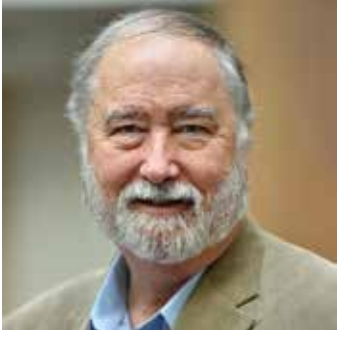


# POPULATION CONNECTION

Volume 54, Issue 2  
June 2022

## AMERICAN ABORTION BANS AND AFRICAN BABY BOOMS





## President's Note

**A**re we there yet? That's a familiar, if frustrating, refrain heard by those sharing long car rides with young children. When it comes to our own population mission, "getting there" entails three key steps:

**Attaining replacement rate fertility:** Demographers define that level as about 2.1 children per woman in low-mortality settings. When we were founded in 1968, women in the U.S. had 2.5 children on average. That has dropped to 1.64—well below replacement rate. Globally, we've gone from 4.9 children per woman to 2.4 today. Those are strong signs of progress, with wide variations around the globe.

**Achieving population stabilization:** We're still adding about 80 million people annually to our overcrowded planet, down from the all-time high of 93 million in 1988. In the U.S., according to the 2020 Census, population growth slowed a bit over the past decade—averaging 2.3 million per year—down from the peak rate in the 1990s of 3.3 million per year. More recently, there has been a sharp, possibly temporary, slowdown here at home due to Covid and lower net migration. Yet, 45 percent of all U.S. pregnancies remain unintended. So, there is much unfinished business.

**Ending overpopulation:** The world grows more overpopulated by the day due to our increasing numbers as well as our levels of consumption of—well, just about everything. Earth's precise carrying capacity has proven impossible to pin down—partly because it isn't a fixed figure. Rather, it depends at any given time on our consumption habits. But the hard fact is that, from climate change to deforestation to endangered species, we are destroying the natural systems that sustain us all.

When it comes to scaling the twin peaks of overpopulation and overconsumption, we're barely into the foothills. Right now, we're committing global ecocide. Under the most optimistic scenarios, stopping overpopulation will take generations of hard work. Even as we strive to move forward, there are dark political forces determined to roll back reproductive health and environmental preservation. We will not submit to their craven schemes and rotten regimes. We know that education and empowerment coupled with deep respect for the natural world are central to our population stabilization mission.

Our adversaries want us to become discouraged. Let's show them that our commitment to a better, safer, less-crowded world is unshakable.

*John Seager*  
john@popconnect.org



### In Memoriam: Art Riggs

We were very sorry to learn of the recent death of our good friend Arthur D. Riggs. Along with his wonderful wife, Jane, Art was among our earliest and most generous members. He led the team that developed synthetic insulin for diabetes patients—a breakthrough that has transformed the lives of millions. Weeks before his death in March at age 82, Art was still conducting medical research at the City of Hope National Medical Center in southern California. In his obituary, *The New York Times* quoted Art as saying, "I could have retired into a South Pacific mansion and enjoyed myself on the beach, but I would have been bored within a week." He led a life full of purpose and great achievement. We are grateful to Art and Jane for their deep commitment and generous support over many years. Together, they have made a tremendous impact to help advance our mission of global population stabilization.

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*Population Connection* (ISSN 2331-0529)

Population Connection is the national grassroots population organization that educates young people and advocates progressive action to stabilize world population at a level that can be sustained by Earth's resources.

Annual membership (\$25) includes a one-year subscription to *Population Connection* magazine, published quarterly. Population Connection is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization. As such, contributions, bequests, and gifts are fully tax-deductible in accordance with current laws.

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## Features

### 12 Harnessing Africa's Baby Boom: Women Seize Power Over Their Fertility—and Future

*By Sarah Newey*

### 22 The Supreme Court Is Egregiously Wrong in Its Draft Opinion

*By Dara E. Purvis, JD*



**Cover Image:** Family planning clinics are effective and popular, but distances in Ghana are huge, and only a minority of women can reach them. To overcome geography, Marie Stopes also operates outreach teams—comprised of a health nurse, midwife, and driver—who travel along pothole-ridden dirt roads to remote regions. (Simon Townsley/ Telegraph Media Group Limited)

## Departments

- 2 Editor's Note
- 3 Letters to the Editor
- 4 Pop Facts
- 6 In the News
- 8 Membership Engagement
- 10 International Partner Profile
- 24 Washington View
- 26 Field & Outreach
- 28 PopEd
- 32 Cartoon
- 33 Editorial Excerpts



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## Editor's Note

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I'm not normally someone who procrastinates, but I really dragged my feet writing this column, waiting for inspiration to strike (it still hasn't, so please forgive the stream of consciousness that follows). From a Supreme Court on the brink of a decision that will take away a fundamental right to bodily autonomy for Americans in half the states in this country to the despicable failure of Susan Collins (one of my senators in Maine) to vote for the Women's Health Protection Act despite her pro-choice claims to the state abortion bans that are getting passed faster than you can say mifepristone, I just *cannot*.

My husband was very accommodating of my using our breakfast bar and dining table for poster-making for the protests on May 3 (the day after the Supreme Court's draft opinion that would overturn *Roe v. Wade* was leaked) and May 14 (the day Bans Off Our Bodies rallies were held across the country). And as cathartic as it was to march and shout and commune with like-minded folks, it's hard to feel hopeful when so many self-serving politicians are out there trying to take us back 50 years, to a time when getting an abortion meant taking your life in your hands.

The madness of it all is heightened by "pro-life" (give me a break) members of Congress failing to extend the expanded child tax credit that reduced child poverty by 50 percent in 2021 and refusing to vote for a bill to address the critical shortage of baby formula in the United States. So make sure every fertilized egg becomes a baby, but then once those babies are born, let them starve. Got it.

You could cut the hypocrisy with a coat-hanger.

Of course, there's joy and satisfaction to be found amongst the angst and exhaustion: It's baby goat season at Sunflower Farm (look up "goats in pajamas" on YouTube if you want to shed happy tears), which I haunt from April through October. My favorite band (Lucius) is currently on tour, and I've seen them blow the roof off four different venues in Maine, Massachusetts, and Minnesota. My perennials survived the winter and unusually cold spring. And we still have 40,000 members of Population Connection who care about reproductive health and rights and the future of this put-upon planet.

As tired as we all are, we can't let the cynicism and misogyny of a few hundred right-wing politicians bring us down and snuff out our spirits—we can't afford to let them win the long game. They might be creating chaos and catastrophe right now, but the midterms are coming up this fall, and before we know it, there will be more Supreme Court seats to fill. (We're thrilled about the confirmation of Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, who will replace Justice Stephen Breyer at the end of the current term.)

So my advice to myself and to you is to snuggle some cute animals, go see some live entertainment (it's outdoor concert and theater season!), and get outside and far away from phones and computers and TVs. And once you've taken care of your battered psyche, put your elected officials on speed dial and get back to work. We're going to need everyone's help to keep this crazy train from going completely off the rails!

Marian Starkey  
marian@popconnect.org

## Letters to the Editor



Thank you for your article “Studying Our Stuff: Life Cycle Analysis Activities for Grades 6-12.” The activities are timely and educational. Most people, not just school children, are not aware of or choose not to think about where stuff comes from or where it goes. By learning about “stuff” they will become better stewards of the planet. It is never too early to begin teaching kids about the life cycles of stuff and the importance of the “three Rs” (reduce, reuse, recycle). I give presentations about water and climate and other environmental issues. I like to ask young students about where water comes from. Most say that it comes out of a faucet, but when asked where it originates from, how it gets purified for drinking, how it is transported to the faucet, and where it goes when it drains—most are clueless. And most think that water is free and are shocked to learn that it must be paid for.

Humans consume and throw away way too much. In our neighborhood we have weekly trash pick-up, and I am amazed at the amount of reusable furniture and other items that are left at the curb to be picked up and driven to a landfill. Our town has a yearly electronics drop-off day, and I am equally amazed at the mountains of electronics trash that will be headed to a landfill.

Your article has inspired me to continue incorporating “stuff” studies into my lesson plans. I’m sure that after reading your article, others will do the same.

Ginny Bauregard

First, in response to some letters in the March issue, I always like reading the letters—it is nice to know others feel like I do about overpopulation. So I enjoyed both Frank Pittman’s and Cory Davidson’s letters. I couldn’t have said it better on both issues, so thank you to both of you.

Also, thank you to Population Connection for finally giving us an article about men and their responsibilities (“Men Across America Are Getting Vasectomies ‘as an Act of Love’”). I have been asking for one for some time. I admit I get tired of reading about birth control and abortion but never anything about men and what they can do. So this was refreshing and a start. Thanks to all men willing to do this.

Keep up the good work. You seem to be the only group that gets (or will admit) the connection between too many people and all of our environmental problems—food shortages, fresh water shortages, too much logging, etc.

Bonnie Scott

It must be said that no discussion of a ‘lack’ of any fundamentally life-giving resource should be taken seriously that fails to bring in the balancing subject of overpopulation (contextual locally and writ large globally), with its myriad unrealistic demands thereof.

We must begin to take into account the planet’s finite realities as the starting point for such discussions.

Robert Culbertson

Thanks for the great recent issue! I read it cover-to-cover. As someone who lived in Mississippi as a high school teacher with Teach for America and witnessed rampant teenage pregnancy there, and then as someone who had a vasectomy a few years ago, for all the reasons pointed to in this article, this issue hit home on many fronts.

Bryce Hach  
Population Connection Board Member

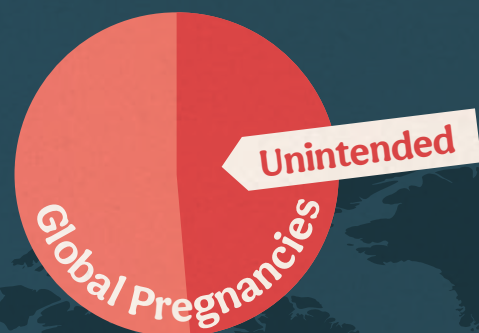


# UNmet Need Unintended Pregnancy Unsafe Abortion

Globally, an estimated **257 million women** who want to avoid pregnancy are not using safe, modern methods of contraception, and of them, **172 million women** are using no method at all.<sup>1</sup>

Globally, the latest data show that in 2015–2019, there were roughly **121 million unintended pregnancies each year**, with some **48% of all pregnancies being unintended**.

**61%** of these unintended pregnancies ended in an induced abortion. Given that an estimated 45% of all abortions remain unsafe, **this is a public health emergency.**



**Unsafe abortion hospitalizes about 7 million women a year** in developing countries. Between 4.7% and 13.2% of maternal deaths can be attributed to unsafe abortion annually.







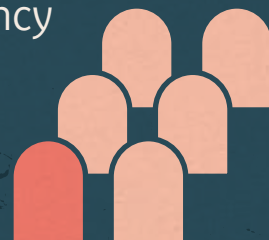
In developing countries, nearly **one in three young women** aged 20 to 24 years **gave birth in adolescence**, defined as ages 10 to 19.



Between 1990 and 2019, the annual unintended pregnancy rate fell from 79 to 64 unintended pregnancies for every 1,000 women aged 15 to 49 years. While the falling rate of unintended pregnancy offers some comfort, the absolute number of women who experience an **unintended pregnancy has actually increased by about 13%**, because of population growth over this 30-year period.

<sup>1</sup> Note that this is a global estimate. The figure we more commonly use—**218 million**—refers only to those women in low- and middle-income countries who have an unmet need for modern contraception.

Complications in pregnancy and childbirth are the **leading cause of death** among girls aged 15 to 19 years.



Source: *State of World Population 2022*, UNFPA



# IN THE NEWS

*By Marian Starkey, Vice President for Communications*

## **New IPCC Report Glosses Over Role of Population Stabilization in Climate Change Mitigation**

The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is in the process of publishing its Sixth Assessment Report (assessments have come out every six to eight years since 1990). The assessment is being conducted by three separate working groups that focus on different aspects of climate change: the physical science basis (Working Group I); impacts, adaptation, and vulnerability (Working Group II); and mitigation of climate change (Working Group III). Another group of authors will write a non-technical synthesis report, integrating the three working group reports and three special reports in a “style suitable for policymakers.”

In April, Working Group III released its report. The charge of this group was to assess progress in emissions reductions and mitigation options going forward. The report’s 239 authors covered much over the course of 2,913 pages, including copious references to different population projections and how they change future emissions scenarios. But despite the frequent acknowledgment of the role population size plays in humanity’s consumption of greenhouse gases (GHG), family planning was only mentioned once, and only in reference to its ability to minimize the number of people at future risk of hunger. Contraception and birth control weren’t mentioned at all.

For a report meant to illuminate the potential effectiveness of our options for reducing future GHG emissions, the omission is disappointing and even dangerous. In order to keep warming to less than 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, the report states that global emissions must peak by 2025, which will “involve rapid and deep and in most cases immediate GHG emission reductions in all sectors.” The population and reproductive health sector should be identified clearly and by name.

## **Male Birth Control Methods Near Human Trials**

There are several different male birth control methods currently undergoing testing, but none yet ready for the health care market. (This, despite research to discover a hormonal method for men beginning in the 1970s.)

One method that will enter human trials in Melbourne, Australia, soon is ADAM, a non-hormonal gel injected into each vas deferens, the tubes that carry sperm from the testicles to the urethra. The gel is intended to block sperm for at least a year, and the method is meant to be reversible.

Another method expected to begin human trials later this year is a non-hormonal pill that blocks sperm production by inhibiting a particular Vitamin A receptor. In mice, the pill has been 99 percent effective at preventing pregnancy, and researchers have observed no side effects. Within four to six weeks of discontinuing the pill, male mice have been able to impregnate female mice.

## **China’s Population Peaking Soon**

China’s population could peak this year, according to Cai Fang, a member of the People’s Bank of China’s monetary policy committee. The Chinese government’s 2021 population estimate for mainland China was 1.41 billion, with births the lowest they’ve been since at least 1950. The rate of population growth was the lowest it had been since 1960. Several provinces are already reporting negative population growth.

## **Major U.S. Cities Lost Population in 2021**

The U.S. Census Bureau released new data in March on metro area and county population change from July 1, 2020, to July 1, 2021.

Most (57 percent) U.S. counties experienced population growth during 2020-2021, but counties that are home to some of the nation’s largest cities declined in size. More than two-thirds of metro areas (251 of 384) experienced population growth during 2020-2021. Due to higher deaths than births and domestic migration to smaller metro areas, however, the country’s largest metro areas experienced population decline:

- New York-Newark-Jersey City: -327,955
- Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim: -175,913
- San Francisco-Oakland-Berkeley: -116,385
- Chicago-Naperville-Elgin: -91,671



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The pandemic has elevated deaths above what would be expected otherwise; births are at their lowest levels in decades; and many people are being priced out of major cities (and many of them can now work remotely) and are moving to smaller cities and towns.

## State Abortion Law Updates

This year is shaping up to be the worst in recent history for abortion rights in the U.S. In preparation for an end to national protections for abortion access, legislatures across the country are passing bills that will make it more difficult or even impossible for residents to get abortions in their states. Here's a rundown of state bans that have been passed this year:

**Arizona:** Gov. Doug Ducey (R) signed SB 1164 into law in March, banning abortion at 15 weeks—medical emergency is the only exception. Physicians who violate the law will be faced with felony charges and loss of their medical license. The law, if unchallenged, will likely go into effect this summer.

**Florida:** Gov. Ron DeSantis (R) signed HB 5 into law in April, which bans abortion after 15 weeks. Exceptions exist only to save the life or protect the physical health of the pregnant person or in the case of a fatal fetal diagnosis. The law is scheduled to take effect in July.

**Idaho:** Gov. Brad Little (R) signed SB 1309 into law in March, banning abortion at six weeks, with exceptions for rape, incest, and threats to the life or health of the pregnant person. The law

allows the “father, grandfather, sibling, aunt or uncle of the fetus” to bring legal action against the abortion provider, with a potential payout of at least \$20,000 if their claim is successful. The law was scheduled to go into effect in April but was temporarily blocked by the Idaho Supreme Court after a legal challenge was brought by Planned Parenthood.

**Indiana:** Gov. Eric Holcomb (R) signed HB 1217 into law in March. The bill requires patients to undergo counseling 18 hours before a procedure that informs them that medication abortions may be reversed, that “human physical life begins when a human ovum is fertilized by a human sperm,” and that “objective scientific information shows that a fetus can feel pain at or before twenty (20) weeks of postfertilization age.” None of these statements are backed by science.

**Kentucky:** The legislature overrode Gov. Andy Beshear's (D) veto of HB 3 in April, and the law went into effect immediately. The 72-page bill places such onerous requirements on providers that the 15-week ban included in the legislation is moot—the two remaining abortion clinics in Kentucky stopped providing abortions immediately, until a federal judge temporarily blocked the law a week later and the clinics were able to resume abortion provision.

**Oklahoma:** Gov. Kevin Stitt (R) signed SB 612 into law in April, saying, “We want Oklahoma to be the most pro-life state in the country. We want to outlaw abortion in the state of Oklahoma.” The bill does just that, with one exception:

to “save the life of a pregnant woman in a medical emergency.” Providers who violate the law could be fined up to \$100,000 and face up to 10 years in jail. The law goes into effect in August. Gov. Stitt signed another bill (SB 1503) into law in May that mimics SB 8 in Texas, allowing private citizens to bring lawsuits against anyone who aids a patient in getting an abortion. It went into effect immediately.

**South Dakota:** Gov. Kristi Noem (R) signed HB 1318 into law in March, banning medication abortion via telemedicine. This will result in patients having to visit the clinic four times: to receive counseling, to take the first pill 72 hours later, to take the second pill 24 hours after that, and to have a follow-up appointment a couple weeks later. The bill is slated to go into effect in July.

**West Virginia:** Gov. Jim Justice (R) signed SB 468 into law in March, banning abortion when a fetus has a genetic anomaly. The law is scheduled to go into effect in June.

**Wyoming:** Gov. Mark Gordon (R) signed a “trigger ban” (HB 92) into law in March that would ban abortion at six weeks if the Supreme Court overturns *Roe v. Wade*. The bill contains exceptions for rape, incest, and threats to the life or health of the pregnant person. The bill also redefines what viability means, “to a detected heartbeat standard.”

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The digital version of this article includes hyperlinked sources: [popconnect.org/articles/in-the-news-june-2022/](https://popconnect.org/articles/in-the-news-june-2022/)

# Virtual Events

By Natalie Widel, Director of Digital Marketing

If you haven't checked out the array of virtual events Population Connection regularly hosts, you're missing out! Over the last few months, hundreds of members and supporters have joined us for:



Liz McKenzie



Hannah Evans



Hank Lentfer

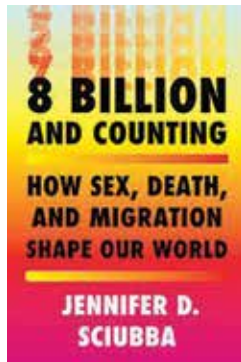
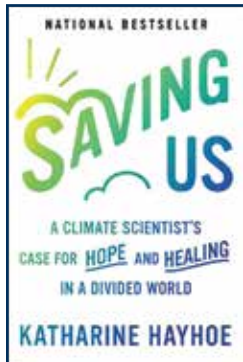


Marni LaFleur



Seheno Cordaunt-Andriantsaralaza

- A four-part **Demography Series** hosted by Senior Analyst Hannah Evans. This education series explored how human population trends and dynamics affect global sustainable development and environmental change.
- A screening of the documentary film **The Singing Planet** to celebrate Earth Day. This inspiring film celebrates the beauty of our natural world and calls on all of us to work to preserve it. Filmmaker Liz McKenzie and natural sounds recordist Hank Lentfer joined us for a special panel following our screening period to discuss their work on the film and how they've learned to listen more carefully to the world around us.
- A special presentation by one of our international partners, **Lemur Love**. Founder Dr. Marni LaFleur and on-the-ground Director Dr. Seheno Cordaunt-Andriantsaralaza shared insights about the valuable conservation work this small, Madagascar-based nonprofit does to preserve lemur habitats and strengthen the health of the human communities surrounding them. (Read our interview with Dr. LaFleur on page 10!)



- Two meetings of the **Page Turners** book club! In March, members gathered to discuss *Saving Us: A Climate Scientist's Case for Hope and Healing in a Divided World* by Katharine Hayhoe, and in June, they read *8 Billion and Counting: How Sex, Death, and Migration Shape Our World* by Jennifer D. Sciubba. Join our next meeting in August for an interesting and lively discussion with other Population Connection members! You can find more information at [popconnect.org/virtual-events/book-club/](https://popconnect.org/virtual-events/book-club/).

## Announcing: Our First Annual Member Photo Contest!

Do you love to take photos on your travels or in your own community? If so, we'd love to see them! Submit your photos of the people, places, and wildlife you're most passionate about protecting, and see your winning photo in the September issue of *Population Connection* magazine! See submission guidelines and instructions at [popconnect.org/virtual-events/summer-photo-contest](https://popconnect.org/virtual-events/summer-photo-contest). Accepting entries now through August 5.

It's never too late to see what's happening next! Find recordings of past events (including most of those mentioned on these pages) and register to join us in the coming months at [popconnect.org/virtual-events](https://popconnect.org/virtual-events). We'd love to have you!



# Partner Profile: Lemur Love

Dr. Marni LaFleur is the Founder and Director of Lemur Love, an organization in Madagascar that Population Connection is proud to support. Marni is also an Assistant Professor at the University of San Diego, where she teaches Biological Anthropology, and she's a member of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Species Survival Commission (SSC) Primate Specialist Group and the IUCN SSC Primate Specialist Group Section for Human-Primate Interactions. She recently spoke over email with Dr. Lee Polansky, Senior Director of Executive Initiatives and Special Projects. Read on for an abridged version of that conversation.

## What's the story behind your work with lemurs and why you started Lemur Love?

I became fascinated with lemurs after observing them in forests in Madagascar and seeing their unusual social relationships. Unlike 98 percent of mammal species, lemur females dominate males. I ended up living with a troop of ring-tailed lemurs in Tsimanampetsotsa National Park for a year. While I was there, I saw illegal activities in the park and worried that the lemurs and their forest would soon disappear. I started Lemur Love to continue studying lemurs and to help protect them.

## How has human population growth impacted Madagascar's environment and wildlife, including lemurs?

It's difficult for rural Malagasy women to access family planning—it's simply unavailable and/or unaffordable. In 2019, one month of oral contraceptives increased from \$0.05 to \$0.50—many Malagasy women couldn't pay the higher price. Without birth control, women have more children than they might necessarily want—children who need more resources—impacting the environment and threatening the lemurs.

## Has anything surprised you about lemurs and their relationships to each other?

Ring-tailed lemurs are funny and have distinct personalities! The troop's

dominant female, Pinky, is a jerk and a neglectful mother, who routinely ignores calls from her babies and abandons them several times a day. I have a photo of her baby alone in the dark at 3:47am! This is extremely dangerous, obviously, and only something Pinky would allow.

Contrast Pinky with 5-head, a low-ranking female from the troop. She is more skittish—she constantly worries about everything, makes alarm calls often, and returns lost calls to all group members. She goes out of her way to help the young ones, and often picks up the slack for Pinky.

## How does Lemur Love work to empower women?

We're working with the Madagascar Ministry of the Environment and the Barefoot College Madagascar to train four women from Efoetse

village to be solar engineers. When the women return to Efoetse after training, they'll build a solar grid for the community. Currently, the village doesn't have electricity, running water, or sanitation. Electricity is a major step in sustainable development and will no doubt lead to economic and development opportunities.

## What's the most satisfying aspect to working with Lemur Love?

Introducing Malagasy children to lemurs! Madagascar was a French colony until 1960, and education is still based on French curriculum, which includes European—but not Malagasy—flora and fauna. Many Malagasy children (and even adults) have never seen a lemur. It warms my heart to see young minds being sparked!

*Learn more about Lemur Love at [lemurlove.org](http://lemurlove.org).*



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# Harnessing Africa's Baby Boom

## Women Seize Power Over Their Fertility—and Future

**Africa's population is on track to double by 2050. Experts warn the continent's high birth rate perpetuates poverty—so does the solution lie in family planning? Sarah Newey visits Ghana to find out. Pictures by Simon Townsley.**

Senior and Junior are asleep in their mother's arms, cozy beneath their pale pink beanie hats. Yet to be named, the pair are just a month old—with Senior nicknamed for arriving moments before her younger sister.

The twins are part of Africa's baby boom, an unprecedented renewal which will see the continent's population double in size by 2050, to an estimated 2.5 billion. Already 60 percent of the population is under the age of 25, making it one of the most promising and potentially volatile on Earth.

Experts say that if the health and education of this new generation can be

secured, Africa's "human capital" will soar, boosting economic growth by nearly 90 percent by 2050 and putting it on a development trajectory every bit as assured as India's or China's. Already, several African economies, including Ethiopia and Guinea, have enjoyed real GDP growth averaging more than six percent a year since 2013, according to World Bank data. But Africa's future is far from

**Invest in women's health and empowerment, and they will invest in their families' futures. Reduce population growth, and governments will have more to spend on each individual's health and education.**

certain. Without investment and nurturing, the current population boom is as likely to lead to bust as it is a dividend.





Augustina Korley, 13, with her one-month-old twins, Senior and Junior

The cards are already stacked against Senior and Junior. At just 13, their mother, Augustina, is still a child herself and is woefully ill equipped to give them the support they need to flourish. Augustina met the twins' 21-year-old father at a village party and two months later realized she was pregnant. At the time, she knew next to nothing about sex, let alone contraception. Her life has now changed beyond recognition. "I had heard a bit about family planning, but only that it was painful," Augustina says. "Now, I've had to leave school. That's been the worst part. I'm not really enjoying motherhood at all. It's hard."

Her story is not uncommon in sub-Saharan Africa, where roughly 10 percent of girls aged 15 to 19 have given birth at least once. In high-income countries, that figure is just 1.5 percent. Young mothers typically go on to have

more babies and are less likely to complete their own education or have the money to invest in their children. In some parts of Africa, the average number of children per woman is four times the average in high-income countries.

Such high birth rates perpetuate poverty, say experts. But a large part of the solution lies in contraception and family planning. Invest in women's health and empowerment, and they will invest in their families' futures. Reduce population growth, and governments will have more to spend on each individual's health and education. If every woman in Africa gave birth to her first-born just two years later, population growth would be nine percent smaller

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**"Now, I've had to leave school. That's been the worst part. I'm not really enjoying motherhood at all. It's hard."**

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by 2100. If women had only the number of children they actually wanted, growth would drop by 30 percent.

"Family planning is a means to enjoy a healthier and better life—it is an essential cornerstone in the equation," said Dr. Ayman Abdelmohsen, Global Operations Coordinator at UNFPA Supplies, the world's largest provider of

donated contraceptives. "Looking at it from the perspective of human development is essential; family planning is a capital investment in women and young girls—it is not just health care. Giving women knowledge leads to the realization that they have power over their own life and fertility."

The Ghanaian government has shown signs that it is beginning to prioritize access to birth control as a means to embed growth and further reduce poverty.



Sharon Maternity Home, a BlueStar private clinic which partners with Marie Stopes

Despite the benefits for women and their communities, ensuring access to family planning is far from simple. In many African countries, the cultural, geographical, and political barriers appear insurmountable. On the other hand, that has been true in almost every other

country on earth—right up to the point that they turned their birth rates around.

Augustina's home, Ghana, in West Africa, could be on the brink of that transition. The economy, one of the strongest and most stable in Africa, has

been growing for three decades, and the country now enjoys lower-middle-income status. Economic growth has driven poverty down to afflict less than 30 percent of the 28 million population, and slowly an educated middle class is emerging.



However, access to contraception remains low, especially in rural areas, and is used by just 22 percent of women over 15. While this is above the West African average of 16 percent, it is lower than many other middle-income countries. In places like Sri Lanka, Vietnam, and Nicaragua, uptake hovers at close to 50 percent, for example.

But change is coming. The Ghanaian government has shown signs that it is beginning to prioritize access to birth control as a means to embed growth and further reduce poverty. Working with





**“We need to give young boys and girls the right information so they are prepared when they start having sex.”**

NGOs, including Marie Stopes, new initiatives are being rolled out across the country to empower women and give them more choices.

Reaching children and teenagers like Augustina before they become pregnant is the priority. The outlook here is positive; the Ministry of Education looks set to get a comprehensive sex education syllabus onto Ghana’s school curriculums for the first time. “Catching adolescents

[early] is really important,” says Anne Coolen, Marie Stopes Country Director. “We need to give young boys and girls the right information so they are prepared when they start having sex.”

Beyond the classroom, Marie Stopes runs eight drop-in clinics for contraception services and advice in Ghana and works with a much larger network of BlueStar private clinics across country.

In the heart of Tamale, a bustling city in northern Ghana, it’s market day, and the Marie Stopes clinic is

packed with women of all ages, including 19-year-old Anisah. She’s having a contraceptive implant in her arm, after being told to use family planning by her older sister. “She told me I should use it to protect myself,” Anisah says. “It means I can have a good sex life and not worry about getting pregnant before I’m ready.”





Working with Muslim and Christian religious leaders, village chiefs, and men in communities is starting to turn the tide of opinion.



Charity Ametus, 32, has an implant removed in Mianwali



Munitatu Abdallah, a midwife and clinic manager, will see between 20 and 30 women and girls today, many young women like Anisah, but also mothers and even grandmothers.

The clinics also provide safe abortion services. Poorly regulated street pharmacists often give women desperate to discreetly end a pregnancy dangerous medicines, and deaths are common. "I lost a sister, Fatahiya, to an unsafe abortion," says

Munitatu. "She didn't tell us she was pregnant; she took drugs and then went to school. But she started feeling dizzy, and she later died in hospital. That's why I do my job."



Overcoming the stigma around abortions is difficult. A nationwide Marie Stopes awareness campaign—Time to Talk—successfully broached the subject earlier this year, encouraging women to use contraception so they can avoid the necessity of an abortion. “We also offer post-abortion counseling,” says Munitatu. “98 percent of women who have an abortion at the clinic start using family planning afterwards. If everyone used family planning, it would reduce the need for anyone to have an abortion.”

The clinics are effective and popular, but distances in Ghana are huge, and only a minority of women can reach them. To overcome geography, Marie Stopes also

operates outreach teams—comprised of a health nurse, midwife, and driver—who travel along pothole-ridden dirt roads to remote regions.

For Ashitotu, their arrival in the remote village of Mianwali in central Ghana could not come soon enough. “My husband died, so I had to marry his brother,” she says, sitting in the shade outside a small community building with her nine-month-old daughter, Nkusimi, on her knee. “He ran away after he made me pregnant. He hasn’t answered my calls or met Nkusimi, but I know that if he ever comes back, he’ll want to have sex. I don’t want another baby. Things are very difficult. I have five children to look after. I can’t have another one.”

At 34, Ashitotu is being offered access to contraception for the first time. Short-term methods in the form of injections and

condoms are available at Ghana Health Service clinics, but Ashitotu wants something longer lasting. Though she originally thought about an implant—a hormonal plastic rod inserted into an arm, which works for three years—she has decided instead to have a “coil” or intrauterine device (IUD) fitted. They prevent pregnancy for up to 12 years.

“It’s important that women have access to longer-term options,” says Sheilla Mensah, the Marie Stopes midwife performing Ashitotu’s procedure. “These methods allow women to space their pregnancies, as they can have them removed when they like. It also helps them to save money.”

Sheilla puts on her headlamp and begins the procedure, as Ashitotu lays on the blue bleach-stained sheets. The whole process is over within 15 minutes, but will give Ashitotu peace of mind for over a decade. “It wasn’t really painful,” she says afterwards. “It was so quick. I don’t care if people gossip about me, because what I have been through is much worse than any side effects.”

Marie Stopes operates eight outreach teams across Ghana, providing over 35,000 women like Ashitotu with long-lasting contraception each year. To make the service sustainable, it is also training the nurses and midwives of the Ghana Health Service, through four capacity building teams, to take over in the long term. This is increasingly a necessity, as the government has made its intentions to move to ‘Ghana beyond aid’ clear, and international funding here is drying up.

**“I don’t want another baby. Things are very difficult. I have five children to look after. I can’t have another one.”**



Midwife Sheilla with Ashitotu, a mother of five who was widowed and then left by her second husband



**“If I had to go to a hospital, I wouldn’t use family planning.”**

“Donors are increasingly pulling out of service delivery and looking towards other countries [because of Ghana’s economic status],” says Anne Coolen.

“We are building

on strategies with the Ghana Health Service and the government to make sure they are ready. It feels like a turning point for Ghana.”

Another distribution system being tried here goes by the name of Marie Stopes Ladies. It’s based on the old Avon cosmetics model where commission-driven “Avon Ladies” sold makeup door-to-door. But in this case, contraception—and even the pills required for

first trimester abortions—are on offer. Rahmatu is one of the ladies. A trained midwife, she opens up her home in the evenings to women wanting to discreetly access contraception. Under the cover of darkness, more women in this deeply conservative part of northern Ghana feel

comfortable to visit Rahmatu without becoming the topic of local gossip.

30-year-old Asana had an implant fitted by Rahmatu last year. “If I had to go to a hospital, I wouldn’t use family planning,” she says, sitting in the dimly lit

Rahmatu, a trained midwife, opens up her home in the evenings to women wanting to discreetly access contraception.



Women visit Rahmatu under the cover of darkness to avoid becoming the subject of local gossip in this deeply conservative part of northern Ghana.







Women attend a Ghanaian health service clinic in Dabo village, Upper West region. Outreach schemes providing family planning advice to women in churches, schools, and their homes are helping to win over critics of contraception.



**Perception matters in Ghana, where women who want to use contraception are often too embarrassed to ask for it.**

courtyard. “At the hospital, it is an open place and everyone will know that you want to use family planning. News will spread like wildfire. The gossip is worse among those who don’t use it—they judge you and begin to look at you like you’re promiscuous.”

Perception matters in Ghana, where women who want to use contraception are often too embarrassed to ask for it.

Working with Muslim and Christian religious leaders, village chiefs, and men in communities is starting to turn the tide of opinion, and Marie Stopes believes that as more women use birth control, demand will increase exponentially. To ensure this happens, the combination of options is important; there’s no ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach to delivering contraception or reaching all women. Teenagers are different to

30-year-olds, rural women have different lives to urban. But the approaches require investment, and as the country develops, that increasingly needs to come from the government.

If Ghana rises to the challenge, the future looks bright. Even in the most conservative cultures, change can happen quickly; in Iran, in 1984, women had an average of over six children each.





**Since Marie Stopes re-trained the midwives at the small, franchised clinic, giving them the confidence to both tell women about and provide family planning, there has been almost a 400-percent increase in uptake in services.**

15 years later, this had dropped to fewer than three—the fastest-ever decrease in babies per woman.

Globally, the impetus on governments to improve access to family planning is also on the rise. “It is a topic that is

focus solely on women’s and children’s health. “We are not going to beat the war against extreme poverty unless we address the needs of those who are left out. The future development of countries depends first and foremost on the quality

so critical for the future of women, adolescents, and children, but also so critical for peace and security in the world,” Kristalina Georgieva, CEO of the World Bank, told *The Telegraph* in November, at the replenishment event for the Global Financing Facility, the largest investment fund to

of their people, the health and education they receive.”

Back in Augustina’s town, there are positive signs. Since Marie Stopes re-trained the midwives at the small, franchised clinic, giving them the confidence to both tell women about and provide family planning, there has been almost a 400-percent increase in uptake in services. New outreach schemes—to tell women in churches, schools, and their homes—are also helping to turn opinion.

But although Augustina is supported by her parents, uncle, and the twins’ dad, life is still uncertain. “I would like to go back to school, but I don’t know if that will happen,” she says. “I feel like I should get a job. My dad says I have to marry the man, but maybe I’ll get married when I’m 20. I don’t know.”





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**“I want them to be  
Ministers of State  
when they grow up.  
I will tell them about  
family planning. My life  
has become very hard.  
I don’t want them to  
end up like me.”**

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What she does know about, however, is her dream for the twins. “I want them to be Ministers of State when they grow up. I will tell them about family planning.



Augustina Korley, 13, with her one-month-old twins, Senior and Junior

My life has become very hard. I don’t want them to end up like me.” 

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# The Supreme Court Is Egregiously Wrong in Its Draft Opinion

By Dara E. Purvis, JD

The world was rocked the evening of May 2, when a draft opinion in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* overturning *Roe v. Wade* was leaked to *Politico*. The draft is not a surprise, but Justice Samuel Alito's opinion is a broad attack on privacy rights in ways that reach far beyond abortion. The implications are staggering for reproductive justice, women's rights, and LGBTQ equality.

Alito pulls no punches in his condemnation of *Roe*, which he calls an "abuse of judicial authority" and "egregiously wrong from the start." *Roe* held that abortion is part of the 14th Amendment's guarantee that the government shall not "deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law." Reversing this means that in the future, laws regulating or banning abortion would be evaluated using a test called rational basis review. This is the lowest level of scrutiny and means that the person challenging the law must prove that a statute has no rational relationship to a legitimate government goal. Alito further says "respect for and preservation of prenatal life at all stages of development" is a legitimate government goal, so abortion restrictions will only be struck down under his logic if a judge cannot imagine a rational link between the law in question and prenatal life. For obvious reasons, this will be a near-impossible hurdle to clear.

Alito's opinion is only a draft, and justices could change their votes before it is

final. It seems likely that the prospect of such a switched vote motivated the leak. If Alito's opinion remains the decision of the Court, as seems likely, it will have both immediate and far-reaching effects.

Most immediately, the moment *Roe* is reversed, about half of U.S. states will criminalize abortion, either through pre-*Roe* laws that were never taken off the books, post-*Roe* "trigger laws" written to snap into place if *Roe* were ever reversed, or modern laws currently being challenged under *Roe*. Some of those states are also experimenting with more creative and harsher ways to keep their residents from obtaining abortions, enabling private citizens to sue anyone who helps someone access such care. Some states are even toying with extending such lawsuits to suing people in other states if pregnant people have to cross state lines to terminate their pregnancies. There are also rumblings of federal legislation banning abortion nationwide after the 2022 midterm elections.

New abortion restrictions would likely reach into other areas of reproductive health care as well. Some proposed abortion bans define "unborn life" as beginning at fertilization rather than implantation. This would encompass not only all healthy pregnancies, but also ectopic pregnancies, in which a fertilized egg implants outside of the uterus. Banning abortions after fertilization would bar the only treatment for ectopic pregnancies, which are incredibly dangerous—they are the leading cause



Dara Purvis


of death in the first trimester and cause 10 percent of all pregnancy-related deaths. Defining life as starting at fertilization would also ban a wide swath of birth control methods, such as Plan B, IUDs, and birth control pills. In vitro fertilization (IVF) would also be placed at risk, as fertility clinics retrieve and fertilize multiple eggs at one time, freezing and storing embryos that would be considered legal persons. Because extra unused embryos are stored, destroyed, or donated to medical research, defining them as "unborn life" would complicate and potentially bar IVF services.

Finally, Alito's opinion has frightening implications for other rights relating to personal privacy and liberty. The Supreme Court has explained liberty in past decisions as rights that are "deeply rooted in this Nation's history and tradition." If you are a liberal judge who believes that the Constitution expresses principles that can be broadly applied to modern topics, it seems straightforward



to say that individual choice about when to have children is deeply rooted. How people make that choice looks different today—it might be taking birth control pills, buying condoms over the counter, or getting an IUD inserted, none of which were widely available in the 19th century—but the core right is the same. Conservative justices like Alito, however, would define the liberty right as only covering what “liberty” was understood to mean when the 14th Amendment was ratified in 1868.

By this historical definition, Alito concludes that abortion is not part of the liberty guaranteed by the 14th Amendment. But this also throws serious doubt on how Alito would view

other liberty rights. He writes that “[u]ntil the latter part of the 20th century, such a right was entirely unknown in American law.” He is referring to abortion, but that statement is also true about access to birth control, LGBTQ equality, and even interracial marriage. If this language remains unchanged in the Court’s opinion, it signals a green light to conservative activists set on rolling back other hard-won rights. 

*Dara Purvis is Vice Chair of the Population Connection Board of Directors. She is also on the Population Connection Action Fund Board of Directors. Dara is a professor at Penn State Law, specializing in family law, feminist legal theory, masculinities, and sexuality and gender identity.*

Abortion rights supporters rally at the Supreme Court in Washington, DC, on May 3, the day after the draft opinion overturning *Roe v. Wade* was leaked. (Grace Long)





# Family Planning Is Underfunded, and Roe Is About to Become History

By Brian Dixon, Senior Vice President for Governmental and Political Affairs

## Farewell to Stacie Murphy

The author of this column for the past 15 years has moved on to a new chapter in her career. Stacie Murphy started working at Population Connection as a Government Relations Fellow in 2007; by the time she left, in April, she had served as Director of Government Relations for several years.

Stacie was arguably our best staff writer, a fantastically engaging public speaker, an effective lobbyist on Capitol Hill and with administration officials, and a crucial resource to our staff, members, and supporters for information about policies related to reproductive health and rights. She has left a big hole in our advocacy department that will not be easy to fill.

We wish Stacie all the best in her new position at Nathan Associates, an international economic and analytics consulting firm in Arlington, Virginia. And we are rooting for the success of her newly published novel, *The Unquiet Dead*, a sequel to her first book, *A Deadly Fortune*, published in 2021.

## White House Releases 2023 Budget Proposal

On March 28, the White House released President Biden's proposal for the Fiscal Year 2023 federal budget. The proposal

includes small increases in funding for family planning programs in the United States and around the world. Like his first budget proposal a year ago, it again fails to recognize the enormous gap between the need for services and the resources available to meet that need.

On the global side, the President is requesting overall funding of \$653 million—a \$45.5 million increase (7.5 percent) over the level approved for 2022. Of that total, \$56 million is for a dedicated contribution to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). While an important step forward, this increase remains far below the funds needed. There are at least 218 million women in the developing world who want to delay or prevent pregnancy but have an unmet need for contraceptives. The failure to meet this need undermines efforts to address climate change, protect natural resources, improve public health, prevent future pandemics, ease poverty, and promote economic security especially for girls and women.

United States support for international family planning programs peaked in 2010 under President Obama, at \$715 million. Since that time, funding plummeted to \$607.5 million where it has stagnated. Had funding simply kept pace

with inflation since 2010, we would be supporting these programs to the tune of nearly \$943 million—still only about half the needed investment of \$1.74 billion in order to address the existing unmet need.

On the domestic side, the White House is proposing a more robust increase. The President's proposal calls for a \$400 million investment in the Title X domestic family planning program. That's an increase of \$113.5 million over the current \$286.5 million—a level that has remained stagnant for eight years. President Biden, for the second consecutive year, also proposes the elimination of the infamous Hyde Amendment that has denied needed safe abortion care to low-income Americans for more than 40 years.

Congress will begin its annual appropriations process in the coming weeks, and we'll be working with leaders in the House and Senate to increase the funding provided to these crucial programs across the United States and around the world.

## Leaked Supreme Court Opinion Shows the End of Roe

On the evening of May 2, Washington was rocked by an unprecedented leak of



a draft Supreme Court opinion overturning *Roe v. Wade*, the decision that guaranteed the right to abortion in the United States. While some conservatives want to focus attention on the fact that the draft was leaked, the real story here is the loss of basic reproductive freedoms now facing people throughout the United States.

Supporters of abortion rights feared such a result when Mitch McConnell refused to even consider President Obama's Supreme Court nominee in 2016 and then jammed through Trump's nomination of Neil Gorsuch early in 2017. And again when McConnell refused to even consider a credible accusation of sexual assault and rushed through the confirmation of Brett Kavanaugh. And yet again when he rushed the confirmation of Amy Coney Barrett just days before the election that turned out of office the president who nominated her and the McConnell-led majority that confirmed her.

Population Connection and its sister organization, Population Connection Action Fund, joined other advocates and supporters on the steps of the Supreme Court the day after the leak to protest the end of *Roe*. We also worked to help turn out supporters to protest at county

and municipal courthouses across the country. We believe that abortion rights are human rights, and we are committed to fighting to guarantee those rights to people everywhere.


### **Senate Republicans Block Bill to Enshrine Abortion Rights in Law**

In the aftermath of the draft Supreme Court opinion overturning *Roe v. Wade*, the Senate swiftly took up an updated version of the Women's Health Protection Act (WHPA), introduced by Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) to codify the *Roe* ruling in federal law. WHPA prevents state governments from limiting health care workers from providing safe abortion care and bars states from requiring the provision of inaccurate medical information, unnecessary procedures such as invasive ultrasounds, and unnecessary credentialing or building standards that are not applied to other low-risk medical procedures.

The bill was defeated on a procedural motion by a vote of 49-51. All Democrats except Sen. Joe Manchin (WV) voted to advance the bill, and the Republicans voted unanimously to kill it. A similar bill was defeated on a procedural vote in February after the House had passed it.

### **House Democrats Push for Increased Investment in Family Planning**

On April 27, 157 members of the House—all Democrats—sent a letter to leaders of the Appropriations Committee urging that international family planning programs be funded at “no less than \$1.27 billion” in the 2023 State Department and Foreign Operations Appropriations bill. The letter was spearheaded by longtime champions of family planning Reps. Diana DeGette (D-CO), Jackie Speier (D-CA), Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), Karen Bass (D-CA), Ami Bera (D-CA) and Jan Schakowsky (D-IL). They and their colleagues make the forceful case that investments in family planning are central to achieving other important public health, development, humanitarian, and foreign policy goals. The letter also calls for prioritizing support for UNFPA and for the inclusion of the Global Health, Empowerment, and Rights (HER) Act to prevent a future president from reinstating the odious Global Gag Rule.

The Appropriations Committee is in the early stages of drafting the annual funding bill, and we expect action sometime in the summer. 



# Sitting in the Rage of the Moment While Standing Up and Fighting Back

By Grace Long, Advocacy and Outreach Fellow

In March, together with Population Connection Action Fund, we hosted our annual advocacy conference, Capitol Hill Days. Attendees tuned in to Zoom presentations and interactive training sessions after weeks of radical attacks on reproductive rights in state legislatures across the country, with even more looming on the horizon. We were angry at regressive politicians for pushing these vile laws and anxious about the looming Supreme Court decision that could overturn *Roe v. Wade* and what that reversal of rights could mean for copycat legislation around the world.

In her keynote address, Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA) thanked everyone for their continued resolve to fight for the Global Health, Empowerment, and Rights (HER) Act, emphasizing that our activism will be the force that gets it passed. She reminded us that reproductive health care is a human right and that backwards legislation can't change that fact.

## Roundtable Discussion: Global and Domestic Reproductive Health Policy

After Rep. Lee's address, we were joined by Dara Purvis\*, Professor of Law at Penn

State (see Dara's article on page 22), and Caitlin Horrigan, Senior Director of Global Advocacy at Planned Parenthood Federation of America, for a roundtable discussion on reproductive health policies. They advised us to sit in the rage of the moment, but to never stop making our voices heard. Their panel provided a comprehensive look at the current policy landscape, as well as the many ways we can push back against present and future threats. Perhaps the most important takeaway was that Americans are global players; the political forces that are motivating states to pass regressive legislation and emboldening the Supreme Court to strike down *Roe* are also at play in foreign policy decisions.

## On the Ground: Family Planning and Reproductive Health Programs Around the World

Melvine Ouyo\*\*, Founder and Executive Director of Hope for Kenya Slum Adolescents Initiative, emphasized that American bans on abortion and reproductive health services have far-reaching consequences and said that the Global Gag Rule allowed for extreme attacks on women's and LGBTQ rights in East

Africa. Its chilling effect also destroyed medical networks and forced clinics to shutter, eroding community trust in reproductive health programs. The damage that policies like the Global Gag Rule can do is a testament to how important United States funding is for millions of people around the world.

Following Melvine, Dr. Jallicia Jolly, Professor of American Studies and Black Studies at Amherst College, opened her presentation with a question: "What are the conditions needed for people to live autonomous lives?" The answer, of course, is access to reproductive autonomy and bodily integrity. Jallicia discussed the community building work of an HIV/AIDS and reproductive health care organization in Jamaica as an example of an effective and culture-specific solution. Their "Mentor Mom" initiative brings together newly diagnosed HIV positive women with women who have been living with the disease for some time, giving them the space to advise and support one another. By addressing the psycho-social needs of their patients, the organization pushes back against the social stigma of an HIV diagnosis and empowers communities to mobilize resources to address

\* Dara is Vice Chair of the Board of Directors of Population Connection and also serves on the Board of Population Connection Action Fund.

\*\* Melvine is on the Board of Directors of Population Connection.

the unmet needs and rights of those affected.

## Climate, Population, and Reproductive Health

Empowering women to organize around reproductive health and environmental issues means that their region-specific needs stay at the forefront. Sara Lara emphasized this point in her presentation. As the Founder and Executive Director of Women for Conservation in Colombia, Sara works directly with at-risk communities to provide reproductive health services, sustainable job training, and environmental education. Her organization finds solutions that mutually benefit people and biodiversity. As Sara showed in her presentation, encouraging the women her organization works with to make projects their own is key to getting more people involved at the local level, thereby creating more effective initiatives tailor-made for the communities that execute them.

Sara's fellow panelist, Dr. Joan Castro, Executive Vice President of Path Foundation Philippines, Inc. (PFPI), agreed. Her organization also integrates environmental, economic, and reproductive health approaches to development and has reached more audiences because of it. PFPI works with communities that

have been directly impacted by climate change, empowering women through livelihoods training and getting them involved in conservation programs. Combining reproductive health services with economic and ecological initiatives has the added benefit of encouraging men to become more involved in family planning.


The energy from our speakers was electrifying. Each presentation revealed a fresh and innovative approach to reproductive health programming as unique as the communities that benefit. The care the organizations show towards the people they serve, their resiliency in the face of hostile policies and insufficient funding, and their dedication to inclusive programming was deeply moving.

## Storytelling: How to Share Your Story for Organizing

Inspired to make a change, attendees tuned in to a session led by M+R Vice President Tania Stewart to learn how to craft compelling narratives and convince legislators to support the policies we champion. Tania said, "Stories have a connective tissue and a powerful imprint," which was demonstrated so clearly through her presentation and through the storytelling of all of the speakers.

## Virtual Lobby Day

On the final day of Capitol Hill Days, participants took their newfound knowledge and skills into Zoom meetings with their members of Congress, where they passionately advocated for the Global HER Act and an increased U.S. contribution to international family planning. Many said afterwards that their training from then-Director of Congressional Relations Stacie Murphy had more than prepared them for the task. One participant reported that her conversation had filled her with a newfound sense of purpose, as the staffer had agreed with her and enthusiastically discussed the need for international family planning. Several other activists were able to calmly and confidently push back against a resistant office, explaining that the Global HER Act would save thousands of lives and positively impact millions more. Each participant's decision to stand up and make a difference changed their outlook, and most left their meetings feeling more confident than they had been when they arrived.

In the words of Dara Purvis, "Every time you contribute your voice, it makes an impact. It's important for people to hear that we're mad about this kind of stuff, so thank you for adding your voice to the chorus." 





# A Camera Eye Towards the Future

Winners of the 2021-2022 Student Video Contest Announced

By Julia Davis, Student Engagement Fellow

Each year, our World of 7 Billion Student Video Contest allows students from around the world to think critically about how population growth affects different environmental and social issues.

This year's contest asked middle and high school students to submit a 60-second video about how population growth impacts one of the following global challenges: ocean health, urbanization, or agriculture and food. The students were tasked with offering a solution in their videos, and the ideas ranged from eating insects as a meat alternative to installing modular green roofs in urban areas.


More than 4,000 students from around the world participated in this year's contest—submissions came from 48 countries and 45 U.S. states and territories!

Many students collaborated with classmates on their videos, either independently or as part of a classroom assignment. The PopEd team provides resources to help students as they produce their videos, including background readings on the different

contest topics, filmmaking tips and resources, a graphic organizer, judging rubric, and related lessons for teachers.

The videos were first viewed by the PopEd staff, who narrowed down a selection of finalists. These were then sent to a panel of 44 judges made up of educators, filmmakers, and topic experts, who selected the winning videos. High school winners received \$1,200 for first place, \$600 for second place, and \$300 for an honorable mention, while middle school winners received \$600 for first place and \$300 for second place.

The level of complexity and attention to detail that our winning videos were able to bring to their productions are a beacon of hope that our future world leaders have the thoughtfulness and understanding to tackle pressing global issues. Their proposed solutions ask society to rethink our approach to topics like urban planning, food insecurity, and fishing practices, to name a few.

You can view this year's winning entries, along with students' photos and expanded bios, on our contest website: [worldof7billion.org](http://worldof7billion.org). 

## Honorable Mentions High School

**"Bunting the Bottle"**

**Jeevan Janeev & Samuel Taylor**  
*Grade 12, Coppell High School*  
*Coppell, TX*

**"Tiny Shrimp Are a Big Problem:  
Solution for Mangrove Destruction"**  
**Sophia Heilen**

*Grade 12, Battlefield High School*  
*Haymarket, VA*

**"Beat the Heat: Implementing Green  
Roofs"**

**Sabina Khizroev**  
*Grade 9, Miami Palmetto Senior High  
School*  
*Pinecrest, FL*

**"A Corridor to Global Health"**  
**Carter Sutton**

*Grade 11, Reedy High School*  
*Frisco, TX*

**"Animal Agriculture in a Growing  
World"**

**Olivia Zheng**  
*Grade 11, Stuyvesant High School*  
*New York, NY*

**"The False Banana"**

**Alexandra Pilz & Eleonore Vecchioli**  
*Grade 9, St. Paul's Girls' School*  
*London, United Kingdom*

## Ocean Health



### 1st Place, High School

#### **"Overfishing: A Fishy Business and How to Combat It"**

**Fatma Raghani**

*Grade 12, Lycée Français Théodore Monod*

*Nouakchott, Mauritania*

Fatma says that "not a lot of people know that Mauritania has a serious problem with overfishing." She thought creating a video could help increase awareness. Her solutions focus on seeking out other sources of protein, supporting local fishing, and petitioning for catch limits. Fatma currently serves as class president in her student council and plans to go to medical school and become a public health doctor.



### 1st Place, Middle School

#### **"Keep the Corals Colorful"**

**Alicia Ortiz**

*Grade 7, Plaza Middle School  
Virginia Beach, VA*

Alicia's video explains the complicated science behind coral bleaching using original animation she created after teaching herself how to use animating software. She proposes implementing marine permaculture as a solution, which would use seaweed to cool water around coral reefs. Alicia enjoys painting, sculpting, and drawing and would love to pursue a future career in art.



### 2nd Place, High School

#### **"Ghost Nets"**

**Kaviya Chidambaram & Nora Bruxvoort**

*Grade 11, Broomfield High School  
Broomfield, CO*

Kaviya and Nora's video uses a whiteboard animation style to talk about the dangers of "ghost nets," or abandoned industrial fishing nets, which account for 70 percent of all marine wildlife entanglement. Their solution involves using biodegradable nets and net tracking devices to make it easier for fishing nets to break down or be recovered and reused. Both Kaviya and Nora are interested in working in the environmental field in the future.



### 2nd Place, Middle School

#### **"A Poem About Overfishing—the Future of Our Fish"**

**Feben Tessema & Anna Yang**  
*Grade 8, Eastside Preparatory School  
Kirkland, WA*

Feben and Anna took the creative approach of making their video a rhyming poem packed with facts about overfishing. As a solution, they recommend no-fish zones around the world to allow the ocean to recover. Their animated poem combines Feben's passion for poetry with Anna's passion for drawing, resulting in a truly creative video.

## Urbanization



### 1st Place, High School

#### **"Greener Cities Are Stronger Cities"**

**Nagasujan (Sujan) Ganesh Kumar**  
*Grade 12, Enloe High School*  
*Raleigh, NC*

Sujan's video proposes a unique solution to implementing green roofs that we had not seen before—modular panels that allow people to install them in sections on a smaller scale. "I was looking for a solution that would be a bit more cost-effective and that you could implement anywhere," he says. Next year, Sujan will be attending the Georgia Institute of Technology, where he plans to study industrial engineering with a concentration in data science.



### 1st Place, Middle School

#### **"Urban Sprawl: A Challenge"**

**Arnav Bali**  
*Grade 8, Central Middle School*  
*Edgewater, MD*

Arnav is a repeat winner of this contest. His winning video this year looks at urban sprawl, specifically how a growing population needs more housing, which can disrupt wildlife habitats. "I live in an urban area, and I saw that there were a lot of differences between neighborhoods and how some areas are very densely populated and some are sparsely populated and how that affects the environment," he says.



### 2nd Place, High School

#### **"Urbanization: Energy Efficient Housing"**

**Sasha Kobrina & Colette Siegel**  
*Grade 9, Ermitage International School of France*  
*Maisons-Laffitte, France*

Sasha and Colette's video takes a look at how much energy we could save by utilizing passive housing, which relies on buildings being carefully designed to make the best use of sunlight and heat recovery systems. Sasha and Colette decided to submit their video to the contest because of their shared interest in urbanization. Sasha says, "Small-scale urbanization touches all of us."



### 2nd Place, Middle School

#### **"Solving Homelessness Person by Person"**

**Kayla Ling**  
*Grade 8, The Nueva School*  
*Hillsborough, CA*

Kayla took inspiration for her video from her experience living in Taiwan in 4th grade. There, Kayla noticed the presence of micro-communities and how powerful having strong local connections can be. Her solution to homelessness is "starting from the bottom up with the people who are really individually affected by the issue." Kayla is involved in social justice and climate action, her ultimate passion.



## Agriculture and Food



### 1st Place, High School

#### **"The Meat of the Future"**

**Abigail McDaniel**  
*Grade 9, Great Valley High School*  
*Malvern, PA*

Abby's solution to the unsustainability of eating meat is one that already has proven successful in many areas of the world: She proposes utilizing insects as a protein source, and her video calls out the taboo nature of eating insects in many parts of the Western world. Abby says that she was pleasantly surprised by how appetizing many of the recipes she researched were. Abby throws shotput and discus for her school's track team and hopes to pursue technology or engineering in the future.



### 1st Place, Middle School

#### **"Aquaponics: A Self-Sustainable Solution to the Rising Demand for Food and Water"**

**Benjamin Kurian**  
*Grade 6, Olentangy Middle School*  
*Powell, OH*

Benjamin is "concerned about feeding the world" and says that "our current ways of doing that aren't really sustainable." His aquaponics solution uses farmed fish waste to supply nutrients to plants grown in the same water, a process which purifies the water. Benjamin plays piano, violin, and drums and loves using his music editing software.



### 2nd Place, High School

#### **"Repurposing Weeds to Combat Deforestation"**

**Ranye Ezenekwe**  
*Grade 9, Peak to Peak Charter School*  
*Lafayette, CO*

Ranye used her years of animation experience to educate viewers on something that most people see in a negative light: weeds. Her video shows how we could use weeds productively in areas that have been stripped of soil and nutrients and ultimately build up arable land, eventually reversing deforestation. Ranye is on her school's varsity tennis team and also enjoys playing the clarinet, reading, and completing the *New York Times* crossword.



### 2nd Place, Middle School

#### **"The Future of Agriculture"**

**Sadhana Vija**  
*Grade 8, Tagore International School*  
*New Delhi, India*

Sadhana's video explores creative ways to combat habitat fragmentation from large-scale agriculture, such as overpasses and underpasses for wildlife. She also addresses the need to develop sustainable agriculture techniques, like vertical farming. Sadhana recently wrote an essay on climate change that was published in a book by UNESCO: *Year 2 AC (After Coronavirus): A Future Imagined by Youth: 100 Essays by Young Indians*.

## CARTOON



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## The New York Times

... Many who oppose *Roe v. Wade* today, and even some who support it, argue that the 1973 ruling short-circuited a running debate over abortion, a debate that should have been allowed to play out in the states, many of which had long banned abortion. This is one of the main justifications in the leaked draft opinion in which a majority of Supreme Court justices appear ready to overturn *Roe* and *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, the 1992 decision that preserved *Roe*'s central holding with certain restrictions.

The problem with this reasoning is that ... leaving the matter to individual states and the political process means that millions of Americans will be denied their fundamental rights—in this case, the right of women to decide what happens inside their own bodies. ...

Women and men should have equal control over their own bodies, as many Americans believed in 1973 and a majority believe today. And yet the right to choose whether to terminate a pregnancy is on the verge of being eliminated because five members of the current Supreme Court don't like it. ...

Overall, the outlook for reproductive freedom is bleak. In 13 states, "trigger" laws will automatically or very quickly ban abortions after *Roe* is overturned, as seems highly likely. In about a dozen other states, lawmakers are gearing up to severely restrict access to abortions, if not effectively prohibit them, as Texas has already done without interference by the Supreme Court. ...

What all this shows is that the right to an abortion cannot be left at the mercy of individual states—something that few people on either side of this issue genuinely seem to want.

This is why a national standard is necessary. That national standard, at least for a few more weeks, is *Roe v. Wade* as modified by *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*. These two rulings are not perfect, but for all their flaws, they have managed to strike a delicate balance that reflects the public's complex position on a morally fraught issue. The majority of Americans do not want these cases overturned, and an overwhelming majority say that abortion should not be banned outright. ...

— May 6, 2022

## The Star-Ledger

... The so-called protectors of life also rarely notice that the U.S. states with restrictive abortion bans score poorly on most metrics that measure the quality of life for families and children, such as maternal morbidity, infant mortality, premature birth, access to health care, day care, food, and housing.

... The majority of mothers forced to give birth will be of low-income, the Guttmacher Institute reports; they live in a country that doesn't provide job protection for 40 percent of its workers following a birth, and their childcare options are often out of reach. ...

The same pro-life pretenders seek to repeal the Affordable Care Act, they want to defund Planned Parenthood, and they even remain silent when we rip children from their mothers at the border and put them in cages. From the moment Trump slashed education (15 percent), children's health care (10 percent), and child nutrition (9 percent) to pay for his tax cuts, they have been mute.

But you can always rely on them to advocate for the unborn, because children of the zygote variety don't need education, health care, or food.

A Methodist minister from Alabama, Dave Barnhart, said it best: "You can love the unborn and advocate for them without substantially challenging your own wealth, power, or privilege, without re-imagining social structures, apologizing, or making reparations to anyone. They are, in short, the perfect people to love if you want to claim you love Jesus, but actually dislike people who breathe. Prisoners? Immigrants? The sick? The poor? Widows? Orphans? All the groups that are specifically mentioned in the Bible? They all get thrown under the bus for the unborn."

... The abortion debate has been rekindled, and it's white-hot. But the needs of American children, a moral obscenity that has been neglected for too long by pro-life crusaders, must start now.

— May 5, 2022



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