

POPULATION CONNECTION

Volume 55, Issue 1
March 2023

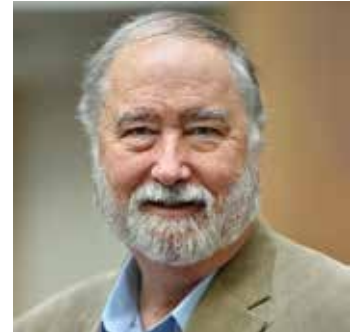
**PROTECTING WILDLIFE
THROUGH IMPROVED
HUMAN HEALTH AND
CONSERVATION-BASED
LIVELIHOODS IN UGANDA**



President's Note

John Seager

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While the global tide of overpopulation continues to rise rapidly, there are crosscurrents where population has begun to decline—most notably in Japan, Eastern Europe, and now China. Here in the U.S., the Census Bureau reports that in 2022, 18 states saw their populations decline even as our national population grew by more than 1.2 million, and that between 2010 and 2020, the population of more than half of all U.S. counties dropped while our nation as a whole grew by more than 22 million.

When population declines anywhere, it's portrayed as problematic. A recent headline in *The New York Times* asserted, "China's Shrinking Population Is Cause for Alarm," while Oregon Public Broadcasting reported, "Oregon Population Decline Is Cause for Concern, Say Economists." We can help change this narrative by drawing attention to places that are thriving while growing smaller.


The focus of policymakers has long been on how communities cope with population growth. Yet with reductions in family size, especially in the Northern Hemisphere, we need sound models for flourishing when populations grow smaller in a given locale—which typically occurs due to a combination of lower birth rates and outmigration.

A good place to look for inspiration is Pittsburgh. Mid-20th century photos of what was then dubbed "Steel City" show smoke and haze blackening daytime skies. Factories operating around the clock provided employment in a city that reached a population of nearly 700,000 in 1930.

Times change. Today, there are no longer any steel mills within the city limits, and Pittsburgh's population has plummeted to 300,000. This isn't just a story of suburban flight, as the number of people in the entire metropolitan area has dropped by more than 200,000 over the past half-century. Has this dramatic population decline resulted in economic hardship and pervasive personal misery? The answer is a resounding *no*!

Pittsburgh is thriving. Per capita income has rebounded and now exceeds the national average. The city has transformed into a center for high-tech medical device production with good jobs at good wages. Institutions such as Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Pittsburgh provide myriad opportunities for arts and culture. *The Economist* ranks Pittsburgh as our nation's third most livable city.

What makes communities attractive is no great secret: strong local economies and affordable homes along with access to health care and education, cultural, and recreational opportunities. A downsized community can fit the bill through proper planning, sound investment, and local leadership.

There are always challenges, and there is no one-size-fits-all template for success through shrinkage. We've invested hundreds of billions of dollars to accommodate growth. If we now turn our efforts toward making sure communities that grow smaller don't get left behind, the U.S. could be the global leader for a better future. And it just might help shrink internal divisions in our overcrowded world by showing that no matter where we live, we all want to take comfort and pride in the place we call home. 

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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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Cover image: Dr. Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka, Founder and CEO of Conservation Through Public Health, in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park. Photo by Kibuuka Mukisa, UNEP

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Editor's Note

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Spider monkeys swung from the trees above me, eating young leaves and seeds, some carrying babies on their backs. One, who seemed to be the father of a sleepy infant clinging to its mother a couple branches away, stared down at me indifferently while he peed from above, nearly hitting me with his stream. Moments later, a gang of three males chased me and grabbed the paper bag in my hand, hoping that it contained food. When they discovered flip flops and a rash guard, they let go of the bag and ran back into the forest, screeching with disappointment.


I've been visiting the Caribbean coast of Mexico each winter for a few years now. One of the highlights of my annual trip is observing the spider monkeys that live in the forests there. They come out at dawn and dusk, and many of them are habituated to humans, as evidenced by the anecdotes above from my latest trip in January. It's important not to feed them, although I cannot honestly say that I've never given a banana from the breakfast buffet to a pleading primate. The few times I have, the monkeys have plopped down right in front of me to peel and eat the fruit, paying me no mind once they'd gotten everything of interest that I had to offer.

The hotel where I stay is serendipitously situated on the far end of a stretch of seaside resorts, which means that two sides of it are bordered by forest. Looking at a satellite map of the region, it's plain to see what would happen if the hotel expanded or if a new resort was built next door—more of the spider monkeys' forest habitat would be destroyed. The dark green of today's map would become a multicolored patchwork of buildings, service roads, parking lots, and swimming pools. (Of course, this is exactly what happened when the hotel where I stay was built.)

Habitat degradation and loss is the greatest threat to

species in every major world region, according to WWF's latest *Living Planet Report* (data from the report is depicted in this issue's Pop Facts infographic). We destroy wildlife habitats by converting them to agricultural land to feed more people, by replacing them with human settlements, and by extracting the natural resources they contain. The larger our population grows, the less territory wildlife has to thrive—or even to survive.

One organization that we've been working with for many years addresses the human-wildlife challenges that exist at the edges of mountain gorilla rangeland in Uganda by improving the health and livelihoods of people and by protecting gorillas' health, safety, and habitat. The Founder and CEO of Conservation Through Public Health, Dr. Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka, is publishing her memoir, *Walking With Gorillas: The Journey of an African Wildlife Vet*, on March 14, and we've reprinted the chapter about her organization's family planning program in this issue. Please enjoy this excerpt and then read Dr. Gladys' book and join us (and her!) for our Page Turners book club meeting on May 9. (Register on our website at popconnect.org/virtual-events/book-club/.)

Not every species has a dedicated champion the way that mountain gorillas have Dr. Gladys or chimpanzees have Jane Goodall, but I like to think of our members as champions of all wildlife, writ large. Together, through our efforts to strike a sustainable balance between people and the planet, we can ensure healthy and intact habitats for all the planet's spectacular species. 

The photo above is from my visit to the Akumal Monkey Sanctuary in February 2020. The spider monkey was put in my lap by staff, and it was free to jump away—but it didn't want to because I was given sunflower seeds to hold in my hands!

Letters to the Editor

Your President's Note in the December 2022 *Population Connection* expressed my sentiments exactly. Exploding human population is the number one driver of most of humankind's global problems, and in particular environmental ones. As your column and accompanying articles illustrate, this can be addressed and corrected. But will we do so before it is too late? I wish that population management would get more publicity in the mass media. Certainly your organization is doing its part.

Terry McDaniel

Thank you so much for expressing so well what my husband and I view as a world driven mad by greed, where humans fail to understand that the natural world has limits that apply to us as well. Though people have taken much from nature, most have failed to extract an understanding of its laws of limits, its necessity for reciprocity, and its powerful energy of diversity. We are especially stunned watching the media's refusal to say anything at all negative about an ever-booming human population—*TIME* magazine stands out for its pathetic gloss-over of the 8 billion milestone. It's as if the words "human overpopulation" must never be said—as if the more people there are, the better the world will be. The timing couldn't be worse for such an attitude.

We have supported your organization for years and will continue to do so—and we will continue to share with others our opinion that our world is in great peril due to constantly growing economies and populations.

Judy Reynolds

I love all the articles and reports in your magazine. As an animal rights activist, I am also advocating for human rights; the two issues cannot be separated. Too many people need more land, food, and housing, which means more forest and wildlife habitat destruction, more animals bred and killed for food. The desire to eat a more "Western-style" diet leads to factory farms that abuse and slaughter billions of animal lives.

If you care to protect the environment, you must also advocate for animal protection, human rights, and education of women in the poorer countries. We must recognize that these problems are all related, that destruction of forests and oceans, air pollution, and extreme climate change lead to suffering of humans and non-human creatures. We all share the same fate and suffer the same hardships. Education, advocacy, and the media must combine and address all these issues. I am happy to see that your publication aims to do just that.

Susan Kalev

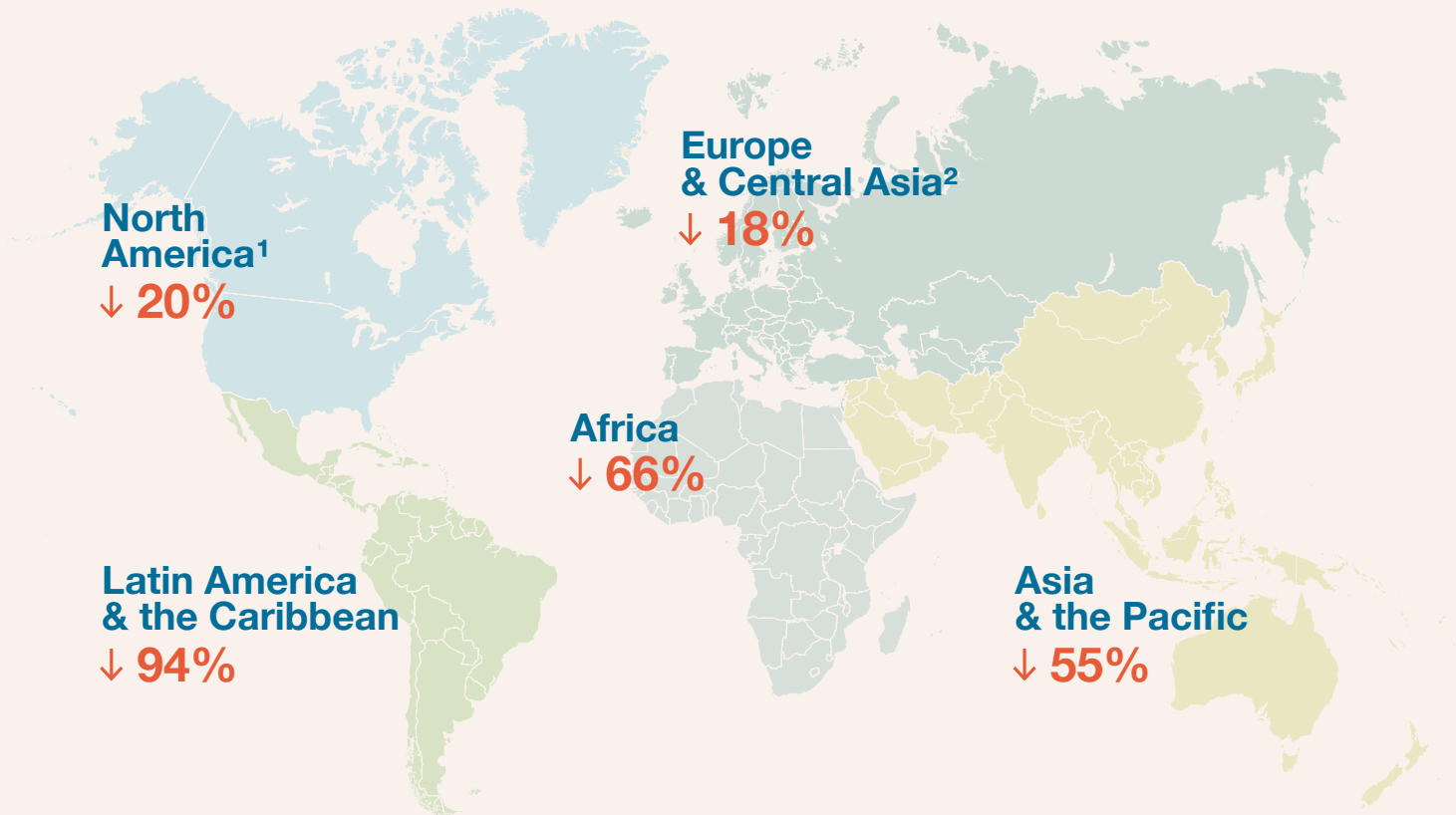
The December 2022 *Population Connection* edition was outstanding. I have frequently contrasted Thailand's family planning progress with the Philippines' failure and its impact on economic success and prosperity. Per capita GDP in the Philippines and Thailand was about equal in the 1970s. Today, it is twice as high in Thailand. People must understand that family planning increases wealth, health, life spans, and peace, along with a more sustainable planet.

Kevin Curtis

2022

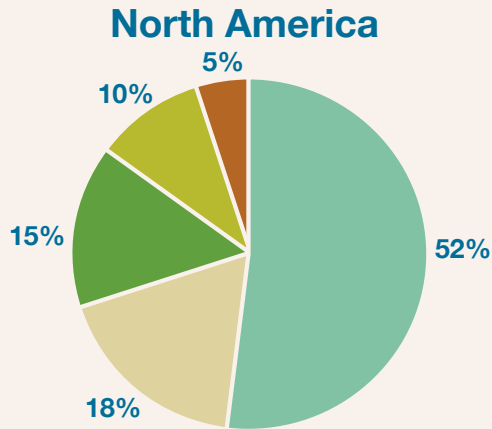
Living Planet Index Reveals Biodiversity Crisis

The average change in relative abundance of **31,821 POPULATIONS** [of mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles, and fish] representing **5,230 SPECIES** monitored across the globe was a **DECLINE OF 69%**



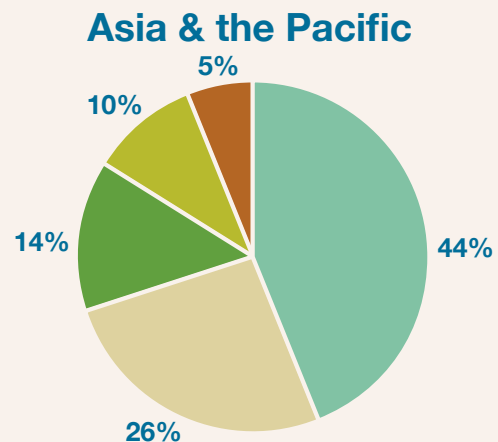
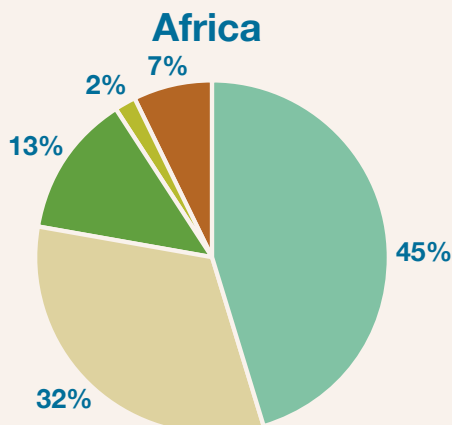
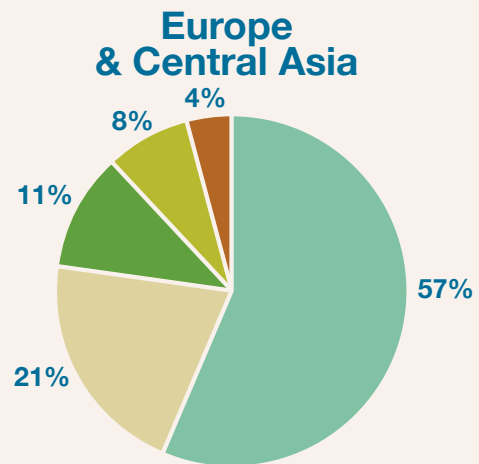
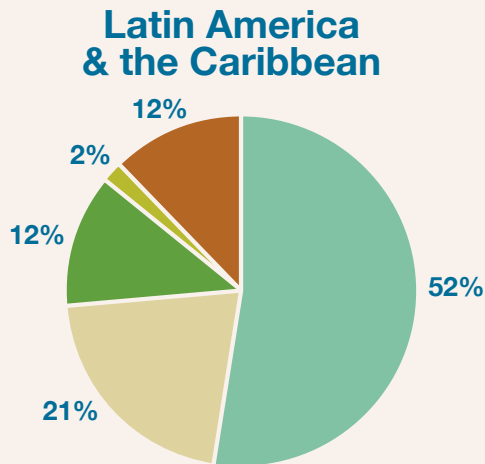
¹ It is important to note that the 1970 baseline refers to a time when wildlife abundances in North America had already been impacted by human activities for many decades.

² It is important to remember the context of the 1970 baseline—nature had been transformed to a large degree prior to 1970, so the LPI shows trends for many species that were already in a depleted state.



Major Threats to Wildlife Populations

- Habitat Degradation/Loss
- Overexploitation
- Invasive Species and Disease
- Pollution
- Climate Change



ALL STATS ARE FROM 1970 to 2018

Source:

Westveer, J, Freeman, R., McRae, L., Marconi, V., Almond, R.E.A, and Grooten, M. (2022) A Deep Dive into the Living Planet Index: A Technical Report. WWF, Gland, Switzerland.



IN THE NEWS

By Olivia Nater, Communications Manager

China's Population Begins Slow Decline

According to data released in January by China's National Bureau of Statistics, the country's population declined by roughly 850,000 people between 2021 and 2022, the first shrinkage since the 1960s. This means India may now be the world's most populous nation.

This news wasn't unexpected—China's fertility rate (the average number of children per woman) dropped below two back in 1991 and now stands at only 1.2. While the infamous one-child policy contributed to the decline, China's fertility rate actually began dropping dramatically well before the one-child policy was enacted, as a result of a non-coercive “Later, Longer, Fewer” campaign encouraging a later start to childbearing, greater spacing of births, and smaller family size.

Despite increasing the limit on family size to two and then three children in recent years, alongside strong propaganda from the Communist Party promoting childbearing, as well as incentives such as tax deductions, longer maternity leave, and housing subsidies, the birth rate has remained low. This trend is reflected in other industrialized countries with aging, shrinking populations and is likely here to stay with the welcome

adoption of a new small family norm as women take up higher education and careers.

Unfortunately, politicians, mainstream economists, and media outlets are widely painting this positive development for women and the planet as a crisis, disregarding the fact that infinite growth is not compatible with a finite planet.

Nations Agree on Biodiversity Deal

In December, leaders from more than 190 countries came together for the 15th conference of the parties (COP15) to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UN CBD), held in Montréal and presided over by China.

The outcome was the new Kunming-Montréal Global Biodiversity Framework, which will replace the failed Aichi Biodiversity Targets that expired in 2020. The new deal aims to protect 30 percent of all land and marine areas by 2030 but is lacking in many areas, including on tackling root drivers of nature loss such as rapid population growth.

As a non-member of the UN CBD (due to Republican opposition to international environmental treaties), the United States was only able to

participate in the conference from the sidelines. Upon taking office, however, President Biden signed an executive order that would similarly place 30 percent of U.S. land and waters under protection by 2030.

Past Eight Years Were Warmest on Record

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) confirmed in January that the past eight years were the warmest on record globally, “fueled by ever-rising greenhouse gas concentrations and accumulated heat.” In 2022, the average global temperature was about 1.15°C above pre-industrial levels, meaning we are moving ever closer to breaching the 1.5°C Paris Agreement limit. The WMO stated that global warming trends are expected to continue because of record levels of heat-trapping greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, which will bring more extreme heatwaves, drought, and devastating flooding.

Afghan Women Banned From Universities

In December, Afghanistan's Higher Education Minister announced that women would be banned from universities, with immediate effect. This represents yet another attack on

women's rights by the new Islamic fundamentalist government—girls had already been excluded from secondary schools since the Taliban takeover in 2021, and in November, women were banned from parks, gyms, and public baths in Kabul.

The move was widely condemned by human rights advocates, including the United Nations. The UN Special Rapporteur to Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, said it “marks a new low further violating the right to equal education and deepens the erasure of women from Afghan society.”

This war on women is mirrored in Iran, where the government is doubling down in its violent repression of months-long protests following the death of Mahsa Amini in September 2022 in the custody of Iran’s “morality police.” The 22-year-old woman was arrested for allegedly not wearing the hijab in accordance with government standards.

UN Secretary-General Warns of Catastrophic Famine

Addressing the G20, UN Secretary-General António Guterres warned, “We are on the way to a raging food catastrophe.” Guterres called for increased financing for the Global South, which is being battered by the Covid-19 pandemic, rapid population growth, the climate crisis, escalating conflict, as well as rising food and fertilizer prices accelerated by the war in Ukraine.

There are now 349 million people experiencing acute food insecurity, up from 287 million in 2021. One of the worst affected areas is the drought-stricken Horn of Africa. In Somalia alone, which has a fertility rate of 5.7 births per woman, the number of people facing “catastrophic” acute food shortage is expected to increase from 5.6 million in December 2022 to 8.3 million by June 2023.


Roe’s 50th Anniversary That Wasn’t

January 22, 2023, marked 50 years since the *Roe v. Wade* decision, which created the constitutional right to abortion across the United States. With the Supreme Court’s decision to overturn Roe in June last year, this anniversary was unfortunately not an occasion to celebrate. At the time of writing, most abortions have been fully banned in 13 states, with a six-week ban in place in another, and four states with 15-, 18-, or 20-week bans.

Maternal and Infant Mortality Highest in Abortion Ban States

Women living in states that banned abortion after the overturning of Roe are up to three times more likely to die during pregnancy, childbirth, or soon after giving birth, according to a report by the Gender Equity Policy Institute published in January. Black women are the worst affected, with seven out of 10 living in states that ban or restrict abortion. Additionally,

babies born in these states were found to be 30 percent more likely to die in their first month of life, with Black babies facing double the likelihood of death over white babies.

Lack of safe abortion care itself represents a major threat to women’s lives but another reason for these differences is that states hostile to abortion have higher poverty rates and worse health indicators, while also making contraception more difficult to access and failing to provide medically accurate sex education, leading to more unintended pregnancies. 

The digital version of this article includes hyperlinked sources:

popconnect.org/article/in-the-news-march-2023/

For more information about China’s population decline and the new biodiversity deal, please visit our blog:

popconnect.org/blog/

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Robert Pickering
John Pickett
Delano & Norma Pierce
Jo Pine & William Seabridge
John Pitcairn
Joseph Pittman
Stephen Plank
Halina Platt
Garry Plunkett
Abraham Pollack
Robert Pollet
Eric Ponteri
Joan Carol Poor
Paul Prenovitz
Donald & Eric Proctor
Cory & Diane Pulfrey
Donald & Alice Pulver
Mattox Purvis, Jr. & Jacqueline Barbour
Vivian Pyle
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Sidney & Maryannette Robinson
John & Georgeanne Roe
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Robin & Theodore Ross
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Lael Sandeno
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William Scharf
Michael Scher & Barbara Zelazo
Eric Schindler
Robert & Elizabeth Schlechter
Nancy & Charles Scholes
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Renate Schulz	Ronald Stevens	Larry Warren, MD
Robert Sedgwick & Helen Torelli	Frances Stevenson & Cynthia Waslewsky	Sharran & William Warren
Neil Seely	Verena Stocker	Wendy Warren & Thomas Brown
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	Mary Walter	
	Lewis Wardell, III & Sarah Wardell	

Organizations

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Apple Matching Gift Program	Ruth H. Brown Foundation
Bay Laurel Nursery & Garden Center	Sheldon and Audrey Katz Foundation
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Doris J. Foster Foundation	The Billstein Family Foundation
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Hitz Foundation	The John and Shirley Nash Foundation
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If you don't see your name and believe you should have been recognized as a member of the 2022 President's Circle, please let us know. Contact Jennifer Lynaugh at jennifer@popconnect.org.

PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE MEMBER

Lindy Novak & Spottswode Winery

Population Connection's Director of Development Jennifer Lynaugh had a chance to catch up with Lindy Novak in January. We are grateful to Lindy and all of our President's Circle members for their commitment to our mission and generous support of our programs!

Tell me a little bit about your upbringing and the careers you've had.

I grew up in San Diego County, part of a large, athletic family. We spent a lot of time outside, and I think that led to my appreciation for and connection to the outdoors and the natural world. We spent time at the beach (I love the ocean), camped in Mexico, and took road trips through the Southwest, the Sierras, and Wyoming. I feel very lucky for all of this.

My family moved to Napa Valley in 1972, as my dad wanted a lifestyle change; he wanted to leave medicine and become a farmer. (He was a general practitioner with a practice in Solana Beach, California). My parents purchased a historic Victorian house and vineyard named Spottswode to realize that dream. The five of us Novak children helped with property projects and worked some in the vineyard (not always fun, mind you,

suckering vines and cleaning the irrigation system!).

I ended up at UCLA for college and transferred to UC Berkeley, majoring in geography. I thought I might get involved in some kind of environmental work or city planning, but that didn't happen. Instead, I segued into the clothing industry, having an interest in fashion. I worked for Macy's for several years and then became a sales representative for various clothing lines, traveling throughout Northern California, Oregon, and Washington and enjoying my job. After I had been doing this for about 10 years, my mom and my sister, Beth, asked if I might be interested in helping with sales and marketing for Spottswode, the winery they were getting off the ground. It was a big and somewhat scary change for me, but I adapted and ended up really enjoying traveling the country and meeting people who appreciated our wine. I'm glad I stayed on!

What brought you to Population Connection? What attracted you to the cause?

I have always had an awareness about human population growth being a significant issue in terms of our planetary health and balance. I read parts of Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb*, and I shared his feelings about dire consequences for unchecked population growth.

I don't have children, and part of the reason for this decision was the recognition that we already have a very full planet.

What motivates you to stay involved?

To my knowledge, there are not many groups that focus almost exclusively on the human population issue, which amazes me. The topic still seems to be somewhat taboo and falls outside the realm of most environmental discussions. I think I may have Googled population focused groups perhaps six or seven years ago, and Population Connection came up as the extension of the group Zero Population Growth. I joined as both a member and donor. I love the work you do.



I so value Jennifer Lynaugh, my contact at Population Connection. She and I connected directly two years ago, and she is wonderful—both an engaging, down-to-earth person and a genuine advocate for all of Population Connection’s efforts. A pleasure to interact with! I read the Population Connection magazines I receive in the mail, and I have listened to a number of webinars, which have been very inspirational. I have loved hearing President and CEO John Seager speak during virtual events; he is genuine and straightforward and a great communicator.

I act as a sort of environmental liaison at the winery. My sister is equally, if not more, committed to environmental causes and endeavors, and Spottswoode has been a member

of Yvon Chouinard’s 1% for the Planet movement since 2007, which means that every year we donate at least 1 percent of our gross sales to environmental causes. I stay connected to many of the groups we give to, and this involves personal interchange with individual contacts at these groups, listening in on webinars, and participating in live activities, such as visiting sites that are being adapted, preserved, or

restored, writing letters to the editor, sending letters to encourage voter turn-out, etc. This is very satisfying. I just wish I could do more.

Do you have an anecdote about your experience as a member of Population Connection that really moved you?


I listened in recently on a webinar that focused on a girls’ school in Africa (Nasaruni Academy, “Education and Empowerment: How One School in Kenya Is Helping Maasai Girls Find Their Voice”). I found this discussion to be extremely moving. You see the work with groups on the ground making a real difference. It brings tears to my eyes!

Does anyone in your life play a role in supporting your involvement or providing inspiration?

I would say my sister, Beth. She has done amazing work messaging on environmental issues and guiding the winery toward becoming an inspiration to many other wineries, as well as to other businesses—a model of a successful business that focuses on the greater good (Spottswoode became a certified B Corp in 2020). Having someone I am close to and admire who shares my environmental commitment and concerns is helpful and inspiring because the fight for the planet is daunting and never-ending.

What do you hope Population Connection will achieve in the future?

I hope we achieve broader recognition of human population growth’s role in our planet’s problems. With the ultimate goal of drastically slowing population growth all over the world. I hope we continue getting the message out more broadly, with bravery and tenacity, about the population issue being a crucial factor in our planetary problems.

I wish more people would become involved and do whatever they can to make a contribution to these efforts. It is going to take all of us. 

MEMOIR OF A WILD LIFE

Review of *Walking With Gorillas: The Journey of an African Wildlife Vet* by Dr. Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka

By Marian Starkey, Vice President for Communications

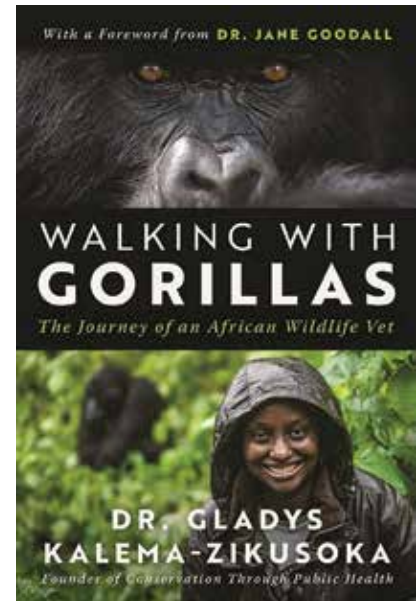
A species of ape that was predicted to go extinct before the turn of the century now numbers over 1,000 in the wild. Mountain gorillas have made a comeback, welcoming 15 new babies in 2022 alone, and that's in no small part due to decades of determination and creative and compassionate problem solving by Dr. Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka, Founder and CEO of Conservation Through Public Health (CTPH). Her organization was Population Connection's first Global Partner, and our pride in supporting CTPH has only grown since we made our first contribution in 2016. In 2021, Dr. Gladys became a member of the Population Connection Board of Directors, further strengthening our connection to her remarkable work.

After nearly three decades of working as a wildlife veterinarian in Uganda, Dr. Gladys has recounted her early life and accolade-laden career in a memoir, to be released on March 14 by Skyhorse Publishing, Inc. *Walking With Gorillas: The Journey of an African Wildlife Vet* features tear-jerking recollections of dear animal friends, empowering stories about being the only woman in graduate courses and on gorilla tracking expeditions, and heartwarming accounts of the heroes

and mentors who inspired and helped her along her way.

I've known Dr. Gladys for 16 years, but it took reading her memoir to learn that her beloved father was murdered by the maniacal regime of Idi Amin when she was a toddler. This grim chapter of Uganda's history is recounted through memories of Dr. Gladys's childhood during Amin's reign in the 1970s. Perhaps it was her experience of being raised, along with her siblings, by a widowed single mother who still managed a career as a respected political leader that gave her the confidence to pursue her somewhat unusual passion toward helping gorillas and other wildlife thrive in their natural habitats.

Her journey from amateur animal lover to world class wildlife veterinarian started with a rigorous education in veterinary science at the University of London and at North Carolina State University, where she met her husband, Lawrence, also from Uganda. She started working in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, home to about half the world's mountain gorillas, in the early 1990s, soon after it was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The park is surrounded by densely



populated human settlements, which have encroached into areas that were previously gorilla habitat, causing sometimes violent conflict between the two species.

The program model that has made the conservation goals of CTPH so successful focuses on human health and livelihoods. When people are hungry and ill, they tend not to extend sympathy to the plight of gorillas and other wildlife ranging on the borders of their settlements—especially when local folklore tells them that eating gorilla meat will cure what ails them. But when people have access to culturally sensitive health care and jobs that depend on the well-being of local wildlife, they have a vested stake in protecting it. Now

Dr. Gladys picking ripe berries during a coffee safari at a farm adjacent to Bwindi.
Photo by Sarah Marshall



that locals are able to make a living as park rangers, tour operators, coffee growers¹, and crafters, they don't need to capture baby animals to sell as pets or poach bush meat to eat or sell as food, and they don't react to gorillas entering their gardens with violence, because doing so would directly harm their ability to earn an income. The CTPH model enables people to be rewarded for looking out for their once adversaries and prey.


Because gorillas share 98.4 percent of our DNA, they are susceptible to many of the same diseases as humans (and vice versa). To date, there have been no known cases of Covid-19 among Bwindi's mountain gorillas, due to the strict masking and distancing requirements adopted during the pandemic. But the gorillas weren't always so well protected from human illnesses. A scabies outbreak among gorillas, contracted through contact with dirty clothing used for scarecrows, was Dr. Gladys's first moment of realization that in order to keep gorillas healthy, the humans who lived adjacent to their habitats must also be healthy. Cholera and

typhoid were common among people and often passed on to gorillas as well, due to the practice of open defecation. In response, community toilets and hand-washing stations were introduced—a straightforward and very effective solution.

The CTPH health and conservation solutions that have worked best, Dr. Gladys writes, are the ones proposed by local community members, giving them ownership over the educational workshops, public health services, and human/gorilla conflict resolution strategies CTPH staff have implemented. Traditional healers are asked to help neighbors remember to take their medications, from tuberculosis pills to birth control pills, the latter being a newer addition to the CTPH suite of services. Dr. Gladys refrained from incorporating family planning until the organization was well established and had developed credibility among the rural communities it served. Only then did she trust that people

would be receptive to such a sensitive intervention.

In fact, they've been so receptive, birth rates have dropped in the communities with CTPH family planning programs more than they've dropped in Uganda on average. Dr. Gladys and Lawrence, who chose to limit their family to two children in order to only replace themselves, are effective role models when they visit communities with their happy, healthy, well-educated sons.

We hope that you'll purchase and read this inspiring memoir and that you'll join us for our Page Turners book club meeting on May 9 to discuss it—Dr. Gladys will be joining us as a special guest! (Register on our website at popconnect.org/virtual-events/book-club/.) To get you started, the following pages contain a reprint of the chapter in *Walking With Gorillas* that describes the introduction and immense influence of the CTPH family planning program. 

¹ Some readers may recall receiving a bag of Gorilla Conservation Coffee, grown by farmers in the Bwindi Coffee Growers Cooperative, as Population Connection placed CTPH's first bulk order to share as membership premiums!

EXCERPT

Walking With Gorillas: The Journey of an African Wildlife Vet

“Embracing Family Planning” chapter reprinted with permission from the author and Skyhorse Publishing Inc.

By Dr. Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka



Dr. Gladys at Bwindi Impenetrable National Park Photo by Jo Anne McArthur

So much work had been done to establish Conservation Through Public Health, but I knew it was only just the beginning of the journey to build a model that could change the world.

On a flight, I met a woman who told me about an organization called Ashoka, which focuses on supporting individuals and not organizations, and nurtures leading social entrepreneurs with systems-changing ideas. To become an Ashoka fellow you must

show creativity and an entrepreneurial spirit, and your new idea should have potential for great social impact. Another important criterion is having a strong ethical fiber. The woman, Irene Mutumba, had become an Ashoka fellow for her idea called

the Private Education Development Network, which was transforming the Ugandan education system by teaching kids entrepreneurial skills at an early stage of their lives. Irene nominated me to become an Ashoka fellow for our One Health approach that she felt was transforming conservation practice in Uganda. Up to this point, I had not considered myself an entrepreneur.

Though we were benefiting public health by bringing health services to the last mile users around protected areas, the really big idea was a new approach to conservation by improving the health of people, animals, and the environment together. Several months after the Ashoka country director, Debbie Serwadda, and her program manager, Abu Musuza, visited Bwindi to see for themselves, I became a fellow for merging Uganda's wildlife management and rural public health programs to create common resources for both people and animals. The fellowship came with a three-year stipend for me to focus on developing this new idea and connections to additional funding and recognition.

One such connection was with the PBS show *Frontline World*, where Singeli Agnew filmed our One Health work to prevent and control tuberculosis.

I was pleased with how the CBDOTS¹ program was going. Not only were we achieving recognition, but the number of people being referred and treated for tuberculosis was increasing every day, and the community was embracing our new approach to conservation. Having seen the success of this project, in 2006, the new USAID Population Officer, Heather D'Agnes, asked us to add family planning to the CBDOTS model and perhaps get the same volunteers who were watching people take tuberculosis medication to be the ones who we trained to encourage their community to adopt family planning as well as distribute contraceptives to those who wanted them.

To incorporate family planning into the CBDOTS model, Heather asked us to focus on one target group—either women, men, teenagers, or couples. I looked around me and, with Vaster² as my main frame of reference, saw that most teenage girls were unfortunately married off by the age of 15 after getting pregnant. I also soon realized that men and women



Sharon Akampurira, CTPH Community Health and Conservation Field Officer, leading a training with Village Covid-19 Task Force Committee members at Bwindi Photo by CTPH

were not openly talking to each other about family planning and the use of contraceptives. My gut feeling was to focus on couples.

USAID could not directly give CTPH funding because the administrative requirements were too arduous for a small start-up nonprofit. So, they provided funding to us through an organization based in Washington, DC: Camp Dresser and McKee International Inc. This organization also provided valuable advice on managing the project and, more importantly, allowed us to be creative and develop an impactful program to improve access to family planning and health care.

I did not have much information about how the community felt about family planning and requested Mbarara University to send us

some students to conduct a needs assessment for family planning around Bwindi. They camped at the Kayonza government health center for two weeks and had separate focus group discussions with men and women, and also went to churches to talk about family planning. Though we wanted an independent assessment, I had the privilege to attend one of the sessions and was extremely impressed with how these young medical and nursing students were engaging the local communities and getting them to express their feelings about what turned out to be a highly controversial subject not only in Uganda but also in the United States, where the funding had come from.

The lack of family planning meant that women did not have control over their bodies. Many of them did not want to have a baby every year

¹ Community Based Direct Observation of Tuberculosis Treatments Short Course Therapy

² From chapter 15: "Our first hire was a woman named Vaster Orikiriza to help us implement the program on the ground. She was the first female college graduate from the Bwindi community and had been inspired to obtain a bachelor's degree in tourism because of the mountain gorillas. When we hired her as our staff, she became the first person to earn a salary at CTPH."

but were resigned to their fate. The majority of the women did not have the support from their husbands, and when it was time to get a new supply of contraceptives, they would lie to their husbands that they were going to the market and then would secretly go to the health center to either get an injection or pills. Whenever their husbands found out that they were taking the pill, they would throw the pills in the pit latrines. Worse still, if they managed to successfully hide the fact that they were taking birth control, their husbands would beat them up for not getting pregnant.

To avoid this cycle of domestic violence, we decided that it was best to engage couples through peer education and get both husband and wife to see the benefits of jointly planning for the number of children that they were able to manage. What resonated

The lack of family planning meant that women did not have control over their bodies. Many of them did not want to have a baby every year but were resigned to their fate.

most with the men was being able to reduce poverty in their homes through balancing the family budget. Women embraced birth control because it gave them more control over their bodies, freeing them up to do something else with their lives in between having babies, such as starting a business.

Some churches still preached the message in the Bible that God said *go forth and multiply*. However, I strongly believed that the earth's resources could not sustain this type of population growth. There was simply not enough to meet the needs of all the children whom women did not plan to have, and God did not intend for people to suffer and starve. This is how we got the religious leaders to modify the message to their congregation, over whom they exerted great influence.

The students discovered that the Bwindi community had many myths and misconceptions about birth control. Some of them thought that if you took it, you would never have a baby again, while others firmly believed that your womb would rot.

We called for meetings with the local community leaders to introduce this new program. Just like the CBDOTS program, we talked about what we would like to do and asked them what they thought about the volunteers looking after TB patients being the same ones who distribute contraceptives. They were excited about this new program but preferred that the volunteer work be spread more evenly by selecting a new person from each village to reach everyone with family planning. I was once again humbled by their wisdom to identify what worked best for their community. We asked them to select that person from each village, who should be trustworthy and could read and write because they needed to be able to collect data to determine if the program was making a difference. At that meeting, they jointly selected the volunteers, enabling us to begin with 22 community conservation health workers from 22 villages in two parishes with intense conflict between people and gorillas. We selected two more people from each parish to supervise them, making a total of 26. I did not think much about it at the time, but having women as half of our



Adult blackback gorilla at Bwindi
Impenetrable National Park
Photo by Jo Anne McArthur

volunteers was enabling us to achieve something bigger: reducing gender disparities. Over time, an unintended benefit of this PHE [population, health, and environment] program was that among our volunteers, men became more engaged in health care and family planning, and women became leaders in their community promoting conservation and better management of natural resources, breaking societal norms, and having a longer-lasting impact.

We hired an experienced nurse and midwife, Sylvia Nandago, to head the program. We designed forms for community conservation health workers to record the number of homes they visited and women and men they referred to local health centers to obtain a method of family planning, as well as what contraceptive method they took up. In the first year, the number of new users of contraceptives increased from 35 to 145, and in the second year, another 147 new users signed on. However, we found out that though women preferred the injection because they only needed to excuse themselves from home once every three months to sneak to the local health centers to receive it on market day, they would find overworked nurses and midwives dealing with very sick children and would often go home without getting the contraceptive and then conceive. This prompted us to approach Family Health International (FHI 360), an

organization piloting a program where voluntary health workers delivered the injections every three months. CTPH became their fifth partner, to train the community conservation health volunteers to give community-based Depo-Provera injections in the comfort of the volunteer's home. This led to the number of family planning users doubling to 350 in the third year. It was a major breakthrough.

One of my most heartwarming testimonies was about a woman who owned a shop and had three girls. Once our program was introduced to her, she decided to stop trying for a boy to be an heir and concentrate on educating the girls instead. This was helping to ensure a bright future for her children, and she went on to teach others in her community about family planning as a means of breaking the cycle of poverty.

Convincing communities to

change their behavior around the sensitive issue of family planning and conservation wasn't easy, but by developing innovative approaches, we were able to get the message through. One approach we took was by working with Ashoka Fellow Craig Esbeck, Founder of Mango Tree Enterprise, who developed affordable and easily obtainable teaching aids—flip charts made out of sisal, a local material. We collaborated on creating a set of visual aids to educate communities with an integrated health and conservation message that started off with two families—one with positive impacts on the gorillas and their habitat and one with negative impacts—based on the number of children they had, which also had an impact on the health of their families. This type of communication tool has proved really effective in changing behavior not only in Uganda but also in other developing countries. What became clear in all of this is



Dr. Gladys (second from left) with VHCTs (Village Health and Conservation Teams volunteers) living around Bwindi Impenetrable National Park Photo by CTPH



A VHCT (Village Health and Conservation Teams) volunteer gives a woman in her community a Depo-Provera contraceptive injection Photo by CTPH

that through our knowledge of the culture and the help of the local community, we were able to develop an effective tool that worked. So often, conservation planning does not involve local community members who are aware of what will work and what will not.

We collected data measuring how many people were changing behaviors and attitudes as a result of the flip chart. We also measured the number of people identified and referred for scabies, which had affected the gorillas, as well as other common and potentially zoonotic health conditions including tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS.

One day at a meeting in the Kanungu district health office, we told them how impressed we were that the

volunteers were visiting homes including those that were hard to reach at the edge of the park boundary. Dr. Ssebudde and the senior public health nurse, Florence Rwabihunga, asked us if the communities' homes were becoming more hygienic as a result of these visits, and I didn't know the answer. I realized we needed to find a way to measure those changes as well. With a grant from the Whitley Fund for Nature (WFN), we designed and implemented a plan to improve community hygiene and raise awareness of contamination by educating people about building latrines at their homes and keeping them clean with installed hand washing stations. When my WFN grant application was in its finalist stage, I was invited to London with my family to meet the jury. I could not believe it when I won the Whitley

Gold Award, the green Oscars for outstanding leadership in nature conservation, which was given to me by Her Royal Highness Princess Anne, in the presence of over 300 conservationists and my family. Sir Edward Whitley mentioned that I had brought the oldest and youngest people to the ceremony including my mother of 80 years old, and my second son, Tendo, who was just two months old, along with his playful four-year-old brother, Ndhego. Winning the Whitley Gold Award for our new approach to conservation, keeping gorillas healthy by improving the health of people, was a huge validation for CTPH. Healthy gorillas enabled tourism to thrive, and the benefits were shared with the local communities, giving them an economic incentive to protect the gorillas. We received a lot of media attention, including from the BBC and *The Guardian* in the UK and *New Vision* in Uganda, as well as endorsements back home, where I received a congratulations letter from the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hon. Tugume, and a congratulations message from the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) Executive Director, Moses Mapesa.

The Whitley Gold Award provided two years' funding of £60,000 to improve the health of the people, gorillas, and their environment so that when gorillas foraged in people's gardens, they found cleaner homes

with no dirty clothing on scarecrows, no open defecation, and no uncovered rubbish heaps.

Within one year, the proportion of pit latrines with hand-washing facilities had tripled from 10 percent to 30 percent. I was also excited that the number of people referred for tuberculosis testing had increased 11-fold. The same program was initiated in the second year of funding from the Whitley Gold Award to neighboring DRC to improve homes around Virunga National Park, where mountain gorillas are found in the Mikeno sector and eastern lowland gorillas are found in the Mount Tshiabirimu sector.

When we introduced the village health and conservation volunteer model to the minority Batwa hunter-gatherers, they also embraced the family planning program. We called them VHCTs (Village Health and Conservation Teams). When the Bwindi chief warden, Pontious Ezuma, expressed his doubts as to whether the Batwa also needed to adopt family planning because their ethnic group is so few in number, Flora Kyomukama, the first Batwa VHCT, said, “Family planning is important to me because I only want to have the number of children that I can manage to provide for.” Flora continued to be a role model in her community when she successfully encouraged them to acquire hand-washing stations, particularly important because the

We collaborated on creating a set of visual aids to educate communities with an integrated health and conservation message that started off with two families—one with positive impact on the gorillas and their habitat and one with negative impacts—based on the number of children they had, which also had an impact on the health of their families.

Batwa had the poorest hygiene, leading to a higher rate of infectious diseases. When CTPH Community Health and Conservation Field Officer Alex Ngabirano conducted a survey in 100 homes of the Batwa, he found a hand-washing station at only one of

them. In one of the Batwa settlements, Alex was shocked to find children who had been sent home from school because they had scabies. This settlement was bordering the park and sometimes visited by the mountain gorillas. We recruited 14 Batwa VHCTs to improve the hygiene, health, and well-being of people in their settlements.

Within the first year, the newly recruited community conservation health volunteers requested livestock so that they could earn an income to sustain their volunteer efforts. Camp Dresser and McKee International Inc. agreed for us to reallocate some of the funding for workshops into buying livestock for sustainability. [Stephen Rubanga, Co-founder and Chief Veterinary Technician at CTPH], having worked for the Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry, and Fisheries (MAAIF) for over 20 years before joining CTPH, had experience in distributing livestock to rural populations and strongly advised against giving individual animals to each person because, depending on how good they were at rearing animals, the benefits would not last long. It was better to give them to the communities as a group activity that brought them all together. Mukono parish volunteers requested goats, and Bujengwe parish volunteers requested cows. Among them, two people in each parish volunteered to keep animals in their land, and then when

they gave birth, they would give the offspring to another volunteer, until they all received an animal. Running alongside our program were also Village Saving and Loan Associations (VSLAs), introduced by CARE International through the Bwindi Mgahinga Conservation Trust. The initiative encouraged villages to save money, and, as a result of the livestock program CTPH had introduced, the volunteers found that they were now in a position to put money aside. We were very excited that the community volunteers had built upon what we had started with them. This has been such a huge success, and for the next decade, no volunteers dropped out because the money they earned from the livestock supported them when our funding ran out.



Lead silverback Maraya of Mubare family
in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park
Photo by Nick Penny

The finance system devised to keep records and share funds propelled us to receive more awards and funding. When invited to show a potential donor the system, Sam Rugaba, a VHCT leader, proudly pointed to a small black metal box with three locks that had the money. It was designed so that three people had to be present to access the funds and records. When the two other VSLA members came with their keys, they opened the box and explained how it all worked, while Sam showed us the records. This really warmed my heart.

This innovation led CTPH to win the Global Development Network's 2012 Japanese Award for Most Innovative Development Project. It was the first time a Ugandan organization had ever won this award. The award came with funding of \$30,000, which enabled us to expand the VHCT and VSLA model to other parishes around Bwindi—Nteko and Rubuguri—with high human and gorilla conflict, where we worked with their most active village health teams volunteer from each village. Winning the award also meant that we could apply for additional funding of \$200,000 from the Japanese Social Development Fund to expand our model.

While attending a 30-year celebration for Ashoka in France, I received the tragic news that Mizano, a playful blackback in the Habinyanja gorilla group, was missing and suspected to be dead. I called Stephen to go and investigate, and, together with a CTPH veterinarian, Dr. Hameed

Katerega, they walked 17 kilometers inside the forest and found the lifeless body of the 10-year-old adult male gorilla. They conducted a postmortem that revealed that a spear went through the right side of his shoulder and punctured his lungs, leading to hemorrhage and a painful death. It was shocking news and a sad day for conservation because I had assumed that all the communities around Bwindi had received so many benefits from conservation that they would not think of harming the gorillas, but I was wrong. A poacher had entered the park to hunt duikers, and Mizano got into a fight with the man's hunting dog, which led him to spear the gorilla several times until he died. The Bwindi park management worked with the police, whose dogs traced the blood of the bleeding dog from the scene of the crime to the home of the poacher. He was arrested and put into a local jail and released after two weeks with a fine of just \$20. This outraged everyone, including our VHCTs who first told me about the verdict, questioning why he was given such a small sentence after committing such a severe crime. I was so upset, I found myself writing to the UWA Executive Director, Dr. Andrew Seguya, complaining about this outcome.

What stunned me was that this poacher had received a goat from UWA a few years ago, but when the gorilla got into a fight with his hunting dog, his gratitude for the goat didn't stop him from killing Mizano. This took me back to Stephen's valuable advice not to give individual




CTPH staff, UWA staff, and Gorilla Guardian trainees at their Gorilla Health and Community Conservation Center in Kanungu District, Bwindi Photo by CTPH

livestock to community members, but to instead develop a project so that people had a viable livestock enterprise that brought them together with others and reminded them why they had received the livestock and helped to improve their attitudes toward conservation. In spite of this great tragedy, I was particularly encouraged that it was the VHCTs who told me about Mizano, which meant that our One Health approach was making communities care more about the gorillas, and ultimately changing their attitudes toward conservation. A few years later, with support from the National Geographic Society, we set up a VHCT network in Mpungu parish, where this poacher came from.

One of the results of the broad outrage was that UWA began to intensively engage the local magistrates, including

bringing them to visit the gorillas at Bwindi, which helped them to understand the value of wildlife, in time for another similar tragedy that happened nine years later.¹

Meanwhile, our PHE program contributed to the number of women using modern contraceptives increasing from 22 percent to 67 percent within 10 years, higher than the national average for rural areas, which increased from 30 percent to 45 percent. Twelve years later, the community-based Depo-Provera program is still going strong. I became emotional when a former staff member with Family Health International, Leonard Bufumbo, told me that he often talks about this pilot project as an example of a sustainable project with long-lasting impact. I am also particularly pleased that gorillas

are falling sick less often and have not had another scabies outbreak, possibly because there was an improvement in the hygiene of their human neighbors, which we are measuring by the increase in homes acquiring hand-washing facilities, that started at 10 percent and went up as high as 75 percent in the most frequently visited households. There has been a reduction in human and gorilla conflict because VHCTs report homes visited by gorillas and other wildlife, leading to a faster response from the Human and Gorilla Conflict Resolution (HUGO) teams or Gorilla Guardians. 

Please buy or borrow *Walking With Gorillas: The Journey of an African Wildlife Vet* to keep reading the rest of Dr. Gladys's memoir!

¹ We find out later in the book that, in 2020, the lead silverback of Nkuringo gorilla group, Rafiki, was killed by a poacher.

New Congress Convenes in Chaos

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

Chaos Rules Opening of New Congress

The 118th Congress came together to begin on January 3. Thirty-four men and women who were elected to the Senate were sworn in by Vice President Kamala Harris and began their work. The House, though, well that was a different scene.

Newly elected members of the House are sworn in to office by the Speaker of the House. And by the end of the day on January 3, there was no Speaker. That was true for January 4 as well. And January 5 and 6. It wasn't until the wee hours of January 7 that Kevin McCarthy of California was elected Speaker on the 15th ballot. And it wasn't until later that day that 434 members of the House were finally sworn in (there is one vacancy in the 4th district of Virginia created by the death of Rep. Donald McEachin just weeks after he was reelected).

Much has been made of the promises McCarthy had to make to win over some of the most extreme members of his party. Plum committee assignments were doled out. As were promises to push

legislation doomed to fail, and a pledge to default on national debts.

Among the legislation McCarthy promised to move early was a series of bills to further restrict access to abortion. One Republican, Nancy Mace of South Carolina, said during a TV appearance that if her party was serious about reducing abortion, it shouldn't waste its time passing bills that will never become law, but should instead focus on real solutions like ensuring that everyone has access to contraceptives. Whether she'll be prepared to match her votes to her words remains to be seen.

The new Republican majority has little but chaos to show for its first month in control. The debt limit crisis is ongoing. Several of the bills McCarthy promised to his extremists seem unable to muster enough votes to pass, so they remain in limbo. And the weakened Speaker agreed to allow just one member of his own party to call for his removal and spur yet another floor vote.

McCarthy also faces pressure to deal with Rep. George Santos, a serial fabulist who faces very real

legal jeopardy. That didn't stop his receiving committee appointments while McCarthy was blocking two Democrats from joining the Intelligence Committee.

Biden Administration Proposes New Rule to Expand Access to Contraceptives

On January 30, the Department of Health and Human Services issued a new rule to expand health insurance coverage of contraceptives. The new rule will reverse a policy imposed under the previous administration that allowed employers and universities to avoid the Affordable Care Act mandate to cover birth control without cost sharing simply by expressing a "moral" objection.

The ACA recognized that birth control is essential health care for Americans and included a crucial provision guaranteeing coverage. Nearly 90 percent of women of reproductive age have used birth control at some point in their lives, and support for access to the full range of contraceptive methods is near universal.

Access to contraceptives is essential to women's health, autonomy, and economic security. This new Biden administration rule will help ensure that Americans' health care isn't subject to the "morals" of their bosses.

Before taking effect, the rule is subject to a 60-day period during which the public may submit comments.

EACH Act Introduced in House


On January 26, just days after the 50th anniversary of the *Roe v. Wade* decision guaranteeing the right to legal abortion across the United States, the Equal Access to Abortion Coverage in Health Insurance (EACH) Act was introduced by Reps. Barbara Lee (D-CA-12), Ayanna Pressley (D-MA-7), Diana DeGette (D-CO-1), and Jan Schakowsky (D-IL-9).

Roe is no longer the law of the land after the Supreme Court overturned it last summer, and Americans face wildly different scenarios when it comes to the legality and availability of abortion, making this legislation critically important.

The EACH Act repeals the Hyde Amendment and guarantees coverage for abortion in all federal health insurance programs including Medicaid, Medicare, and plans available to federal employees, military service members, veterans, and many others. It also lifts restrictions on abortion coverage imposed on private insurers participating in the federal exchanges created by the Affordable Care Act.

There are 34 states, plus the District of Columbia (thanks to unwelcome congressional interference), that do not cover abortion in their state Medicaid plans. And politicians in 26 states have limited abortion coverage within their state health insurance exchanges.

Making abortion care more accessible and affordable is a crucial public health measure. In states where abortion is most restricted, maternal mortality rates are highest. Passing EACH would create a critical federal standard.

Regretfully, the current House majority is unlikely to move the bill forward. 

For over 40 years, Hyde has forced poor women who are denied insurance coverage for abortions to term or pay for care when they're already struggling to make ends meet. With extreme abortion laws in place in half the country, it is more critical than ever that we fight to make abortion accessible wherever possible. It is past time for our policies to ensure everyone can get the health care they need without shame, punishment, or financial ruin. It is time to take a step forward, not back. It is time to repeal Hyde once and for all.

—Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA-12)

FIELD + OUTREACH

Roe Fell and the Nation Reacted

By Grace Long, Acting Field Coordinator

Achieving the goals of the progressive population movement hinges on reproductive rights. Our twin goals of gender equality and environmental sustainability require that the right to bodily autonomy is respected and that everyone can choose when, whether, and with whom they have children.

In 2022, we witnessed a loss of that right in the United States.

My first day at Population Connection, in February 2022, was two months after the Supreme Court heard oral arguments in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*. The state of Mississippi defended its 15-week abortion ban—the subject of the case—by arguing that *Roe v. Wade* was wrongly decided. Jackson Women's Health Organization, the state's only abortion clinic, argued that Mississippi was in violation of the U.S. Constitution by infringing on the right to abortion before fetal viability. During these arguments, five justices signaled a willingness to overturn *Roe*, including the three nominated by Trump.

We knew the official decision was coming soon, and that it likely wouldn't be good. What surprised

us was when, a few weeks before the decision was set to be released, a draft was leaked to the press. We rushed to mobilize our volunteers as protests erupted across the country, with reproductive and women's rights organizations leading the pack. My social media feeds were flooded with information on how to obtain FDA-approved abortion medications in case bans went into effect. Millions of dollars were raised for abortion funds. My coworkers and I stood in front of the Supreme Court building, texting supporters about how to find their local rallies while we listened to speeches by activist leaders. And then, on June 24, 2022, the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*. The other shoe had dropped.

For the second time in as many months, I was sending thousands of texts to our contact lists, urging everyone to join the crowds of people protesting the decision and demanding that their states protect the right to choose. The reproductive rights landscape transformed almost overnight. The Supreme Court's decision to let states legislate abortion quickly resulted in a confusing mess of laws and lawsuits, as reproductive rights organizations leveraged their state

constitutions to challenge trigger bans. These included pre-*Roe* abortion bans that were never taken off the books and laws written and passed in the decades since the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision by legislatures hopeful that it would one day be overturned. Many states quickly moved to protect abortion access by enshrining the right into law, expanding coverage under Medicaid, and prohibiting state employees from participating in investigations against anyone seeking an abortion.

Days after the decision came down, we hosted a virtual event with legal expert and Population Connection Action Fund Board Chair Dara Purvis, where she walked us through the impacts of the decision. She explained just how much power the justices gave to state legislatures, and how pro-choice legislators could defeat bans and pass protections. Dara and speakers at the nationwide rallies emphasized that abortion rights were on the ballot in the upcoming election.

The messaging worked. Abortion rights had an amazing midterm election, thanks in large part to incredibly high voter turnout. Constitutional amendments



Yasmeen Silva, National Field Manager, at the Bigger Than Roe rally getting signatures on our petition to end the Global Gag Rule, which blocks U.S. funding for foreign organizations that provide abortion services, counseling, or referrals or advocate to decriminalize abortion




Yasmeen holding a Population Connection Action Fund sign in front of the White House at the Bigger Than Roe rally

enshrining the right to abortion were passed by enormous margins in California, Michigan, and Vermont. Kansas and Kentucky voters rejected proposed amendments that would have given lawmakers carte blanche to pass severe abortion restrictions or outright bans. In Montana, voters defeated a ballot measure that would have allowed for criminal charges against medical providers who failed to take extreme measures to treat infants born with terminal medical issues. Voters made it clear that when

abortion was on the line, they would come out in droves to defend it.

On January 22, 2023, the 50th anniversary of Roe, a coworker and I braved the cold and rain to attend the Bigger Than Roe rally in DC, the sister event to a Wisconsin march hyping voters for an upcoming state Supreme Court election there. The conversations that day were about liberating abortion—how to free it from shame and stigma, how to ensure everyone has access, and how

to get patients and providers the respect they deserve.

Last year, we came together as a nation to defeat threats to reproductive freedom at the polls and in state houses across the country. Join us this year to stay active in keeping these threats at bay and in working toward passing legislation that goes above and beyond the provisions of Roe. With the majority of voters on our side, we can do even better! 

POPULATION EDUCATION

Into the Woods With PopEd

By Pamela Wasserman, Senior Vice President for Education

Teaching About Forests and Biodiversity

The connections between human activities and threats to habitat and biodiversity are major themes in the PopEd curriculum. From elementary lessons on the basics of wildlife endangerment to high school activities examining the politics of forest conservation, we have a wide variety of classroom resources to help students of all ages gain a better understanding of the delicate balance between people and other living things.

Since this magazine issue features Dr. Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka's important conservation work with Uganda's mountain gorillas, I wanted to highlight several of our K-12 resources that specifically address deforestation and its impacts on habitats and biodiversity. After all, forests are home to 80 percent of the world's land-based plants and animals.

Grades K-5

Young children are filled with curiosity about the natural world and are interested in how they can



Anne and Sara demonstrate the lesson plan "Web of Life" at the Leadership Institute in Briarcliff Manor, New York, in July 2018

be good stewards of habitats in their communities and around the globe. In our elementary curriculum, *Counting on People*, an entire unit focuses on people and wildlife.

In "Web of Life," young students become characters (water, sun, tree,

soil, air, bird, worm, rabbit, human, etc.) in an interactive story about a forest habitat. As the teacher reads the story, a ball of yarn is passed from one character to another, forming an intricate web. If anything happens to one character (e.g. a tug on the yarn), all are affected.



Above: Grid used for “World of Difference,” a lesson plan that compares biodiversity in two different types of forests

Right: Amanda and Mary Ellen explore deforestation in the activity “Timber!” at the Leadership Institute in Briarcliff Manor, New York, in July 2018



Discussion questions explore these connections and the role that human activities play on the health and well-being of the other characters in the ecosystem.

Who can resist the giant panda, that cuddly megafauna that resides only in China’s bamboo forests? In “Pondering Pandas,” another role-playing simulation, student pandas roam their habitat (classroom) trying to amass enough bamboo (paper towel rolls) to survive, even as some of their primary habitat is cleared (desks removed) for development in the heavily populated Yangtze River Basin region. This simulation illustrates what happens when both people and animals struggle to meet their basic needs with resources from the same area.

“Lessons from *The Lorax*” builds students’ reading comprehension skills and introduces science themes of cause-and-effect in nature. As the greedy Once-ler creates more demand for thneeds, the Truffula

forest and its inhabitants disappear. Dr. Seuss’s messages from 50 years ago still resonate with readers today.

Grades 6-8


Understanding the root causes of deforestation is the theme of “Timber!,” an activity that models supply and demand of forest products (wood and paper) and farmland (created from clearing the trees). Students use wooden craft sticks to represent forest growth and depletion as the area’s population changes.

In “World of Difference,” students calculate probabilities (a middle school math topic) as they compare biodiversity in a temperate forest in the U.S. and a tropical forest in Rwanda. Different species are represented by small props—dried beans, macaroni, nuts, beads, etc.—on a grid that represents forest acres. A role of the die determines which acres get cleared. Higher population growth rates increase the odds of deforestation and loss of species.

Grades 9-12

High school students play the board game “Go for the Green,” making environmental and economic decisions along the way that will affect the fate of their fortunes and the rainforest. “Choice cards” ask them to weigh options as farmers, industrialists, government officials, and everyday consumers.

Sustainable management of a common resource is the goal of “What’s at Stake for the Forest?,” a strategy game where students assume roles of different stakeholders and must negotiate how best to balance competing priorities for a publicly owned forest. A case study on a deal to protect Canada’s Great Bear Rainforest in British Columbia sets the stage for the game.

To find out more about these lessons, along with related teaching resources, visit population.education/forests and population.education/biodiversity. 

VIRTUAL EVENTS

Get to Know Our Global Partners

By Natalie Widel, Director of Digital Marketing

2022 Year in Review

Our 2023 virtual events program kicked off with a 2022 Year in Review. Population Connection staff discussed our newest offerings for K-12 students and educators; explained how we responded to changes in the reproductive rights advocacy landscape; gave an overview of our successful communications efforts informing the public about population issues; and shared updates on our Global Partners program.

Global Partners Series


We have a full slate of virtual events planned for 2023, including a year-long Global Partners series that will feature a number of our international partner organizations. Join us to hear their stories, learn more about their programs, and enhance your own knowledge about the connections between population, health, and the environment. The first installment of the series took place on February 9 and featured Kamal Rawal of RUWDUC in Nepal. Hannah Evans, Senior Analyst, visited RUWDUC for a week in November, and she moderated Kamal's presentation and shared her

own impressions of the important work RUWDUC is doing in the areas of women's empowerment, gender equality, environmental conservation, economic opportunity, health care, and climate adaptation throughout the far-west region. See the page opposite for a rundown of RUWDUC's work!

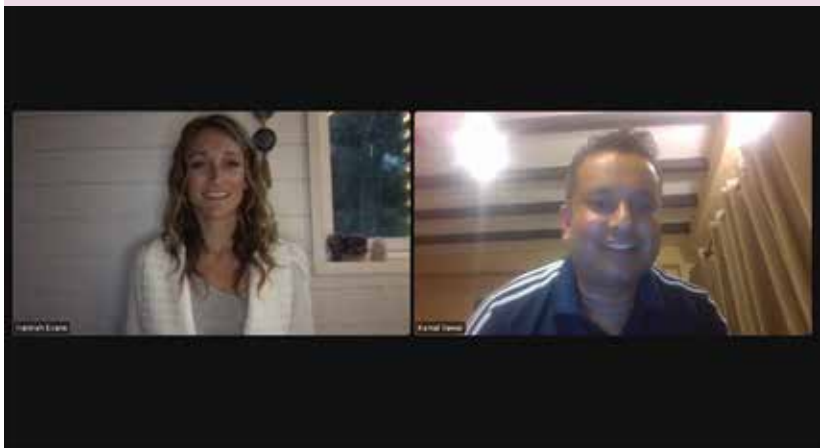
Page Turners Book Club

Our Page Turners book club meets quarterly throughout the year. These meetings are an interesting and informative way to learn more about population-related issues and virtually meet like-minded Population Connection members

and supporters. The next Page Turners meeting, on May 9, will feature an appearance by Dr. Gladys Kalema-Zikusoka. Dr. Gladys will join us to discuss May's book club pick—*Walking With Gorillas: The Journey of an African Wildlife Vet*—her just-released memoir. Dr. Gladys is the Founder and CEO of Conservation Through Public Health, our first official Global Partner, and sits on Population Connection's Board of Directors.

See all upcoming (and past!) events at popconnect.org/virtual-events/. We hope to see you online! 

Hannah Evans and Kamal Rawal during the virtual event "Unity For Women's Empowerment" on February 9, 2023



GLOBAL PARTNERS

RUWDUC Nepal

By Hannah Evans, Senior Analyst

Rural Women's Development and Unity Center (RUWDUC) is an NGO that supports rural development programs in environmental conservation, health care, and women's empowerment throughout the far-western region of Nepal. RUWDUC provides scholarships for school students, supports community-led women's leadership groups, hosts educational workshops in reproductive health and safe childcare, and provides shelter and maternal care for pregnant women throughout rural, at-risk Nepali communities. RUWDUC's initiatives have helped thousands of low-income people access quality health care services, including pre- and post-natal care for women and their children.

RUWDUC's current initiatives also focus on disaster relief in response to climate impacts in Nepal. With the help of USAID and Oxfam, RUWDUC helps provide aid to affected communities and facilitates community-led climate adaptation efforts throughout Nepal's most affected regions.

In 2022, Population Connection worked with RUWDUC to help fund the reconstruction of an early




Above: Mahakali women's empowerment meeting in the Mahakali Basin (Hannah Evans in front row, far right; Kamal Rawal in back row, far right)

Below: Mahendra Secondary School in Dureldurha (Kamal Rawal in front row, far right; Hannah Evans in back row, far right)

flood warning system that was destroyed during the October 2021 Mahakali flood, which displaced 90 families. Additionally, Population Connection has contributed funding for the distribution of food, water, and clothing on behalf of RUWDUC to the families displaced by recent climate-induced floods.

RUWDUC's Transboundary Rivers of Asia (TROSA) project provides water filtration systems to communities with limited and uncertain access to potable water.

TROSA has also established disaster alert systems in vulnerable communities in response to the increasingly consistent—yet unpredictable—weather patterns associated with climate change. The project emphasizes the training and participation of women as managers of the disaster alert systems and leaders in water resource management throughout four districts along the Mahakali and Jogbudha rivers. 



EDITORIAL EXCERPTS

Los Angeles Times

A little over six months ago, the Supreme Court overturned *Roe v. Wade*, ending the constitutional right to an abortion and sending the nation back half a century to the time when state politicians decided whether women controlled their own bodies. ...

But in the last six months, something exhilarating happened that bodes well for reproductive rights in 2023 and beyond. Voters defended the right to an abortion on the ballot from coast to coast in an exercise of power and self-determination. In the five states—blue, purple, and red—where abortion was explicitly on the ballot in 2022, all the outcomes went in favor of abortion rights. ...

As we begin a new year without a federal constitutional right to abortion, the hurdles for access are still high. But if supporters and much of the electorate stay galvanized by the belief that they can restore a right that belonged to everyone for 49 years, then perhaps even more can be accomplished in 2023. ...

Abortion rights advocates will be spending much of their time in 2023 battling state abortion bans on the grounds that state constitutions protect basic rights and individual autonomy, even without an explicit provision on abortion rights. So far, 34 cases have been filed challenging abortion bans in 19 states. ...

Expanding abortion access is a difficult journey, but if the midterm election results are any indication, most Americans care deeply about protecting reproductive rights. We have seen that people can mobilize and vote for measures and elect state and federal lawmakers to support those rights. Our hope is that more people will stand up for their rights and more access to abortion will be restored in 2023.

January 3, 2023

The New York Times

The fight over abortion has taken on new resonance in post-Roe America. It is no longer just a front in the culture wars, but rather a fundamental matter of health and well-being for millions of women—and the difference between life and death for many. While views on abortion remain nuanced and complex, a majority of the American public stands firmly on the side of preserving a woman's right to control her own body. The most rational, equitable way forward would be for Congress to enshrine abortion rights in federal law. That is not going to happen any time soon; leading Republicans in the House will thwart any legislative moves to ensure these rights. That's why the most promising avenues for action will be at the state level through ballot initiatives. ...

Allowing individual states to regulate women's reproductive rights does have practical and philosophical flaws. It establishes a patchwork system that risks sowing confusion and uncertainty, potentially undermining the care women receive—or fail to receive. It also makes a mockery of the concept of inalienable rights. The right to control one's body should not depend on whether one lives in Alaska or Maine as opposed to Tennessee or Texas. ...

So the push on the federal level for reproductive rights should continue. There are steps that the Biden administration can take on its own, and voters should keep the pressure on Congress. But whatever happens in Washington, enshrining abortion access in state constitutions through ballot measures is a vital pursuit, and one that will help insulate a growing number of Americans from shifting political whims.

January 7, 2023

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Our invaluable members enable Population Connection to provide life-changing support to our Global Partners. This photo shows some of the girls who benefit from Girl Up Initiative Uganda, one of our newer partners.

