

POPULATION ACTION FOR THE FUTURE



The global population is now estimated at 8.2 billion, and is expected to keep growing for another six decades, peaking at 10.3 billion in 2084, and then gradually declining to around 10.2 billion by 2100. These figures belie the range of possible outcomes, however – UN demographers project that the population in 2100 has a 95% likelihood of being between 9 billion and 11.4 billion – a difference equivalent to the current combined size of Europe, Northern America, Australia, New Zealand, and sub-Saharan Africa.

Our global population is on track to exceed **10 billion** in the second half of this century.

10 billion

these countries, it's growing more than three times as fast. Sub-Saharan Africa's rapid growth is especially worrying because the area also has the highest poverty rates as well as high vulnerability to climate change. Without greater investments in health, education, and job creation, the very large and growing cohort of young people in this region faces dire prospects.

A NEGLECTED EMPOWERING SOLUTION

When women and girls are free to choose the number, timing, and spacing of their children and have access to formal education and career opportunities, they tend to have smaller families. This lessens environmental pressures, while reducing poverty, boosting countries' economies, and building resilience to natural disasters and other shocks. Including more women in decision-making spheres is also proven to lead to more policies that benefit people and nature, and to better outcomes for peace and security.

An estimated 218 million women in lower- and middle-income countries have an unmet need for modern contraception. The Guttmacher Institute estimates that fulfilling this unmet need would cost just \$10.60 per person per year.



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URGENT NEED FOR POPULATION ACTION

Continued population growth makes it harder, and in several cases impossible, to achieve the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Mounting population pressure is incompatible with climate and other environmental targets, and in lower- and middle-income countries, rapid population growth is outstripping development efforts, leading to more people impacted by hunger, poverty, and other injustices. UN member states and civil society organizations must act together to end population growth through empowering solutions.

A 2023 report by the Population Institute found that in the 80 most climate-vulnerable countries, population is growing at twice the global average rate, while in a dozen of



The **80** countries most vulnerable to climate change have a population growth rate **twice the global average rate.**

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CLOSING THE FAMILY PLANNING FUNDING GAP

There have been misguided attempts at censoring population concern within some circles. Intentionally obscuring the enormous returns on investment generated by funding family planning and women's empowerment in terms of health, socioeconomic, and environmental benefits makes it much harder to close the annual \$5.5 billion funding gap.

Publicly acknowledging that women's reproductive autonomy leads to slower population growth, and that this eases pressure on nature and creates a window of opportunity for lower income countries to grow their economies, is key to ending the funding shortfall.

Those serious about addressing any of the world's most pressing problems can't continue to ignore population growth and the impact it has on the planet or on its poorest people.

EMBRACING LINKAGES FOR GOOD

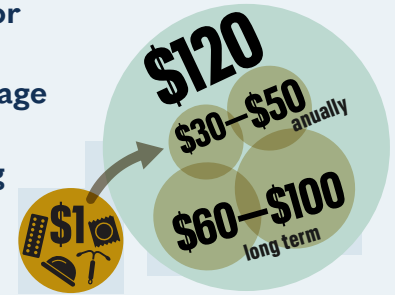
The achievement of a good quality of life for all on a healthy planet is pushed further out of reach the more our population grows. We must strive for an earlier, smaller peak population through empowering solutions.

That path forward necessarily embraces the critical linkages between population and the SDGs, and emphasizes the crucial importance of investing in women and girls.



A woman and her baby in Sierra Leone (Photo by Annie Spratt on Unsplash)

Every \$1 invested in addressing the unmet need for contraceptives generates on average \$120 in annual benefits, including \$30–\$50 from reduced infant and maternal mortality, and \$60–\$100 in longterm benefits from economic growth.



Removing barriers to family planning and girls' education would not only yield enormous health and development benefits, but would also put us on track for a more sustainable global population size. It's high time for UN member states and the donor community to increase investment in women and girls. The longer we fail to act, the less we will be able to improve and protect lives and shape our global demographic destiny for the better.

KEY FACTS

- Our global population is on track to exceed 10 billion in the second half of this century.
- In the 80 countries with the highest climate change vulnerability, population is growing at twice the global average rate.
- An estimated 218 million women in developing regions have an unmet need for modern contraception.
- Fulfilling this unmet need would cost just \$10.60 per woman per year.
- Every \$1 invested in addressing the unmet need for contraceptives generates on average \$120 in annual benefits, including \$30–\$50 from reduced infant and maternal mortality, and \$60–\$100 in longterm benefits from economic growth.