

# POPULATION MATTERS

Autumn 2024

Issue 45

## Wave of change

Defenders of the environment and promoters of reproductive rights – we're celebrating our **Change Champions 2024**

### Dried up futures

Our new report examines how drought, land degradation and desertification are driven by population growth

### Highs and lows

Demographic anxieties dominated the International Conference on Population and Development

POPULATION  
MATTERS



# INFORMED BY EXPERTS | GROUNDED IN SCIENCE | A CATALYST FOR CHANGE | CONNECTING THE ISSUES | PUSHING FOR A FAIRER WORLD

## About us

Population Matters (PM) 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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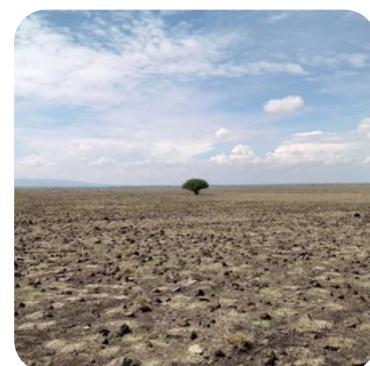
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**"In our new strategy, we want to bring to life our unique perspective on rights and sustainability to ensure population is firmly in the minds of those who make the decisions that affect us all."**

**WELCOME** to the autumn edition of our magazine. As ever, we will share with you our latest news, including our recent trip to the United Nations General Assembly in New York, where we joined with partners from India and Nigeria to work on new ways to help reduce global population.

But before you read on, I want to share with you my thoughts on the future. Population Matters is changing. I took the lead as the new CEO in March, and I have recruited new colleagues across our organisation.

As I write, my colleagues and I are working on our new five-year strategy, which will be revealed in the new year. Building on the solid foundations of the past, we will be setting out ambitious but realistic goals on how best to make the differences we need to see to reduce the human population and the impact we have on the planet.

#### THE CHANCE TO THRIVE

How we co-exist and build relationships with the environment and other species with whom we share this planet will play a huge part in how our natural world thrives in the future. Biodiversity plays a vital role in the survival of humans in countries across the world who are battling the challenges of climate change.

We will seek to drive powerful research and influence the debate on population on a global level, capitalising on our unique position as the only credible UK-based NGO that is willing to tackle the uncomfortable truths of human global population growth.

Talking about the devastating consequences of increasing human population growth is challenging, but our goal is to bring this conversation into the mainstream.

#### AN INTERCONNECTED PLANET

We have the knowledge and are armed with facts and do not shy away from speaking up. We do so for all populations.

Humanity is part of nature – we must protect all species, all ecosystems, to support human life. Furthermore, to support humanity within the context of an interconnected planet, we must focus on human rights.

**How we co-exist and build relationships with the environment and other species with whom we share this planet will play a huge part in how our natural world thrives in the future.**

Injustice is a moral wrong. More than that, it leads to bad outcomes. Greed, hubris and abuse of power – be that a patriarchal society structured to benefit men at the expense of women, or global corporations that seek to extract riches such as minerals, fossil fuels and water and to exploit human capital as a resource rather than as the bearer of rights – is morally unacceptable. It also leads to oppression, especially of women.

On the other hand, women who know and are able to express

their rights to become active, equal members of their societies, who influence local, regional and national governments, do so to the benefit of all. This means, among other things, that women must access education. Education leads to self-expression, confidence, economic stability and sustainability – and to smaller families.

#### PM IS A UNIQUE ALLY

We are, therefore, an environmental NGO and a gender rights-based NGO. Our focus on population makes us a unique ally to our partners and colleagues across the world who also believe in human rights and the sustainability of our planet.

In our new strategy, we want to bring to life our unique perspective on rights and sustainability to ensure population is firmly in the minds of those who make the decisions that affect us all.

I do not underestimate this challenge. To bring together – under the banner of achieving a sustainable population – gender rights and male allyship and to combine that with justice, environmental protection and support for biodiversity is no mean feat. But it is the objective I have set Population Matters as we move into 2025.

**Amy Jankiewicz**  
CEO, Population Matters

# Population Matters news round-up

## The Summit of the Future – what will it actually deliver?

Billed as a 'once-in-a-generation opportunity', PM attended this high-level event, hosted by the United Nations (UN) this September in New York. Bringing world leaders together to forge a new international consensus, the Summit of the Future focused on accelerating efforts to meet existing international commitments and taking concrete steps to respond to emerging challenges and opportunities.

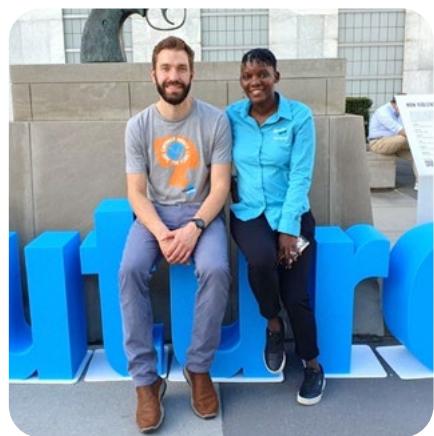


The UN claims that this will be achieved through an action-oriented outcome document the *Pact for the Future*, which was negotiated and endorsed during the Summit. The document will feature chapters on Sustainable development and financing for development; International peace and security; Science, technology and innovation and

digital cooperation; Youth and future generations; and Transforming global governance. The UN has stated: "The result will be a world – and an international system – that is better prepared to manage the challenges we face now and in the future, for the sake of all humanity and for future generations."

Yet, despite these noble intentions, the track record is dire. Progress towards the 17 Sustainable Development Goals – a global footprint for a better future, created by the UN in 2015 – is badly off track. So, will improvements in international cooperation enable problems to be solved and progress to be made?

With Population Matters involved in the negotiations, the answer is a hopeful "yes". PM's Florence Blondel reveals: "In collaboration with our US-based partners, Population Connection and Population Media Center, we have actively contributed to the *Pact for the Future*, urging



PM's Josh Hill and Florence Blondel at the UN's Summit of the Future in New York.

governments to bring population dynamics into the conversation by prioritising empowering population solutions."

The PM team also hosted a successful hybrid side-event with partners from India, Kenya and Nigeria.

Look out for a full debriefing about this event, along with news of other key events we'll be attending in our next newsletter and on our website at [populationmatters.org/news](https://populationmatters.org/news).

## UN predicts 10 billion people on Earth

Every two years, the UN releases new projections for future population changes at a global, national and regional level through to the end of the century. The latest numbers were published on World Population Day – 11 July 2024.

The headline news was that the global population is due to peak in 60 years, before gradually declining. The UN's report also noted a stark contrast between falling populations in the Global North and high fertility rates (the number of children a woman is likely to have during her reproductive years) in the Global South. More than one in 10 countries – mostly in sub-Saharan Africa – have fertility levels of four births or more per woman. In addition, in 2024, 4.7 million babies – 3.5% of the total worldwide – were born to mothers under age 18. Of these, some 340,000 babies were born to girls under age 15.

While it's good news that the peak is slightly lower than the last



Photo: NASA/UN Population

set of projections two years ago, it still represents a significant increase from today's number of 8.2 billion, with worrying questions raised about reproductive health education and access to modern contraception for millions of women and girls. This means more people will find themselves trapped in poverty, suffering the impacts of the climate crisis and unable to access the fundamental building blocks of education and healthcare necessary for sustainable development.

## How will population look in the future?

The latest UN projections suggest:

- We will add another 2 billion people by 2061.
- Population will peak at 10.3 billion in the mid-2080s, and gradually decline to 10.2 billion by 2100.
- In Angola, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Niger and Somalia, populations are predicted to double between 2024 and 2054.
- Globally, life expectancy reached 73.3 years in 2024 and is predicted to reach an average longevity of 77.4 years globally in 2054.
- By 2080, people aged 65 or older will outnumber children under 18.
- Immigration will be the main driver of population growth in 52 countries and areas, including the UK, Australia, Canada and the US, through to 2054.

## World Population Day with three trailblazers

On World Population Day 2024, we were thrilled to welcome three groundbreaking speakers from partner organisations worldwide – Dr Joan Castro of PATH Foundation, Philippines, Isabella Cortes of Women for Conservation, Colombia, and Wendo Aszed of Dandelion Africa, Kenya – to our latest webinar.

Contributing to our *Celebrating Women in Conservation* online event, each shared details of the programmes they're spearheading, along with insights related to healthcare, local environmental pressures, the climate crisis and much more. All of these trailblazing women work closely with local communities, challenging stigmas surrounding reproductive health, improving health and economic empowerment for women in rural areas, and implementing practical solutions such as providing mobile family planning clinics to remote communities. To watch the conversation, hosted by PM's Shweta Shirodkar, visit <https://bit.ly/3TwyFr0>.



■ Dr Joan Castro (top right) is one of our 2024 Change Champions. Turn to page 10 to find out more >

## Beached whales sad symbol of population impact



As we observed World Population Day on 11 July, when the UN projected the global population will reach 10.3 billion within 60 years, a tragic mass beaching of pilot whales was occurring.

A pod of 77 pilot whales were discovered stranded on the island of Sanday, Orkney and, despite refloating efforts, all died. Since records began in 1992, there have been 13 mass strandings in the region – 10 in the last decade. The ocean is becoming an ever-noisier place, due to shipping, military sonar installations and energy exploration. This negatively impacts marine animals, such as whales, which rely on sound to navigate, communicate and hunt. Researchers suspect underwater noise pollution from shipping traffic may have scared the Orkney pilot whales or disrupted their navigation, causing the stranding. Our recent [Vanishing Icons](#) report looked at the impact of underwater noise pollution on the endangered Southern Resident Orcas.



Photo by Joshua Woroniecki on Unsplash

## US election watch

Despite a notable change in fortunes for the Democrats thanks to the emergence of the Harris-Walz ticket, a second Trump presidency is still a real possibility, which could have a devastating impact on women's reproductive rights.

In his first term, Trump played a significant role in paving the way for the Supreme Court to overturn *Roe v Wade*. Since the landmark decision was reversed on 24 June 2022, 14 states have implemented total abortion bans, resulting in harrowing experiences for many women. And, while Donald Trump's actions have further restricted women's rights, his running mate, JD Vance, is perceived by many as even more extreme.

Vance favours strict abortion restrictions and opposes exceptions for rape and incest, considering pregnancies resulting from such circumstances as "inconvenient" rather than grounds for abortion. After JD Vance was announced on the Republican ticket, Trump's niece, Mary Trump, said on her substack: "American women will know misery if by some great tragedy Donald and Vance get into the White House because those two will make *The Handmaid's Tale* our reality."

### OUR STANCE

Ever since *Roe v Wade*, which had guaranteed women the right to an abortion up until the point of foetal viability, was overturned by America's top court, Population Matters has been monitoring the situation. We believe campaigners for women's rights should be concerned about Vance's views because they reflect a broader movement to limit reproductive rights, undermining access to safe and legal abortions and endangering the health and autonomy of women, particularly those in vulnerable situations.

Population Matters is emphatically pro-choice, and we believe it is critical to keep watching the situation in the US – and other countries where there is a threat to reproductive rights – via our [Gilead Watch](#) initiative. Please also follow and support our partner organisations in the US, such as Planned Parenthood and the Center for Reproductive Rights, who are fighting to protect those rights.



## campaigns

# POPULATION HEALTH ENVIRONMENT

## The government still isn't listening



Funding PHE projects is the holistic solution to our interconnected environmental crises. Frustratingly, the message appears to be falling on deaf ears, writes PM's **Madeleine Hewitt**.

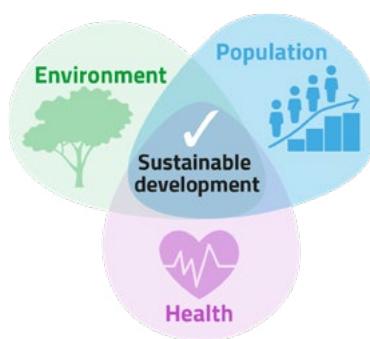
**EARLIER THIS YEAR** we launched a campaign ask, directed at the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO), for the UK government to fund Population Health Environment (PHE) projects under its commitments to the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBD) and international aid.

PHE projects focus on providing voluntary family planning information and services, environmental conservation, and education on sustainable natural resource management in a coordinated manner. At PM, we believe PHE is the vital solution to our interconnected environmental crises. Thank you to all our supporters who participated in the campaign, which resulted in a response from the FCDO. The key points are shared here, and highlight exactly what the FCDO gets wrong about this pressing issue.

### THE IMPACT OF FUNDING CUTS

**FCDO:** *"With regard to supporting family planning and tackling population to improve local communities, the UK is a strong defender of Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) – including that all people have the fundamental right to make informed choices about their own sexuality and fertility free of coercion, discrimination, or violence."*

While the UK government's long-term support for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), is admirable, the facts don't support the ambition. Systemic cuts to SRHR funding have forced bodies such as the UNFPA – whose mission is to deliver a world where every pregnancy is wanted, every childbirth is safe and every young person's potential is fulfilled – to scale back.



According to the International Development Committee report on this issue, the government has reduced its spending on sexual and reproductive health by a third, halved its family planning spend, and cut spending on reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health by 37% since 2019. Globally, more than 257 million women still have an unmet need for safe, modern contraceptives.

We hoped the UK government would recognise that SRHR funding gaps could be closed through PHE policies. PHE's integrated approach means the government could also draw from allotted budgets to support the GBD and its commitments to fund climate change resilience in vulnerable countries.

### POPULATION CAN'T BE IGNORED

**FCDO:** *"Although the world faces significant environmental and economic challenges, they cannot be solved by trying to force population growth or decline. The UK also believes that everyone everywhere should be able to freely decide whether, when and how many children to have."*

Population Matters strongly agrees. We believe that choice firmly rests in the hands of the individual. It's disappointing that the FCDO offered this stock response, rather than looking at the bigger picture. The interconnected environmental crises are the result of the environmental toll that high population growth and our overconsumption of resources have placed upon the planet. The government can't duck out of this – the facts speak for themselves. Since 1970, the global human population has increased from 3.7 billion to more than 8 billion. In the same



timeframe, wildlife populations have plummeted by 69% on average. The Global Footprint Network estimates that we are currently in ecological overshoot, meaning that humanity demands 70% more than the earth's ecosystems can regenerate.

### GROUNDED IN HUMAN RIGHTS

**FCDO:** *"Women's bodies should not be used to solve global challenges – international action to tackle climate change and biodiversity loss must be grounded in human rights and seek to alleviate rather than reinforce existing inequalities."*

This response was truly maddening. PHE's focus on choice-based family planning puts women in charge of their own fertility and their own futures. Evidence shows that women overwhelmingly choose to have fewer children and space their pregnancies when an unmet need for safe, modern contraception is fulfilled. This provides them with the opportunity to pursue higher education or develop careers, advancing their economic status.

The approach of PHE is grounded in human rights and can help achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals: from ending poverty to achieving gender equality and ensuring a sustainable distribution of natural resources for all, ending food insecurity and drought. It's ridiculous that the UK government does not yet recognise the multiple benefits of a PHE approach, but it emphasises the need for us to continue our vital campaigning work.

■ **WANT A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE? Visit [populationmatters.org/campaigns](http://populationmatters.org/campaigns).**

Stepping up to the plate in his new role, **Sho Nair** tells us a little about himself and his thoughts on joining our small but mighty charity.

## Our new Head of Fundraising and Engagement in the hot seat

**Q: What attracted you to join the Population Matters team?**

**A:** What I saw was a charity, which I hadn't previously encountered, that, on a 'big picture' level, matched very closely with my beliefs and values. PM is an organisation that wants a world in which we have a well-educated population making sustainable choices that benefit both people and the planet.

I was also impressed by how the organisation has attracted many very good people, including its patrons and staff, past and present, along with truly amazing supporters. Thanks to some fantastic contributions, our financial situation is very healthy, and in a great place to build from, from a fundraising point of view.

**Q: What aspects of your background and previous experience do you think will be most valuable in your role?**

**A:** I've worked in a wide variety of charities and across different types of fundraising, with different levels of investment and expectation, including at Rethink Mental Illness for five years. I was privileged to be part of the movement that continues to bring mental health into the mainstream.

I've been involved in highly successful and well-resourced fundraising operations, and those that are quite the opposite. I think combining this variety of experience with taking an evidence-based approach, and trying to maintain an open mind and humility, will help me to contribute to Population Matters developing its fundraising further.

**Q: What does your role encompass?**

**A:** I'm here to ensure that enough people, who I believe are inherently kind

and generous, know about Population Matters and think that that supporting us is a good thing. As well as making sure our wonderful members have the best possible experience, we need to find and sustain new sources of support so we both maximise income and expand the population conversation.

**Q: What do you see as the biggest challenges Population Matters faces and how do you think these can be overcome?**

**A:** The taboo around talking about population is a major challenge. We can overcome it by understanding our part in various conversations and forums and landing the right messages in the right contexts. Just today, I

**Our strengths include our courage to work tirelessly on a subject that many prefer to avoid, and our wonderful staff and supporters who make everything we do possible.**

talked with my excellent colleague Josh, who spoke about how crucial context is when it comes to bringing people on board.

**Q: What do you think are the biggest strengths of Population Matters? What sets this charity apart?**

**A:** Our strengths include our courage to work tirelessly on a subject that many prefer to avoid, and our wonderful staff and supporters who make everything we do possible. I've met so many people



close to the cause who are insightful, passionate, diligent, compassionate, generous and willing to have difficult but enlightening conversations about population. Thank you to all of you who are reading this!

**Q: Outside of work, how do you like to spend your time?**

**A:** I love being with my small family, playing and watching cricket – I'm a Gloucestershire County Cricket Club supporter – and travelling. This summer, I walked up Yr Wyddfa (Mount Snowdon) and was lucky enough to catch some Olympic action in Lille.

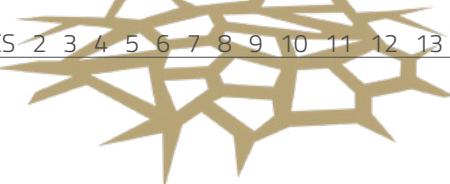
### THANK YOU! YOUR DONATIONS ARE CHANGING THE WORLD

Thanks to the incredible generosity of our donors and fundraisers, we're able to promote positive, practical, ethical solutions that can achieve a sustainable human population and protect the natural world. Some of the initiatives your donations have helped happen include:

- Our core campaigns, such as *Small families* and *HumaNature*.
- In-depth reports such as *Vanishing Icons* and *Dried Up Futures* (see page 8) which open up vital conversations.
- Landmark research, such as our *Population Futures* project.
- Events, such as *Population Conversation Nigeria* and PM's attendance at several international events at the UN, including *The Summit of the Future* this September in New York.

Meet our Supporter of the Year on page 12!

**IN BRIEF:** Sho has worked in the charity sector since 2005, in a variety of fundraising roles – primarily in health, social welfare, human rights and education. He believes in empowerment and enjoyment at work and continuously looks for ways to improve the experiences of people, in a fair and equitable way. At the top of his agenda is the need to safeguard the natural world more urgently every day.



# No life on this land



Drought and desertification are the worst environmental crises facing the world today. PM's **Madeleine Hewitt** showcases our new report – *Dried Up Futures* – which examines how these interconnected disasters are driven by population growth.

**LIFE ON LAND** is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) established by the United Nations in 2015. As SDG number 15, it aims to protect, restore, and promote the sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt land degradation, and halt biodiversity loss by 2030.

This goal is only six years away, but progress towards achieving it seems staggeringly slow. When it comes to addressing drought, land degradation, and desertification, we live in a world where no other set of hazards claims more lives and causes more economic losses. All three of these environmental crises exist within a complex cycle, which shapes the lives of billions of people worldwide.

It's an issue we've explored in depth in our new report – *Dried Up Futures: How population growth is driving drought, land degradation, and desertification*. We consider how population growth is a driver of these interconnected environmental crises and the urgent need to adopt a holistic Population Health Environment (PHE) approach that puts women and girls at the forefront of solutions. *Dried Up Futures* 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.

## DROUGHT – THE SILENT CRISIS

Unlike dramatic wildfires or floods, droughts don't dominate news coverage. Instead, they have been described as 'misery in slow motion'. The Horn of Africa has been devastated by drought since 2020, affecting 100 million people in the region. The principal cause of drought is low rainfall over an extended period. Droughts are made worse by climate change, deforestation, urbanisation, and groundwater depletion, all driven by population growth and our unsustainable demand for resources.

Drought is also one of the most expensive natural disasters. In the past 50 years, drought-related hazards have led to economic losses of over \$70 billion USD in Africa.

Droughts devastate whole communities but disproportionately impact women and girls. In rural Africa, female infants born during severe droughts will grow up physically shorter, receive less education, and ultimately become less wealthy. In Ethiopia, rates of child marriage rose by 119% in 2022

in areas worst impacted by drought, as young girls were sold for dowries or for families to have one less mouth to feed. Child marriages violate girls' rights, placing them at higher risk of violence and exploitation. Child marriages also contribute to high fertility rates and rapid population growth in low and middle-income countries.

## LAND DEGRADATION – NO LAND, NO LIFE

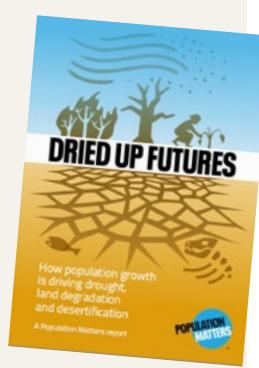
Land is one of the most valuable resources upon which we depend for our food and our shelter. However, due to humanity's rapid expansion and cultivation of land, the resource upon which we depend is increasingly degraded.

The UN's Global Land Outlook 2022 suggests that 20–40% of the Earth's land is in a degraded condition, with 100 million hectares of productive land lost annually. Since agriculture began, land degradation has followed and accelerated as agriculture has expanded and intensified to meet the rising demand of our growing population. Unsustainable agricultural practices – overgrazing, deforestation, artificial fertiliser and pesticides – causes land degradation.

It has been estimated we would need to scale up food production by 70% to meet future demand. Whilst technological breakthroughs may improve agricultural efficiency with reduced environmental impacts, they would be limited by scale if continued population growth drives unsustainable demand.

## Population Health Environment is a solution

To tackle interconnected issues such as drought, land degradation and desertification, it's important to utilise a holistic approach that can break down the vicious cycle wherein one crisis worsens the other. Population Health Environment (PHE) is a holistic approach that improves access to safe, modern contraception in remote areas, alongside educating communities on how to sustainably manage natural resources, acting as an effective preventative approach to drought, land degradation, and desertification. Please download, read, and share our fully referenced report which includes recommendations for action, at [populationmatters.org/resources/dried-up-futures-report](https://populationmatters.org/resources/dried-up-futures-report).



## DESERTIFICATION – DRYLANDS TO DEADLANDS

Drylands are found in five of the world's continents and are home to over 3 billion people. People have lived on drylands for thousands of years, with indigenous knowledge passed down

generations to ensure communities live in harmony with these delicate ecosystems. However, in recent decades, climate change, alongside rapid population growth, has tipped the ecological balance, placing greater pressure on drylands, triggering the process of desertification.

Desertification does not mean desert expansion, it's land degradation that occurs on drylands. In fact, 46 out of the 54 African countries are vulnerable to desertification. In Asia, desertification has affected 38 out of 48 countries.

While less than 10% of drylands are undergoing desertification, these areas have experienced the most rapid population growth, the population having increased from approximately 172 million in 1950 to over 630 million today. Rapid population growth in drylands has meant traditional pastoral techniques have been replaced by intensive agriculture to meet demand, which has resulted in overgrazing and soil erosion, causing desertification.

Desertification syndrome is a term used to describe the negative cycle linking desertification and poverty. Dryland populations apply



modern contraception, resulting in rapid population growth in these areas. The population in drylands is projected to increase twice as rapidly as non-dryland areas and is projected to reach 4 billion by 2050.

### THE PRESSURE OF POPULATION

Since 1970, the global human population has increased from 3.7 billion to now over 8 billion in 2024. Unsustainable demand, due to population growth and rising per capita consumption, has strained the earth's water and land systems, and accelerated drought and land degradation.

Current UN projections are for a population of 10.3 billion by 2085, with a 95% certainty range of 8.9 to 12.4 billion. All these extra billions of people will require more land, more food, and more water – all natural resources at risk of scarcity in some areas due to drought and desertification.

As the UN's *2023 Global Drought Snapshot* eloquently puts it: *"Nothing in nature can survive unlimited growth. Nothing in nature exists independently. Everything is interconnected and we are starting to realise this only now. We are not separated from nature, but are an integral part of this fragile web that evolved over millennia."*

**Nothing in nature can survive unlimited growth. Nothing in nature exists independently. Everything is interconnected. We are an integral part of this fragile web that evolved over millennia.**

unsustainable agricultural practices to meet demand, leading to desertification, crop failure, and food insecurity.

Desertification ruins agricultural livelihoods and increases rates of poverty, subsequently limiting the capacity of the community to invest in more sustainable land management, thereby continuing the cycle of desertification.

In dryland areas of Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, up to 41% of the total populations live in extreme poverty. Many of these communities lack access to safe,

### More people need more food

 Intensive agriculture drives land degradation, 100 million acres of land lost annually

### More people place more pressure on the land

 Drylands undergo desertification, trapping communities in poverty cycles

### Women bear the scars of drought on their bodies

 Girls grow up shorter, poorer, and more likely to be sold in child marriages

## awards

# Celebrating changemakers

There's a wave of change making ripples across the planet thanks to people like these – our incredible, innovative and inspiring 2024 Change Champions...

For World Population Day 2024 – which focuses on the urgency and importance of population issues and solutions – we gave awards to individuals and organisations across the globe. Each of our winners is recognised for their progressive and inspiring work defending the environment, promoting reproductive rights, and enlightening the public about the challenges we face and the solutions available. Learn more about our different award categories and meet our fabulous 2024 Change Champions here.

## LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

### Dr Joan Regina Castro



Dr Castro is a public health specialist with over 20 years of experience working on sustainable and community development initiatives in rural and urban settings. She currently heads up our recent Empower to Plan partner, PATH Foundation Philippines, Inc (see page 16), whose mission is to alleviate poverty, improve health, and promote environmentally sustainable development. The organisation has been involved in trailblazing work in Population Health Environment. Dr Castro also featured as a panellist in our enlightening World Population Day 2024 webinar, *Women in Conservation*.

*"I am honoured to receive this Lifetime Award. This award affirms our decades of work advocating for the integrated Population Health Environment approach that puts the wellbeing of the people and ecosystems front and centre. Thank you, PATH Foundation Philippines, Inc! Thank you, Population Matters!"*

## YOUNG CAMPAIGNER Hadiqa Bashiri

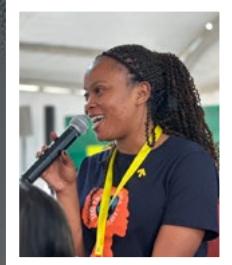


Hadiqa is a 21-year-old feminist activist from the tribal regions of Pakistan. At 11 years old, she boldly declined a marriage proposal, igniting a fervent dedication to combat early and forced marriages. Hadiqa is the founder of Girls United for Human Rights (GUHR), challenging entrenched patriarchal norms and championing the rights of girls and women. Hadiqa is one of Population Matters' Choice Ambassadors, our group of young people who do amazing campaign work all over the world.

*"My personal journey as a survivor of early and forced marriage fuels my passion for change, exemplifying the transformative power of youth-led activism. Thank you so much for this amazing news! I am truly honoured and delighted to receive the Young Campaigner Change Champion Award from Population Matters. It is an incredible privilege to join such a distinguished group of awardees."*

## WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT CHAMPION **Joan Kembabazi**

*"I am so honoured and humbled about this awesome recognition and award. This award means a lot to me as a grassroots girls' and women's empowerer."*

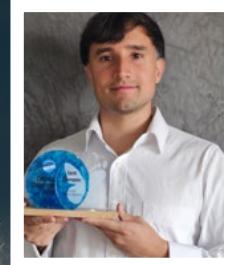


Joan is the founder and CEO of Gufasha Girls Foundation, a community-based organisation in Uganda committed to implementing projects that empower girls and young mothers. It is named after Joan's best childhood friend, Gufasha Moreen, who was forced into marriage at the age of 13, had to leave school as a result, and tragically died during childbirth. Joan has taken her message all over the world, most recently attending the 68th session of the Commission on the Status of Women where she moderated an event for UNICEF. Joan is one of Population Matters' Choice Ambassadors, joined as a panellist for our World Population Day 2023 webinar, *Is Education the Magic Bullet?* and featured in our Spring 2023 Magazine.

## EARTH CHAMPION **Daniel Cáceres Bartra**

Daniel is a marine conservationist and environmental advocate from Peru. He represents the Sustainable Ocean Alliance in Latin America and co-founded the Taking Care of the Ocean collective. His work focuses on marine biodiversity, ocean health, and sustainable practices to protect our oceans. He recently interviewed legendary Marine Biologist Sylvia Earle onstage at the *Our Ocean Youth Leadership Summit 2024*, where he engaged her in a fascinating conversation about the impact of population growth.

*"Thank you so much for this amazing award, I accept very happily, and I know it will give the legitimacy continue to speak on the opportunity that we have to prevent further loss of biodiversity."*



## SHINING A LIGHT (film, book or tv programme)

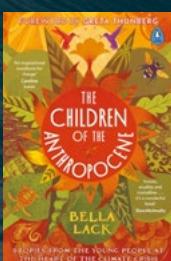
### **Bella Lack**

Bella is a longtime young activist who started environmental activism at the young age of 12 (she's now 21). She is the author of *The Children of the Anthropocene: Stories from the Young People at the Heart of the Climate Crisis*, a book highlighting the youth globally who, while at the frontline of the environmental crisis, are also combatting it. She is also a co-founder of Reserva, a youth-led biodiversity conservation organisation empowering young people to



make a measurable difference for threatened species and habitats through conservation, education, and storytelling.

*"This was so unexpected and so very kind of you – thank you."*



## ONLINE CAMPAIGN **Anna Hughes**

Anna is the Director of Flight Free UK, an organisation that challenges people to take a year off flying to reduce emissions and shift the norm towards flight-free travel. Anna does fantastic work via social media and blogs to promote alternative travel and make people realise the amazing benefits.



*"We work hard to inspire people to take positive climate action by reducing the amount they fly, and it's very validating for this work to be recognised by Population Matters as benefitting both people and planet. The best campaigns show how taking climate action doesn't have to be a sacrifice. And, just as a greater awareness of the issues of population lead to happier, healthier communities, with greater choice, more access to healthcare and services, and more empowerment, so choosing to travel in low-carbon ways gives the traveller a more enriching and better travel experience. We will continue to inform and inspire people to give flight-free travel a try, for their own sake as well as for our planet's future."*

## awards

### SOCIAL IMPACT STORYTELLING Veronika Perková

Veronika is an environmental journalist and activist. She explores the intersection of reproductive justice and conservation through her podcast, *Nature Solutionaries*.

*"When I started interviewing people 10 years ago, I had no idea where it would take me. I was just curious about the world and wanted to get to know inspiring people. And here I am, holding an award from Population Matters and making social impact! My dream is to live in a world where women have full autonomy over their lives and reproductive choices, where nature is thriving and where people live well while respecting the rights of future generations. Thank you for supporting me on my journey."*



### FAMILY CHOICE CHAMPION Miley Cyrus

Actor and singer/songwriter Miley Cyrus is one of the most high-profile celebrities to publicly announce that she doesn't want to have children due to the state of the planet. At PM, we feel it's important that people with international recognition have these conversations in public spaces, helping to reduce the stigma around those who choose not to have children and giving voice to countless people who feel the same. For that reason, Miley is our Family Choice Champion 2024.

*"The earth is angry. We've been doing the same thing to the earth that we do to women. We just take and take and expect it to keep producing. And it's exhausted. It can't produce. We're getting handed a piece-of-s\*\*\* planet, and I refuse to hand that down to my child. Until I feel like my kid would live on an earth with fish in the water, I'm not bringing in another person to deal with that."*

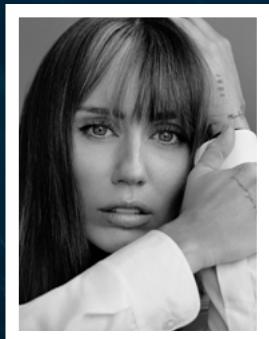


Photo: Facebook

### CAMPAINING GROUP McGill Youth Advisory Delegation

The McGill Youth Advisory Delegation (MYAD) do incredible advocacy work, representing young people at UN events around population and development issues, particularly sexual and reproductive health and rights and climate adaptation. (You can read more about them on page 19). Receiving the award on behalf of MYAD, Othmane Souissi, UN Campaigning Officer, told us:



*"I have received the award, and I must say that it is a magnificent trophy, both aesthetically and symbolically. Once again, I reiterate our sincere appreciation on behalf of MYAD for your consideration and efforts towards encouraging youth movements. Be assured that it will further push me personally to pursue this everlasting campaign to drive things forward."*

### POPULATION MATTERS SUPPORTER Alice Morley

Alice undertook a 10k run for us through Roundhay Park in Leeds, UK, back in April, raising nearly £400. Alice is an inspiration not just because of her physical exertion, but she also truly believes in our work. Thanks, Alice!



*"Huge thanks to you and the team at PM for supporting me in the run up (pun intended!) to the 10k, and afterwards as well. Quite a few of the people who sponsored me said they hadn't heard of PM before so hopefully they'll continue to stay updated with PM news and maybe even become members themselves!"*

### 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](http://populationmatters.org/newsletter).



Our Change Champions Awards are made with recycled acrylic from Midton. These awards minimise our environmental footprint and showcase our commitment to sustainability.



# Breeding for Britain?



Despite the UN's prediction that the global population will reach 10 billion by 2061, the UK's burgeoning 'pronatalism' movement insists the country needs more children. For **World Population Day 2024**, PM's CEO **Amy Jankiewicz** wrote this piece for the *Independent*, challenging the right-wing rhetoric.

Photos by Dakota Corbin and Chris Boland on Unsplash

**THE SOVIET ORDER** of Maternal Glory is redolent of the grossest form of state interference into perhaps the deepest and most personal expression of a woman – her ability to choose to reproduce.

Women were "encouraged" to have more communist babies for the Motherland, to help meet Soviet production targets. You might think there are few in the UK who would seek to replicate the Soviet state's policy today.

However, on the day that the United Nations has predicted that the perilous growth of the world population will mean it will reach 10 billion by 2061 (11 July, World Population Day), there is a growing movement in the UK calling for pronatalism – the belief that the world needs more children.

## LIVING BEYOND OUR MEANS

Surely we all know that we are already consuming more resources than the planet can sustain? We are already living way beyond our means. We know we are tipping the world over into irreversible climate change – which in turn erodes fertile soil, meaning more people must scrabble for more resources from diminishing land and water sources. We know we are killing off animal species at a dizzying rate.

We are felling our rainforests, pumping oil and digging up and burning more coal in a frenzy to try to satisfy our increasingly voracious appetites for consumables. But, say the pronatalists, while the birth rate is rising in many lower-income countries like Nigeria, in richer countries, birth rates are declining.

## THE UK DOES HAVE A PROBLEM

In the UK, this is a problem, they say, because while our numbers are shrinking – if you strip out the results of immigration – the number of older, non-working citizens is increasing. Our population is ageing. This, say the pronatalists, is a problem. And they are right. We cannot afford to support our

increasingly larger cohort of economically less active elders, who place the heaviest demands on social care services, the NHS and the state pension pot.

Logically, then, we need an ever-growing pool of working-age people to make the money on which our elders, in the autumn of their years, can float. This is why the pronatalist movement is demanding that women should breed for Britain – it is their patriotic duty. Their duty for the Motherland.

Author Paul Moreland argues in his latest book, *No One Left: Why the World Needs More Children*, that if women do not step up, we, in the UK will be overtaken by lower-income nations with booming economies turbo-boosted by higher fertility rates. And the former Tory MP Miriam Cates, speaking at a conference in London last year, spoke of a national "malaise" towards having children, claiming it was an "existential threat".

## THERE'S A WAY TO FIX IT

Let us politely step around the blaring racism and sexism in these statements. There is a fix – and a fix that does not rely on a *Handmaid's Tale*-solution of British women producing babies to pay into our pension pots.

New workers, keen to come to the UK, are the answer. They want to work – often in the NHS and social care, where they are needed most to support our elders – and they pay taxes to fund those services and boost our pension pots. At the same time, immigration into the UK does not add to global population growth.

The science is clear, population growth is a driver of all our environmental crises from climate change to wildlife extinctions, to millions left in poverty plagued by drought and desertification.

We need to end our constant pursuit of growth at the expense of women's bodies and the natural world upon

which we depend. Pronatalism is a simplistic, misguided, sexist, racist and entirely irrational answer to the wrong question. The *reductio ad absurdum* of this philosophy is that we must destroy the planet (with more and more people) to save it. Whisper it quietly, but it is time to reduce – not increase – our population.



**Pronatalism is a simplistic, misguided, sexist, racist and irrational answer to the wrong question.**

## events

# DEMOGRAPHIC ANXIETIES dominate ICPD debates



PM's **Florence Blondel** reports on the **57th session on Population and Development**, which Population Matters attended. Three decades after the Programme of Action was first adopted in Cairo, the challenges of declining and rising populations were the hot topics of conversation.

**THIS YEAR'S EVENT** wasn't just an ordinary convening. The 57th session on Population and Development marked a significant milestone: the 30th anniversary of the landmark Programme of Action's adoption in Cairo, in 1994. To commemorate this occasion, countries gathered in New York to share their successes and challenges in tackling population issues over the past three decades.

For 30 years, the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) has been the foundation for a global approach to population and development. It considers factors beyond birth rates and emphasises individual rights, especially for women, in reproductive health choices. This approach has shaped policies tackling population growth, maternal health, gender equality, and education access.

## EXCESSIVE, IRRATIONAL FEAR

In his keynote speech, *Past and Future Demographic Trends: Fears, Facts and Policy Implication*, Jose Miguel Guzman, President and Founder of NoBrainerData, warned

that excessive and irrational fear, especially concerning older populations hinders clear thinking and effective decision-making. He highlighted four demographic challenges: **Population decline, Very low fertility, Rapid ageing and International migration**.

Guzman stated: *"For some, a population reduction would be positive both for the economy and the environment and, therefore, they think governments need to start planning for a world where population is declining. Others consider that there are more negative than positive implications and thus, the need to increase fertility and, incentivise immigration."*

## MACROECONOMIC JUSTIFICATION

Stuart Gietel-Basten, Professor of Social Science, warned: *"These kinds of issues are to be addressed in their own right and not packaged up, sometimes with ethno-nationalist narratives, sometimes with conservative gendered worldviews, and used as a justification – as a kind of macroeconomic justification – for pushing back gains in reproductive and sexual health, reproductive autonomy and the empowerment of women and girls."*



PM's Florence Blondel asking questions at the megatrends side event.

In many countries now, there are attempts to increase fertility and reverse population decline or to slow the pace of population ageing. Iran's representative quoted studies saying: *"In the absence of proactive policy interventions, their fertility rate is anticipated to plateau below the replacement level."* Iran regrets what it now calls 'implementing stringent family planning policies' since Cairo and is warning countries not to fall into a 'population trap'. It is among the eight countries we monitor in our *Gilead Watch* campaign.

Experts caution against using these demographic anxieties to justify policies which restrict reproductive rights or blame younger generations for societal problems. *"It's very hard to imagine a situation where having more babies is the most effective response to these kinds of challenges,"* commented Professor Gietel-Basten. *"I know, I feel like it's become a catchphrase. I need to keep reminding people that babies don't work. They don't pay tax. So, we have children born today will not enter the labour market until maybe 2043."*

## BABY BOOM HOTSPOTS

While the world experiences longer lifespans and smaller families, some regions, particularly Sub-Saharan Africa, face the challenge of rapid population growth. By 2050, one in four people globally will be African. Dr Eliya Zulu of



The PM team with a delegation from Nigeria, including the National Population Commission.



PM Board member Simone Filippini reading the oral statement.

AFIDEP – an organisation that aspires for an Africa where evidence transforms lives – emphasised the urgency of addressing this issue, stating: “*You can’t wish away these big numbers.*”

And it’s Nigeria that leads the charge. It wasn’t lost on the National Population Commission (NPC) Chair, the Honourable Nasir Isa Kwarra, that his country tops the list. In a side conversation with us, he admitted that: “*Nigeria’s population is growing very fast, we are working on reducing the total fertility rate, working on the cultural elements that make it difficult for us to slow population growth. It takes time, but we will continue to invest in girl child education up to tertiary level, to buy her time to make reproductive choices at her pace.*”

Zambia, another country with a staggering 3.5% annual growth rate, is a prime example. Charles Banda, Head of Population Development and Planning, calls it one of the world’s “*fastest-growing*

**These kinds of issues should not be packaged up and used as a macroeconomic justification for pushing back gains in reproductive and sexual health, reproductive autonomy and the empowerment of women and girls.**

Stuart Gietel-Basten, Professor of Social Science

*populations.*” However, he highlights a unique aspect: “*This growth creates another challenge. Others call it a youth bulge, but I call it a child bulge. Nearly half (46%) of Zambia’s population is under 15.*”

Africa has a roadmap for achieving the ICPD goals: the Addis Ababa Declaration on Population and Development. However, progress remains slow or even stagnant in some cases. Banda emphasises this, pointing out that Zambia’s young median age of 17 hinders development compared to countries like the USA with a median age closer to 40.

### MEGATRENDS AND FUTURE GENERATIONS

In one of the side events we attended, organised by UNFPA, five visionary thought pieces exploring how key ICPD themes are shaping the future amid global megatrends were commissioned. I, representing Population Matters and US organisations Population Connection

and Population Media Center, raised two crucial questions: How are we increasing funding for family planning to meet the needs of over 250 million women with unmet demand? Are we ready for overconsumption in Africa?

Peter Le Souef, Professor of Paediatrics at the School of Medicine, University of Western Australia, is currently engaged in research commissioned by Population Matters and was part of the PM delegation. He identified a key gap in the week’s discussions – the future of children and their rights: “*While concerns about children’s wellbeing are less pronounced in highly developed countries, the situation is vastly different in Sub-Saharan Africa. With projections of 5.5 billion children born there by the end of the century, these countries face immense pressure on their environment and resources. Ensuring a safe and healthy future for these children, including tackling existing malnutrition issues, will be a major challenge.*”

Photo by Ante Hamersmit on Unsplash

## POPULATION IS STILL GROWING – AS ARE ITS IMPACTS

The issue of birth rates is complex. While some countries face population decline, others grapple with high population growth and its environmental strains. The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) argues that: “*Continuing rapid population growth is partly the result of a failure to ensure that all people, everywhere, have the knowledge, ability and means to determine whether and when to have children.*”

Population has not stopped growing. Despite a slowdown, the world still adds over 73 million people annually, and lifespans are extending (which is good). According to the latest UN population projections, in more than half of the world’s countries, women are hovering around replacement-level fertility (2.1 children per woman). It is much lower in one-fifth of countries, mostly in Europe and East Asia, where they are experiencing ‘ultra-low fertility’ (1.4 children per woman or less). However, there is a dramatic increase in Sub-Saharan Africa (average of 4.6 births per woman) and Africa in general, which will fuel the world’s population growth across most of the 21st century.

The answer doesn’t lie in coercive government policies. We need a balanced approach, one that respects individual choice, promotes family wellbeing and also considers the environmental impact of population growth. The debate continues. Find out more at [populationmatters.org/solutions](http://populationmatters.org/solutions).



partnerships

# On the PATH to a more sustainable future

**EMPOWER TO PLAN**


Our Empower to Plan project coordinator **Shweta Shirodkar** reports on how your support is helping women in a coastal Philippines village tackle immediate challenges and shape a resilient future for the next generation.

**EMPOWER TO PLAN** 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.

On a recent visit to the Philippines, I witnessed the amazing impact this initiative can have. At the coastal village of Sapao, I saw firsthand the incredible transformation led by local women, empowered by our partner, PATH Foundation Philippines, Inc (PFPI). These women are tackling climate change, addressing gaps in reproductive health services, and combating food insecurity. Their efforts have created sustainable solutions that continue to uplift the entire community.

This six-month project showcases the powerful, lasting impact of women-led initiatives, addressing both environmental and health challenges while underscoring the vital link between human wellbeing and environmental sustainability.

## A COMMUNITY IN CRISIS

Like many coastal communities in the Philippines, Sapao faces a perfect storm of challenges. Once reliant on fishing, the community now struggles as warming seas push fish beyond reach for small-scale fishers. Climate change and rising sea levels further threaten

Sapao, leaving the community on the brink of displacement.

One fisherwoman shared, “Two years ago, we would catch 4-5 kilograms of fish per day. Now, if we catch even 2-3 pieces, we are surprised.”

Legal restrictions and financial strain further trap the community, preventing fishers from venturing beyond a 20-mile radius. This compounds income loss, food shortages,



Training women in leadership, financial management, sexual and reproductive health and rights and sustainable fisheries management, were among the activities that took place.

and limits overall progress. Additionally, Sapao grapples with high rates of unintended pregnancies and limited reproductive health services due to its remote location.

## WOMEN TAKING THE LEAD

With modest funding from Population Matters, the women in Sapao took action. By integrating reproductive health education with environmental conservation, this PHE (Population, Health, Environment) project tackled two of Sapao’s most urgent challenges.

At the heart of this initiative is Sapao’s first Women Managed Area (WMA) – a five-hectare mangrove conservation zone managed by 35 local women. These women have become environmental stewards and champions of gender equality. The WMA is dedicated to mangrove replanting and conservation, recognising the critical role women play in the fisheries value chain and elevating them as leaders in both conservation and community development.

Mangroves shield the coast from storms and serve as vital fish breeding grounds, directly supporting the community’s food security and

livelihoods. Through their leadership in managing the mangroves, these women have gained a seat at the table in household and community decision-making.

Collaborating with government authorities and the broader community, PFPI planted over 1,000 mangrove seedlings, restoring 5 hectares of coastal land. These efforts not only enhance biodiversity but also strengthen long-term food security.

Interactions with the women of Sapao revealed: *“We have come to realise that our efforts in establishing mangrove nurseries, replantation, and management will directly benefit our children. They will inherit the fruits of these endeavours.”*

## BUILDING SKILLS, BUILDING FUTURES

To amplify the WMA’s impact, PFPI trained over 100 women and community members. These workshops covered leadership, reproductive health, sustainable fishing practices, mangrove conservation, and gender equality. By involving local officials in the training, the project helped foster lasting behavioural changes within the



This project showcases the lasting impact of women-led initiatives, addressing both environmental and health challenges while underscoring the vital link between human wellbeing and environmental sustainability.

community. Beyond conservation, over 25 women were trained in alternative livelihoods such as fish processing and bottling. This diversification is set to improve household incomes through value addition at source.

Additionally, through participation in the Community-Managed Savings and Credit System, the women developed financial management skills, empowering them to take greater control over household finances and better navigate economic challenges.

### EMPOWERING FUTURE GENERATIONS

Sustainability was central to the project's design. PFPI developed a five-year management plan to guide the WMA's activities, ensuring that human and financial resources are available for the continued conservation of mangroves, the advancement of gender equality, and reproductive health. The plan includes policy advocacy and efforts to embed the WMA's work into local governance structures, securing the project's benefits long after the initial funding.

### FROM CAREGIVERS TO CONSERVATIONISTS

The women of Sapao embody this sustainable future, transitioning from caregivers to conservationists. Their deepened understanding of the link between environmental health and human wellbeing has inspired their commitment to protecting their environment and leading their community.

### WHAT'S NEXT FOR EMPOWER TO PLAN?

Empower to Plan's support in Sapao has shown the profound impact holistic solutions such as PHE and small grants can have on local communities. With



a strong five-year management plan in place and ongoing efforts to secure government support, PFPI and the women of Sapao are well-positioned to continue their conservation and community development efforts.

New partners for the coming year will be announced soon, ensuring that this model of sustainable, community-led development continues to grow.

■ To contribute and keep updated, visit [populationmatters.org/empower-to-plan](https://populationmatters.org/empower-to-plan).

## THE CHALLENGES THE PHILIPPINES IS CONFRONTING

Like many coastal communities in the Philippines, Sapao faces a perfect storm of challenges.

- Highest population density in coastal Asia.
- Coastal areas experiencing sea-level rise 3x faster than the global average.
- 70% of coral reefs at risk, threatening marine biodiversity.
- Ranked 4th globally for climate risk impacts over the past 20 years.
- 1 in 10 teens (15–19) is pregnant, with 50% of these pregnancies unintended.
- Despite contributing only 0.4% of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, the country is highly vulnerable to climate change.



## EMPOWER TO PLAN PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Thanks to your support, we were able to action a number of vital initiatives:

- Established a Women-Managed Area (WMA) in Sapao.
- Conducted participatory workshops to plan and replant 5 hectares of mangroves.
- Trained 100+ women and community members in leadership, SRHR, and sustainable fisheries management.
- Created a 5-year plan for WMA activities and ongoing mangrove conservation.
- Provided alternative livelihood training for 20 women.

Our Empower to Plan partner PFPI is a pioneer of the Population, Health and Environment (PHE) approach, which seamlessly integrates sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) with environmental conservation. This addresses population, health, and conservation challenges simultaneously, promoting sustainable development that benefits both people and ecosystems.

## fundraising

# One week can make a difference



Help us continue the **Population Conversation** by being part of our **Big Give Christmas Challenge 2024** appeal. For one week only, your donation will be doubled at no extra cost to you, explains PM's **Anthony Howarth**.



**YOUR FANTASTIC DONATIONS** last year enabled us to hold our **Population Conversation 2024** event in Nigeria. We brought together 90 public, private and governmental stakeholders from across the country to discuss population growth, challenges, and positive steps in Africa's most populous country. February's event was informed by a unique, in-depth survey of citizens' views across Nigeria. Key steps identified included better access to

family planning and girls' education.

PM's **Population Conversation** concept was devised as a means to amplify national voices and local actions with evidence-based advocacy towards a sustainable population. Our approach is always to

consult and support locally, recognising the knowledge and experience that already exists. The fact that **Nigeria's Population Conversation** is ongoing is testament to this.

Our global goal to reach a sustainable human population can't be achieved without local knowledge, understanding, and support. Through **Population Conversation Nigeria** we have learned so much and made many like-minded friends, including Nigerian NGOs the Population Explosion Awareness Initiative (PEAI) and the Civil Society Legislative Activity Centre (CISLAC).

## SHAPING POPULATION CHANGE

We are building on this by strategically planning for phases two and three, to further engage with local experts and explore long-term structural engagement and the creation of a sustainable platform

to shape population change. Along with our existing partners, a network of coordinators across diverse Nigerian regions is being set up. This countrywide network will conduct advocacy on population, including education of the public and policymakers. Practical steps are decided at a local level by the people most affected by population growth. These efforts might differ across regions but are likely to include the provision of contraceptives, education, and healthcare. With the resulting groundswell of local support generated through this work we aim to influence regional and national policy.

Of course, ambitious plans like these need funding – and this is where we need your help. We're asking our amazing supporters to be part of our **Big Give Christmas Challenge 2024** appeal.

## SAVE THE DATE!

We have a real opportunity to make a big difference in Nigeria by developing the **Population Conversation** through our burgeoning partnerships in the country. Therefore, we have set our **biggest target ever – £25,000** for our December Big Give appeal.

What makes the **Big Give Christmas Challenge** so special is that it is **match funded**.

This means that **every single pound you donate is doubled** without any further cost to you.

It works like this.

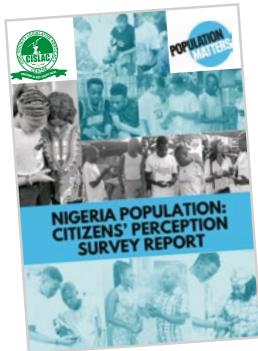
Using a pledge model, public donations are doubled from a combined match funding pot. This pot

comprises pledges, which the charity secures, and funds from Big Give's funding partners – foundations, philanthropists, corporations and trusts. During the campaign, public donations made through Big Give's online platform unlock the match funding.

Thanks to some of our amazing friends, **PM has secured pledges of £12,500**. So, with your help, our ambitious target is

within reach. To make the magic happen, donations must be made via the **Big Give Christmas Challenge** website during the week-long appeal period which runs from **12.00pm on Tuesday 3 December to 12.00pm on Tuesday 10 December 2024**.

■ **DONATE THIS DECEMBER!** To register your interest or to find out more visit [populationmatters.org/biggive2024](http://populationmatters.org/biggive2024) or email [supporters@populationmatters.org](mailto:supporters@populationmatters.org) and we'll send you a reminder about the all-important donation dates. Huge thanks!



## THE CHALLENGES FACING NIGERIA

■ 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.

■ Its natural resources are already under strain, with rising carbon emissions and increasing deforestation.

■ Lagos is vulnerable to rising sea levels and communities in the Niger Delta have lost or fear losing their homes due to coastal erosion.

■ 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.

*"It gladdens my heart to see that people around Nigeria are beginning to be aware and now talk more about overpopulation issues and family planning, especially for the economic burden that raising a large family poses to the numerous poverty-stricken families."*



**Chidera Benoit, Population Explosion Awareness Initiative, Nigeria**

# Q&A with Victoria Forte from McGill Youth Advisory Delegation (MYAD)

With a mission to empower youth and influence global policies, MYAD is a student-run, university-affiliated organisation that has consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). MYAD's Branding Officer, Victoria Forte, tells us more...

**Q: Can you explain MYAD's mission?**

**A:** Our mission is simple yet profound: we aim to bridge the gap between youth and policymakers. Our focus is about amplifying the voices of young people, ensuring their perspectives are not just heard, but actually shape international policy. We strive to create policies within the United Nations system that are inclusive, relevant, and effective, addressing the diverse needs and aspirations of youth around the world.



Our mandate revolves around actively enhancing youth representation through various initiatives. We conduct community consultations and workshops in the Montreal area where MYAD is based, collaborate with youth-focused NGOs, and create platforms for young individuals to articulate their viewpoints and concerns. This work is vital because, although young people often bear the brunt of insecurity and conflict, they are largely excluded from the policies and decisions that will shape their future. That's why we place a strong emphasis on intergenerational dialogues to foster mutual understanding and respect.

**Q: MYAD has achieved consultative status with the UN's ECOSOC. How does it feel to have a seat at such a prestigious table?**

**A:** Holding consultative status with the UN's ECOSOC since our establishment in 2006 has been an incredible honour for MYAD. This empowers us to actively engage with UN Permanent Missions, advising and contributing to the negotiation process. We actively work to integrate the unique insights and aspirations of young individuals into the fabric of global policies.

**Q: Day to day, what does MYAD's work involve?**

**A:** Throughout the year, we meticulously research and craft youth-centred policy

briefs for esteemed UN Commissions, including the Commission on the Status of Women and Commission on Social Development. These serve as crucial tools, enabling us to advocate for youth-centric policies on a global scale. As our final initiative for the academic year, MYAD puts together a *Youth Policy Report* – the product of an entirely youth-led policy development process as well as community consultations, expert consultations, and knowledge sharing with youth-centred organisations.

**Q: How does the engagement process with the UN work?**

**A:** We regularly engage with UN Permanent Missions and NGOs to develop side events, draft joint statements, and engage directly with UN third committee negotiations.

These meetings are pivotal to ensure that the perspectives, insights, and concerns of young people are thoroughly considered. Currently, there



is a lack of dialogue between youth and older generations, which leads to misunderstanding and fear. This fear often manifests as reluctance to incorporate and embrace new ideas. By promoting intergenerational dialogues, we can combat these fears and ensure that policies are informed by diverse perspectives and experiences.

**Q: What are MYAD's biggest challenges?**

**A:** The widespread perception that youth activism is a threat rather than a vital force for positive change. Too often, those in power view young people as a security threat, something to be managed or suppressed. We must move away from the narrative that focuses on youth as a problem to be solved, as this overlooks the unique insights that young people, in all their diversity, bring to the table. If we want a future that is sustainable, equitable and transformative, the voices of young people are not just important, they're indispensable.



Population Matters met with the MYAD delegation at the 57th session on Population and Development earlier this year.

**VICTORIA FORTE**, currently in her third and final year at McGill University, is completing her BA in Political Science and Gender, Sexuality, Feminist, and Social Justice Studies. As the new Branding Officer for MYAD, Victoria brings a fresh perspective to the team. She has a keen interest in Canadian public policy, human rights, transitional justice, and law.

■ MYAD is the Population Matters 2024 Change Champions Campaigning Group award winner. Find out more at [www.mcgillyad.org](http://www.mcgillyad.org).

# Let's make it a magical December



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**SAVE THE DATE!** For one week only, your donation will be doubled at no extra cost to you. To make the magic happen, donations must be made via the **Big Give Christmas Challenge** website during the week-long appeal period which runs from 12.00pm on Tuesday 3 December to 12.00pm on Tuesday 10 December 2024.

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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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