

POPULATION MATTERS

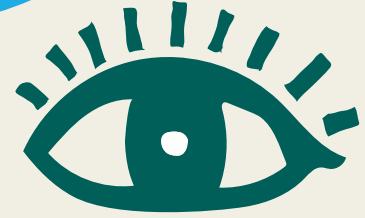
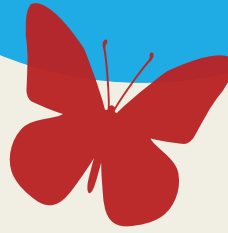
Autumn 2023

Issue 43



Improving lives

Enhancing opportunities



Inspiring visions

Having an impact



POWER

TO THE



Positive Empowering
Population choices

PEOPLE



A route to **Future wellbeing** with **Benefits today!**



OUR NEW REPORT SHOWS HOW POPULATION POLICIES WORK



POPULATION MATTERS

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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 are committed to human rights, women's empowerment and global justice.

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Magazine

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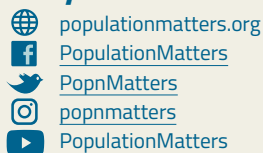
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In this issue...

3 [Welcome](#)

From PM's Head of Fundraising and Engagement, **Izi Clery**.

4 [News round-up](#)

Including **Joan Kembabazi** at the Women Deliver Conference and the UN Global Plastic Treaty.

6 [Support our call](#)

Alistair Currie reports on why the UK needs a national demographic committee.

7 [Closing thoughts](#)

Our former Executive Director, **Robin Maynard**, signs off.

8 [World Population Day](#)

Our key actions, including the launch of a new new report – *Power to the People*.

10 [Our Change Champions 2023](#)

Awards acknowledging the effective and brave work of individuals and organisations.

13 [Space to live?](#)

Nastaran Rahnama's visual voyage of discovery started in a supermarket and saw her seeking answers 6,000 miles away.

14 [Gilead advances](#)

PM's **Ben Stallworthy** on signs that a pronatal political agenda could be coming to the UK.

15 [See us, hear us](#)

Our new Partnerships, Advocacy and Voice Manager, **Abimbola Junaid**, on the power of building global connections.

16 [John Guillebaud](#)

One of our eminent PM patrons discusses population and the need to invest in voluntary family planning and women's education.

17 [Catalysing change](#)

PM's **Shweta Shirodkar** shares a story of unwavering resilience and hope.

18 [Would you do it for the money?](#)

PM's **Anthony Howarth** hopes to inspire more community fundraisers.

19 [Q&A](#)

With Kenyan climate activist and PM Choice Ambassador **Dorcus Wakio**.



4



10



13



19

Welcome to the autumn 2023 edition

As a new chapter of Population Matters' story begins, following the resignation of Executive Director, Robin Maynard, **Izi Clery** focuses on what opportunities this time of change will bring...

IT SEEMS STRANGE to be writing what has always been the Director's welcome to the members' magazine, but the privilege has fallen to me during this interim period while we seek a new Executive Director for Population Matters, following Robin's departure after seven committed years at the helm (see page 7).

Whilst any transition might bring feelings of uncertainty and trepidation to the surface – those which are all too familiar to most of us following both global and national events in recent years – it would seem prudent and altogether more hopeful to recognise that change and the addition of 'new blood' can be a Good Thing – capital G, capital T!

A GROWING NETWORK OF POPULATION ADVOCATES

New perspectives, ideas and approaches can reinvigorate any charity or campaign. This latest issue of our members' magazine brings those voices together, including those we amplified on World Population Day (page 8) that celebrate our growing network of population advocates in various fields such as education, and support the expansion of the population conversation with our allies. Indeed, this is something we're hoping to do much more of with a new Partnerships, Advocacy and Voice Manager, Abimbola Junaid, joining the team too (page 15).

You'll still find old friends – John Guillebaud on page 16 – and a dose of reality in reading about the challenging circumstances facing communities in South Sudan (page 17), and the latest restrictive policy

developments in our Gilead Watch (page 14).

Even here in the UK we are not immune to the growing narrative that stigmatises both older people as a burden and those who choose fewer or no children as somehow lacking when talking about demographic change – something we are asking you to act upon with a letter to Downing Street (page 6).

INTERCONNECTED ISSUES

I often find myself sitting somewhere between the negative and positive, being all too aware on

New perspectives, ideas and approaches can reinvigorate any charity or campaign. This latest issue of our members' magazine brings those voices together.

a daily basis of the interconnected, hugely challenging issues we're facing globally, whilst many of my friends are finding and sharing the joy in growing their families.

That's why I'm personally delighted that one of our Change Champion Awards is in recognition of Cindy Forde's new children's book (page 11). *Bright New World* presents an optimistic, possible future world in which our children have grown up and tackled the world's most pressing social and environmental problems – so that's Christmas gifts covered for this year!



FINDING COMMON GROUND

Whatever your family looks like, wherever you live and whoever your children grow up to be, our 'We are kindred' appeal (page 18) seeks to recognise that ultimately, we're all human, all people with unique experiences, thoughts, and feelings.

We all want space to live (page 13), the power to choose (like our Choice Ambassador, Dorcas Wakio, page 19), opportunities to get involved (pages 6 and 18) and to make a positive difference. By finding common ground and bringing our individual passions together will enable us to shape our world more positively in the years ahead.

And to steal a phrase Robin used recently, we are continually grateful to have such "smart, compassionate, and aware supporters" spread across the world and helping us to catalyse change. Even by reading this magazine (and perhaps passing it on to someone else), you're helping grow the conversation and working towards a better future, so: thank you.

Izi Clery

Head of Fundraising and Engagement

Izi



Population Matters news round-up

“Many issues need to be addressed so that no girl or woman is left behind”

The Women Deliver Conference is one of the largest gatherings to advance gender equality, health, rights and wellbeing of girls and women. This July, it was held at the Kigali Conventional Centre in Rwanda. We were delighted to assist Population Matters Choice Ambassador, Joan Kembabazi, the founder of the Ugandan organisation Gufasha Girls Foundation, to attend the event.



Joan Kembabazi meets a delegate from UNICEF.

The conference attracted more than 6,000 participants, including world leaders, policymakers, feminist activists, academics and representatives from non-governmental organisations.

The keynote speakers included Sima Bahous (Executive Director, UN Women), Natalia Kanem (Executive Director, UNFPA), Helen Clark (Former Prime Minister, New Zealand), Jeannette Bayisenge (Minister of Gender and

Family Protection, Rwanda). Also speaking was Malala Yousafzai (Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Co-Founder, Malala Fund, and one of our 2023 Change Champions – see page 11), who emphasised the need to support and collaborate with young people to make sure their voices are heard and amplified. Panel discussions explored critical issues relating to gender equality, gender-based violence, gaps in funding for sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) and education, workplace diversity and inclusion, access to

education, and healthcare. Joan Kembabazi commented: *“Interactive side events allowed us to actively engage in topics around issues girls and women are still facing. I also attended an event entitled ‘Responses to the climate crisis’ where I shared the work that Population Matters does towards achieving a global population size that provides a good*



PM Choice Ambassador, Joan Kembabazi spoke of the benefits a sustainable population can bring.

standard of living for all in a sustainable environment. The conference emphasised that girls and women face diverse challenges including climate change, negative social norms and biases, inadequate or lack of sexual and reproductive health information, and a lack of access to education opportunities. These challenges need to be addressed with an intersectional lens so that no girl or woman is left behind.”

■ [Read our Q&A with another PM Choice Ambassador, Dorcas Wakio, on page 19 >>](#)

“The challenges posed by plastic pollution are compounded by human population growth”

Legislation on plastic has fallen behind public opinion and plastic production continues to surge. However, recent developments, such as the second session of the UN Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-2) held in Paris in June, provided a glimmer of hope.



Photo by OCG Saving the Ocean on Unsplash

INC-2 is part of the UN Global Plastic Treaty Dialogues. If successful it will lead to countries around the globe adopting targets to reduce plastic pollution. This would be in the same way as the UN Paris Accord set global targets for reducing CO₂ emissions in each country which are being followed today.

Discussions revolved around reducing plastic production, promoting recycling

and circular economy models. Emphasis was placed on fostering international cooperation to address the intertwined challenges of plastic pollution and population growth. John Higginson, editor-in-chief of *Plastic Free Post*, commented: *“The challenges posed by plastic pollution are compounded by human population growth. Over the past half-century, the global population has doubled, placing immense strain on our finite resources and natural ecosystems.”*

PLASTIC POLLUTION Key facts

- Plastic production, as it is created from fossil fuels, highly contributes to the climate crisis.
- Plastic waste makes up 80% of all marine pollution and around 8 to 10 million metric tons of plastic end up in the ocean each year.
- Research states that, by 2050, plastic will likely outweigh all fish in the sea.
- In the last 10 years, we have produced more plastic products than in the previous century.
- Only about 10% of the plastic we produce is currently being recycled. The rest is either incinerated, causing air pollution, or it ends up in our oceans and environment.
- Plastic pollution in the ocean has a devastating impact on marine life and ecosystems – 17% of the species affected by the presence of plastic in the ocean are on the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List of Threatened Species.

Source: oceanliteracy.unesco.org/plastic-pollution-ocean

One in six children live in extreme poverty

Photo by Ja Huh on Unsplash



An estimated 333 million children globally live in extreme poverty, according to new UNICEF-World Bank analysis, meaning that the UN's Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of ending child poverty by 2030 is unlikely to be met.

The *Global Trends in Child Monetary Poverty According to International Poverty Lines* notes that children are bearing the brunt of stalled progress on extreme poverty reduction worldwide, with Sub-Saharan Africa carrying the highest number – 40% – living in extreme poverty. The analysis points to a combination of rapid population growth, limited social protection measures, and challenging global trends – including Covid-19, conflict, and climate-related disasters – as causing the steep increase.

The report was released ahead of High-level Week 2023 of the United Nations General Assembly, held in September, when global leaders met to discuss the mid-point of the SDGs. World Bank Global Director for Poverty and Equity, Luis-Felipe Lopez-Calva, commented on the need for all children to have a pathway out of poverty “*through equitable access to quality education, nutrition, health, and social protection.*”

Population Matters has commissioned research, headlined *Population Futures*, from leading paediatrician Professor Peter Le Souef and global-change ecologist Professor Corey Bradshaw. Their initial analysis underpins our case that ‘bending down the curve’ of population growth would secure a better, safer, more resilient future for children everywhere.

A sustainable world by 2050?

**Earth
4All**

This most recent attempt to address the question of sustainable population comes from the Earth4All (E4A) – an

international initiative to accelerate the systems-change we need for an equitable future on a finite planet.

Specifically, E4A's working paper addresses questions posed by the non-profit Global Challenges Foundation around the number of people that the Earth might sustain at different levels of welfare, changes in technology and resource management. The E4A paper explores two contrasting scenarios: *Too Little Too Late*, and the *Giant Leap*. Under the *Giant Leap* scenario (where poverty is ended, women are empowered and the world has transitioned to clean energy), global population peaks at 8.5 billion in 2040 and declines to 6 billion by 2100. Greenhouse gases fall reaching 90% of their 2020 level by 2050 and global warming is kept below 2°C above preindustrial levels.

■ Read our full analysis at populationmatters.org/news/2023/05/sustainable-population-the-earth4all-approach.



The UN's *State of World Population* report – our response

The UN's *State of World Population* report, launched at an event in New Zealand in May by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), expands on its celebration of human population reaching 8 billion last year by arguing that talk of overpopulation and underpopulation are both wrong.

At Population Matters, we think that this non-committal approach serves no one and avoids what most people understand to be obvious: There are too many of us, consuming too much.

The report does acknowledge that the most common population belief among people globally is that it is too high, but then dismisses that as reflecting public ignorance, rather than asking why so many people from different continents and cultures hold that view.

The answer is not that they have been exposed to ‘population rhetoric’ or don't understand demographic data, but because they are experiencing real-time erosion of their wellbeing, of the natural environment and its life-supporting systems. Whether that's through strained public services and loss of green space in affluent countries, or water conflicts and millions stuck in poverty in low-income countries, people can connect the dots.

The UNFPA report side-steps the scientific evidence that population growth, alongside unsustainable economic growth, is a key driver of our climate and biodiversity crises – as per the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's blunt statement last year that: “*Globally, GDP per capita and population growth remained the strongest drivers of CO2 emissions from fossil fuel combustion.*” It also ducks stating that the reason our population now exceeds 8 billion people is a collective and shameful failure in achieving gender equality, poverty alleviation, quality education and contraception access for all.

On the positive side, it was good to see the UN highlighting the rising threat of pro-natal policies, which limit reproductive rights in pursuit of nationalistic, racist or economic goals. And we're grateful that the UN cites our pioneering report, *Welcome to Gilead*, flagging up the rise of rights-restricting pro-natalism in their report.

■ Turn to page 14 for a Gilead Watch update >>



campaigns

Keep politics out of population



It's an issue that impacts on everything and everyone, which is why we're calling for a national demographic committee, writes PM's **Alistair Currie**.



Photo by Anna Dzuliniska on Unsplash

IN THE UK, WE LIVE in one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world and, with no end to population growth in sight, pressure on wildlife, housing, public services and resources will continue to grow.

There is ample evidence of the negative impact of population growth on the UK – and of deep public concern about it – yet there is no clear path in place to address it.

WE WANT POLICIES FOR A POSITIVE FUTURE

We believe that all countries, including the UK, should have policies intended to ensure a sustainable population.

By this we mean a level and demographic distribution of population that provides the best quality of life for all citizens, protects the natural environment, ensures the wellbeing of future generations and, just as importantly, has positive effects beyond each territory's borders.

No recent UK government has fully grasped the implications of demographic change or developed any coherent policy to address, manage or influence its future trajectory. Nor do any of the political parties in the UK.

A POLITICAL LACK OF WILL

This political lack of will stems primarily from ignorance of the nature and implications of demographic change, and concern that the issue is too politically sensitive to address.

We are therefore calling on the government and political parties to remove the politics from population and establish an independent official body to conduct research and policy analysis on demography, and provide objective, evidence-based advice to

the government, parliament and the public on this issue. We are absolutely confident that such a body's findings will be entirely in line with our concerns and proposed solutions.

PLEASE SUPPORT OUR CALL

Population Matters has outlined our proposals for a national demographic committee in a letter we sent to the leaders of the major Westminster-based UK parties.

No recent UK government has fully grasped the implications of demographic change or developed any coherent policy to address, manage or influence its future trajectory.

We'd also like our supporters to get involved too. You can find a short letter at populationmatters.org/take-politics-out-of-population, which is of a suitable length to fit the character limit of the 10 Downing Street contact form.

HOW TO GET A RESPONSE

If you adapt it, ensure that your letter is reasonable, brief and polite. Politicians respond best to positive proposals and sensitivity regarding controversial subjects

Please share any replies you receive with us by emailing supporters@populationmatters.org.

THE UK IS A DENSELY POPULATED COUNTRY, AND ITS NATURAL ENVIRONMENT AND QUALITY OF LIFE ARE PAYING THE PRICE

■ The UK's population is now **more than 67 million**, which is the biggest it has ever been. In 1950, the population was 50 million.

■ The Office for National Statistics projects that it will pass **70 million in 2035**. The UK is on track to be the largest nation in Europe by the second half of this century.

■ Population density in Europe is just 34 people/sq km. At 457 people/sq km, **England is the most overcrowded large nation in Europe**.

■ The average UK resident produces 11 times more CO₂ consumption emissions per year than a person in Nigeria and, according to the Global Footprint Network, if everyone on Earth lived like the average Briton, **we would need 2.7 planets** to meet humanity's natural resource demand without destroying nature.

■ More than **two-thirds of the land needed to produce the UK's food** and animal feed is abroad: 64% of the related greenhouse gases are emitted on foreign soil. (*Read about Nastaran Rahnema's film on this subject, [Space to Live](#), on page 13*).

■ The first Red List of UK mammals shows that a **quarter of native mammal species now face "imminent" extinction** due to relentless pressure from habitat destruction.

■ Find out more at populationmatters.org/overpopulation-in-the-uk.

Robin's reflections

After seven years at the helm of PM, our Executive Director, **Robin Maynard**, has left the charity. Still committed to being a **'positive nuisance'** to help change the world for the better, he reflects on past achievements and future challenges.

BEING THE DIRECTOR of PM, prepared to raise the contentious issue of population, has certainly not been as easy or as uncontroversial as raising concerns about the plight of hedgehogs.

Yet, my key reflection is the still modest, but rising, pulse of optimism that the 'population conversation' has opened up during my tenure. It's also incredibly gratifying to know that we've been joined in that conversation by new, fresh, and spirited voices, enabling us to bypass those with inflexible, stagnant, and ideological positions.

VIBRANT VOICES

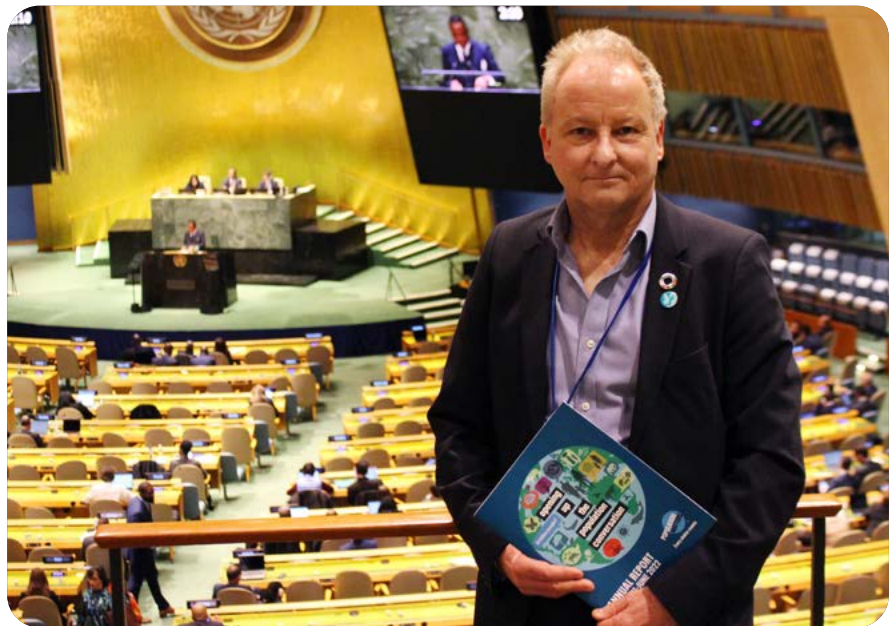
Those vibrant voices and views come from PM's growing global network of Change Champions, Choice Ambassadors and Empower to Plan partners, along with the participants from across Africa who joined in the 'Population Conversation' in Kenya last year. Among these individuals, organisations and activists, PM is finding common cause, whether that's when attending and speaking at international conferences, or via online webinars and discussion groups.

That building hubbub and diversity of voices, supporting or airing similar views to our own, is beginning to influence the media – even in the face of the UN's relentlessly positive narrative about *"8 billion Opportunities"* when our population passed that sobering milestone last year. This narrative glossed over the failure of achieving most if not all of the UN's own Sustainable Development Goals, not least those focused on universal access to education and family planning choice.

THE COUNTER-NARRATIVE IS CUTTING THROUGH

Yet PM's 'counter-narrative', balancing the UN's 'shiny, happy people' spin, has managed to cut through, featuring in more than 270 global media reports and reaching an estimated one billion people. Journalists are questioning the mainstream environmental NGOs 'population silence' and attempts to control and stifle the narrative.

Oxfam's Head of Inequality Policy, Max Lawson, under pressure in a



Population Matters is better equipped than ever to play a pivotal role in raising awareness, challenging preconceptions and highlighting all the available solutions.

discussion on Turkish World TV, was forced to concede: *"I would not disagree that population growth is a pressure on the planet, and I would agree with Population Matters on that."*

Donnachadh McCarthy of *The Independent* went further, drawing from our briefing to call-out the NGOs illogical avoidance of the 'P' word: *"We are adding 80 million to the global population annually. That is just under the population of Britain, Belgium and Ireland combined. All of these people will require land, water, and other resources to feed, house, wash, transport, clothe and more. But the solution to the population crisis is one that all NGOs can support. It is simply to ensure that all women have a universal right to voluntary family planning, education, and economic independence."*

He went on to mock Friends of the Earth's 'bizarre policy' on population: *"Nobody says that population is the only thing that needs to be addressed. The problem is the opposite: almost nobody is advocating action on one of the top two drivers of climate and ecological destruction."*

An absurd policy that the organisation's own members decry – and all the more bizarre, when it was Friends of the Earth who co-published the first paperback version of Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* in the UK in 1971.

PM IS PART OF A FRESHER, DIVERSE NETWORK

But the NGOs 'ownership' and control over what can and cannot be talked about is weakening, being challenged, and simply ignored by that new, fresher, more legitimate, more diverse network of individuals and groups, of which PM is part.

I believe that the tide is turning. Right now, Population Matters is better equipped than ever to play a pivotal role in raising awareness of the impact of an unsustainable global population on climate change, challenging preconceptions and, crucially, highlighting the available solutions. There really can be a positive future, in a regenerating, species-diverse world sustained by resilient ecosystems.

WORLD POPULATION DAY 2023

What was on the agenda?



This year's World Population Day was the first since our human population passed **8 billion** in November 2022. PM's **Alistair Currie** reports on our actions and activities.

WORLD POPULATION DAY is always a busy time for Population Matters – and this year was no exception. First up, we invited four guest speakers from around the globe to take part in a webinar which explored the critical links between education, population, women's empowerment and the environment.

Entitled '*Is education the magic bullet?*', this online event enabled speakers from Nigeria, Austria, Uganda and the UK to bring together a wide range of perspectives and experiences. Also joining us on the day were people from 25 different countries, who listened intently and pitched a range of questions to the panel.

TALKING POPULATION

Panelist **Chidera Benoit** is a teacher and founder of **Population Explosion Awareness initiative**, Nigeria and one of PM's 2022 Change Champions.



This non-profit organisation raises awareness about the exponential rate at which the country's population is growing – the UN projects it will increase from 215m today to 374m in 2050 and 545m in 2100.

Noting: "*Our fertility rate is 5.1 per woman and 3 million Nigerians are living in multi-dimensional poverty*", Chidera added: "*When a woman is educated, she tends to be more decisive in terms of the number of children that she wants to have. So, if there's anything that's going to help Nigeria, it's massive investment in education.*"

Ekaterina Zhelenkova, researcher and doctoral candidate at the University of Vienna, whose work is focused on human capital and demographic analysis, referenced a study in sub-Saharan Africa



which showed that: "*Moving the most economically disadvantaged and illiterate woman from a low educated to a high educated community reduces her desired family size by 20%. Most importantly, achieving literacy accounts for 36% of the child's survival improvement, 50% of reduction in fertility and a whopping 80% of the increase in female empowerment.*"

Joan Kembabazi, founder Of **Gufasha**



Girls Foundation, is a women's rights activist, campaigner against child marriage and PM Choice Ambassador. She shared valuable insights

from her community: "*My country, Uganda, ranks number 31 on the list of countries with the highest populations in the world. And it all goes back to the lack of access to education for girls and women. My team recently assessed the causes of child marriage and teenage pregnancies in the communities of Kayunga districts. We found out that two in five girls were pregnant and one in five girls (aged 13 to 16) had already given birth. We realised that what they were telling us is that they weren't in school. By providing quality education to girls, we could reduce the total fertility rates of the country by 8%.*"

Dr Rebecca Foljambe, PM Board member, NHS GP and founder of the UK charity **You Before Two**, which encourages young people to consider their own education and autonomy before entering



a serious relationship and or getting pregnant, commented: "*Is education the magic bullet? Absolutely. There are still up to 30, 40, even 50 per thousand girls getting pregnant in deprived areas in the UK. We also have the highest rate of teenage abortions now than we've ever had. That's very reflective that young woman did not*

want or plan that pregnancy and did not have access to contraception."

TAKING POPULATION TO THE UN

Taking action is at the very heart of PM, so we urged our supporters to write to their individual governments to ask for population to be included in the UN's Summit of the Future: multilateral solutions for a better tomorrow.

Due to take place in September 2024, the event is billed as a "*once-in-a-generation opportunity to enhance cooperation on critical challenges and address gaps in global governance, reaffirm existing commitments including to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the United Nations Charter, and move towards a reinvigorated multilateral system that is better positioned to positively impact people's lives.*"

As we believe addressing the population issue is central to achieving the SDGs, getting it on the agenda is essential. To add your voice to this campaign, visit populationmatters.org/bring-population-into-the-summit-of-the-future.

CELEBRATING CHANGE MAKERS

We also announced the winners of our third annual **Change Champions Awards**, celebrating inspirational people who have made a real difference in the world (*see over the page for more*). The categories included Youth Champion, Media Story, Online Campaign, Population Matters Supporter and our new Lifetime award.

AND – A GOOD NEWS REPORT!

We also launched a brand new report – *Power to the People – how population policies work*. This details how population policies can and have improved the lives of millions of people across the world, featuring four case studies. On the opposite page, we share some of the key highlights.

POWER TO THE PEOPLE

How population policies work

Our new report examines the positive, choice-based actions that effectively reduce population growth while improving people's lives, including case studies, featured here. This provides an antidote to the negative perceptions of 'population control', distorted by China and India's coercive and harmful past policies.



Rwanda A vision of a better future



Rwanda had one of the world's highest fertility rates in the 1980s, with each woman having on average 8.5 children. In 1982, the National Office of Population was established, prioritising the uptake of family planning.

Following the horrific Rwandan genocide in 1994, amid social chaos and an exodus of millions of refugees, fertility rose. Then, in 2003, The National Policy for Sustainable Development was introduced. The plan identified the importance of addressing population growth as part of a holistic programme for sustainable development, including ensuring universal education for all children, and equal economic opportunity for men and women.

Messaging has focused on the opportunities for families presented by having fewer children. Between 2005 and 2020, contraceptive use among married women increased from 17% to 64% and its total fertility rate of 3.7 is the lowest in the region. Child and maternal mortality have dropped significantly, and Rwanda was one of only two countries in sub-Saharan Africa to achieve the Millennium Development Goals for health.

Thailand Improving lives and enhancing opportunities



In 1970, Thailand's annual population growth rate was 3% with a total fertility rate (TFR) of more than six children. Today, its population growth rate is near zero, with a TFR of 1.3, lower than that of most European countries, and just 4% of women have an unmet need for modern contraception.

Thailand's approach included provision of family planning clinics in all health centres and hospitals, and devolution of responsibilities to local level, bringing the services and messages closer to the communities using them.

A mass media communication campaign was also deployed, with over half of Thais getting information on family planning from radio or TV. The *OECD Better Life Index* reports that "per capita incomes have continued growing steadily due to a rapid demographic transition as a result of birth control campaigns, rising prosperity and delayed childbearing for education and careers."

Costa Rica Communities taking charge



In the past 60 years, Costa Rica has undergone a remarkable transformation. Its GDP per capita grew from \$380 to over \$12,000, life expectancy climbed from 60 to 80 years, and the fertility rate fell from nearly seven to less than two. The population growth rate – once one of the world's highest at 3.8% – has decreased to 0.9%.

Costa Ricans now enjoy much higher standards of education and one of the world's most effective primary healthcare systems. Nature, too, is flourishing – Costa Rica became the first country to reverse deforestation, and now leads the world in renewable energy use.

Through its family planning programme, which actively promoted small families, the government made contraceptives much more accessible. Via mass communication and home visits, nurses, social workers, and priests explained to couples that having fewer children would enable them to save more money and enjoy more leisure time. This approach worked: Costa Rica now has Latin America's highest rates of contraception usage – 84% – and one of the region's lowest birth rates. In a 2021 evaluation, Costa Rica ranked as the 16th happiest place on Earth.

Kerala, India Empowering, positive action

Amid India's tainted family planning history (particularly during the 'Emergency' of the 1970s), stands a bright outlier: the southern state of Kerala.

During the 1950s, Kerala's population was growing faster than that of any other Indian state, but by 1987 it had become the first state to reach a replacement level fertility rate. Kerala achieved such rapid birth rate decline – one of the fastest in South Asia – through early investment in women's empowerment, healthcare, and non-coercive family planning. When Kerala started promoting smaller families as part of its family planning programme, high education rates and later marriage age made the idea more popular. And, after slowing its population growth, Kerala has had a much more rapid decrease in poverty than other Indian states – by 2000 its GDP per capita was 20% higher than the country average.



You can read the fully referenced report at populationmatters.org/resources/power-to-the-people-how-population-policies-work.



WORLD POPULATION DAY 2023

Celebrating our Population Matters Change Champions

To mark World Population Day 2023 on 11 July, we once again gave awards to individuals and organisations across the globe for their progressive, effective and brave work promoting reproductive rights, defending the environment, and enlightening the public about the challenges we face and the solutions that are available.

There are many people across the world who, in a variety of ways, are making a positive difference to people and planet. At Population Matters, we believe that these amazing contributions should be acknowledged and celebrated. This is why we launched our **Change Champions awards** back in 2021, to recognise motivational change-makers across the globe. The winners each received a uniquely designed award made from recycled plastic as well as a donation for the charity or cause of their choice. Here's an opportunity to find out more about these inspiring individuals and their achievements.

LIFETIME AWARD Sir David Attenborough

SIR DAVID'S REPEATED WARNINGS about our impact on the planet and urgent need to transform our relationship with nature has stirred countless people to action. His love and compassion for other species is infectious and many people have been moved to tears by his documentaries. Most importantly, he is one of the few public figures who is outspoken about the root causes of our environmental crises: *"As I see it, humanity needs to reduce its impact on the Earth urgently and there are three ways to achieve this: we can stop consuming so many resources, we can change our technology and we can reduce the growth of our population."*

He dedicated a whole documentary to the issue in 2009 with the BBC Horizon episode *How Many People Can Live on Planet Earth?* (in which he voiced his support for Population Matters), and his 2011 Royal Society presidential speech: *"Fifty years ago, when the WWF was founded, there were about three billion people on earth. Now there are almost seven billion. Over twice as many – and every one of them needing space. Space for their homes, space to grow their food (or to get others to grow it for them), space to build schools and roads and airfields. Where could that come from? A little might be taken from land occupied by other people but most of it could only come from the land which, for millions of years, animals and plants had had to themselves – the natural world."*

Sir David has repeatedly used his platform to call for empowering population solutions, including in his RSA speech and in this 2012 interview with the Wellcome Trust: *"Wherever you empower women, wherever they have the vote, wherever they have the education, wherever they have the free will and are in charge of their lives and not dictated to by men, the birth rate falls."*



Photo by Miles Barton

This call was repeated in 2020's *A Life on our Planet*, and he rightly added: *"Why wouldn't we want to do these things? Giving people a greater opportunity of life is what we want to do anyway. The trick is to raise the standard of living around the world, without increasing our impact on that world."* Population Matters is incredibly grateful to have Sir David as a patron and, along with presenting him with this much-deserved award, we will continue to do our best to honour his wish for a better world for both people and wild species.

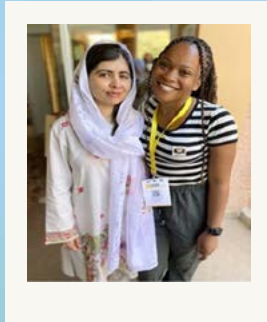
WOMEN'S CHAMPION

Malala Yousafzai

NOBEL-LAUREATE and tireless education campaigner, Malala transformed the trauma of her injuries at the hands of religious extremists into a worldwide movement for girls' education. Like Malala, Population Matters supports education because it is every person's right and because the empowerment it brings to girls and women will benefit people everywhere. We are also pleased to see Malala acknowledging that it has a role in both mitigating climate change, and empowering girls, women and communities to lead the campaign against it. The 2021 Malala Foundation report *A greener, fairer future* stated: *"If every girl was able to exercise her sexual and reproductive health and rights through quality education and had access to modern contraception, it could reduce total emissions."*

"Thank you for nominating Malala for the Women's Champion Award, it is a great honour."

A representative at the Malala Fund



EARTH CHAMPION

Dr Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka

A WILDLIFE VET, Dr Kalema-Zikusoka is the founder of Ugandan organisation Conservation Through Public Health, which promotes biodiversity conservation by enabling people, gorillas and other wildlife to coexist through improving their health and livelihoods in and around Africa's protected areas. In 2022, she said: *"Family planning was a solution because people were having more children than they wanted to ... It was affecting women's health, increasing poverty and preventing children from going to school ... And with more mouths to feed, they would go into the forest to collect firewood or to poach. ... For women, [family planning] gave them more control over their lives, over their bodies. For men, it meant better balancing of the family budget. It became a win-win situation."*

"I am greatly honoured to receive this award and recognition from Population Matters for our work to promote integrated approaches to population, health and the environment."

Dr Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka



YOUTH CHAMPION

Nafitatu Nouhou Osseini

SINCE 2017, Nafitatu has been involved in JVE (Jeunes Volontaires pour l'Environnement) Niger – a youth association created in 2009, that works for the protection of the environment, sustainable development and the promotion of the culture of peace in Niger and Africa. She is committed to issues of environmental protection, climate change, promotion of sustainable development, women's and children's rights, gender equality, peace and democracy in Africa. She is currently in charge of JVE Niger's Ecology and Consciousness Program, for the mobilisation of young people and teachers around environmental education in schools.

"I am very honoured by this distinction, and it confirms that with small individual actions, we can contribute to collective change. Let's be the change."

Nafitatu Nouhou



SHINING A LIGHT

(FILM, BOOK OR TV PROGRAMME)

Cindy Forde Author of *Bright New World*

THE FOUNDER of Planetari, an organisation dedicated to worldwide environmental education, Cindy Forde has worked with leaders across sectors including the UN, government, NGOs, finance, business, technology and education. She was CEO of the Cambridge Science Centre and Managing Director of the Blue Marine Foundation. *Bright New World* offers an attractively illustrated (by Bethany Lord) glimpse into a better future – *"a world in which today's children have grown up and tackled the world's most pressing social and environmental problems."* Its optimistic spirit and grounding in real science and active projects provides a vital alternative to pessimism over our future.

"The fact that we can solve so many of our pressing challenges by inclusion, respect and kindness to women and girls is a glorious message to share with children, educators and families. Population Matters' work lays the foundations for how we can thrive as a human family. I am delighted to help shine a light on this and to win this wonderful award."

Cindy Forde



MEDIA STORY

Jon Vidal The Guardian Article

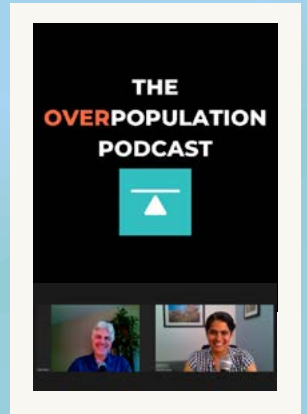


THE FORMER ENVIRONMENT EDITOR at *The Guardian* addressed the taboo about discussing population and climate change in his November 2022 article entitled, *It should not be controversial to say a population of 8bn people will have a grave effect on the climate*. The editorial states: “Despite the fact that the several billion more people expected to be alive in 70 years’ time will put more pressure on resources and will produce far more emissions, the population explosion is yet again being ignored, sidestepped or denied by world leaders... The generations-long argument between those who uniquely blame overpopulation and those who maintain that consumption is the biggest contribution to the climate emergency must be ditched.” We could not agree more!

“It is the award I am most proud of!”
Jon Vidal

ONLINE CAMPAIGN Population Balance The Overpopulation Podcast

PRODUCED BY OUR FRIENDS at US-based organisation Population Balance, the Overpopulation Podcast offers education and solutions to address the impacts of human overpopulation and overconsumption on the planet, people, and animals. Exploring critical but often under-reported issues, the team interviews world-leading experts on a diverse range of subjects, including pronatalism, alternative economics, patriarchy and animal cultures.



“We are deeply honoured to receive this Change Champion award from Population Matters in recognition and celebration of The Overpopulation Podcast. Through interviews with expert guests on subjects such as pronatalism, ecocentrism, and degrowth, we create a safe environment within which to have these bold, compassionate, and solution-oriented conversations that are centred on the principles of justice and sustainability.”

Nandita Bajaj, Executive Director and Alan Ware, Researcher, Population Balance

FAMILY CHOICE CHAMPION Sheila Kay



KNOWN AS AUNTIESHEILAKAY!

on TikTok, Sheila posted a joyful video about her childfree choice which has garnered 3 million views and 480,000 likes. Her passionate, positive message has struck a chord with people the world over. In the three-minute video, she says, “*It has meant a life of complete and total freedom, a life of joy!*”

“I am deeply honoured. It is wonderful to be recognised for my efforts to help women in having a voice in remaining childfree by choice!”

Sheila Kay

POPULATION MATTERS SUPPORTER Rupert Rivett



A LONGSTANDING PM SUPPORTER,

Rupert spreads the word about population by posting polite short messages and links to relevant PM content under articles and opinion pieces on Twitter on an almost daily basis. In seeking out new audiences and opportunities to open the population conversation, Rupert is a patient, dedicated and creative supporter of the cause. A photojournalist based in Brighton UK, he has a particular interest in photographing environmental and political issues and has undertaken event photography for Population Matters.

SIGN UP TODAY

Population Matters campaigns to raise awareness of the issues surrounding population and the promotion of practical, positive, empowering, rights-based solutions. Keep up to date with our work by joining our mailing list at populationmatters.org/newsletter.



“I was hoping I can make a difference”



Photos courtesy of Nastaran Rahnama

Space to Live visualises **Nastaran Rahnama**'s personal journey to inspire others to have a positive impact on society and the biosphere. Here, she shares her voyage of discovery...

MY JOURNEY BEGAN with a trip to the supermarket. Reading the labels on my small selection of groceries, I discovered that the green beans I'd purchased had come from Kenya, even though it was green bean season in the UK. Why was the UK having to use other people's land and water to feed itself?

With a little research, I discovered that the UK only has the ability to grow enough food for around 20 million people in a country with a population of more than 67 million. As a citizen of a developed nation, I wondered how my own consumption could be harming what I'm trying desperately hard to protect – wildlife and the natural world. I decided to head out to Kenya to find out for myself.

THIS IS WHERE OUR GREEN BEANS ARE GROWN

In Kenya, after a long drive through the most beautiful landscape, I arrived at an industrial growing facility, stretching out as far as the eye can see. Inside these great, grey structures is the place that grows green beans, flowers and other vegetables for the UK market. And, while this facility undeniably provides employment and contributes to a stable economy, what's the impact on the environment?

Speaking to local conservationists, it became clear that a huge challenge is the competition for space. The land available is finite – and the battle for it is having a devastating impact. Increases in human settlements, requirements for industrial

food production facilities and grazing for livestock is eating up the land, resulting in vital wildlife migratory corridors being blocked. And, with less available habitat, wild animals and humans have closer contact, causing conflict.

One conservationist told me that livestock keepers have been poisoning lions (currently listed as 'vulnerable' on the International Union for the



Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species). This not only targets these valuable predators but all those species that feed on the toxic carcasses.

Local conservationists are working with communities to help them

understand that coexistence with wildlife is vital to maintaining biodiversity – something that is essential for a healthy, functioning planet. As scientist Paul Ehrlich told me: “*Biodiversity stands between us and global climate change, water scarcity and a lack of food.*” Moreover, other species have a right to live on this planet – not just humans.

At the root of all this is the issue of our growing human population. Over the last 100 years, the global population has quadrupled to more than 8 billion today. Having seen the impact of this in Kenya, and speaking with scientists and experts, it's clear that our world can no longer sustain us and things have to change.

I dedicated my time and money to making *Space to Live*, to share the solutions and to inspire others to have more positive impact. I was hoping I can make a difference – and slow down the problem the biosphere is facing because of the growing human numbers and consumption – by raising awareness about a problem that is hardly spoken of.

WATCH THE FILM

Space To Live has won several awards as a best environmental, animal rights, and climate change film. It features contributions from PM patron **Paul Ehrlich**, **Jeff Gibbs**, director of the environmental documentary *Planet of the Humans*, film producer **Dr Sofia Pineda Ochoa**, and ex-PM Executive Director **Robin Maynard**. Visit populationmatters.org/news/2023/06/space-to-live-a-journey-of-discovery.



women's rights

IS GILEAD GETTING CLOSER TO HOME?



We continue to keep a close eye on worrying developments across the world where governments are restricting freedoms to advance their pronatal agendas, writes PM's Ben Stallworthy.



IN A DISTURBING DEVELOPMENT,

it may be that we are seeing the first signs of a pronatal political agenda coming to the UK.

At the National Conservatism Conference in May – a brand new event on these shores – backbench MP Miriam Cates made a speech (and secured a few newspaper column inches) focusing on family values and the importance of having children. The convention was organised by the Edmund Burke Foundation, a US-based right-wing populist think tank, to espouse the ideology of national conservatism. Cates spoke of a national “malaise” towards having children, due to factors such as a lack of government infrastructure and direction, and sense of national duty.

An incredulous Peter Walker of *The Guardian* commented: “Miriam Cates, who part-channelled Viktor Orbán and Giorgia Meloni in describing low birth rates as an existential crisis for the west. The populist leaders of Hungary and Italy are explicit in wanting more domestic-born children as against immigrants, a point Cates did not make, although it was arguably implicit.”

A far more senior and influential politician took up the cause in July. Jacob Rees-Mogg told GB News that “the idea that having children is damaging the environment is mistaken. I’ve done my bit by having six, so now let me encourage you to do yours.” He went on to claim that “a younger population means a more innovative population. And what’s the number one way we can deal with climate change? The way we’ve made things cleaner over centuries? It’s by innovation.”

It’s hard to picture a more dangerous environmental narrative, and this demographic perspective stigmatises both older people and those who choose fewer children. Sadly, elsewhere in the world developments are yet more alarming. Here’s a snapshot of other *Gilead Watch* news.



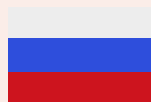
ITALY

The Brothers of Italy party, elected to government in September 2022, has explicitly linked abortion to declining birth rate and proposed linking of social welfare payments and motherhood. Anti-abortion politician Eugenia Roccella has since been appointed as Minister for Family, Natality and Equal Opportunities.



IRAN

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei seeks to double Iran’s population by 2050 to restore its “*dynamism, development and youthful nature*”. In May 2023, the President ordered government clinics to ban access to abortion pills. By June, it was announced that a paramilitary militia would be cracking down on abortions. The ‘abortion patrol’, or ‘Nafs’, meaning ‘life’ in Persian, was announced by Saber Jabari Faruji of the Ministry of Health, who warned that those involved in illegal abortions will be dealt with “*severely*”.



RUSSIA

In August 2022, Russia revived its Soviet era ‘Mother Heroine’ award for women who have 10 children or more. This April, Russia was among a group of 22 nations blocking agreement on Comprehensive Sexuality Education at the UN’s Commission on Population and Development. Health minister Mikhail Murashko criticised women for prioritising education and careers before having children, along with announcing restrictions on the availability of abortion pills in Russian pharmacies.



USA

More than a year has passed since the overturning of *Roe v Wade*, which reversed the constitutional right to abortion in the USA and gave individual states the power to decide whether abortions could continue within their borders. More than 36 million women of reproductive age in the country currently live in states that either ban or are attempting to ban abortion. Of those, 15.4 million are women of colour, 2.9 million are disabled (black, Indigenous, and people of colour and disabled people are significantly more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes), and 12.5 million are economically insecure.

Grace Long of the US-based organisation Population Connection comments: “*Millions of people are now forced to jump even greater hurdles to access reproductive health care. The news is awash with stories of patients being denied miscarriage care, of pregnant people being turned away from emergency health centres, and of doctors compromising best practices to avoid legal trouble.*”

KEEP WATCH



You can keep tabs on the latest developments at populationmatters.org/gilead-watch-protect-womens-rights-from-pronatal-politicians. Also read our original report that exposes how politicians across the world are justifying the restriction of women’s reproductive rights because of fears of population decline at populationmatters.org/resources/welcome-to-gilead-report.



Developing partnerships, fostering collaboration

Reaching out to individuals and groups who share our values and mission to achieve a sustainable human population enables us to build valuable partnerships, explains PM's **Abimbola Junaid**.



MY JOB AS PM's Partnerships, Advocacy and Voice Manager is to extend and promote Population Matters vision globally, enabling the charity to be better seen, heard, and engaged. This entails applying my versatile relationship-building skills in mapping and seeking out critical stakeholders with a view to brokering mutually beneficial engagement and advocacy as a partner of choice.

It's a role that's been newly created at Population Matters – and it will enable me to focus on strengthening PM's external communications and partnerships, built on the principles of inclusivity, diversity, and sustainability.

OUR COLLECTIVE PROBLEM

Unsustainable population is a collective problem – and one that needs a collective behavioural change to fix. That's why it's essential that groups across the world who are traditionally underrepresented are included in PM's discussions and activities.

In recent years, PM has pushed for opening up the population conversation, and has done incredible work through advocacy, research and public engagement. I'm committed to building on that, to increase momentum towards positive, practical, ethical solutions that can achieve a sustainable human population.

This can only be achieved by investing in building global partnerships to help power the grassroots change that is making a real difference to communities across the world. PM's vision is global reach with local and regional context,

brokering advocacy partners such as civil society networks, non-government organisations (NGOs), community leaders, campaigners and the media.

TURNING PLANS INTO ACTION

The information I uncover through the connections I make will further PM's knowledge of the local context and intersectionality surrounding unsustainable human population growth, thereby enabling the charity to put its plans into meaningful action.

Engagement also helps PM to recognise and support those who deserve to be listened to but are often overlooked by the mainstream media. PM is committed to amplifying the voices of global campaigners who recognise that human population is a key factor in climate change, biodiversity loss, and upon people's quality of life.

A key part of my role is enabling some of the people I engage with to think differently about population and its impacts. When people come to realise

that population is connected to everything – from quality of life and education opportunities to women's rights, the natural world and global justice – it's like a lightbulb moment, when they suddenly connect the dots.

When having conversations about population, it's important to understand where the other person is coming from. A little patience,

When people realise that population is connected to everything, it's like a lightbulb moment.

resilience and flexibility goes a long way and results in meaningful discussions about how it's possible to achieve a sustainable human population via positive, practical, and ethical solutions – and the benefits this would bring to people and planet.

Abimbola is a seasoned development practitioner who has delivered tailored social change and social justice programmes and projects for NGOs and civil society organisations, including Transparency International NG, Oxfam, and the Department for International Development UK. She has campaigned on anti-corruption and illicit financial flow, tax justice, gender equality and social protection, and delivered a self-management mental health and wellbeing course – a partnership project of the Mental Health Foundation and The Wildfowl and Wildlife Trust, at the London Wetland Centre. She successfully campaigned for the first female director of the World Trade Organisation and the landmark Disability Rights Law in Nigeria.



“Optimum human population exists. One in harmony with all non-human life”



Decades as a senior family planning doctor, educationalist and environmental activist makes Population Matters' patron **John Guillebaud** perfectly placed to talk about the need to invest in voluntary family planning and women's education.



WE WERE PRIVILEGED to interview John Guillebaud, Emeritus Professor at University College, London. A friend of David Willey, who launched the Optimum Population Trust (now Population Matters) in 1991, John later secured our charitable status – overcoming opposition within the Charity Commission – and continues to provide valued expertise. Here he shares some defining moments from his career – and his views on restoring the balance of the world through contraception.

■ To read the interview in full see populationmatters.org/news/2023/07/a-warning-an-apology-and-a-promise.

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

While still a medical student, an optional evening lecture was my first alert to the dire environmental risks of the population 'explosion'. It changed my life. I learnt that my profession, by dramatically reducing death rates while birth rates remained high, bears sadly some responsibility – unintendedly – for the increase: one billion in the early 1800s, 3 billion then (in 1959), and over 8 billion now. Being alarmed about the future of all life on the finite planet, restoring balance through contraception, therefore, seemed my obvious medical career path.

THE ECO-TIME CAPSULES

After more than 30 years of population and environmental activism and my ever-increasing anxiety about the future of life on earth – reinforced by the first *World Scientists' Warning to Humanity*, authored in 1992 and signed by over half the living Nobel Laureates in science – I launched the *Delivering a Warning, an Apology and a Promise* Eco-Time Capsules project. Triggered by the Kashmiri proverb – *We have not inherited the earth from our grandparents, we have*

borrowed it from our grandchildren' – Eco-TCs were buried in botanic gardens at Kew, Ness on the Wirral (UK), South Africa, Seychelles, Australia and Mexico around World Environment Day in June 1994. They are due to be disinterred in 2044 (after exactly 50 years and by our 'grandchildren'). The capsules contain 20th-century artefacts labelled 'BAD', such as a pot of fossil fuel and a CFC aerosol, and 'GOOD', including my own cycle pump and – of course – a pack

Nothing more is required than removing prevailing barriers in many communities to women's choice of contraception.

of contraceptive pills. Alongside those are 'official' and unofficial Letters of Apology, including poems and pictures from hundreds of schoolchildren, apologising for the anticipated damage to our grandchildren's 'loan' to us. These also pledged action, that hopefully the word 'sorry' might never be needed: something that with now only 21 years to go is, sadly, looking less likely. For our song 'encapsulating' all this, visit www.ecotimecapsule.com.

THE MOST IMPACTFUL SOLUTIONS

Voluntary family planning/contraception is vital for planet Earth. Though it is hardly rocket science to see population growth as being the 'driver' of human-induced climate disruption and biodiversity carnage, intervening in human reproduction raises intensely personal issues and has become fraught,

with taboos. A very persistent myth is that any quantitative concern about human numbers must be, intrinsically, coercive. Coercion is abhorrent – and also unnecessary. Nothing more is required than removing prevailing barriers in many communities to women's choice of contraception. If they are removed, it gets used.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) provision is optimal if it's rights-based and removes barriers to women's access to voluntary family planning (VFP), while simultaneously achieving full gender equity, especially in education.

The impact of this on climate change – along with the primary, quicker-acting, objective to keep fossil fuels in the ground – would be immense. Project Drawdown – the world's leading resource for climate solutions – demonstrated the potentially massive reduction in world greenhouse gas emissions achievable by increasing women's access to education plus VFP. Indeed, proper resourcing of world contraception-care services – increasing them to at least 2% from the current derisory 1% of international aid – is an important ADDITIONAL climatic intervention, needed now. Indeed, it is the most cost-effective one there is.

John Guillebaud, Emeritus Professor of Family Planning and Reproductive Health, University College London (UCL), in 1993 became the first clinical gynaecologist in the world with that title. He is the author/co-author of 300 publications, an ex-chair and current patron of Population Matters and the creator of the 1994 Environment Time Capsule (Eco-TC) project.

EMPOWERING HOPE IN A CRISIS



Shweta Shirodkar, our Empower to Plan Coordinator, reports on a transformative mission in South Sudan.

EMERGING FROM the unparalleled natural beauty of South Sudan is a story of unwavering resilience, transformation, and hope. Amidst the nation's persistent political instability, internal strife, and consequential underdevelopment, our new Empower to Plan partner – National Women Empowerment and Rehabilitation Organisation (NWERO) – has been a steadfast force since 2013 for marginalised communities, particularly women and adolescent girls.

NWERO's journey is a testament to empowerment, amplifying the voices of the unheard and championing the rights of the marginalised. Facing these stark realities, NWERO's commitment to gender justice, women's empowerment, and sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) remains resolute – fostering a safer, more equitable environment.

COMPLEX CHALLENGES

Years of conflict have thrust South Sudan into a complex web of challenges – from inadequate socio-economic infrastructure and sustained violence, to limited access to essential healthcare and education services. As the cost-of-living soars and livelihoods remain unstable, the burden of poverty weighs heavily, exacerbating existing hardships.

Tragically, these challenges disproportionately impact women and girls. Deep-seated patriarchal norms and harmful societal constructs have eroded their agency and autonomy – **every second woman suffers from intimate partner violence and 52% of girls are married before turning 18**. The nation's maternal mortality rate stands alarmingly high at 789 per 100,000 live births, intensifying challenges surrounding reproductive health.

Furthermore, the ongoing conflict in neighbouring Sudan, since April 2023, has triggered a regional humanitarian crisis, displacing over 3 million people, and forcing many South Sudanese to seek



Editha Meling Leju, NWERO's Executive Director, facilitating a community consultation on gender-based violence related issues.

refuge in their homeland. This is not an abstract tragedy – it's a stark reality with widespread repercussions, magnifying existing vulnerabilities, especially for women and girls. Within this challenging context, NWERO's efforts aren't merely important – they are essential.

AWARENESS AND ACTION

NWERO's partnership with Empower to Plan underscores its commitment to catalyse change even amidst adversity. Focused on SRHR education, eradicating gender-based violence



(GBV) and establishing safe spaces through adolescent health clubs, this collaboration reflects a shared vision – to equip women, adolescents, and the wider community with the knowledge and tools necessary to make informed choices about their bodies, lives, and futures.

NWERO's approach is built on collaboration. Based in Juba, the capital city, NWERO engages not just the community but also the Juba County Health Department, unifying vital stakeholders to drive lasting change.

They will also link beneficiaries with the established Adolescent Girls and Young Women Network, a platform for girls and women to share experiences and build solidarity to prevent child marriage in their respective communities. NWERO's Editha Meling Leju says: *“Our goal is to cultivate their ability to influence decisions and advocate for positive change.”*

EMPOWER TO PLAN

Every donation supports a range of pivotal initiatives:

- **Equipping 25 vulnerable adolescent girls and young women** who left school prematurely with comprehensive SRHR education and GBV prevention training.

- **Establishing an adolescent health club within schools**, creating safe spaces for open discussions on SRHR and dismantling taboos.

- **Conducting targeted community sessions** on HIV/AIDS and GBV prevention and fostering health-seeking behaviour.

- **Leveraging radio to broadcast jingles on SRHR**, family planning, and maternal health. These messages transcend language barriers, inspiring informed decision-making across communities.

- **To donate, visit populationmatters.org/empower-to-plan/nwero-empowering-women-girls-in-south-sudan-amidst-crisis.**

We're community fundraising COME AND JOIN US!



PM Fundraising Officer **Anthony Howarth** shares stories of our amazing band of community fundraisers along with ideas to spur you on to raise vital funds.



YOU DON'T NEED TO run a marathon, swim the channel, or cycle coast to coast to help support the vital work of Population Matters.

In fact, our amazing fundraisers have come up with all sorts of imaginative ways to collect hugely appreciated cash for us. From the bride and groom who asked for donations to PM in lieu of wedding gifts, to Susie, Mike and Dom who ran miles for us, and Hellie, who made and sold Christmas cards on our behalf. Supporter Tom regularly takes donations using a collection tin in his Guernsey shop.

There are all sorts of ways to raise funds. You could hold a raffle, host a coffee morning or bake sale, share a sponsored silence one Friday morning in the office, or have a tidy up and raise funds at a car boot or yard sale.

Something as simple as a good old fashioned sponsored walk is still a great way to become one of our community fundraisers. Not only is walking great for general fitness, being sponsored can encourage you to keep trekking through those daily steps.

8KM FOR 8 BILLION

Long-time PM supporter John, aged 77, undertook a walking challenge across Langdale Pike with his family in May this year, raising nearly £200. He even inspired me to complete a walking challenge – averaging 86,000 steps a week – which may inspire you too!

How about taking on an 8km for 8 billion (the current global human population) challenge? Now there's an idea. If you could manage a sponsored 8k walk (around 10,000 steps), cycle, swim, run or wheelchair race, you'll be supporting our campaigns to achieve a sustainable human population, protect the natural world and improve people's lives through promoting positive, practical, ethical, and voluntary solutions.

Shopping (sustainably, of course, for our essential needs) is another way to raise funds without costing you a penny. Simply sign up to donation platforms such as [easypopulationmatters.org](https://www.easypopulationmatters.org) or [giveasyoulive.com](https://www.giveasyoulive.com). Register with the platform of your choice and select **Population Matters** as your preferred charity. Then, the next time you shop online with thousands of participating retailers, first log into the donation platform, follow links to the retailers' website and they'll donate a small percentage of your sale to us without any cost to you. It's a win-win! Whatever way you get involved will help us shine a light on such a neglected and sometimes misunderstood cause.

■ **TO FIND OUT MORE** visit [populationmatters.org/fundraise-for-us](https://www.populationmatters.org/fundraise-for-us). If you need any advice, or have any great fundraising ideas you'd like to sound out, please get in touch by emailing supporters@populationmatters.org.

Our growing numbers threaten everyone's right to a fair share on a healthy planet over the critical decades ahead.

Yet, when people are motivated and empowered, they can make a difference to their own lives and others. Whether it's 16-year-old Saira in Rajasthan collaborating with other girls to end child marriage in their communities, or Fredrick of Kenya's KOMB GREEN Solutions, cleaning up Korogocho slums and championing family planning – there are incredible people fighting for human equality and environmental protection.

Population Matters connects the dots and speaks up when no one else will. We are the only charity in the UK talking about population growth and how it impacts our lives and environment.

By donating to our **We are kindred** appeal, you will be supporting our core campaigns, including:

■ **Small families** – supporting kindred spirits around the world who believe that **#ChoiceMatters** and who wish to enable others to have equal freedoms when it comes to family planning.

■ **In-depth reports** that challenge dangerous pro-natal policies, and **vital research** that digs deep into what drives population growth and how we can fix it.

■ **Our partnerships** with activists like Saira and projects such as KOMB GREEN that are making a real difference.

DONATE TODAY at [populationmatters.org/we-are-kindred](https://www.populationmatters.org/we-are-kindred) or via cheque, posting your gift to: **Freepost POPULATION MATTERS**. Please write your name and address and 'We are kindred' on the back of the cheque. Thank you.



Q&A with Dorcas Wakio

A Kenyan environmental and climate activist, **Dorcas Wakio** is one of Population Matters' Choice Ambassadors. Dedicated to promoting empowering solutions, she reveals her inspiring story...



Q: What sparked your desire to become an activist?

A: Growing up, I never knew much about the environment and the need for urgent action against the climate crisis. Then, in May and June 2019, I saw how my country, Kenya, was impacted by climate change. I saw people dying of hunger, floods causing havoc to settlements, unbearable temperatures, and our beautiful forests and green spaces being degraded mainly by human activities. I realised that it was up to young people, like me, to fight to save our forests.

Q: How did you start making a difference?

A: Taking inspiration from other young activists such as Greta Thunberg and Vanessa Nakate – the first Fridays For Future climate activist in Uganda and founder of the Rise Up climate movement – made me see that no one is too small to make a difference. I started planting trees in my university, and later on expanded to schools in my area. Most schools we have visited are bare, with no trees, so the children have to play and sit under the hot sun. We want to increase the green spaces in schools and for the children to have shade.

Q: What effect is the tree-planting having?

A: So far, we have planted over 10,000 trees – both fruit and indigenous species. We have visited more than 15 schools to educate the young girls and boys on the importance of protecting the environment and its ecosystems, showing them how to plant and grow trees until they reach maturity. By educating the students about the environment, and how to care for the trees, we give them knowledge and skills. The fruit trees will be source of employment for my community, as people will be able to sell the fruits and sustain themselves, and the students will have fruits to eat in their school. At the same time, they are doing something practical to help, and will experience the benefits of good climate action in a few years' time. Restoration of our degraded forests and green spaces will help my country to attain its 10% forest cover target.

Q: What about your other projects?

A: I am also part of the **#KeepGirlsInSchool** Campaign. Access to sanitary towels is a big challenge for many girls who come from poor families in Kenya. This prevents girls from attending school because they feel ashamed. There are many instances where girls drop out of school once they start their periods and staying at home leaves them even more vulnerable to

violations of their rights such as child marriage. That's why we decided to help to reduce that problem.

Q: How is climate change impacting women's menstrual health in Kenya?

A: In areas where climate disasters such as hurricanes and droughts have resulted in limited access to clean water and sanitation materials, the use of unclean, old rags for menstrual hygiene management has risen. This increases the chances of infections leading to reduced school attendance. It's estimated that girls from poor families miss 20% of school days each year due to lack of sanitary products. Our aim is to provide all schoolgirls with sanitary towels to minimise absenteeism and put them on a par with their male counterparts.



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Dorcas Wakio is a Kenyan environmental and climate justice activist and Population Matters Choice Ambassador. She volunteers for 'One Billion Trees for Africa' and is the founder of the 'Adopt a Tree at Kwale' initiative. Dorcas is also co-founder of Mazingira Pamoja initiative, which works closely with schools and the community to create awareness about protecting the world's limited resources and sustainability. She is also a member of the UrbanBetter Movement, which celebrates young African disruptors at the forefront of building healthy and sustainable places for people and planet. To support Dorcas' work visit gofund.me/e4f6da12. Population Matters is partially sponsoring Dorcas to participate in the COP28 climate meeting in Dubai this November.

■ **TO DISCOVER MORE** about our Choice Ambassadors – young people who understand the crucial links between population, the environment and women's and sexual and reproductive health and rights – visit populationmatters.org/our-choice-ambassadors.



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