

POPULATION MATTERS

Spring 2024

Issue 44

Driven to extinction

Our compelling report examines how human-driven pressure is threatening the natural world

Catalysing conversations

Confronting challenges and exploring opportunities in Nigeria, the Giant of Africa

A pivotal moment?

Will COP 28 result in meaningful action?
Our Choice Ambassadors share their thoughts

POPULATION
MATTERS

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every choice counts

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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WORLD POPULATION
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"Bringing our positive and powerful message to a wider audience."

Sara Parkin, Chair of the Board of Trustees, welcomes our new Chief Executive, **Amy Jankiewicz**.

I AM DELIGHTED to welcome Amy Jankiewicz – who took up the role of Chief Executive with Population Matters at the beginning of March. She joins us with an impressive range of experience behind her, as well as being fresh from a post-graduate degree in anthrozoology from the University of Exeter.

The latter has given Amy a deep, science-based understanding of how the future of all species – including our own – is tied up with the health of our shared environment. An outlook on life that ties in well with PM's recent *Vanishing Icons* report, which looks at several human-animal conflicts around the world (see page 8).

WIDE-RANGING CONVERSATIONS

Thinking of the interconnections between *all* populations also underpins Amy's approach to working on PM's next strategy, which she is kicking off through wide-ranging conversations with our friends and critics – as well as those who have never thought twice about us.

She is a fan of the 'one-health' approach to uniting the interests of people-animals-planet and recommends to anyone who missed it a recent **PM webinar with Dr Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka**.

A leading veterinarian and conservationist, Dr Kalema-Zikusoka, who is also a Population Matters Change Champion, uses a public health framework to protect endangered gorillas in Uganda. This includes family planning to reduce the pressures on people, environment and gorillas from growing human numbers. You can

watch the webinar in full on our website at populationmatters.org/news/2024/04/exploring-the-links-between-people-their-health-and-the-environment.

MISSION-DRIVEN AND VALUES-LED

Amy joins us after working in a variety of senior roles – both executive and governance – including Brooke International Equine Charity, the Department of Environment and Rural Affairs, Guide Dogs for the Blind, and a stint as Captain in the British Army. We were all impressed with her mission-driven and values-led focus.

As we have recently been discussing, this next strategic period is pretty critical for the health of us all – people and planet.

Her positive outlook suggests she will seek to lead the organisation in exactly that way – positively – an attitude she has already been pleased to find in the stirring stories told by some of our **Empower to Plan** partners (see page 16).

Amy already wants to nurture and grow our existing partnerships and will be seeking out new collaborations – essential if we are to raise the voice and influence of Population Matters. A good example of this is the recent **Population Conversation in Nigeria** earlier this year (see our report on page 10).

In recent months, Population Matters has been represented at



various international conferences, including **COP 28** (page 14), the **Commission on the Status of Women** (page 13) and, as this magazine goes to press, the **Commission on Population and Development**, where PM will be represented by Florence Blondel, our Campaigns Specialist, and Simone Filipinni, a Population Matters Trustee. I know that Amy is keen for PM to continue to be active on the international stage, bringing our positive and powerful message to a wider audience.

So, welcome Amy! We are all thrilled you have joined us, and we look forward very much to working with you in the years to come. As we have recently been discussing, this next strategic period is pretty critical for the health of us all – people and planet. We are sure you are just the person to lead Population Matters as we build powerful coalitions for the changes we need to achieve the best possible outcomes.

Sara Parkin OBE
Chair, Population Matters

Population Matters news round-up

Progressive politicians and positive policies make a difference

The *EPF European Contraception Policy Atlas* is an annual report that monitors access to modern contraception in the continent. The report ranks 47 countries (Israel were included for the first time this year), looking at access to supplies, access to counselling and the availability of online information, with each country given a percentage score.

In 2024, the four best performing countries are Luxembourg, the UK, France and Belgium.

The lowest ranked countries are Poland, Hungary, Armenia, Cyprus, Turkey and Russia.

At an event in Luxembourg, where the findings were shared, EPF Executive Director Neil Datta pointed out that it was unsurprising to find the top performing countries clustered

in North-western Europe. He also commented that where countries had a poor ranking, that had nothing to do with finances and everything to do with political will. This is borne out by our

Gilead Watch campaign, which tracks pronatalist policies around the world and features four of the bottom six countries: Poland, Hungary, Turkey and Russia.

Some of the positive aspects shared by the best performing countries were contraception coverage schemes within national

health systems, accessible and free consultations, excellent government-supported websites and free or partially covered over-the-counter emergency contraception. The worst performers had no coverage for adults included in their national health services, no government websites and, in the case of Poland,



Karen Melchior MEP and Antonina Lewandowska in Luxembourg.

emergency contraception that was only available with a prescription.

A range of speakers discussed the findings and shared their experiences, including Antonina Lewandowska, National Advocacy Coordinator at the Foundation for Women and Family Planning (FEDERA) in Poland. Antonina is a friend of Population Matters and was our Women's Champion in our 2022 Change Champions Awards.

UN not addressing population as an effective conservation measure

In tandem with the recent United Nations climate conference (COP 28) in Dubai, the UN also released its *Tipping Points* report, warning of irreversible environmental disasters. However, it only hints at one of the key underlying causes – population.

The 2023 *Interconnected Disaster Risks* report analyses six interconnected risk tipping points, representing immediate and increasing risks across the world (see panel, right). And, in the 'Accelerating Extinctions' technical section, the report does identify that the boom in human population growth since the 1950s has led to increased demands for water, energy, food, and land, with resulting consequences for the Earth's ecosystems. It states that under a business-as-usual scenario almost 90% of birds, mammals and amphibians will lose their habitat due to agricultural expansion by 2050.



Photo by Dikaseva on Unsplash

Unfortunately, despite scientists' warnings, the report doesn't directly identify addressing population as an effective conservation measure.

For the UN to identify these interconnected environmental disaster risks without fully addressing one of the key drivers – population – is concerning. Hopefully, continued efforts from our campaigns will mean that the population factor is finally addressed, and recognised as one of the solutions to resolving these complex environmental crises.

■ [Read about our *Vanishing Icons* report on pages 8-9 >>](#)

THE 6 TIPPING POINTS

The latest UN report analysed six interconnected risk tipping points, identified for their potential to impact millions of lives.

Defined as irreversible changes where the current systems the world relies on stop functioning correctly, amplifying the risk of catastrophic effects, **population growth is a driver of five out of six of these tipping points, which are:**

1. Accelerating extinctions causing ecosystems to collapse.
2. Groundwater depletion risking drought and water scarcity.
3. Mountain glaciers melting.
4. Space debris causing loss of multiple satellites.
5. Unbearable heat risking human health in certain areas.
6. Uninsurable futures where rising environmental risks makes homes unaffordable.

Support our call for a Sustainable Population Policy



A UK population of 70 million by 2036? That is what the Office for National Statistics projected in January. People know that a bigger population means more pressure on land, water, hospital beds, school places and public transport; more pollution, greater congestion and increasing climate emissions; and less space, less greenery, and a lower quality of life for current and future generations.

Population Matters has long been calling for the UK to adopt a Sustainable Policy. Politicians have not been receptive, partly as a result of poor understanding of the issue, as well as sensitivity about issues to do with family and migration.

We are calling for an official independent advisory group to provide guidance to the government. We have written to the Prime Minister, other party leaders and MPs on Parliament's Home Affairs. Please support our call by contacting politicians, including your own MP. Find out more at populationmatters.org/news/2023/11/population-in-the-uk-grow-grow-grow.

Our annual survey results

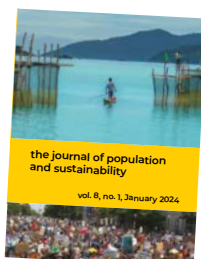


We'd like to say a big thank you to everyone who completed our recent annual survey.

More than 850 people completed our member and supporter surveys. We're very pleased that the majority of respondents across both surveys – 82% – shared with us that they were satisfied (38%) or very satisfied (44%) with their experience of Population Matters – a satisfaction figure that increased to 90% among members (with 47% being very satisfied). Across both surveys only 4% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction. It's always an interesting and worthwhile experience receiving feedback – a wide range of interests in different parts of our work is evidenced in your responses. We read and consider all survey responses and your valued feedback, positive and negative, really helps us as we plan for the future.

Delve deeper

The latest edition of the *Journal of Population and Sustainability* (JP&S) has recently been published. Editor David Samways references the fact that population is still not included within the COP 28 framework and investigates the conflicts between pastoralists and settled farmers in central Nigeria. Available at whp-journals.co.uk/JPS/issue/view/84/19.



Could you 'Pop a Bun in the Oven' for us?

Population Matters needs fundraisers! We rely completely on the generous support we receive from our supporters. How to fundraise though if you've never done it before? We're here to help with an exciting, easy fundraising pack.



PM's Fundraising Officer Anthony Howarth (pictured) explains: "This spring, the Population

Matters team has come together to create a bakers' dozen of 13 authentic home-baking recipes from our own kitchens which we would love to share with you! Some bakes are savoury, some are sweet (just like us)!"

The 'Pop a Bun in the Oven' bakes come from all over the world: Africa, the USA, Asia, Europe, and Australia, and include traditional biscuits and cakes, vegan options, stove top pancakes, fudge, a savoury pasta bake, and more. Anthony adds: "The PM staff range from novice to amateur bakers, and we have shared old family recipes and favourite dishes from our travels which we hope you will enjoy."

Perhaps you could even go one step further by using our recipes to hold a bake sale or host a coffee and cake morning? The pack of 13 recipe cards is available for digital download for a small donation of just £5. Please visit populationmatters.org/bun.

OTHER WAYS TO GET INVOLVED THIS SPRING

Fundraising is just one of Population Matters' Spring Actions we would love you to get involved with this spring. You could also:

- Check out our environmental campaigns, [HumaNature](#) and [Insect Populations Matter](#).
- Take steps to support biodiversity in your local area.
- Sign up to our social media channels and share our content with friends and family.

Anthony adds: "Our core focus remains our ever-increasing global population. But it's also necessary for those of us already here to reduce our impact and make sustainable choices for our shared natural world. Our Spring Action Month is the perfect time to start."



- Visit populationmatters.org/spring-action-month for details.

The madness of 'phone-mo' upgrade culture

Madeleine Hewitt reports on new PM research that reveals Brits are feeling pressure to upgrade to the latest smartphone, despite the cost to them and the environment.

BLACK FRIDAY is an annual event that sees retailers slashing prices for exclusive deals, stirring up a shopping frenzy. This often results in people spending money they don't have on things they don't need, with the environment taking a hit from the production, packaging, delivery and disposal of all kinds of over-hyped, unnecessary items.

FACING UP TO THE FACTS

A study in 2019 by the University of Leeds found that up to 80% of Black Friday purchases are thrown away. These unwanted cheap goods, made from poor-quality unsustainable materials, end up in landfills or are burned in incinerators. In 2020, UK deliveries from Black Friday sales were estimated to release over 429,000 metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions – the equivalent of 435 return flights from London to New York.

It's all too easy to get swept up by the over-consumption whirlwind. A recent poll conducted by Population Matters revealed that more than half (53%) of people across the UK reported seeing an advert or receiving marketing material encouraging them to upgrade their phone on Black Friday.

Worryingly, if just over half (53%) of all 18–24-year-olds in the UK bought the new iPhone 15, it would cost £2.8bn and generate 156 million kg of carbon emissions – equivalent to driving 1.8 trillion miles in an average petrol-powered car. Other findings of our poll include:

- More than half of 18–24-year-olds surveyed planned to buy a new handset in the annual sales promotion.
- Pressure from retailers, influencers and friends/peers, along with fear of missing out – abbreviated to 'FOMO' and explained by *Forbes Health* as: "Experiencing negative feelings when comparing one's life to others on social media" – on a good deal, all contributed to 'phone-mo' around upgrades.

However, our polling results also revealed that four out of 10 people believe 'upgrade culture' is just a way of getting people to spend more money when they don't need to. In addition, many people appear open to checking out of upgrade culture – 44% of people surveyed agreed that manufacturers should concentrate on making phones more long-lasting and reliable instead of adding new features.

As part of our **We Don't Buy It** campaign, we wrote to phone retailers asking them to stop their phone upgrade schemes as part of their Black Friday deal offers, and instead promote their phone repair schemes. A new smartphone produces 85.2kg of CO₂ emissions compared to 7.61kg CO₂ emissions from a refurbished device.

RIGHT TO REPLY

We received no response from EE or Vodafone. Dana Haidan, Chief Sustainability Officer of Virgin Media O2, did respond, outlining the measures that O2 Virgin Media are taking to improve their environmental sustainability, such as offering refurbished phones as well as a phone recycling scheme. The company failed, however, to make a firm commitment on marketing its refurbished phones rather than promoting upgrades.

Prior to Black Friday, myself and our former Head of Campaigns, Alistair Currie, also took part in a series of local radio interviews, with Alistair appearing on *The Evening Standard's Tech and Daily* podcast (Spotify's most listened-to daily British tech show). In an episode entitled 'How Black Friday sales hurt our planet' Alistair spoke about the huge difference to the environment phone companies could make by releasing upgrades every two or three years, rather than annually.

The madness of 'phone-mo' upgrade culture are symptoms of an unsustainable system and it's refreshing that our latest poll reveals people are starting to see through the hype and are realising that our planet can't afford it.



Photo by Erik Mclean on Unsplash

WATCH the lifecycle of a smart phone – don't buy into the iCon

There are many negative environmental effects associated with smartphone production. These include the impact of extraction and processing of elements such as copper and aluminium, the carbon emissions associated with design, manufacture, distribution and disposal of the products (including recycling), and the resulting e-waste.

As an example, Apple facilities alone used **1.4 billion gallons of water** in 2021/22, of which almost 90% is freshwater, primarily from municipal sources.

It has also been calculated that if Apple had stopped selling hardware in 2021, about 80% of it would have become obsolete and therefore discarded as **200,000 metric tonnes of waste**.

As part of our **iCon** campaign, Population Matters, in collaboration with Insurgent Vision, has produced a **new animation** to reveal the unseen damage a new smartphone causes the planet.

Available on TikTok and YouTube, watch and share it now via this link: <https://bit.ly/3PxLDCB>.



PHE for a positive future

Funding a sustainable future for people and planet is within our grasp, which is why Population Matters is urging the UK government to embrace the benefits of Population Health Environment in its policies. Find out more with our Q&A.

Q: What is PHE?

A: PHE stands for Population Health Environment. It's a development approach that recognises the interdependent links between local communities, their health, and the natural resources upon which they depend.

Q: How does PHE work in practice?

A: PHE projects focus on providing voluntary family planning information and services, environmental conservation, and education on sustainable natural resource management in a coordinated manner.

Q: How does PHE support and benefit communities?

A: Critical areas for biodiversity tend to be bordered by rural, low-income, subsistence communities. They are often referred to as 'last-mile' communities as they are the furthest and hardest to reach with medical services. This means that these communities are unable to access modern contraceptives or family planning information. In addition, these rural communities often depend on natural resources such as freshwater, timber, and wild plants for food and medicine.

The exponential growth of population in these local communities can cause demand to soon outstrip supply. This results in deforestation, water scarcity, and desertification – threatening local ecosystems with collapse and putting vulnerable communities at risk of resource scarcity.

PHE projects provide a vital opportunity for conservation of critical areas for biodiversity, as well as providing local communities with an unmet need for reproductive health services.

Q: Why is Population Matters aiming to push PHE further up the agenda?

A: PHE projects have been actively funded by the US International Development department (USAID) since the 1990s. However, there has been

minimal support for PHE from the UK government. While it has announced measures to support the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) – an international treaty with the goal to halve and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030 – the UK government has neglected to include PHE projects in any of its policies. Population Matters is campaigning for this to change. By promoting and funding PHE projects, the UK

government could not only achieve its aims to reverse biodiversity loss, but it could also resolve the current shortfall in SRHR (sexual and reproductive health and rights) funding.



WHY SUPPORT PHE?

PHE approaches have multiple benefits, which we explored in a recent webinar featuring two leading experts – Dr Karen Hardee, the co-author of *Breaking Silos* (see page 18), and Dr Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka, the Founder and CEO of the Ugandan organisation, Conservation Through Public Health. These benefits include:

- Lowering fertility rates through voluntary family planning services decreases demand for natural resources. This reduces pressure on local ecosystems allowing nature to bounce back – ensuring more effective conservation.
- Reduced family size or increased space between births ensures more resources are available for each child, which leads to better nutrition and improved health outcomes.
- PHE approaches tend to promote greater buy-in. The World Wildlife Fund reported that integrating family planning and health services into their work improved support. Previously, local communities believed the organisation cared more about wildlife than people.
- PHE projects increase male support for family planning. PHE Ethiopia found that 30% of men in PHE project sites supported the use of contraception, compared to 7% of men in reproductive health-only sites. The SPREAD project in Rwanda reported that men had a “change in mentality” about family planning after it was framed in a context of sustainable development.
- Please support our campaign today at populationmatters.org/news/2024/04/what-is-population-health-environment.



Driven to extinction



Our compelling new report *Vanishing Icons* is an original take on the devastating impact of population growth on some of the world's most loved animals. Their future, along with the rest of the natural world, depends on us, the decisions we make and the actions we take, writes PM's **Madeleine Hewitt**.

POPULATION GROWTH is driving some of our most-loved animals to extinction. The cumulative results of biodiversity loss have been so dire that scientists have declared the start of a sixth mass extinction – the fifth being the disappearance of the dinosaurs.

This new era – the Anthropocene – marks the moment that humans have altered our natural environment to such an extent that we have kickstarted a new geological age, and no species on Earth has been spared from our impact. Yet, despite increasing global awareness of nature's decline, and the fact that population growth is recognised as a driver of biodiversity loss by scientific authorities, exactly how it drives extinctions isn't always understood.

HUMAN-DRIVEN PRESSURE

That's where our compelling, fully referenced report, *Vanishing Icons: How population growth is driving our most loved animals to extinction*, comes in. It takes a look at six iconic species and examines how human-driven pressure is threatening the natural world.

We also consider what can be done to counteract these pressures and reverse nature's catastrophic decline, outlining our recommendations for governments, conservation organisations and funders. *Vanishing Icons* has been distributed to hundreds of environmental organisations and we're hoping this

will open up vital conversations about how population is both a key driver of and solution to our ecological crises.

UNPRECEDENTED DESTRUCTION

Since 1970, the global human population has increased from 3.7 billion to more than 8 billion in 2023. Obtaining the resources necessary to house, feed, and meet the energy demands of the human population has accelerated the destruction of natural habitats, leading to biodiversity loss on an unprecedented scale.

In addition, the UN projects that numbers will continue to increase throughout this century. Its medium projection is for a population of 10.4 billion in 2100, with a 95% certainty range of 8.9 – 12.4 billion. By contrast, WWF's *Living Planet Report 2022* calculated that average global wildlife populations have plummeted by 69% on average since 1970.

FIVE KEY THREATS

Nature's dramatic decline is the result of five key threats to biodiversity – habitat loss, resource exploitation, invasive species, pollution, and climate change.

One of the most devastating drivers of habitat loss is land clearing due to the expansion of agriculture, which is intrinsically linked to human population growth as more people mean the world needs to produce more

food. That expansion comes at the expense of increased deforestation, water scarcity, and pesticide runoff destroying and degrading remaining areas of wildlife habitat, causing biodiversity loss. Agriculture alone has been identified as a threat to more than 86% of the 28,000 species currently known to be at risk of extinction.

Accompanying a growing population is a rapidly increasing per capita consumption, another grave threat to biodiversity. From the imported avocados and bananas in our shopping baskets, grown on large plantations created through the land clearing of natural ecosystems, to the pollution from the mining of the minerals in our mobile phones, nature pays more than we do for what we buy.

Along with the survival of the charismatic megafauna featured in our case studies, the future survival of numerous species across the globe, including plants and insects, depends on addressing human population growth.

POSITIVE SOLUTIONS

Population Matters is calling for the Anthropocene era to transition from environmental destruction to environmental stewardship. In order for this to happen, it's time for all the world's environmental and conservation organisations to consider the impact of human population growth in their discussions, plans and strategies.

Of course, tackling the key drivers of biodiversity loss effectively on a global scale requires many urgent actions – but human population pressure cannot be ignored. Fortunately, the effective actions which address population are positive and empowering in themselves including improved girl's education and better access to family planning



Available online at populationmatters.org/resources/vanishing-icons, please download, read, share and discuss to raise awareness of the key issues and available solutions with as many people as you can. Our time to save nature is running out.



57% of tiger habitat is less than 5km from a road and

tigers remain critically endangered. In Tamil Nadu, India, 13 tiger deaths have been reported in the past year, a six-fold increase from the previous year. The tigers were poisoned by local villagers in retaliation for preying on their livestock – a vicious cycle caused by the destruction of tiger habitat due to expanding local communities inevitably putting pressure on natural resources.

In the UK, the European hedgehog is classed as vulnerable to extinction and,

shockingly, the UK has become one of the world's most nature-depleted countries, in the bottom 10%. According to the 2023 *State of Nature* report, one in six of 10,000 animal and plant species evaluated are at risk of extinction. Whilst countries such as Finland have retained 88.6% of their biodiversity levels, the UK has retained only 50.3%.



Only 17% of suitable African habitat is accessible to elephants due

to human activity and encroachment. Their survival depends on regular migration over large distances to search for food, water, and potential mates. Elephants and humans can cohabit peacefully as long as sufficient space and resources are provided for both species, which will not occur if rapid population growth continues.



Santa Monica mountain lions have a 100% chance of extinction within

the next 50 years. Human population growth inevitably leads to elevated levels of human activity, more footfall on hiking trails, more cars on the road, more houses needing to be built. This has segmented suitable habitats and isolated pockets of the population until they're subject to inbreeding and disease.



Critically endangered chimpanzees – a highly intelligent species that share a remarkable 98.7% of our DNA

– are struggling to survive due to the pressures imposed by expanding human settlements. The main threats are habitat loss, disease, and hunting for bushmeat. Chimpanzees' close genetic relation to humans means they are vulnerable to more than 140 human diseases. As the number of people grows into and around their habitat, chimps are more likely to fall victim.



Southern resident orcas are critically endangered due to

food scarcity and noise pollution. The impacts of population growth aren't just felt by the numbers of people, but the contributing demand they require for energy and shipped goods. Though we may not be able to see the effects of this directly, orcas and many other sea creatures suffer from hearing its effects.



services. These principles are built into the Population Health Environment (PHE) development and conservation model (see page 7), which recognises the interaction and mutual benefits of improving the conditions of human communities in achieving local conservation goals.

PHE is a multisectoral approach to achieving environmental conservation, reproductive healthcare, and sustainable development goals that's proven to have better results than single sector projects. That's why Population Matters is campaigning to get PHE higher up the UK government's agenda.

To find out more about the benefits of PHE and how you can support our campaign, visit our website at populationmatters.org/news/2024/04/what-is-population-health-environment.

It's hopeful that several new studies have confirmed the need to limit the impact of human development and that conservation efforts are making strides to do so. It seems the message is finally getting across: to preserve the future of other species, we must reduce the impact of our own. We hope that by reading our report, those with the power to change things will be stirred into action.

"What we can do is help to catalyse a conversation."



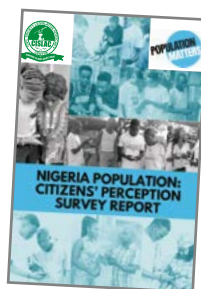
In Abuja, Nigeria's capital city, 90 people from across the country gathered to discuss population growth – one of Nigeria's greatest challenges – at the second **Population Conversation** event, writes **Alistair Currie**.

AFTER MONTHS of preparation, delegates from across Nigeria representing the government, campaign groups, researchers, environmentalists and experts gathered for Population Matters' second international Population Conversation. The event, held in February, followed our successful roundtable in Kenya in 2022.

Devised as a means to "amplify national voices and local actions with evidence-based advocacy towards a sustainable population in Nigeria", the day was introduced by Auwal Ibrahim Musa (Rafsanjani), Executive Director CISLAC/ TI-Nigeria (Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre/ Transparency International Nigeria). He addressed the challenges and need for action.

His speech was followed by a welcome from Population Matters' Voice, Partnerships and Advocacy Manager, Abimbola Junaid. Explaining who Population Matters is, and what our goals for the event were, she said: "It is not our job to tell people what to do with their lives, and it is certainly not our job to come to Nigeria and pretend we know the answers. What we can do is help to catalyse a conversation in which the people who understand the situation, the challenges, the sensitivities and in particular the opportunities, can come together to look at their situation and their options."

Abimbola also presented results of the first ever nationwide survey of views on population in Nigeria, commissioned by Population Matters in partnership with CISLAC. Our friends at PEAI (Population Explosion Awareness Initiative) Nigeria travelled the country to speak face-to-face with more than 700 people in every region, as well as garnering insight from the National Population Commission (NPC). You can read the full survey report at populationmatters.org/resources/nigeria-population-citizens-perception-survey-report. Key findings included:



- The majority of those surveyed believe that higher population growth does not bring benefits – more than three times the number who thought it was beneficial.

- More than a third of people believe that population has an impact on environment. Nearly double that believe that the rate of population growth affects agriculture, food security, biodiversity and the sea.

- Only 136 people (18.81%) said contraceptives are very accessible to Nigerian girls and women, but almost two-thirds of respondents identified low

birth control measures as a key driver of population growth, indicating a clear disparity and opportunity.

- The importance of education in empowering women and girls was prioritised above all other options by both male and female respondents.

Talking about the report's findings, Abimbola revealed: "Nigerians are concerned about population growth, they are willing to act but expect their government to do more. It shows the importance they attach to education and family planning, and their recognition of the ways in which population growth here can have a negative impact. But there is also a significant diversity of views and knowledge – on contraception, on the rights and freedoms of women, on population and on what should be done, among much else."

Following the opening remarks came a number of contributions from various stakeholders. These included Margaret Edison, Chairman of Nigeria's National Population Commission (NPC), and member of the Population Matters Expert Advisory Group, Dr Edu Effiom, Director of Forestry, Forestry Commission & Cross River State Focal Point on Climate Programs.

Commenting on the impact of Nigeria's current situation on women, Dr Effiom stated: "We have to rethink girl child marriage and empower the girl child through good education. This will considerably check population growth with corresponding benefit of a better life for the girl child among others."

STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

After Abimbola had presented the survey findings, the session broke into groups to identify, document and present Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats and identify next steps.



THE CHALLENGES FACING NIGERIA – THE GIANT OF AFRICA



Nigeria is a country rich with natural resources, and the largest population on the continent. Africa's giant is predicted to get even bigger, while its natural resources are already under strain, with rising carbon emissions and increasing deforestation.

DEMOGRAPHICS Nigeria has the biggest population and economy in Africa, with a population of 219 million. It's predicted to overtake the US to become the world's third most populated country by 2051. Currently, half of the population is under the age of 19. It's home to some of Africa's richest individuals; however, stark wealth inequality divides the country, with two-thirds of the population below the poverty line.

CLIMATE CHANGE VULNERABILITY Nigeria is very susceptible to the effects of climate change. Lagos, the country's leading commercial and industrial city which borders Nigeria's coastline, is vulnerable to rising sea levels. A UN report revealed

many communities in the Niger Delta have lost or fear losing their homes due to coastal erosion. Rising global temperatures will also endanger Nigerians. Nigeria's Climate Risk profile predicts that more than 20% of the population will be exposed to heatwaves that are detrimental to human health.

DEFORESTATION Nigeria has the highest rate of deforestation in the world, losing 3.7% of its forest cover every year. The World Economic Forum identified poverty as a driving force of deforestation. Rural, low-income communities depend upon forests for firewood, shelter, food, and economic prosperity. Forests are cleared for agriculture, with illegal cocoa farms expanding in protected rainforest reserves, along with commercial logging, both legal and illegal. The urban population is expected to double in the next two decades, leading to forest clearing for urban space and to meet higher agricultural demand.

FOSSIL FUELS Nigeria's economy is predominantly built upon oil and gas exports, with profits from fossil fuels accounting for 93% of Nigeria's export revenue. Nigeria produced 129 metric tons of CO2 in 2023, the 4th highest emissions in Africa. Yet 86 million people lack access to electricity, with widespread power cuts. Energy poverty is largely in rural areas, with communities relying on fuels such as kerosene, contributing to dangerous levels of indoor air pollution. Firewood is also sourced as a fuel – contributing to Nigeria's rapid deforestation.

LACK OF JOB OPPORTUNITIES Nigeria's population explosion has not kept pace with job creation, with the economy struggling to absorb the 5 million new entrants into the job market each year. A lack of job opportunities in the urban centres has meant many graduates turn to other sources of income, resulting in the rise of illegal cocoa farms.

CISLAC's Auwal Ibrahim Musa (Rafsanjani) commented: "While population affects every facet of societal development and Nigeria's population is projected to reach 400 million by 2050, doubling the current estimate, open, deliberate discussion around population remains uncommon in Nigeria."

He added: "We cannot conceal the fact that with the current inadequate awareness on consequences of population at citizenry and policy levels as well as the unattended impact on national planning, Nigeria has not efficiently harnessed its population to achieve development goals." After much deliberation, the groups made the following observations:

■ While population affects every facet of societal development, discussion around population remains uncommon in Nigeria.

■ With the current low awareness on the consequences of population, Nigeria has not efficiently harnessed its population to achieve development goals.

■ Lack of population planning has been identified as a main contributory factor

to youth unemployment, insecurity, inaccessible healthcare services, food insecurity, education inequality and other challenges that undermine socio-economic development of Nigeria.

■ While Nigeria is recognised among the top five countries in the world with the highest under-five mortality rates, the growing socio-economic, demographic and environmental factors further threaten the survival of under-fives in the country.

■ The growing unemployment rate (53.4% as reported by the National Bureau of Statistics in 2022) exposes Nigeria to more social crimes perpetrated by youths.

■ Overconsumption of the global north through untamed human activities



exposes the ecosystem to massive pollution, threatening human survival, with Nigeria largely impacted.

The day was an unqualified success, generating a public debate and bringing together key people to enhance understanding and identify opportunities. For Population Matters,



it was an opportunity to get a far deeper understanding of the challenges and opportunities in Nigeria.

MOMENTUM FOR CHANGE

Building on the day to create momentum for change, the participants agreed to the following recommendations:

- To form a platform to sustain inclusive conversation on population, and cascade awareness at all levels and to shape policy direction for well-informed and proactive population planning.
- Embrace the idea of smaller families.
- Deliberate policy and legislative engagements leveraging the fact-findings from the survey report to provoke targeted national population planning. Immediate consideration to translate key findings from the survey report into local languages for wider dissemination.
- Integrate active adolescent and youth engagement as a critical stakeholder in population conversation, community sensitisation and awareness for improved population literacy.
- Decrease population growth by discouraging girl child marriage, supporting education and empowerment of girls, embracing ethical planned parenthood.
- Strengthen collaboration among the National Population Commission,

education sector, civil society, traditional institutions, faith-based organisations to amplify awareness and sensitisation on population planning and sustainable development.

- Adopt intensive climate-friendly agriculture practices and infrastructure. Increase investment in further research and development to keep abreast of the direct impact of population on Nigeria's environment and society at large.

Population Matters would like to thank everyone who was involved in the planning and execution of this event – particularly CISLAC* for their insight and tireless work – and all those who attended. The knowledge, commitment and tenacity on show was truly inspiring. Thanks also to Chidera Benoit (pictured right), founder and head of PEA, for conducting dozens of interviews with people all over Nigeria and capturing the content for a powerful video, available on the Population Matters website.

We are looking forward to collaborating further with CISLAC in the future and seeing what comes next from the Nigeria Population Conversation.



MAKING HEADLINES



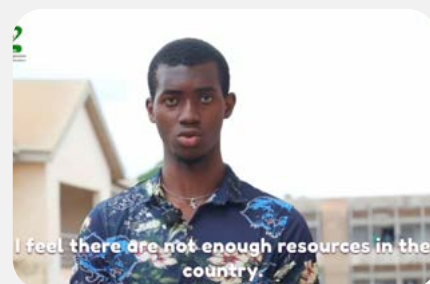
Thanks to the work of local partners, the **Population Conversation Nigeria** resulted in plenty of media interest, with around 30 media outlets in attendance.

This Day led with the headline '**TI Says Nigeria's 400m Projected Population by 2050 is Demographic Nightmare**'. It largely reported comments made by Auwal Rafsanjani, Executive Director, CISLAC/TI-Nigeria, including: *"While a significant function of girl-child education in Nigeria is to provide her with diverse basic knowledge, skills, and training which contribute to personal development and the overall national development, more than 50% of girls are not attending school at the basic education level, while one million girls drop out between the first and last year of primary school."*

The Blueprint headline was '**Overpopulation: Embrace smaller family to avoid poverty, CISLAC, TI – tell Nigerians**', an article that carried quotes from Rafsanjani and Dr Edu Effiom.

The Guardian Nigeria also added weight to their report with the views of attendees Nasir Kwarra and Margaret Edison, Chairman of the NPC and the Director of the Population Management and Development Department of the NPC, respectively.

'Nigeria accounts for 20% of out-of-school children in sub-Saharan Africa – CISLAC' was the headline in **The Times Nigeria**, which focused on the impact of population growth on young Nigerians.



Stills from the insightful short video which explores what Nigerian people think about population, available on the Population Matters website at populationmatters.org/news/2024/02/catalysing-conversation-talking-population-in-nigeria.

Gender equality is achievable – in 300 years...

Population Matters attended the recent Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at the UN for the first time. PM's **Florence Blondel** reports on how, without urgent action, gender equality remains a distant goal.

AN ANNUAL EVENT, the CSW sees leaders from the gender equality space come together to document the reality of women's lives around the world, whilst shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women.

This year's event – CSW 68 – the focus was on the intersection of poverty eradication and financing through a gender lens. At the event's commencement, Secretary-General of the United Nations, António Guterres, acknowledged the inhibiting role of poverty in hindering the progress of women and girls, commenting “Globally, poverty has a female face, women have less access to land, natural resources and financial assets. They suffer the impacts of climate change more than men, and they are more likely to be food insecure.”

PROGRESS MUST BE 26 TIMES FASTER

According to UN Women, gender equality has the power to multiply and accelerate the drivers of human progress but “given the current trajectory, the outlook to 2030 is deeply concerning.” Ginette Azcona, Senior Research and Data Specialist, UN Women, added: “If trends continue, over 340 million women and girls will be trapped in extreme poverty by 2030. That's a far call from no poverty target. Progress, we estimate, must be 26 times faster than the current rate.”

To achieve real gender equality in critical sectors, an estimated \$6.4 trillion annually is required in 48 developing countries, which accounts for nearly 70% of the developing world's population. What's more, UN Women forecasts that by 2050, the ongoing planetary crisis will disproportionately impact up to 158 million additional women and girls, exacerbating their vulnerability to poverty. This figure surpasses the total number of men and boys affected by a staggering 16 million.

At the Equity 2030 Alliance side event, Dr Natalia Kanem, the UNFPA Executive Director acknowledged that while “the financing gap for innovation and research in women's healthcare is one of our biggest hurdles”, it was also a huge opportunity. She said: “Research is showing that meeting the health needs of the four billion

“At UNFPA, we like to say, if the world today is not designed for women, then redesign it.”

women on the planet, indeed would unlock up to \$12 trillion in global economic growth. And at UNFPA, we like to say, if the world today is not designed for women, then redesign it.” I was later able to talk to her and give her a copy of the new *Breaking Silos* report (see page 18).

In fact, CSW 68 provided a pivotal platform to disseminate our materials including our ‘Empower Women: Save the Planet’ t-shirts, the *Breaking Silos* report, bookmarks and business cards with QR codes, to delegates from various sectors. These included prominent figures from the UN, Malala Fund, Girls Not Brides, Women Deliver, UK's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, parliamentarians



and other stakeholders. The aim was to communicate that tackling population in an ethical and empowering manner should be intrinsic to future plans and activities.

Furthermore, we initiated meaningful face-to-face conversations with delegates with a grasp of the intersections between population growth, SRHR and the environment. These included PM Choice Ambassador Joan Kembabazi (see page 14) and longtime activist, Hadiqa Bashir, the Founder and Executive Director of Girls United for Human Rights.

Events such as this are important to drive change. Persistent resistance and inadequate dedication to gender equality, coupled with chronic underinvestment, are key factors impeding progress. It's why we are going to have to wait for 300 years to achieve gender equality unless we act now. UN Women estimates that “over 100 million women and girls could be lifted out of poverty if governments prioritised education and family planning, fair and equal wages, and expanded social benefits.” PM supports all these solutions and we hope the connections we make will get us there much faster.

■ Find out more at populationmatters.org/solutions.



events

Photo by Kiera Worth, UNclimatechange



AMIDST ESCALATING climate crises and increasing urgency, the United Nations COP 28 conference emerged as a pivotal moment for nations to reaffirm commitments made under the 2015 Paris Agreement to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Held in Dubai in the United Arab Emirates at the close of 2023, the event was attended by 85,000 participants. The aim? To drive ambitious actions, innovative solutions, and tangible strategies to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

THE 'BEGINNING OF THE END' FOR THE FOSSIL FUEL ERA?

COP 28 marked the conclusion of the first 'global stocktake' of the world's efforts to address climate change. With progress deemed too slow across all areas of climate action, world leaders, scientists, youth activists, and civil society leaders gathered to share different perspectives and offer solutions. The hot topic was the need for the immediate phase-out of fossil fuels and a transition to greener economies to save people and planet.

According to the UN, other key highlights of COP 28 included new funding for loss and damage, enhancing global efforts to strengthen resilience and assessing countries' efforts, linking climate action with nature conservation, and ramping up practical climate solutions.

But, after all this talk, what meaningful action is actually being taken? And will it be too little, too late? Will the fervour behind the promises begin to wither away? Concern has already been raised about the phrase 'phased out' (referring to fossil fuels) being replaced with 'transition', despite 2023 being the hottest year ever recorded. Three of Population Matters Choice Ambassadors were there, at the heart of the COP 28 activity. Here, they share their thoughts.

FEELING THE HEAT AT COP 28

The first 'global stocktake', historic funding agreements and linking climate action with nature conservation were the UN's key highlights of COP 28. But will all the pledges and commitments really cut it? Three of our Choice Ambassadors – **Joan Kembabazi, Dorcas Wakio and Nyombi Morris** were there...

JOAN KEMBABAZI: *"Women didn't get a full say in the environmental policymaking that will influence decisions that affect their lives and their communities."*

A FUND FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE – BUT NOT NEARLY ENOUGH

COP 28 began with a historic agreement on the operationalisation of the Loss and Damage Fund, which totalled up to USD\$700 million to date and is an essential tool to deliver climate justice. The fund will aim to support the most vulnerable and poorest countries to keep up with the rising costs associated. However, the pledged fund is less than 0.2% of the needed amount.



Joan Kembabazi with Hilary Clinton.

LACK OF REPRESENTATION

Despite the fact that women and girls are disproportionately affected by climate change, there was a lack of meaningful inclusion of women at COP 28 – only 15 of the 133 world leaders were women. Thus, women didn't get a full say in the policymaking that will influence decisions that affect their lives and their communities.

The launch of the Gender-Responsive Just Transitions & Climate Action Partnership on Gender Equality Day

includes commitments on finance, data and equal opportunities. However, much is needed to improve women's opportunities to participate in and shape the green economy. This includes strengthening inclusive decision-making so that the voices of feminists, youth and indigenous peoples are considered at the global level.

EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT

On Gender Day, I organised a panel discussion titled 'Harnessing the Power of Gender Equality in Achieving a Just Transition' to debate the potential that girls and women have in enabling the world to achieve an equitable and just transition.

THE NEED FOR GREEN EDUCATION

On Education Day, discussions focused on how to ensure that all learning institutions are climate-ready, strengthening political commitment. Many young people called for investment in gender-transformative climate change education, because of the power of educating girls in solving the climate crisis.

HIGHLIGHTING THE HEALTH CRISIS

COP 28 hosted the first-ever Health Day. This highlighted the urgent need for governments to prepare healthcare systems to cope with climate-related impacts such as extreme heat, air pollution and infectious diseases.

However, gaps remain on the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) of girls and women. Yet SRHR supports bodily autonomy and the ability to control life choices, building resilience to climate change, which can facilitate engagement in climate action.

Population Matters' Choice Ambassadors Dorcas Wakio, Nyombi Morris and Joan Kembabazi at COP 28, Dubai.



NYOMBI MORRIS: *"Dubai starkly illustrated the peril of overpopulation for humanity's survival."*



Despite the historic gathering, primarily from the world's poorest nations, the event highlighted systemic issues. While UAE's hosting seemed promising, it quickly became apparent that 75% of top negotiators from the Western countries were fossil fuel lobbyists, prioritising profit over planetary wellbeing. Many of them arrived in private jets, heavily funded by fossil fuel wealth. The conference's top priority – the ending of oil and gas extraction – was the first to be rejected.

The only issue that was raised was loss and damage financing, but you can't finance fossil fuel extraction while also offering loss and damage financing. The COP 28 conference underscored how unchecked population growth can foster self-interest, hindering collective action instead of innovations.

To avert catastrophe, global solidarity and grassroots movements are essential. We must challenge entrenched power dynamics and advocate for sustainable policies, rather than entrusting our future to those with vested interests.

DORCAS WAKIO: *"The inclusion of youth in the decision-making rooms is a powerful catalyst for change."*

At COP 28, I contributed my perspective on critical topics such as the climate, gender and conflict nexus, highlighting both challenges and solutions. I also had an amazing interview alongside Nyombi and Joan as Choice Ambassadors of Population Matters, where we explored the challenges of increased population and the available solutions.



I also chatted with the daughter of Kenya's President, climate action champion Charlene Ruto, about my mangrove restoration project. This will provide a framework towards a global science-based target of securing the future of over 15 million hectares of mangroves globally by 2030, underpinned by \$4bn of sustainable finance, in support of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

I am grateful for the financial support from Population Matters which enabled me to attend COP 28. I established meaningful connections that will bring about impactful changes. Young voices bring fresh perspectives and innovative solutions and our voices matter.

Joan Kembabazi is the Founder and Team Leader of Gufasha Girls Foundation, a community-based organisation in Uganda committed to promoting girls' rights and education through advocacy, capacity building, and awareness creation.

Dorcas Wakio is an environmental and climate activist from Ukunda, Kenya. Population Matters was pleased to assist her to attend COP28.

Nyombi Morris is an environmental and justice activist, a founder of Earth Volunteers, and a Population Matters Change Champion.

**MAKE
CHANGE
HAPPEN**



It's still feasible that the 1.5-degree limit can be met if those who met in Dubai, and all of us, work to reduce our collective emissions by reducing our consumption and ending population growth.

■ Find out more at populationmatters.org/the-issue.

partnerships

Positive action that's transforming lives

**EMPOWER
TO PLAN**


Our Empower to Plan project coordinator **Shweta Shirodkar** reports on how your support is having a significant impact on communities in South Sudan and Kenya. Plus, find out about our upcoming initiative in the Philippines.

IT'S A SIMPLE IDEA but it has a huge impact. Population Matters' Empower to Plan scheme uses the power of crowdfunding to support grassroots NGOs that work to improve the lives of women, girls and communities and protect the natural world.

In practice, this means enabling us to promote and support practical, ethical and uplifting on-the-ground education and healthcare solutions in communities across the globe, whilst giving our supporters the chance to fund these life-changing projects. Every donation makes a real difference, supporting initiatives that are truly transformational. I'm delighted to provide you with details of two of our recent Empower to Plan projects that you've helped to support.

CULTIVATING HOPE IN SOUTH SUDAN

By challenging harmful social norms and fostering a pro-choice mindset, Empower to Plan's assistance in a transformative project has laid the groundwork for a future where women and girls can freely assert their rights.

Last September, amidst the challenging landscape of South Sudan, Empower to Plan initiated a life-changing project in partnership with the National Women Empowerment Rehabilitation Organisation (NWERO). This partnership emerged in response to a multitude of challenges afflicting the region: conflict, public health crises, economic instability, and governance issues. Amid these challenges, poverty deepened,



Students at a mentorship initiative. South Sudan faces many challenges. The Fragile State Index 2023 ranked it as the third most fragile country globally.

intensifying the struggle for essential services, and pushing access to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) out of reach. The Sudan crisis since April 2023 has further deepened the woes of South Sudan, with over 500,000 refugees seeking shelter in the country, straining already scarce resources and services. This influx of displaced populations has added another layer of complexity to the challenges faced by South Sudan, amplifying health, education, water, sanitation, hygiene, and SRHR concerns.

INFORMED DECISIONS

Despite these obstacles, your unwavering support shone as a beacon of hope. A **£5,400 grant** was extended to NWERO, enabling them to conduct vital SRHR education sessions for **20 vulnerable adolescent girls and young women**. These individuals, who had previously discontinued their education, now possess the knowledge to make informed decisions regarding their health and rights.

Additionally, NWERO organised monthly community meetings focusing on HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence

prevention, while also promoting access to SRHR and family planning services. This effort nurtured a pro-choice health-seeking mindset in the community, impacting **more than 125 people**.

Moreover, NWERO's establishment of an adolescent health club within a local school has fostered open dialogue and engaged **over 230 community members** on SRHR issues. Further amplifying this initiative, radio broadcasts reached **more than 120,000 individuals** across South Sudan.

In addition, your support has propelled NWERO to be included as a member of the Adolescent Sexual Reproductive Health – Technical Working Group under the administration of the Directorate of Reproductive Health, Ministry of Health, Republic of South Sudan. This will serve to further strengthen and support their activities.

CREATING BETTER FUTURES IN KENYA'S SLUMS

Since 2016, AWOCH Foundation has been at the forefront of positive change in Kibera, Nairobi, Africa's largest informal

settlement. Their mission revolves around the education, empowerment, and the creation of opportunities for adolescents, youth, and women, with the overarching goal of enabling them to fulfil their potential. This has laid the groundwork for a future where women and girls can freely assert their rights.

Earlier this year, Empower to Plan ventured into Kenya's Kibera and Korogocho regions, in partnership with AWOCHÉ Foundation. These bustling yet marginalised slums, fraught with poverty, crime, and neglect, presented daunting obstacles to SRHR and environmental sustainability. The facts speak for themselves:

- 50% prevalence of unwanted pregnancies among girls aged 16 to 25 in Kibera.
- In Korogocho, an alarming 76.7% of pregnant adolescent girls reported unintended pregnancies.
- Kibera generates a staggering 75,000 tonnes of waste annually.

Building upon our successful projects in both Kibera (Ghettoh Clean Youth Group) and Korogocho (KOMB Green Solutions), we realised the need for a comprehensive intervention to systematically address challenges and promote sustainable development.

To facilitate this, we extended a grant of **£6,500** to AWOCHÉ Foundation, enabling a collaborative effort with our trusted partner, KOMB Green Solutions.

SUSTAINABLE INITIATIVES

Leveraging AWOCHÉ Foundation's established presence and expertise in implementing SRHR and life skills projects in Kibera, along with KOMB Green's proficiency in community-driven environmental sustainability initiatives in Korogocho, this partnership is a catalyst for transformative change. Focused on adolescent SRHR and environmental sustainability across both communities, this collaboration systematically addresses community challenges while promoting sustainable development.

To date, AWOCHÉ Foundation has empowered **more than 800 adolescents** through mentorship sessions. These focus on life skills, SRHR, and environmental sustainability. With more



A training course conducted by the AWOCHÉ Foundation.

sessions planned, they are developing a group of SRHR and environmental ambassadors, equipping **20 individuals** to advocate for these causes.

A participant of a mentorship session facilitated by AWOCHÉ Foundation said: *"This mentorship has been incredibly enriching, and I'm truly grateful to our mentors for guiding us toward personal growth. I found discussions on mental health,*

menstrual hygiene, and addressing gender-based violence particularly impactful."

Along with implementing conservation projects in both Kibera and Korogocho, AWOCHÉ has been conducting monthly community radio talk shows to raise awareness on SRHR and environmental sustainability. These shows have reached over **400,000 listeners** to date.

PLEASE SUPPORT OUR NEW PROJECT IN THE PHILIPPINES

With its -1.7% projected change in agricultural production and 22% unmet need for family planning, the Philippines is a 'hotspot' of population and climate change.

Our latest Empower to Plan project is in collaboration with PATH Foundation Philippines Inc (PFPI). This initiative, rooted in the PHE (Population Health Environment) approach, seeks to tackle the interconnected challenges of population pressure and environmental degradation.

Since 2018, PFPI has been working to improve fisheries management in rural coastal communities in the Northern Palawan region of the Philippines. Their efforts focus on building local capacities and accountability to implement resilient and ecosystems-based fisheries management strategies.

Recognising the crucial role of women, PFPI has taken proactive steps, initiating a project focused on promoting gender equality, women's rights, marine conservation, climate change resilience, and improving access to essential services. This initiative encompasses comprehensive training on family planning, reproductive health, and sustainable fisheries practices. The project is executed by establishing women-managed areas, empowering women to form management teams and lead conservation efforts in their communities.

Imelda Mazo, Community leader, Coron, Palawan, who is part of an existing project in the area, said: *"Empowering women as leaders and stewards of our natural resources through the women-managed area proves that when women have a voice and a place of their own, they become unstoppable forces of change, protecting our environment, promoting gender equality, and building climate-resilient communities."* PFPI aims to replicate this impactful initiative in select communities in the West Philippines Sea. We hope you will support PFPI, empowering women and communities, and promoting sustainable livelihoods.

■ To contribute and keep updated, visit populationmatters.org/empower-to-plan.



Photo by Anjo Cerdana on Unsplash

We need a holistic approach

Breaking Silos is a new report that looks at the impact of population growth on vulnerable communities and the continuing reluctance to talk about reproductive rights and population as interconnected topics.

POPULATION MATTERS was delighted to support the release of *Breaking Silos: Ending the Silence on Population and Reproductive Health and Rights*, an independent report on an under-reported topic, which was funded by the Weeden Foundation.

The report, authored by Céline Delacroix, Karen Hardee and J Joseph Speidel, looks at the impact of population growth on vulnerable communities. It examines the challenges and opportunities arising from the linkages between sustainable development, reproductive justice and demographic change.

PM coordinated the publication and launch of this independent report, including distributing it to hundreds of individuals and organisations, and hosting an insightful webinar featuring two of the report's authors. Key themes were discussed, highlighting missed opportunities and the need for collaborative work to improve reproductive health and curb population growth.

30 YEARS AFTER CAIRO

The report's publication comes 30 years after the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in Cairo, a milestone event that called for all people to have access to comprehensive reproductive health care, including voluntary family planning, safe pregnancy and childbirth services. ICPD set the international agenda on population issues, focusing on

individual rights and the needs of women and girls in particular.

Breaking Silos charts the progress that has been made, but also identifies areas where progress hasn't been good. In particular, it identifies the damaging effects of refusing to accept the

links between reproductive health and population dynamics.

Co-author Céline Delacroix said: *"Reproductive health and rights and environmental sustainability have a mutually reinforcing relationship. This, however, is not reflected in the way in which reproductive rights are conceptualised and how we discuss them."*

Reproductive health and rights and environmental sustainability have a mutually reinforcing relationship.

Indeed, since Cairo, sexual and reproductive rights and health (SRHR) has been detached from conversations around environmental sustainability and population dynamics, with discussion of population increasingly characterised as unethical and tantamount to population control by some in the SRHR movement. As a consequence, the UN's own population agency rejects these linkages, and there are no mentions of population issues in important agreements, including the Sustainable Development Goals. The result is incoherent policies.

IT'S TIME TO CHANGE THE FRAMEWORK

Breaking Silos details the importance of population growth, structure, urbanisation, and migration when considering reproductive health and rights. Population Matters agrees that a narrow focus on SRHR without those considerations is not helping to achieve the goals set out in Cairo and shows a worrying misunderstanding of the evidence. We know that enhancing individual health and rights will lower fertility and slow population growth. Acknowledging the possible impact of family planning on helping to meet wider environmental and human



development goals helps change the framework and appeals to new audiences.

While many people and organisations involved in promoting and defending SRHR entirely accept the importance of linking it to population challenges, the resistance among some is harming the vulnerable communities – including women and girls in low-income countries especially – they seek to protect.

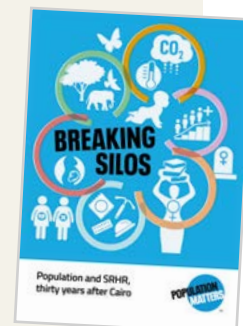
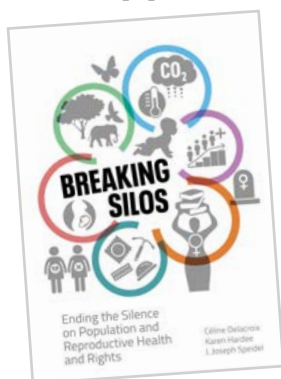
Wrapping up the webinar discussion, Population Matters' Alistair Currie concluded: *"We are hoping to build bridges. Where people have concerns over population within the reproductive rights community, we understand those concerns, but we think this report very clearly demonstrates it's time to start talking to look at the opportunities we have for additional funding, additional champions and additional support."*

■ You can read the full report at www.breakingsilos.info.

The 1994 ICPD in Cairo was a landmark moment in the history of concern over population. However, discussions of population and family planning have since become increasingly divorced, and the goals aimed for 30 years ago have not been met.

The emergence of new approaches to health, development and environmental sustainability signals a promising shift towards less siloed, and more holistic approaches. The discussion of population dynamics must now be recognised as fundamentally linked to equity and environmental justice in the short and long terms.

■ Read in full at populationmatters.org/resources/breaking-silos-report-summary.



Q&A with Isabella Cortes Lara

Women for Conservation empowers and partners with women to protect endangered wildlife and their habitats. Executive Director, **Isabella Cortes Lara**, a Population Matters Choice Ambassador, tells us more...



Q: What's the ethos of Women for Conservation?

A: Together with my mother, Sara Inés Lara, we established Women for Conservation (W4C) in 2019, inspired by the adversities we faced. Our focus is on empowering and enhancing women's lives while healing Mother Nature and preventing nature extinction. Our organisation addresses the intertwined causes of gender equity, social justice, and economic inequality by providing women in remote, rural communities with access to sexual reproductive health services, environmental education and conservation career training – such as working as nature guides for ecotourism, forest guards for nature reserves, and establishing artisanal micro-businesses. W4C emphasises the connection between women's health and biodiversity conservation. Our accessible family planning programmes have helped thousands of rural families become involved in our grassroots conservation programmes. Lasting benefits include increasing women's involvement in leadership, improved high school graduation rates, the promotion of sustainable livelihoods and reduced pressure on natural resources.



partnerships with grassroots women-led conservation projects in Madagascar, Sierra Leone, Nepal, and Bolivia. We've already transformed the lives of more than 10,000 women and children through family planning and environmental education, and our goal is to grow our impact even more by focusing our expertise where it's needed most.

Q: Can you tell us about some of the programmes you're leading?

A: Our programmes help young girls complete their education, pursue careers in conservation, and ultimately chase their dreams. We empower women and girls to lead in the field of conservation by providing them with environmental education, training, and resources to implement conservation projects. We also deliver programmes that include sex education workshops, raising awareness of sexual

violence and domestic abuse, and the different methods of contraception and their importance. We've helped transform the lives of over 1,400 women, young women, and men with free access to reproductive healthcare that they would otherwise not have access to.

Q: W4C has been chosen as a member of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Was that quite a moment?

A: The IUCN is the world's oldest and largest environmental network, so this is a dream come true! It will allow us to advocate for rural women disproportionately burdened by climate challenges, highlight the importance of gender equality to conservation and bring the integrated PHE (Population Health Environment) approach to this global platform.



Q: Since we interviewed Sara Inés Lara in 2021, how have things been progressing?

A: As Executive Director, I now lead the community-based conservation programmes and use my platform to inspire other young women to become environmental activists. My mother, Sara, is concentrating on bolstering legal protections for the ProAves Nature Reserves by declaring them as Regional Parks, ensuring long lasting conservation for endemic species. W4C and our partner organisation, ProAves, have established 27 nature reserves in Colombia.

Broadening our reach, we're also partnered with women's groups around the globe. Since 2021, we've established

ISABELLA CORTES LARA is a passionate conservationist, musician and artist of indigenous ancestry born in the mountains of Cauca, Colombia. Her murals of endangered endemic species strategically connect art and conservation. She has a Master of Science in Conservation Project Management with the Durrell Institute of Conservation Ecology at University of Kent. She has extensive experience working with the El Dorado ProAves Reserve, which is conserving endangered species in the megadiverse Sierra Nevada of Santa Marta, Colombia. Isabella leads W4C's projects in Colombia and internationally, advocating for biodiversity protection through holistic conservation approaches. Her work includes designing the Rana Chiva Bus – a vibrant mobile classroom that travels to remote villages, raising awareness about Colombia's most charismatic species through education, music and art. She has an endemic hummingbird species named after her – the Gorgetted Puffleg (*Eriocnemis isabellae*) – discovered by her father Alex Cortes.



■ **OUR CHOICE AMBASSADORS** are young people who understand the crucial links between population, the environment and women's and sexual and reproductive health and rights. Find out more at populationmatters.org/our-choice-ambassadors.



Bring **POPULATION** to the Summit of the Future

Neglecting population growth and unsustainable consumption has put the brakes on progress towards achieving **the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

This September, the **United Nations' Summit of the Future**, will take place, intended to develop a plan to improve international cooperation and accelerate progress.

We're asking **everyone who cares about achieving a better future for people and planet** to **contact their governments** to press them for greater commitment to the SDGs, and to recognise **the importance of tackling population**.

Find out how to add your voice at populationmatters.org/bring-population-into-the-summit-for-the-future

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Population Matters is a UK-based charity campaigning to achieve a sustainable global population through ethical means, to protect nature and improve people's lives.



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Every choice counts