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# Elevating Population Dynamics and Family Planning in Environmental Dialogue

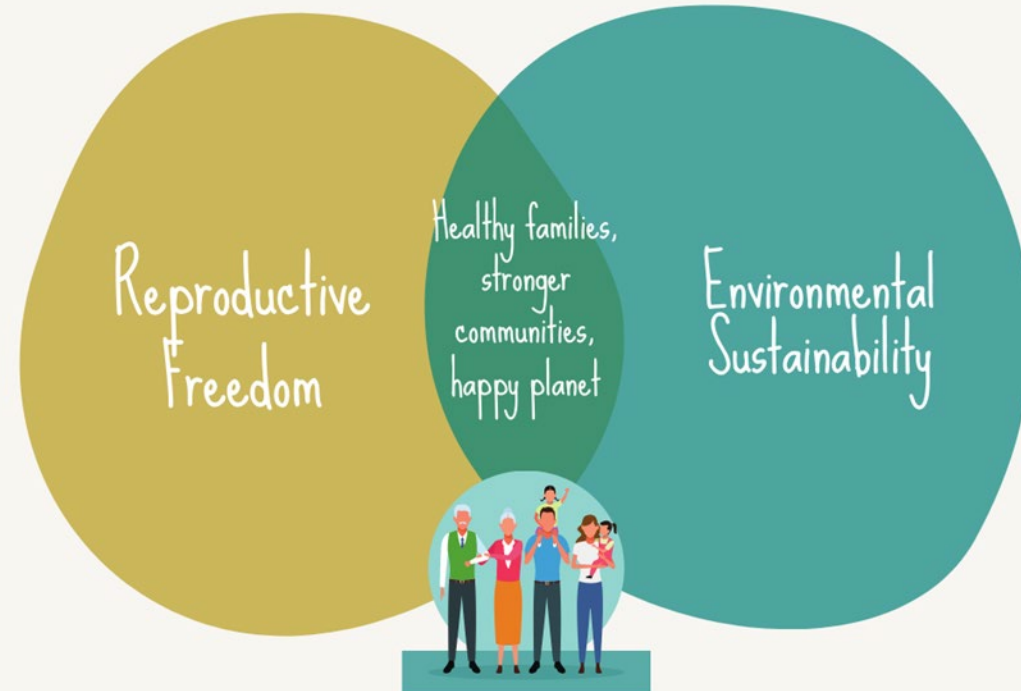
## Population Connection Webinar, April 22, 2024

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Population Institute  
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# Reproductive rights, population dynamics and environmental sustainability

**REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM - THE RIGHT AND CAPACITY OF PEOPLE TO MAKE THEIR OWN CHILDBEARING DECISIONS - IS CONTRIBUTING TO ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY.**



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# Reproductive Rights

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Reproductive rights are human rights

“All couples and individuals have the basic right to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so” (ICPD Programme of Action, 1994)

Human rights are universal and inalienable; indivisible; interdependent and interrelated

Reproductive rights statistics: 121 million pregnancies are unintended/ 257 million women have an unmet need for family planning/25 million unsafe abortions/ 47000 women die from unsafe abortions, 7 million treated for complications

How do we interpret these rights?



# Population dynamics and environmental degradation

- Population growth and gross domestic product (GDP) per capita are the strongest drivers of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions

Shukla, P. R., Skea, J., Slade, R., Al Khourdajie, R., van Diemen, R., McCollum, D., Pathak, M., Some, S., Vyas, P., Fradera, R., Belkacemi, M., Hasija, A., Lisboa, G., Luz, S., & Malley, J. (2022). IPCC, 2022: Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change. Contribution of Working Group III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

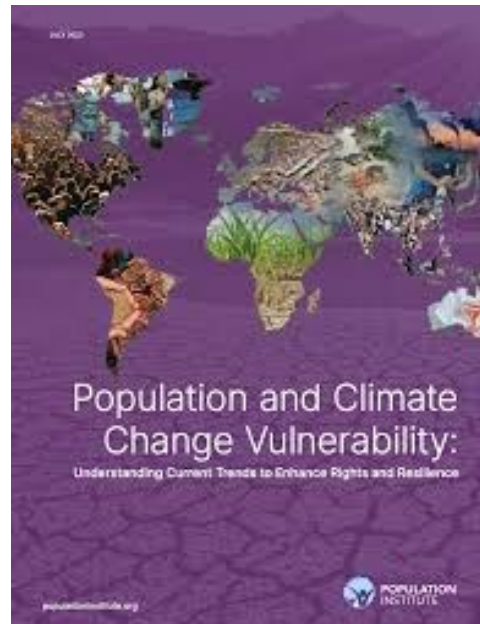
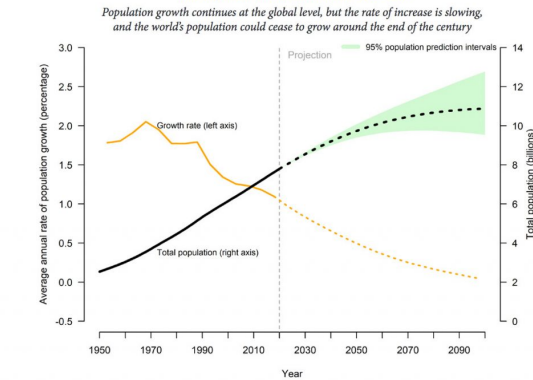
- Slowing population growth in the long run will contribute to achieving the required transformative change to address climate change and environmental degradation

Bongaarts, J., & O'Neill, B. C. (2018). Global warming policy: Is population left out in the cold? *Science*, 361(6403), 650-652.

- Dasgupta, P. (2022). The economics of biodiversity: afterword. *Environmental and Resource Economics*, 83(4), 1017-1039.

# Global population statistics

Figure 1. Population size and annual growth rate for the world: estimates, 1950-2020, and medium-variant projection with 95 per cent prediction intervals, 2020-2100



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2019). *World Population Prospects 2019: Highlights* (ST/ESA/SER.A/423).

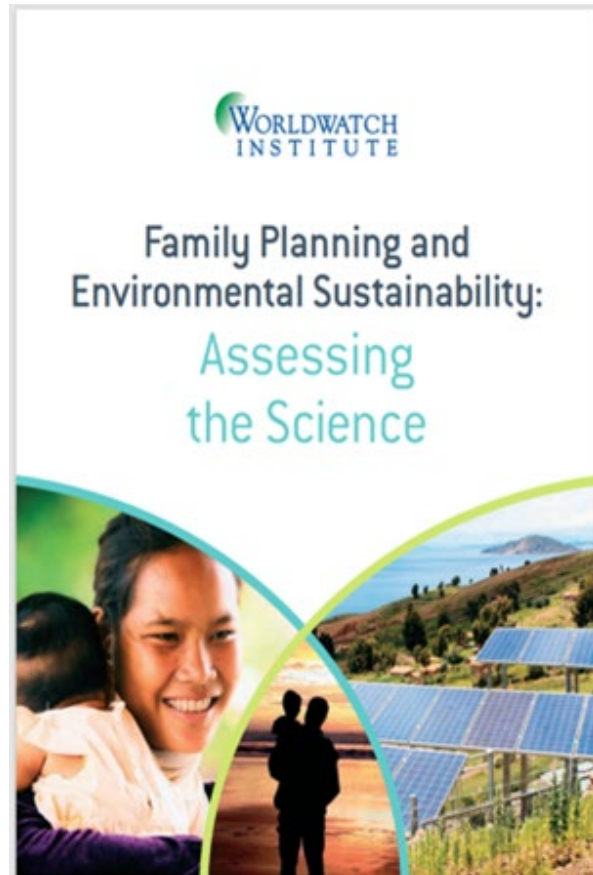
Source: Population and Climate Change Vulnerability, 2023. <https://www.populationinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Population-and-Climate-Change-Vulnerability.pdf>

Vollset, S. E., Goren, E., Yuan, C. W., Cao, J., Smith, A. E., Hsiao, T., ... & Murray, C. J. (2020). Fertility, mortality, migration, and population scenarios for 195 countries and territories from 2017 to 2100: a forecasting analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study. *The Lancet*, 396(10258), 1285-1306.





Reference: Engelman, R., Terefe, Y. G., Gourmelon, G., Yang, J., Bish, J., Fanta, J., ... & Weiss, K. R. (2016). Family planning and environmental sustainability: Assessing the science (pp. 49-50). New York: Wordwatch Institute.



Access to and use of family planning —specifically effective modern contraception— reduces fertility and facilitates delayed and more widely spaced childbirths

Slowing population growth tends to lessen the risk of dangerous environmental changes and to enhance the potential for societal resilience to climate change, water scarcity, food insecurity, the loss of biological diversity, and related threats

By reducing unintended pregnancy and facilitating personal choices on the number and timing of births, family planning expands opportunities available to women and girls

Food security is undermined by high fertility

There is no sub-specialty of demography or environmental science that routinely examines linkages between family planning and the environment

A diversity of authors call for increasing access to and use of family planning to resolve specific environmental problems

Delacroix, C. (2022). Stakeholders' perceptions of the linkage between reproductive rights and environmental sustainability. *The Journal of Population and Sustainability*, 6(1), 1–32.

# Environmental sustainability & reproductive health and rights stakeholders are in favor of integrating their fields

## Stakeholders' Perceptions of the Linkage between Reproductive Rights and Environmental Sustainability

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- Re-framing reproductive rights to acknowledge their positive environmental impact generates funding and programmatic opportunities.
- This linkage is largely understudied and avoided because of the difficulty to address population policy.

### METHODS

Mixed-methods qualitative study. An online survey (N=153) followed by in-depth interviews (N=14) explored how stakeholders of the reproductive rights and environmental movements perceived the linkages between family planning, population growth, and environmental sustainability.

Participants' reactions to statements on the relationship between environmental degradation, family planning, and population growth			
Statement/question	Answers	Number of participants	%
The impact of environmental degradation on global health increased the relevance of population dynamics for reproductive health and rights policy.	Agree	93	62
	Unsure	37	24
	Disagree	18	12
Family planning could be considered as a pathway to resilience because of its impact on fertility levels.	Agree	92	61
	Unsure	28	19
	Disagree	28	19
Slowing population growth could play an important role to avoid dangerous climate change should influence our understanding of reproductive health and rights.	Agree	84	56
	Unsure	26	17
	Disagree	40	26
We need to strive to reconcile and integrate the linkage's fields to advance them both.	Agree	101	67
	Unsure	11	7
	Disagree	21	14
Does population size relate to environmental sustainability?	Agree	104	69
	Unsure	21	14
	Disagree	24	16

- Environmental sustainability and reproductive health and rights stakeholders are in favour of applying a planetary health approach, or "environmental mainstreaming" to the reproductive health and rights field.
- Stakeholders of the reproductive health and rights and environmental movements find that population size and family planning influence environmental sustainability, and overwhelmingly find that the reproductive health and rights ideological framework should be integrated in a wider sustainability frame reflecting environmental considerations.

- Stakeholders of the reproductive health and rights movements were more likely to be divided on the re-framing of reproductive rights in an over-arching sustainability context than their environmental peers.
- A minority of participants favoured a dedicated approach for reproductive health and rights concerns, one excluding environmental considerations from its theoretical framework. They perceived a fundamental incompatibility between human rights, being individual, and environmental objectives, being collective.
- The respective positions of the reproductive health and rights and environmental sustainability movements on the linkage are unclear.



# Sub-Saharan African voices uniquely relevant

Reference: Delacroix, C., & Owoo, N. S. (2023). Documenting the Perspectives of Sub-Saharan African Policy Makers, Researchers, and Activists on the Reproductive Rights, Population Dynamics, and Environmental Sustainability Nexus. *World*, 4(4), 758-775.

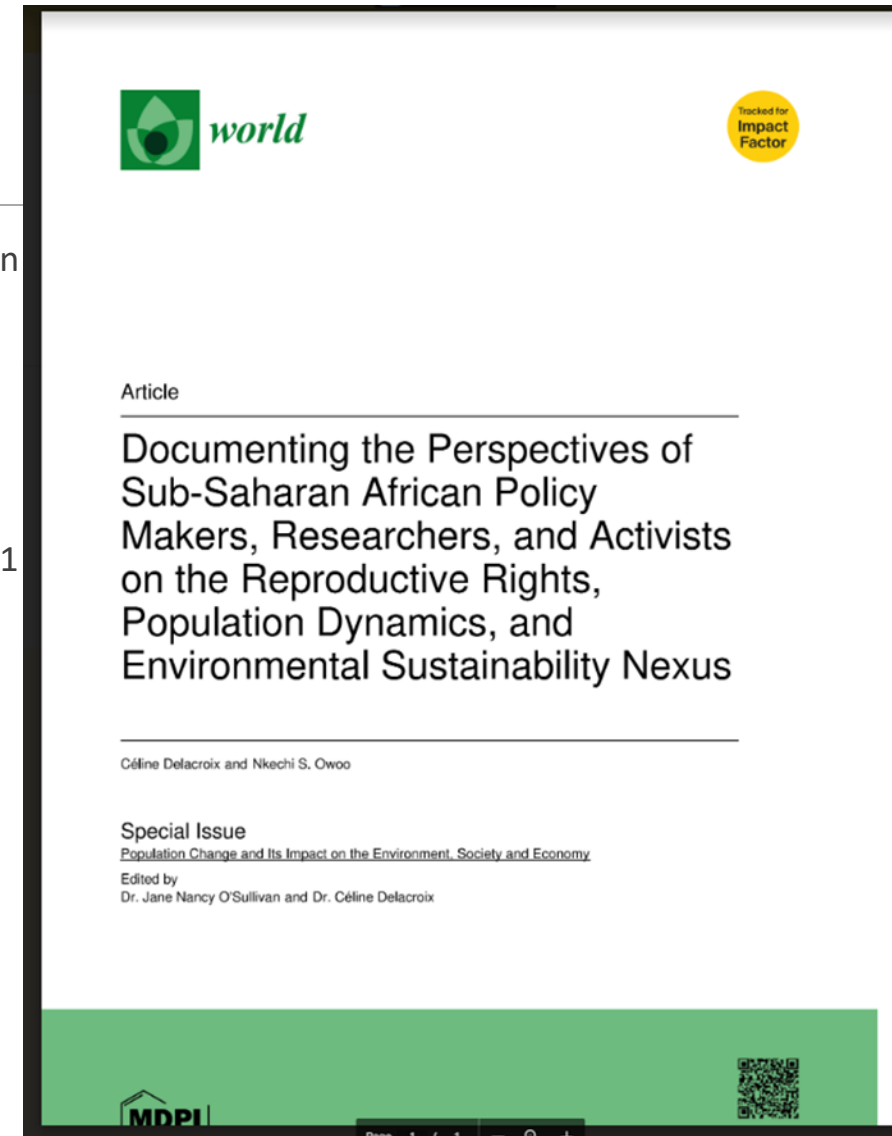
Sub-Saharan Africa is a global exception: Global average x3: 4.6 births/women in 2021 (Canada is at 1.3 births in 2022)

Population increased six -fold from 1950 until 2022, projected to grow from 1.2 billion in 2021 to 2.1 billion in 2050

Highest proportion of unintended pregnancies, unmet need for family planning.

Disproportionately vulnerable to environmental degradation.

Participant from South Africa: “The cumulative impact of 1 billion low per -capita footprints still equals a high impact. This is not to discount the high impact of people that may have lower fertility rates and higher per-capita footprints — who are as important to address.”





# Methods and participant characteristics

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A mixed methods qualitative project documenting the perspectives of sub-Saharan African stakeholders on the interconnections between population growth, reproductive rights, and environmental sustainability.

We conducted a survey (N402) and follow up interviews (N18) with participants from 42 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Participant characteristics:

Gender: 28% (114 participants) identified as women, 71% (286 participants) identified as men, one participant preferred not to answer

Of the ten response choices relating to participants professional fields, the most selected answers were health (57%/228 participants), environment (26%/108 participants), and sexual and reproductive health policy makers/advocates/researchers (26%/104 participants).

Participants came from 42 different countries located in sub-Saharan Africa. Among them, 50% were from Ethiopia, 7 % from Ghana, and 11 % from Uganda.

# Findings and implications

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Echo previous research indicating broad ranging public concern for population growth

Highlight concerns associated with the need to acknowledge the role of excessive consumption, global inequities, and to center reproductive autonomy and human rights in discussions of population dynamics. Participant from South Africa: “The cumulative impact of 1 billion low per-capita footprints still equals a high impact. This is not to discount the high impact of people that may have lower fertility rates and higher per-capita footprints — who are as important to address”

Participants stressed that responses to anthropogenic environmental destruction must integrate population dynamics as a central and transversal component

Broad support for the integration of population dynamics and reproductive health and rights dimensions at international environmental meetings and in environmental sustainability instruments

Concern for the under-representation of sub-Saharan Africa in discussions of population dynamics and in international environmental governance

Demonstrates support for the development of cross-sectoral policies acknowledging the interrelated nature of gender equity, reproductive rights, population dynamics and environmental sustainability goals



# Thank you!

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