbon sinks, and maximise the effectiveness of other solutions.

WE'RE PUSHING FOR CHANGE

However, governments all over the world have launched plans to tackle our climate emergency that exclude rapid and ongoing human population growth as a driver, and women's empowerment and access to family planning as a solution.

At PM, we're pushing to urgently address the environmental and social crises that our planet is facing, and **act on gender inequality and access to vital reproductive healthcare (SIGN PETITION)**.

HOW CAN I HELP?

We want to accelerate our campaigns for essential, positive political and individual action on population and shine a brighter light on this missing link that will improve our progress to net-zero.

As we go to press, we're just over **half way to our 30th Anniversary Appeal target of £100,000**. Please consider donating £30 (or any amount you can spare) so we can better raise our voices to declare that a better future for people and planet is possible – and **2050 will be a milestone worth celebrating**. Just imagine...

- In 2050, we'll celebrate the voices we heard, the changes we made, the women we empowered.

- We'll see the results of positive solutions and making better choices.

- We'll see the benefit of using global resources sustainably and equitably.

- We'll marvel at a planet that's healthy and flourishing...

TO DONATE and play a vital part in creating a better world for the generations that follow us, visit **populationmatters.org/30-years** or send a cheque payable to 'Population Matters', with your details and '30 YEARS APPEAL' on the back to: **FREEPOST Population Matters**. Thank you.



Q&A with Sara Inés Lara

Women for Conservation empowers rural women in Colombia to protect endangered species and halt habitat destruction. Executive Director **Sara Inés Lara** discusses the organisation's initiatives, plus its new partnership with PM.



Q: What are the organisation's key aims and objectives?

A: We empower women while working with them to conserve vital habitats for generations to come. We have seen first-hand the tangible, positive results of integrating women's empowerment and family planning into our conservation projects. Through events, workshops and access to family planning, women can live in harmony with their environment, use natural resources in a sustainable way – and have freedom of choice to be able to plan for their future. When Women for Conservation began 17 years ago, family planning was a taboo subject and a risk to women's safety. Nowadays, the conversation is taking place much more freely. When I visit the communities we work with, the girls say, "Don't worry Ms Sara, I'm not going to have a baby yet! I'm going to keep studying."

Q: What are your thoughts about the links between biodiversity loss, population growth and women's empowerment?

A: It doesn't make sense that we don't talk about population growth. Even though more people are recognising its importance in relation to environmental protection, there's still a stigma. In discussing the links between population growth and conservation, you must start with the key issue of women being able to have control over their own bodies. In our workshops, we see more and more young people asking: "how can I be part of the solution?". It's clear for them that having fewer children is one way, and they're very ready to do it. And, when young people are collaborators in this process, we can achieve balance and harmony with nature for generations to come.



Q: How do you reach out and engage with local communities?

A: We work in the buffer zones around Fundación ProAves' 28 nature reserves, which covers 90,000 acres. In Santa Marta in the north, the women are really motivated to learn more about conservation. They're especially worried about the risks of fires due to unsustainable agricultural practices – such as slash and burning to make way for intensive cattle grazing. They're now working with local government to get conservation areas recognised. Conservation is effective when the local community wants it and makes it happen.

Q: Women for Conservation has just partnered with PM's Empower to Plan. How is this supporting your work?

A: We'll be able to work in four different nature reserves and empower local communities to participate in conservation workshops, while training three rural women to become project site coordinators. We'll also initiate our family planning programme with 45 more women, providing sexual education workshops in collaboration with professional health workers from reproductive rights provider Profamilia.

■ For more about our partners, visit populationmatters.org/empower-to-plan

COLOMBIA'S NATURAL WONDERS

■ Bounded on the north by the Caribbean Sea, the northwest by Panama, the south by Ecuador and Peru, the east by Venezuela, the southeast by Brazil, and the west by the Pacific, Colombia is listed as one of the world's 'megadiverse' countries. Its neotropical rainforests, alpine tundra ecosystems and cloud forests host close to 10% of the planet's biodiversity.

■ It has the highest number of bird and orchid species diversity worldwide and second highest in plants, butterflies, freshwater fish, and amphibians.

■ With 314 types of ecosystems, Colombia possesses a rich complexity of ecological, climatic, biological and ecosystem components.

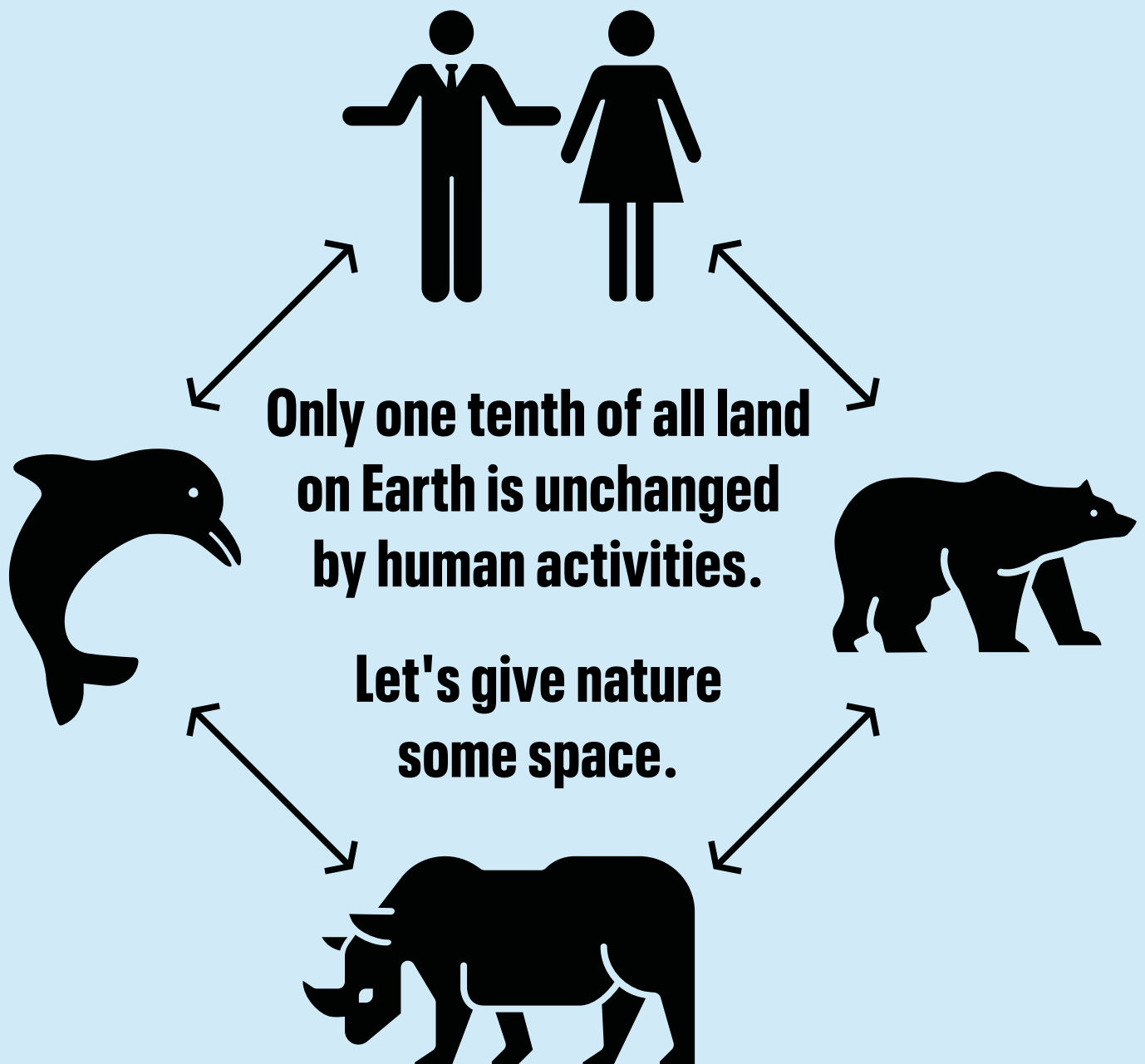
■ Many of these natural ecosystems have been transformed for agriculture, and it's been estimated that almost 95% of the country's dry forests have been reduced from their original cover.

SARA INÉS LARA

has worked in conservation in Latin America for 20 years. After training in engineering and working on major infrastructure projects, she changed career paths and became the first Executive Director of Colombian bird conservation organisation, Fundación ProAves. She founded Women for Conservation in 2004.



KEEP A SAFE DISTANCE



DISCOVER MORE AT POPULATIONMATTERS.ORG

Population Matters campaigns to achieve a sustainable human population, to protect the natural world and improve people's lives. We support human rights, women's empowerment and global justice. We believe that to be able to live within our planet's limits, everyone should be able to choose a smaller family.



TM