

POPULATION CONNECTION

Volume 58, Issue 3

September 2026

THE GREEN REVOLUTION WAS ANYTHING BUT GREEN



President's Note

John Seager
john@popconnect.org



“But any ecologist will tell you that the growing human population is the greatest single stressor endangering the planet’s carrying capacity, and that most environmental ills today stem from overpopulation.”

– US Sen. Gaylord Nelson (1916–2005)

In the 1960s and for some time thereafter, the environmental movement widely supported Earth Day founder Gaylord Nelson’s perspective. David Brower, the first executive director of the Sierra Club and the founder of several prominent environmental organizations, argued in 1970 that “there is one principal question before the United States and before the world [...]: How dense can people be?” He used the phrase to refer explicitly to the environmental impacts of population growth. Henry Kendall, former board chair of the Union of Concerned Scientists, wrote in the 1992 *World Scientists’ Warning to Humanity*, “Pressures resulting from unrestrained population growth put demands on the natural world that can overwhelm any efforts to achieve a sustainable future.”

While America’s environmental groups do vital work, most moved sharply in the wrong direction regarding population concerns. This reversal was partly driven by demonstrably false charges that efforts to slow and stop population growth are inevitably coercive. It’s baffling why so many otherwise thoughtful environmental leaders refuse to recognize that women everywhere want reproductive autonomy and that, when they can make their own informed choices, family size plummets. What’s good for families is also good for our planet.

Recently, positive reinforcement for a less-crowded planet is coming from an unexpected quarter, namely economists.

Historically, Julian Simon, Paul Romer, Nicholas Eberstadt, and other economists have argued — some more explicitly than others — that larger populations support economic growth by expanding the pool of workers, taxpayers, and consumers. There have been exceptions — notably Dean Baker, who wrote, “[A]lthough declining populations may be a problem for political leaders who want to be more important in international politics, they are not bad news for the people of a country.”

Recent research confirms Baker’s assertion. The 2024 Nobel laureate in economics, MIT’s Daron Acemoglu, co-authored a working paper finding that “lower birthrates are associated with higher growth in GDP per working-age adult across countries and higher wage growth across US commuting zones, with no negative impact on aggregate GDP or earnings.”

Now let’s hope that these findings prove eye-opening. While we’re at it, let’s hope those environmental groups reconsider their unseemly, unscientific silence about the perils of overpopulation. 🌍

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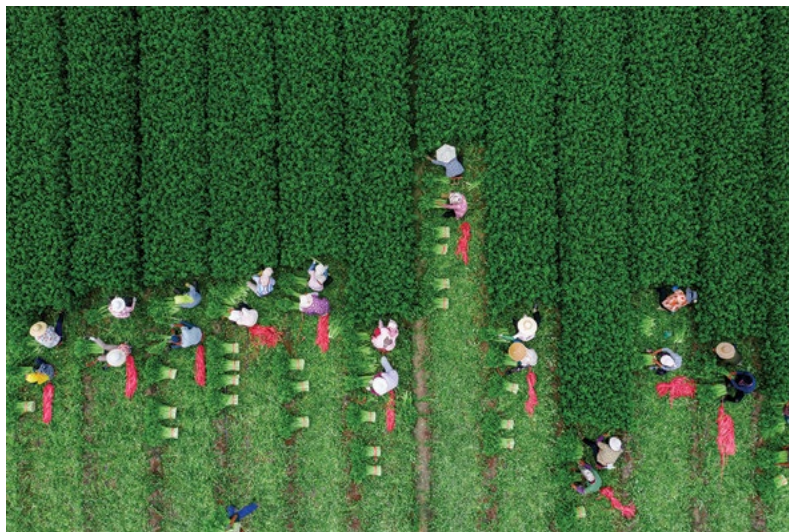
**POPULATION
CONNECTION**

Feature

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No Miracle Cure: The Dark Side of the Green Revolution

By Olivia Nater



Cover image: Farmers harvest celery on July 3, 2026, in Gaoqing, Shandong Province, China. (Photo by Zhang Weitang/VCG via Getty Images)

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Editor's Note

Marian Starkey
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It's been over 20 years since I was a graduate student of Population and Development at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), but I still haven't forgotten my favorite professor from the program. Tim Dyson, PhD, (now Emeritus Professor of Population Studies) was beloved in our department due to his energetic darting back and forth in front of the whiteboard and his jolting exclamations about the synthetic production of ammonia — the Haber-Bosch process!! — being the reason agricultural yields grew enough to feed billions more people in the aftermath of Paul Ehrlich's famine warnings of the late 1960s. (When I was at LSE in 2004/2005, the world population was just over 6.5 billion — up from 3.5 billion when Paul Ehrlich and his wife, Anne, published *The Population Bomb*; today, the world population is estimated at 8.3 billion and is still growing by about 70 million people a year.)

Prof. Dyson made learning about the Green Revolution and its role in the “ginormous” growth of the human population engaging and interesting and ensured that we understood that without it, such explosive population growth could not have taken place.

In the wake of Paul Ehrlich's death in March of this year, journalists and editorial boards across the country gloated about his famine forecasts being wrong because of the huge increases in crop yields that have occurred since his warnings. Because none of the articles we saw addressed the environmental catastrophes the Green Revolution

has unleashed, our Communications Manager and resident blogger, Olivia Nater, wrote an excellent post for our website detailing the consequences of modern agriculture. In order to make sure our members see it, we're including an expanded version of it in this issue, beginning on page 18. This iteration includes quotes from a written interview Olivia conducted with Prof. Dyson.

He told us that climate is the only subject he's actively interested in these days and that he's “afraid that the world faces a really disastrous situation.” Tying his present climate focus back to agriculture, he said, “the forcing of the world's climate that is currently underway will almost certainly bring about much less stable conditions for the world's farmers.”

Editor and journalist Jonah Goldberg wrote in a March *Los Angeles Times* opinion piece that Paul Ehrlich had been “so wildly wrong [...] and] so obviously wrong from the beginning.” He also said that “Global food production has exploded.” He included no details about how that happened or what the repercussions have been, taking advantage of the fact that most people don't get to spend a year learning from Tim Dyson about the Green Revolution.

We hope you find Olivia's article informative and encourage you to write to us if you were involved in any aspect of the Green Revolution and/or work in agriculture today. We'd be very interested to hear from you! 

Letters to the Editor

There is increasing alarm worldwide about low birthrates and population decline as fertility falls way below 2.1 children per woman, the replacement rate. But over time, human evolution will take care of this problem. In a low-birthrate society, the couples who have children are a little different in some ways from those who don't. For example, they have more of a desire for children, are more religious, tend to have difficulty using contraception, are more opposed to abortion, and live in a culture that values having many children. These and other associated factors are to some degree heritable genetically or culturally. Identical twin studies have shown that a surprising number of personality characteristics are influenced by genetics; desire for children is probably one of these. After a few generations characteristics associated with having children will become dominant in the population, and birthrates will recover. Populations will fall but never come close to disappearing. On the contrary, I envision a time in a thousand or so years when population growth will again be threatening the planet.

Stanley Henshaw, PhD

Really appreciated the Ehrlich articles and editorial. I loved the selected quotations from him, especially the one on Musk. Thanks for this magazine.

Sharon Bresler

The feature article in the June issue, "The Case for Gradual Population Decline," was comprehensively informative. I hope acting on its points will help my grandchildren.

I was drawn to the June issue by the photo of Paul Ehrlich on the cover. It is the same image I retained of him when he gave a lecture here at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, almost 50 years ago. I remember being impressed by his study of the butterfly/moth population on a large natural tract of land adjoining the Stanford campus.

Good luck to you and the organization.

Charles H. Hargis

I was very saddened to learn about Paul Ehrlich's death.

In 1996, a small group of population activists from the ZPG Monterey Bay Chapter had dinner with him before his talk at a local bookshop in Capitola, CA, about his (and his wife, Anne's) newly published book, *Betrayal of Science and Reason*.

It was wall-to-wall people in the bookshop. It seemed in that small microcosm of humankind that there was an understanding, and agreement with Ehrlich, that the environment was in a state of decline and that we must take dramatic steps to avert disaster for all life.

Well, here we are 30 years later, with 2.5 billion more people on the planet. I'm convinced we have not averted the disaster, only prolonged it with more technofixes. Some good things have happened over those years, but the human impacts have not helped other species. It is only worse.

Paul signed his book for me, "With warm regards, Fight on!" Yes, we must fight on!

Linda Brodman

Letters to the Editor, continued

I read with great interest the June issue of *Population Connection*. As a premed/biology major at Stanford, I took Paul Ehrlich's course devoted primarily to world population and related implications. That would have been 1962 when he was 29 or 30 years old.

Of the many faculty I interacted with at Stanford, Prof. Ehrlich is the only one I specifically remember. The rest of my fellow students and I were very impressed with his scientific rigor and with his passion for teaching and for his research.

Dr. Ehrlich greatly influenced my thinking and career path. Perhaps more than anyone else at that time, he challenged me to undertake a career in science. I similarly focused on population and health, although in a somewhat different field — under- and over-nutrition (obesity).

Bruce Wolfe, MD
Professor Emeritus, Surgery
Oregon Health & Science University

Regarding the photo caption on page 22 of the June issue, I would like to point out that one does not paddle rowboats, one rows them (go figure) using oars, one on each side. (Paddles are used in canoes and kayaks, and water is moved on only one side at a time.)

Jim Thomson

Paul Ehrlich was a wonderful man. I met him at the Rio Earth Summit. So sorry for his passing. He had a very useful life.

Elizabeth Csicsery-Ronay

I was Paul Ehrlich's PhD student from 1963–1965. Although I eventually did my degree under a different professor, I have always been thankful for his mentoring, which taught me much about science and how to guide students to success. His firm guidance and confidence in me gave an overwhelmed young woman in a (then) man's field the confidence to be a success. I am very grateful. He was an amazing person who did so much for the world and still always remembered me when I happened to visit Stanford.

Alice Schroeder

If you'd prefer to read the quarterly *Population Connection* magazine online, please visit our website at popconnect.org/magazine to see archives going back to 2020. The digital version of each issue contains links to sources, staff authors' email addresses, and suggestions for further reading.



The Guardian

The global fall in fertility rates has arrived faster and spread further than anticipated. Two-thirds of people now live in countries that have slipped below the replacement rate [...].

[...]

There are reasons to celebrate the shift. People have fewer children when they expect their babies to survive. The sub-Saharan African countries that lead fertility tables with around 6 births per woman, such as Chad and Somalia, also lead child mortality tables. Women's education and their economic and social empowerment also cut birthrates. The UN now predicts that the global population will rise by around 2 billion, to peak at 10.3 billion in the 2080s — sooner than expected a decade ago. That may not have much impact in easing global heating, but it could help reduce competition for resources.

[...]

Just as Africa's population boom does not guarantee prosperity, so the impact of falls will depend on how they are managed. Countries must wrestle with profound social and political questions, including whether they are willing to accept and able to attract migrants; whether domestic political systems need to be redrawn as national populations are reshaped; and whether young people see a social contract worth sustaining. Governments should focus on understanding how their populations are changing, and preparing for that, rather than making futile attempts to reverse the decline.

— June 16, 2026

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Republican attorneys general from 14 states [...] sent a letter to the US Environmental Protection Agency earlier this month demanding action on what they warn is “a growing threat to the country's waterways.”

So what gives? Has America's staunchly pro-industrial party suddenly become a bunch of tree huggers? No. The attorneys general's EPA gambit is an all-too-obvious head-fake in service to a more familiar goal: denying reproductive rights to women.

The letter claims, without evidence, that the abortion-inducing drug mifepristone poses an environmental threat and potential health hazards because trace amounts of it end up in wastewater after women use it for medication-induced abortions. It asks the EPA to classify it as a potential contaminant, which could ultimately lead to restricting or banning it.

[...]

The letter — which is presented on Hanaway's official stationery as Missouri's attorney general — states that the AGs are motivated to “protect women from the harms associated with mifepristone.”

In fact, medication abortion, which by definition is used very early in pregnancy, is by far the safest form of abortion. Restricting medication abortion would very likely create more health hazards for women seeking abortions by forcing them to turn to more invasive medical procedures.

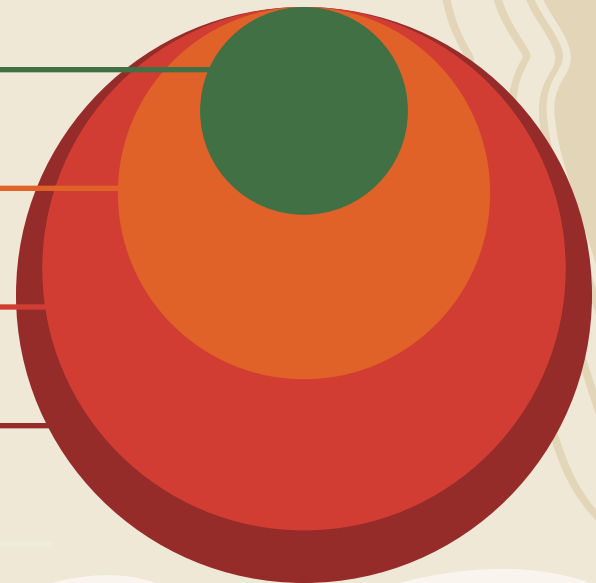
— June 16, 2026

AFRICAN HUMAN CAPITAL

Investing in education
for a more sustainable
demographic and
economic future

Africa's population

1980	483 million
2025	1.55 billion
2070 Further Progress	3.06 billion
2070 Stalled Progress	3.71 billion

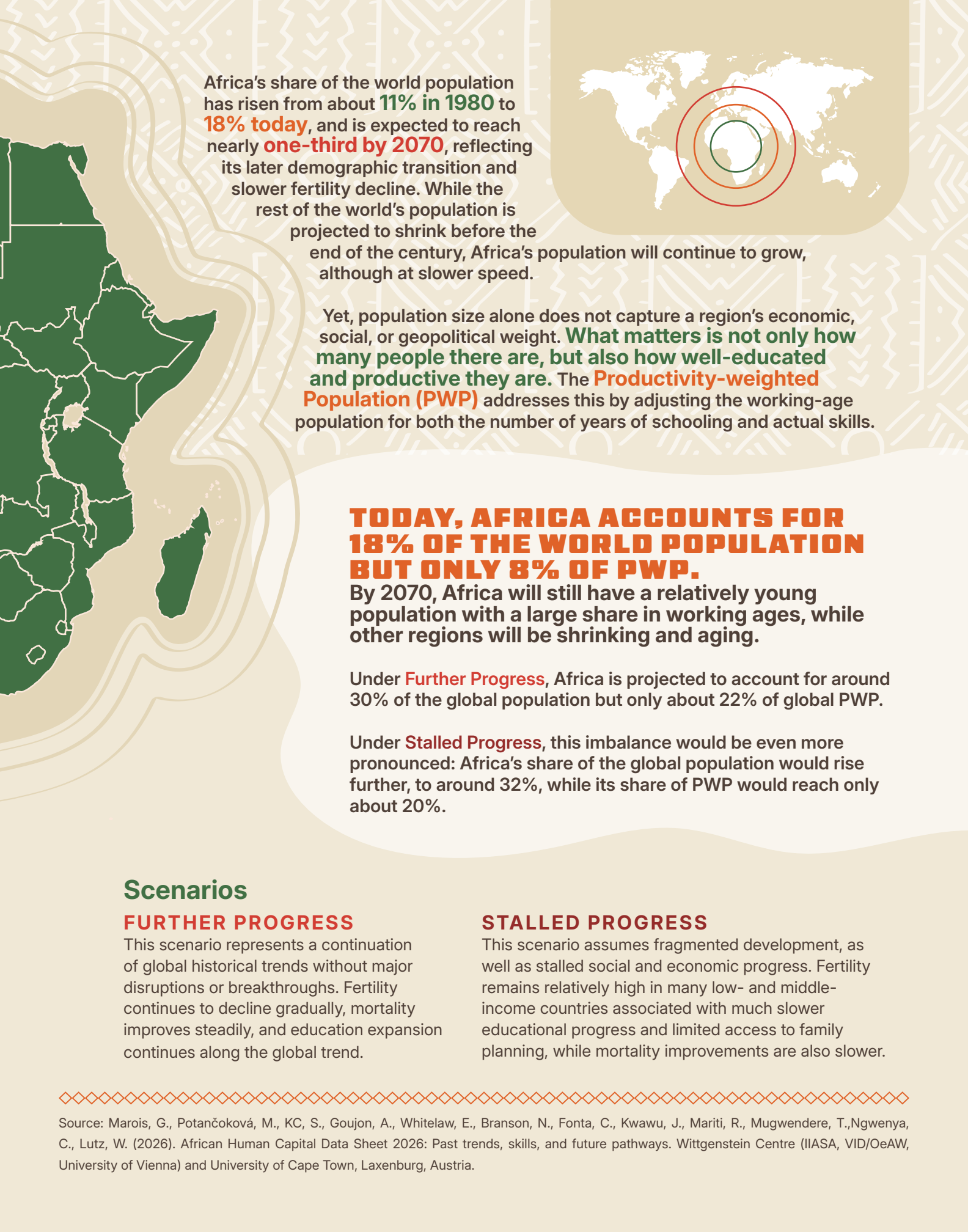


There is a well-established association between higher levels of female education and lower fertility. As girls stay longer in school, they tend to marry later, gain greater autonomy in reproductive decision-making, and have improved access to information and services related to sexual and reproductive health. Education also increases women's participation in the labor market, which raises the opportunity costs of early and repeated childbearing.



At the household level, **more education encourages parents to invest more resources in each child's well-being and learning**, contributing to a shift in preferences toward smaller families.

In Africa, strong empirical evidence demonstrates that fertility ideals and behaviors shift toward **fewer children within all education groups as the overall education level in their surroundings increases.**



Africa's share of the world population has risen from about **11% in 1980** to **18% today**, and is expected to reach nearly **one-third by 2070**, reflecting

its later demographic transition and slower fertility decline. While the

rest of the world's population is projected to shrink before the

end of the century, Africa's population will continue to grow, although at slower speed.

Yet, population size alone does not capture a region's economic, social, or geopolitical weight. **What matters is not only how many people there are, but also how well-educated and productive they are.** The **Productivity-weighted Population (PWP)** addresses this by adjusting the working-age population for both the number of years of schooling and actual skills.

TODAY, AFRICA ACCOUNTS FOR 18% OF THE WORLD POPULATION BUT ONLY 8% OF PWP.

By 2070, Africa will still have a relatively young population with a large share in working ages, while other regions will be shrinking and aging.

Under **Further Progress**, Africa is projected to account for around 30% of the global population but only about 22% of global PWP.

Under **Stalled Progress**, this imbalance would be even more pronounced: Africa's share of the global population would rise further, to around 32%, while its share of PWP would reach only about 20%.

Scenarios

FURTHER PROGRESS

This scenario represents a continuation of global historical trends without major disruptions or breakthroughs. Fertility continues to decline gradually, mortality improves steadily, and education expansion continues along the global trend.

STALLED PROGRESS

This scenario assumes fragmented development, as well as stalled social and economic progress. Fertility remains relatively high in many low- and middle-income countries associated with much slower educational progress and limited access to family planning, while mortality improvements are also slower.



IN THE NEWS

By Olivia Nater, Communications Manager

Slowing population growth key to protecting biodiversity from agricultural expansion

A new study published in *PNAS* found that faster economic development in low-income countries, largely through its dampening effect on population growth, could shrink future global cropland requirements more than slashing consumption in rich countries.

Habitat loss from agricultural expansion is a leading driver of biodiversity loss. The study authors quantified the relative contributions of population, per capita crop demand, yield, exports, and imports to different countries' area of cropland from 1961 to 2016 and found that population had the largest relative impact on cropland expansion across all income groups. They then analyzed past and anticipated future trends in population, food demand, and crop yields to estimate global agricultural cropland requirements by 2050 and 2100, under moderate levels of climate change.

The study concluded that accelerating economic development in low-income countries (which the authors assume would significantly slow global population growth) is one of the best ways to limit further nature loss from agriculture.

The paper doesn't mention that declining fertility rates are often a facilitator of accelerated GDP growth, or that economic development can lead to agricultural intensification, which also has profoundly negative environmental impacts. Nevertheless, the finding that limiting further population increase is key to protecting biodiversity is welcome.

Switzerland rejects initiative to cap its population

A controversial referendum initiated by Switzerland's populist Swiss People's Party (SVP) to limit the country's population to 10 million was rejected by 55% of voters. This would have been accomplished by restricting asylum, family reunification, and residency permits and by ending the leniency with

which EU residents from other countries can live and work in Switzerland.

The proposal made headlines for being the first serious attempt to set an upper limit to a country's population.

Switzerland's population has grown by a quarter over the past 25 years, to just over 9 million today. Proponents of the motion argued that Swiss infrastructure, housing, social programs, natural resources, and culture have been strained by this increase, while critics claimed the measure was anti-immigrant and would harm the country's economy as well as diplomatic relations with Europe.

Studies link falling US birthrate to smartphone use

Two recent, not yet peer-reviewed studies independently concluded that the accelerated decline in the US fertility rate from around 2007 onward may be linked to the roll-out of the iPhone that same year.

According to CDC data, there were 69.5 births per 1,000 women aged 15–44 in 2007,

the highest level since 2000. In 2025, the general fertility rate stood at 53.1 births per 1,000 women of reproductive age. By far the biggest drop occurred among 15–19-year-olds, with a 72% decline since 2007.

The study authors argued that smartphones meant people (especially teens) started spending more time on their devices and less time socializing, lowering their chances of pregnancy. The authors also noted that smartphones make it easier to access information on contraception and abortion.

Other researchers have questioned the findings due to confounding factors like the Great Recession (which began the same year) and the fact that most teens were unlikely to have been able to afford the steep price tag of the newly released iPhone.

Population aging and decline can be good for the economy

Defying “baby bust” alarmism, a new working paper by the National Bureau of Economic Research found that lower birthrates are associated with higher GDP per worker and higher wage growth. The observed gain in GDP per worker was large enough to fully offset any negative economic impacts of population decline, with no reduction in aggregate GDP.

The paper analyzed seven decades of demographic change to assess the impacts of aging and declining populations on economic performance across countries and within the United States.

The authors found it was largely technology-driven labor savings and shifts toward high-tech industries in response to young worker shortages that drove the economic boosts.

Extreme heat hits Europe and North America

This summer once again brought record-breaking temperatures, deadly heatwaves, and devastating wildfires to Europe and the United States. One researcher estimated that the June heat dome over Europe killed more than 20,000 people. In the US, more than 20 states reported temperatures above 100°F over the July 4th holiday weekend.

The number of people exposed to at least one day of extreme heat stress per year has grown by 1 billion globally compared to the 1970s, according to a new study published in *Nature Climate Change*. Exposure to heat stress, the leading cause of weather-related mortality, will increase further with continued global heating and population growth.

Senators condemn deceptive moms.gov website

A letter sent by 11 Democratic senators to Donald Trump and Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. urges them to take down parts of a new federal website called moms.gov, which directs pregnant people to unregulated anti-abortion centers.

Launched on Mother’s Day, moms.gov is yet another strange and creepy attempt by the Trump administration to boost births and crack down on abortion. The website claims to offer “resources, information, and help for new and expecting mothers,” but its listed “resources” are 2,750 crisis pregnancy centers — fake clinics which specialize in talking women out of getting an abortion. 

Visit our blog to read more about some of these news items: popconnect.org/blog

The digital version of this article includes hyperlinked sources: popconnect.org/article/in-the-news-september-2026

PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE AND ZPG SOCIETY MEMBER PROFILE: SUE KAUFMAN

By Victoria Wright, Director of Planned Giving



Sue Kaufman has been thinking about population challenges and advocating for access to reproductive health for most of her adult life. She and her late husband, Stan, met during their first week at Heidelberg

College and married just after graduation. After Stan completed a graduate degree in social work at Case Western Reserve University, they moved to Painesville, Ohio, a small city about 30 miles northeast of Cleveland (where Sue still lives).

Stan went on to work at a local child welfare agency, where he saw firsthand the difficult realities facing children who lacked parental care and support. Those experiences stayed with Stan and Sue and propelled them to take steps to ensure that every child is wanted and loved. In 1970, alongside like-minded friends and colleagues, Stan helped found the Family Planning Association of Northeast Ohio (now part of Signature Health). He served as its director from 1973–2002, helping expand the

organization's services beyond contraception to include prenatal care, fertility services, and HIV testing and treatment.

Sue's own career reflected a similar commitment to science and health care — she worked in hospital laboratories as a medical technologist and clinical microbiologist. Outside of work, she was active with the National Association of University Women and the National Audubon Society. She also devoted countless hours to volunteering for the Family Planning Association of Northeast Ohio and advocating alongside Stan for access to family planning services. She says their early motivation for establishing the clinic was simply to make birth control more accessible. “In other words,” she says, “we were doing population work before it was trendy, before it was politicized, and before most people had the language for it.”

During their 58 years of marriage, Sue and Stan were dedicated organic gardeners, avid bird watchers, and enthusiastic travelers who camped across the United States and parts of Europe. Together, they raised two sons, Peter and Joel. Peter lives in Denver and works as a geologist. He and his wife have two biological sons and three adopted daughters from Ethiopia. Joel lives in Maryland and works for the Library of Congress. He and his wife have one daughter, who was the first girl born into the Kaufman family in 150 years. Stan passed away in 2020.

Sue believes that overpopulation is the root cause of many of our world's most pressing challenges and that Population Connection's work to educate people about family planning and expand access to contraception is essential to building a better future. She first knew the organization as Zero Population Growth (ZPG) and, after reconnecting with it as Population Connection, came to appreciate our work to expand reproductive health care, empower women, and care for our shared environment. Sue thinks that Population Connection's advocacy around family planning is some of our most important work, explaining that it will lead to improved quality of life and decreased environmental degradation.

“We were doing population work before it was trendy, before it was politicized, and before most people had the language for it.”

She hopes people will become more willing to acknowledge the connections between population growth, reproductive health, and climate change, even when those conversations are uncomfortable. “I wish more people understood that contraception needs to be openly accepted, accessible, and available for anyone who wants to plan or time childbearing. It can have a dramatic effect on so many other things.”



She remains deeply concerned about the increasing barriers to contraceptive access in the United States and the dwindling donor funding for international family planning. She believes



everyone should have access to contraception and the freedom to decide whether and when to have children. “It’s a matter of dignity, autonomy, and common sense.”

Through her volunteer work and her advocacy within her community, Sue has seen firsthand what happens when people have information, resources, and choices regarding their reproductive health, and she has also seen the cost when they do not. Her beliefs were shaped by decades of paying attention to what families and communities need to thrive. “When people are empowered to plan their families,” Sue says, “the whole community is lifted.”

When asked what gives her hope, Sue points to her grandchildren, describing them as responsible, compassionate, and smart enough not to buy the misleading messages coming from this administration. She is encouraged by the younger generation's ability to see through political noise and stay grounded. “I truly believe the next generation will make the world a better place.”

Already a member of our President's Circle since 2022, Sue recently joined our ZPG Society with a gift to Population Connection in her will. By including Population Connection in her legacy plans, Sue has ensured this essential work will continue for years to come. 

To become a member of the ZPG Society by including Population Connection in your estate plans, please email legacy@popconnect.org. To join the President's Circle with a gift of \$1,000 or more, please email giving@popconnect.org or scan this QR code with your phone's camera. We appreciate your support!



SUMMER PHOTO CONTEST WINNERS

By Stephanie Wolfe, Membership Relations Coordinator

We are overwhelmed by the incredible turnout for our fifth annual Summer Photo Contest! This year's contest featured seven categories: Amazing Avians, Botanical Bliss, Candid Culture, Charming Creatures, Gorgeous Geology, Scenic Skies, and Wondrous Water. We are thrilled to announce the first-place winners in each category! We received over 170 submissions from supporters sharing photographs that inspire them to protect our planet and all its inhabitants. Entries capture moments from across the US and abroad, featuring epic shots taken in locations from national parks to supporters' own backyards. We extend our thanks to participants for sharing the natural spaces, diverse cultures, and wildlife that motivate them to be good stewards of our planet. Congratulations to our winners! Find all of the incredible photo entries our members and supporters submitted on our website at popconnect.org/photo-contest-2026.

Amazing Avians

Allan Woolway, Sarasota, FL
Population Connection supporter
since 2026

A pair of cardinals interacting with each other midair

"I've photographed cardinals for years, always chasing the bright male first. His unmistakable red draws the eye instantly. The olive-gray female always felt like the supporting cast, but this image changed everything for me. Looking closer, her color caught me off guard. With wings fanned mid-flight, a rosy-orange wash across her feathers did something beautiful: it bridged the two birds' colors. Her muted tones aren't a lesser version of his fire. Instead, they act as a quiet translator, balancing his vibrant energy with her own understated elegance."



Botanical Bliss

Paul Wilson, Portland, OR
Population Connection member
since 1998

The lone Wānaka Tree in Lake Wānaka in New Zealand

“The Wānaka Tree, situated in the foothills of Mount Aspiring National Park (part of the World Heritage property Te Wahipounamu – South West New Zealand), evokes the fragility of life. At low water levels it’s accessible on foot, and since it became a tourist attraction in the last dozen years, it has been climbed on and had limbs sawed off. Its long-term viability depends on visitors’ ability to resist their careless and destructive impulses. On a much larger scale, the survival of unspoiled habitat and the arrest of climate change depend on the human population’s ability to resist the urge to grow and consume unceasingly.”



Candid Culture

Jeanie Cole, Fairbanks, AK
Population Connection member
since 2015, ZPG Society

Two locals guide tourists along the Okavango Delta in Botswana in a dugout canoe called a mokoro

“Humans have relied on the resources of the Okavango Delta for millennia. Regional Indigenous people supplement their subsistence lifestyle by offering mokoro tours. A mokoro is a dugout canoe typically carved from an African sausage tree and propelled by a pole.

Since the 1990s, many mokoros have been constructed from fiberglass to protect the larger sausage trees from being cut down. With increasing demands on resources and formalized land use policies due to expanding human populations, Indigenous peoples face many challenges to preserving their traditional lifestyle and culture.”



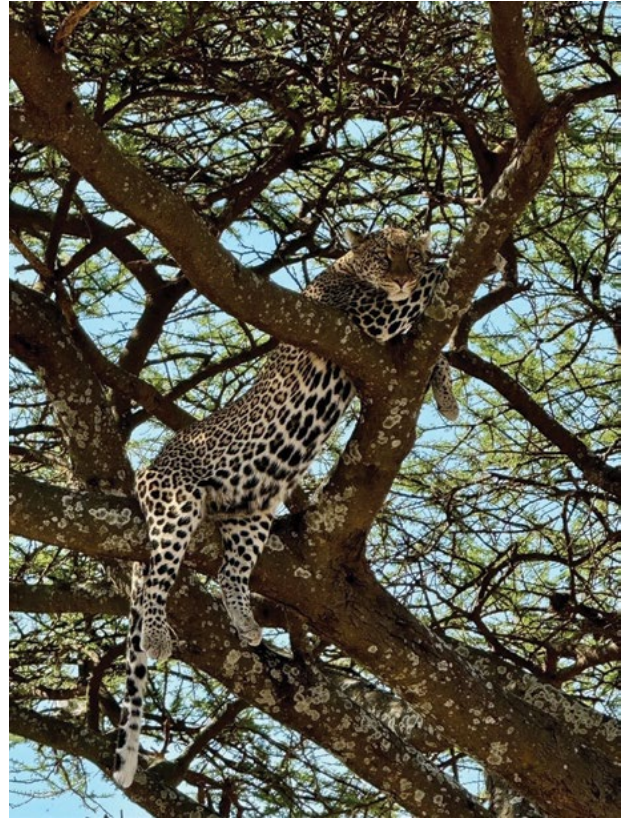
Charming Creatures

Tanya Krejberg, Ontario, CA

Population Connection supporter since 2025

A leopard chilling in a tree at Tarangire National Park in Tanzania

“Nature has given me some of my most meaningful experiences, from photographing wildlife to exploring wild places. Seeing those environments firsthand reminds me that our choices have lasting impacts. Managing our footprint responsibly is essential to protecting biodiversity and preserving the beauty and resilience of the natural world for future generations. Capturing this leopard resting high in a tree in Tanzania was a reminder of how extraordinary and fragile these moments are, and why nature is worth protecting.”



Gorgeous Geology

Steve Harris, Mountain View, CA

Population Connection member since 2019

Late afternoon sun streams through Keyhole Arch at Pfeiffer Beach in California

“In my youth, I was strongly influenced by the first Earth Day and by the books *Silent Spring* by Rachel Carson and *The Population Bomb* by Paul Ehrlich. An avid environmentalist ever since, I believe threats to our environment — habitat loss, climate change, and more — are inexorably linked to humanity’s overconsumption of resources. The human population must reach a steady state if we have any hope of living sustainably on our planet. Through photography, I aim to capture intimate landscapes and highlight what we stand to lose if we can’t live in harmony with nature. It is a daunting task, but not hopeless. In my photo, ‘Ray of Hope,’ I wish for the viewer to see a beacon leading to a brighter future for our world.”

Scenic Skies

Karl Leck, Chadds Ford, PA
Population Connection member
since 2004, President's Circle

A break in the clouds allows sunlight to stream down on a farm field in rural Maryland

“Population moderation is the key to humanity’s long-term survival. Even with the best technology, more people use more resources. Our future depends on not using up resources needed for the continued life of all species. Education, enlightened thinking, and living to preserve nature must happen. Population Connection’s education programs

help shine through some of the world’s dark clouds. The swirling arguments around what to do after conception will continue, but that situation can be avoided with education and family planning.”



Wondrous Water

**David Newswanger,
Sunnyvale, CA**
Population Connection member
since 1999

Waterfalls near Veliki Slap at Plitvice Lakes National Park in Croatia

“This photo shows the beauty of an abundance of water, but also hints at the threat of population pressures as a throng of tourists look on from above. Water has always been precious in California, where I live, but global warming lessens the supply by decreasing the snowpack and

strengthens demand by increasing the need for irrigation by farmers. Our large population pushes demand to the point of water rationing and political fights about water rights. I worry that it could get worse. A smaller population would help those problems considerably.”



NO SUMMER SLIDE FOR THESE STUDENTS!

Did you know that we teach a full-credit summer course at the University of North Carolina (UNC)?

Alongside Professor Plaxedes T. Chitiyo, Hannah Evans, Senior Analyst, Outreach & Global Partnerships, teaches a popular annual seminar-style class at UNC.

Global Populations, Planetary Health, and Justice encourages students to uncover and examine the connections between population trends and dynamics, environmental challenges, gender disparities, social justice, and sustainable development.

The course is taught through a combination of lectures, discussions, student presentations, and international guest speakers. It's offered to both undergraduate and graduate students, and in-state tuition for the three-credit course is covered by Population Connection, thanks to support from members like you!



"I learned so much in just six weeks, it's astounding. The greatest value to me was gaining a holistic understanding of the issues and how they're interconnected. More specifically, speaker presentations and discussions were extremely insightful."



"This course provides a unique and invaluable opportunity to make connections with international professionals and create meaningful dialogue surrounding concepts that are often invisible within academic settings. Professor Evans is an amazing resource and does a fantastic job creating a safe space for important conversations about environmental and social issues."



2026 UNC SUMMER STUDENT TESTIMONIALS



“Professor Evans and Dr. Chitiyo did an outstanding job cultivating a supportive and engaging learning environment, which is often difficult to achieve in an online-only course. Despite the virtual format, they fostered a strong sense of connection through excellent communication, clear expectations, and highly organized course materials. Their genuine expertise and enthusiasm for sustainability truly came through on the screen, making the complex subject matter deeply engaging. Furthermore, their responsiveness and transparent grading procedures ensured that students felt guided and supported at every step.”



“Professor Evans created a positive learning environment by bringing in many guest speakers to teach about all the different applications of her class, offered discussion questions afterwards to keep students engaged and encourage them to think about class teachings, and did a very good job of stimulating interest in the subject.”



“I loved being in this class and learning so much from my professors as well as from our guest instructors. Grateful, thankful, blessed!”



INVITE HANNAH TO YOUR CLASS

If you'd like to invite Hannah to speak to your college or university class, please get in touch with her!

hannah@popconnect.org

NO MIRACLE CURE: THE DARK SIDE OF THE GREEN REVOLUTION

By Olivia Nater, Communications Manager



A farmer sprays fertilizer (18-8-8) on his rice field in Nakhon Sawan province, Thailand, on July 8, 2026. (Photo by Chaiwat Subprasom/NurPhoto via Getty Images)

The agricultural transformation dramatically increased crop yields and is widely touted as proof that humanity can innovate its way out of every crisis. But this view neglects the tremendous harm caused by modern agriculture.

The Green Revolution, named for the color of thriving crops, was a significant advancement in agricultural technology that enabled a massive increase in the production of cereals, especially wheat and rice, during the mid-20th century, thereby preventing catastrophic famines.

The fear that population growth would outstrip available food supplies likely became prevalent after the dawn of agriculture, but it is commonly linked back to Thomas Malthus, an 18th century English cleric and economist. In his 1798 book *An Essay on the Principle*

of Population, Malthus argued that food production increases linearly, while population increases exponentially, which eventually leads to disaster.

This concern also formed the basis of Paul Ehrlich's 1968 book *The Population Bomb*, which warned that humanity was on the path to mass starvation. This alarming scenario looked quite likely in the 1960s, when global population growth rates peaked and many developing countries were undergoing severe food shortages.

Norman Borlaug's groundbreaking work

Seeking to assist impoverished farmers, American agricultural scientist Norman Borlaug began experimenting with novel strains of wheat in the 1940s, using induced genetic mutation and selective breeding techniques to create disease-resistant plants that could tolerate harsh climates.

At a research station in Mexico in the 1950s, Borlaug developed short-stemmed (“dwarf”) strains of wheat that could withstand the weight of heavier heads caused by chemical fertilizer without breaking. He bred these shorter varieties with other strains he had developed earlier that were resistant to a common fungal disease called stem rust, creating extremely productive “semi-dwarf” wheat.

Borlaug's new varieties dramatically boosted Mexican wheat production, turning the country into a net exporter. In 1963, Mexico's wheat harvest was six times larger than 19 years earlier, when Borlaug began work there.

Hearing of this success, famine-stricken India and Pakistan also requested Borlaug's assistance. With funding support from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Rockefeller Foundation, Borlaug's wheat strains were imported and distributed in both countries in the mid-1960s, reducing their reliance on food aid. Over the years, these and new high-yield varieties (including of other staple crops, such as rice and maize) became available throughout the world, and they dominate agriculture today.

Borlaug's work is credited with saving hundreds of millions of people from starvation, and he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1970.

High-yield crops require large amounts of chemical fertilizer and pesticides, however, and there are limits to how much productivity gains selective breeding and genetic engineering can achieve. Norman Borlaug himself made it clear that he believed his innovations were just a temporary solution to avert the worst-case scenarios and give humanity “breathing space.”

Borlaug was deeply concerned about overpopulation, and his Nobel Prize acceptance

speech focused heavily on the dangers of unrestricted growth. He cautioned that “the frightening power of human reproduction must also be curbed; otherwise the success of the Green Revolution will be ephemeral only.”

“The Green Revolution is a change in the right direction, but it has not transformed the world into utopia. None are more keenly aware of its limitations than those who started it and fought for its success.”

– Norman Borlaug, 1970 Nobel Prize lecture

Nothing green about the Green Revolution

The name “Green Revolution” is deceptive considering the term “green” is widely used to describe something that is environmentally friendly. Unfortunately, there is nothing sustainable about modern agriculture.

In 1970, when Borlaug received his Nobel Prize, the global population stood at just under 3.7 billion. Today, it is estimated to be more than twice that size, at 8.3 billion, and is still growing. To meet increasing food demand, agricultural production has continued to boom, using ever

more land, water, fertilizer, and pesticides, causing enormous amounts of greenhouse gas emissions and pollution, fueling the extinction crisis, depleting soils, and compromising human health.

Habitat destruction and biodiversity loss

The global extinction crisis is still accelerating, and modern food systems are the number one driver of biodiversity loss and deforestation. Agriculture alone is contributing to the endangerment of 86% of the species that have so far been classified as at risk of extinction.

This is largely because agriculture uses almost half of all habitable land on Earth and is continuing to expand, destroying nature and the habitats wild species need to survive. Meat and dairy production are particularly problematic, using as much as 80% of all agricultural land. Wild species now make up only 5% of mammal biomass on Earth, while 59% is livestock and 36% is humans. Wild birds account for just 29% of bird biomass, while 71% is farmed poultry.

Pesticide use has negative impacts on all groups of non-target organisms and is a major driver of insect decline — a crisis that has severe implications for ecosystem health and food security.

Finally, agriculture contributes to biodiversity loss indirectly as well, by destroying carbon sinks and emitting greenhouse gases that cause climate change.

Climate change and fossil fuel dependence

It is now well established that food systems are responsible for up to one-third of global greenhouse gas emissions. Agriculture and related land use change, i.e., the conversion of natural habitats to crop production and pasture, make up most of these food system emissions (71%), while the remainder come from supply chain activities,

including transport, industrial processing and packaging, and retail.

Less well-known is the fact that modern agriculture also consumes vast amounts of fossil fuels — 99% of synthetic nitrogen fertilizers and pesticides are derived from fossil fuels. The Global Alliance for the Future of Food estimated in 2023 that food systems account for at least 15% of global fossil fuel use.

The basis for all synthetic nitrogen fertilizers is ammonia, which is produced through the energy-intensive Haber-Bosch process (named after the two scientists who developed it in the early 20th century), whereby hydrogen is separated from natural gas (methane) and sometimes coal, and mixed with nitrogen (from the air). This fertilizer production process itself generates around 2% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Globally, synthetic nitrogen fertilizer use has increased eight-fold since the early 1960s, in the wake of the Green Revolution. Today, an estimated 40% of all petrochemicals (chemicals made from fossil fuels) are used in food systems — primarily as synthetic fertilizers on farms (34%) and, to a lesser degree, as plastic (6%).

The fossil fuel dependence of our food systems makes them incredibly unstable and vulnerable to shocks. Spikes in the price of oil and gas trigger surges in fertilizer and food prices and put millions at risk of hunger, as we've repeatedly seen during times of conflict, such as, most recently, the Russia-Ukraine war, and the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz.

Modern agriculture also suffers from climate shocks. According to Tim Dyson, climate and agriculture expert and Emeritus Professor of Population Studies at the London School of Economics and Political Science:

“For good reasons, farmers everywhere want stability in the growing (and other) conditions that they face. Sooner or later,



A herd of Charolais cows during the drought and heat wave in Limoise, France, on July 2, 2026. In the Bourbonnais region, farmers are forced to feed hay to make up for the lack of grass in the pastures. (Photo by Jérôme Chabanne / Hans Lucas / AFP via Getty Images)

however, the accelerating pace of climate change will produce huge challenges for farmers all around the world. Global heating is already having increasingly serious geophysical effects in terms of floods, droughts, wildfires, extreme weather events, etc. And, in turn, these effects are likely to have increasingly severe societal impacts, for example, in terms of disruptions to trade, increased sociopolitical instability, and heightened risks of conflict. Furthermore, as global heating accelerates so the chances of a sudden

major discontinuity occurring become far more likely. There are several possibilities here, including methane releases, the collapse of icesheets, and a shutdown of the thermohaline circulation patterns in the world's oceans. There is no doubt that the accelerating temperature trajectory makes the occurrence of such a discontinuity much more likely. We could well see cascades of adverse effects which will definitely have the capacity to overturn the agricultural productivity gains of recent decades.”

Pollution

Excessive fertilizer use also leads to nitrogen pollution — globally, more than half of the nitrogen fertilizers applied to crops are lost to the environment, ending up in air, water, and soils. Humanity had already breached the planetary boundary (i.e., exceeded the safe operating space) for nitrogen by 1970. The boundary for phosphorus, another common fertilizer derived from mined phosphate rock, has also been breached.

Nitrogen dioxide, ammonia, and hydrogen sulfide emissions from

manure and fertilizer production and application cause a wide range of respiratory illnesses and can even be lethal. Nitrates from fertilizers and manure in drinking water can cause deadly “blue baby syndrome” in infants and have been linked to cancer. Nitrogen and phosphorus water pollution is also a major

driver of biodiversity loss, via eutrophication — excess nutrient loading triggers dense and often toxic algae blooms and oxygen depletion, which is what causes aquatic dead zones.

The large-scale application of insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides to protect crops from “pests,” disease, and

competition with other plants is another major source of agricultural pollution. Pesticides are either sprayed on crops or applied directly to seeds before planting. Nowadays, many widely used pesticides, such as neonicotinoids, are “systemic,” which means they are absorbed by the plant and spread to all its cells.

Global pesticide use in agriculture doubled between 1990 and 2023. Chronic pesticide exposure through air, water, and food has been linked to cancer, reproductive harm, and neurological disorders.

Water shortage

Agriculture is the most water-hungry aspect of modern society, accounting for 70% of global freshwater withdrawals. This makes our food systems the primary culprit for worsening water shortages, which are now so severe that the United Nations has declared an era of “water bankruptcy.”

Three-quarters of the world’s population lives in countries already classified as water-insecure or critically water-insecure, while around half the population experiences severe water scarcity for at least one month every year. Global water demand is projected to increase by another 20% to 25% by 2050, all while the number of watersheds affected by unpredictable water supplies is expected to rise by 19%.



Thick green algae cover the surface of Hatirjheel Lake in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on July 3, 2026, as polluted water and unpleasant odors raise environmental concerns. (Photo by Sony Ramani/NurPhoto via Getty Images)

Land degradation and desertification

Groundwater overextraction and intensive farming practices, including monocropping, overgrazing, and excessive irrigation and fertilizer use also damage soil health, leading to erosion and loss of fertility. In arid areas, land degradation can deteriorate into desertification, whereby the soil is damaged beyond repair and the land becomes barren.

Land degradation goes hand-in-hand with the expansion of populations and agriculture. As much as 40% of the planet's land area is already degraded, and 100 million more hectares of healthy and productive land are degraded every year. Around 1.7 billion people live in areas where land degradation is directly responsible for lower crop yields, and this figure is set to worsen.

Antibiotic and antifungal resistance

Antibiotic resistance, whereby pathogens become resistant to available antibiotic medication, is a rapidly emerging existential threat. Antibiotics are key to treating many serious diseases as well as simple infections. Due to heavy antibiotic overuse driven primarily by intensive animal agriculture, however, bacteria are increasingly evolving resistance to them. As a result, healthcare practitioners are already struggling to effectively treat illnesses that would have been easy to cure a few decades ago.

Researchers have estimated that 73% of all antibiotics sold globally are administered to farm animals. In intensive livestock farming, antibiotics are not only used to treat sick animals, but are also fed prophylactically to prevent infections, and to promote growth.

Scientists are now observing that the widespread application of fungicides to crops is also driving resistance to antifungals, which are needed to treat fungal infections in humans.

Pandemic risk

Modern agriculture also fuels epidemic and pandemic risk. The pathogens behind pandemics usually have zoonotic origins, meaning they were transferred from animals to humans. As agriculture expands, humans and their livestock are increasingly encroaching into wildlife habitat, augmenting the likelihood of viral spillovers. The overcrowded, unhealthy, and unsanitary conditions of intensive livestock farming create a high risk of viral mutations that can infect farm workers and then spread to the rest of the population.

The combination of growing pandemic risk and antibiotic resistance is especially alarming. The bubonic plague killed almost half of the European population in the 14th century because antibiotic drugs were not yet available.

Cost of continuous growth unacceptably high

“Green growth” advocates need to stop pretending that innovation alone will save the world. As Norman Borlaug cautioned, the Green Revolution was an emergency stopgap measure and was not intended as a long-term solution. As the devastation caused by modern agriculture clearly demonstrates, technofixes may alleviate one problem but almost always create new ones. Despite so-called “progress,” we are moving ever closer to catastrophic tipping points.

Professor Dyson thinks better awareness would go a long way toward achieving sustainability.

“Many more people need to understand where their food comes from — both in terms of its often-distant geographical origins and in terms of how it is produced. Urbanization means that most people today have no real idea of where their food comes from. Indeed, in many of the world's towns and cities children grow up without ever having seen a cow, let alone a truly wild animal. And even among the world's



The Bakersfield region in the southern portion of California's Central Valley is one of the most important agricultural areas in the United States, known for its large-scale farming operations. (Photo by Guven Ozdemir via Getty Images)

“Pretty much whatever we humans do, to some extent our actions tend to have negative consequences for the environment. In turn, this implies that, other things equal, the fewer of us there are the greater are our chances of achieving a measure of sustainability.”

– Tim Dyson, PhD

educated middle classes there is little awareness, for example, of how the Haber-Bosch process for the synthesis of ammonia has contributed to the toast and cereals that they eat each day at breakfast. The challenges we face with respect to population, food, and indeed the rapidly deteriorating world climate would all be better met if people had a much more intimate knowledge of the wider environment in which they live and which ultimately sustains everything.”

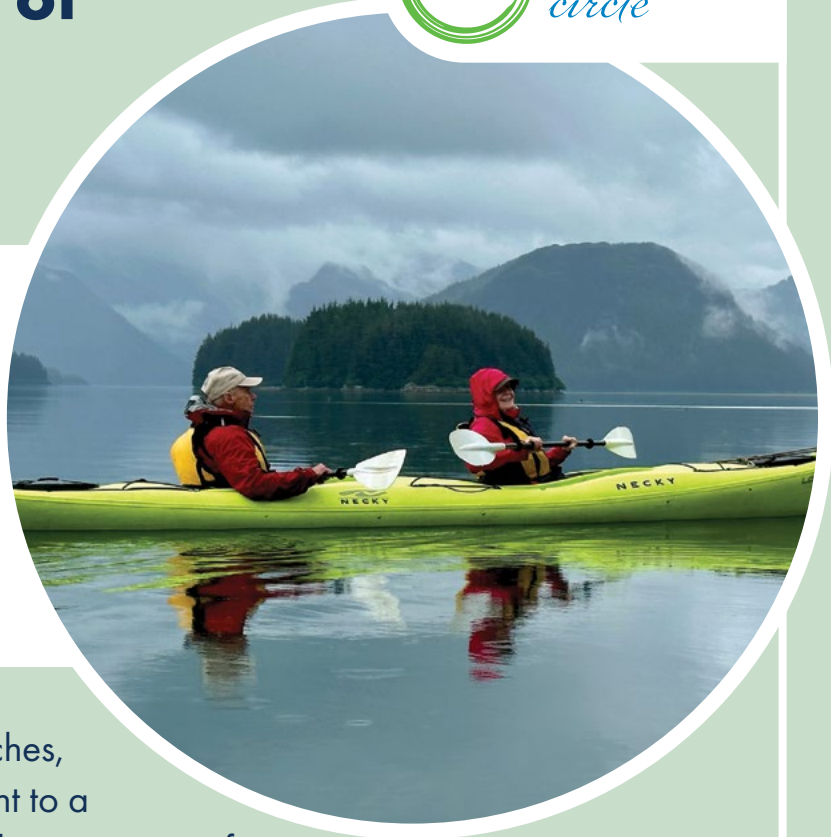
We already know how to farm in environmentally friendly, regenerative, and healthy ways. The problem is that the smaller yields these methods produce are unlikely to meet humanity's current gigantic and growing demand. Eliminating harmful subsidies, ending overconsumption of the most problematic foods such as meat and dairy, and halting global population growth are critical to achieving true sustainability in our food systems. 

Make the most of your year-end giving.



"We support Population Connection because the land, water, and air are priceless, we must treat them that way."

*Rob & Margie Robinson
Glacier Bay National Park
President's Circle Members*



As the end of the year approaches, you can honor your commitment to a sustainable future with a tax-advantageous gift to Population Connection.

You may wish to consider:

- * A gift of appreciated securities, such as stocks or mutual funds
- * A qualified charitable distribution from your traditional IRA
- * A grant from your donor-advised fund (DAF)

You may also create a lasting impact this year and beyond:

- * Establish a charitable gift annuity (CGA)
- * Include Population Connection in your will or trust
- * Designate Population Connection as a beneficiary of your retirement fund, DAF, or life insurance policy

The President's Circle honors those who give \$1,000 or more in a year.



To learn more, visit popconnect.org/legacy, email legacy@popconnect.org, or call **202-974-7756**.



GLOBAL PARTNERS

Kakenya's Dream

Adapted by Marian Starkey from the Population Connection and Kakenya's Dream websites

Founded in 2008 by Dr. Kakenya Ntaiya, Kakenya's Dream began as a primary education boarding school serving 30 rural Maasai girls in Narok County, Kenya. A secondary education boarding school opened in 2018 with a class of 18. Today, Kakenya's Dream is a robust nonprofit organization supporting girls with high-quality education, community-based health care, and leadership programs.

Kakenya Ntaiya grew up in the Maasai village of Enoosaen in southwestern Kenya. After surviving female genital mutilation (FGM), narrowly avoiding child marriage, and negotiating with her father and village elders to

stay in school, she became the first woman from her village to go to the United States for higher education, attending Randolph College in Virginia. She went on to receive a PhD in education from the University of

Pittsburgh before returning home, determined to provide a pathway to education and empowerment for every girl in her community and beyond.

Kakenya's two full-support girls' boarding schools in the remote Maasai villages of Enoosaen and Isampin are called the Kakenya Centers for Excellence (KCE I is the primary school, and KCE II is the secondary school). They provide high-quality education to the most vulnerable girls in rural Kenya.

When students graduate from each school, they enter the Network for Excellence program, which supports them as they make their critical transitions to high school and college, respectively. Through the network, girls receive college and career guidance,

“FGM is practiced as a rite of passage that is believed to prepare girls for womanhood and marriage. Once marriage has been arranged (for me, that was at just five years old) and we have undergone FGM, our schooling ends because we're expected to start families and become homemakers. Education for girls was only seen as a tool to socialize us for marriage.”

– Dr. Kakenya Ntaiya



Dr. Kakenya Ntaiya meeting with community elders. (Photo by Lee-Ann Olwage)

scholarships and financial aid, tutoring, and social support so that they are set up for success in adulthood. Over 1,000 girls have attended the two boarding schools, and over 600 of them have received financial and other types of support in their transitions to high school and college.

In the county Kakenya's Dream serves, four in five women are illiterate; only 17% of girls complete primary school and only 11% finish secondary school. Remarkably, 100% of Kakenya's Dream primary students go on to secondary school, and 94% graduate from high school. In 2022, the organization celebrated the college graduations of its first-ever cohort of students. To date, 113 young women who

attended school at the Centers for Excellence have graduated from college.

In addition, every one of the students at the Kakenya Centers for Excellence self-report having avoided FGM and child marriage. By contrast, 56% of women in Kenya who have no education have undergone FGM, and a quarter of women across all educational backgrounds are married by age 18.

Kakenya's Dream provides its students, as well as boys and girls in partner schools across rural Kenya, with comprehensive sex education, information about the dangers of FGM and child marriage, knowledge of their legal rights, and life skills training. The Jijue Health and Leadership Training Program delivers

weekly after-school workshops for students in grades 5–7 at over 200 schools in Narok County. The program has trained over 35,000 girls and boys to recognize and stand up for their rights and to develop public speaking and other leadership skills.

In 2024, Kakenya's Dream opened the community's first and only youth-friendly health and wellness clinic. The clinic serves about 1,600 patients a month with primary and preventive health care, mental health support and counseling, stigma-free sexual and reproductive health care, and services for those experiencing gender-based violence.

Learn more about this inspiring Global Partner organization at kakenyasdream.org! 

WASHINGTON VIEW

Inappropriate Appropriations and Pronatalist Propaganda

By Brian Dixon, Senior Vice President for Governmental and Political Affairs, and Rylee Pachman, Stanback Government Affairs Fellow

House Appropriations Committee approves FY 2027 foreign affairs bill

On April 28, the House Appropriations Committee approved the FY 2027 National Security, Department of State, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, which allots “not more than” \$461 million for international family planning programs and prohibits funding to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The bill also codifies the Promoting Human Flourishing in Foreign Assistance Act, Trump’s expanded Global Gag Rule.

Democrats on the committee proposed three amendments. Rep. Grace Meng (D-NY) offered an amendment to increase the funding allotted to family planning programs to the current level of \$607.5 million, repeal the ban on funding to UNFPA, and replace the provision codifying the expanded Global Gag Rule

with language that bars using funding for administrative purposes to implement it. Rep. Madeleine Dean (D-PA) proposed an amendment to block the implementation of the DEI and “gender ideology” sections of the expanded Global Gag Rule. Rep. Mark Pocan (D-WI) proposed an amendment to require the Government Accountability Office to investigate how many deaths the shutdown of USAID has caused. All three amendments failed on party line votes.

The full House passed the bill on July 15. It is unclear when, or whether, the Senate will take up the bill.

Trump-Vance administration debuts new pronatalist website

On Mother’s Day, the administration unveiled the new website moms.gov, supposedly created to provide resources to expecting parents;

however, the site is little more than a destination for pronatalist propaganda.

The website’s pregnancy support section directs visitors to Option Line, operated by the anti-abortion group Heartbeat International. Option Line promotes crisis pregnancy centers, which use misinformation to dissuade women from getting an abortion and are known for distributing women’s personal data. A section offering adoption resources directs visitors to Focus on the Family, a right-wing, evangelical organization that urges people to donate to “save babies from abortion.”

Information on contraceptives is glaringly absent. Instead, fertility awareness-based family planning methods are featured as a path to pregnancy.

Moms.gov also perpetuates anti-vaccination propaganda. It ignores the recommendation of the American Academy of Pediatrics to vaccinate all

newborns for Hepatitis B, instead suggesting the vaccine only for infants born to mothers who test positive. The site promotes the debunked claim that acetaminophen causes ADHD and autism in babies if taken during pregnancy.

Congressman introduces new bill to protect federal workers' reproductive freedom

On June 24, the fourth anniversary of the Supreme Court's Dobbs decision that eliminated the constitutional right to safe, legal abortion, Rep. James Walkinshaw (D-VA) introduced the Federal Workforce Reproductive Rights Protection Act (H.R.9448). The bill prohibits federal agencies from moving their headquarters to states with restrictive abortion laws or requiring employees to transfer to such states. It also requires employers to cover transportation and paid leave for employees needing to travel out of state to access abortion, protects employee privacy, and prohibits retaliation regarding reproductive health decisions. Rep. Walkinshaw said, "This bill protects public servants from being punished, pushed out, or put at risk because

they need lawful reproductive healthcare."

Trump decimates Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program

On June 26, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), led by Robert F. Kennedy Jr., canceled \$68 million worth of grants under the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Program (TPPP), which still had two years left in their five-year cycle. The Trump-Vance administration cited "misalignment with agency priority, specifically normalizing sexual activity for minors" as the reason for canceling the grants. Congress allotted funding to TPPP to establish programs that had been rigorously researched and proven effective in decreasing teen pregnancy and increasing healthier sexual behaviors.

Since the most recent peak in 1991, teen pregnancy rates have drastically declined in the US, although they are still higher than in other industrialized countries. In the first five years after TPPP was established in 2010, teen pregnancy rates dropped 35%. They have continued to reach record lows every year since.

Shockingly, the enormous success of this work may be the cause of right-wing opposition

to it now. Marc Siegel, Senior Medical Analyst at Fox News, made illuminating remarks in April, after the CDC released its 2025 births data:

"We still have 3.6 million births a year. But the problem is teens and young adults from ages 15 to 19, the fertility rate is down 7%, and it's down 70% over the last two decades, meaning we're telling people that are young not to have babies, to wait until they're in a more stable life situation, until they're more financially secure, maybe they haven't found the right partner."

Katie Miller, wife of White House Deputy Chief of Staff Stephen Miller, has come out against birth control, writing on social media:

"Since 2007, the teen birthrate has fallen 72%. Hormonal birth control isn't just poison for women's minds and bodies — it's killing population growth. For the first time ever, birthrates for women in their late 30s have surpassed those in their early 20s. Our biological destiny is to have babies — not slave behind desks chasing careers while our civilization dies." 

FIELD + OUTREACH

Organizers Kept Up the #Fight4HER Over the Summer With Community Events

By Lena Nguyen, Stanback Field Fellow

Dobbs decision anniversary

On June 24, 2022, the Supreme Court eliminated the nationwide constitutional right to abortion. The *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health* decision, which overturned *Roe v. Wade*, marked a deadly turn in the uphill battle for reproductive rights.

Four years later, our field organizers in Arizona, Nevada, New Hampshire, and North Carolina commemorated the day the Dobbs decision ended decades of reproductive freedom.

Our Las Vegas field organizer, Kyle DeVasier, organized a town hall alongside five local partners, gaining the attention of local media outlets including the *Las Vegas Sun News* and KLAS.

In North Carolina, our field organizer Richeline Cadet facilitated a community roundtable discussion at the Chapel Hill Public Library, where attendees wrote over 50

thank-you cards that were later hand delivered to abortion providers serving the Research Triangle area.

In front of the Old Main building at the University of Arizona, our Tucson field organizer, Kat Stratford, hosted a vigil to honor those impacted by the Dobbs decision. She opened the floor for community members to share their grief, experiences, and hopes for the future.

Across the country, our New Hampshire field organizer, Kim Ip, posted up in front of the state house in Concord to raise awareness about the consequences of Dobbs.

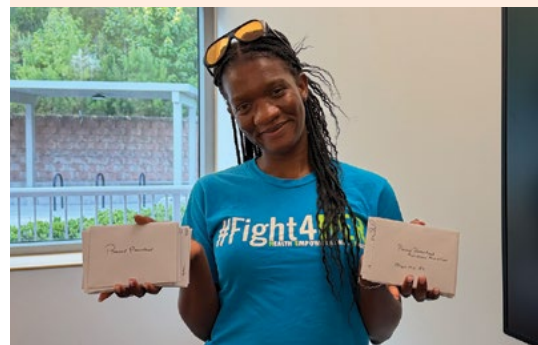
Pride events across the country

In June, #Fight4HER came together, as always, to celebrate Pride Month. The Trump-Vance administration constantly attacks LGBTQ+ rights, from restricting access to gender-affirming care to policing local school districts' curriculum materials



Above: Kyle DeVasier speaks to an assembled crowd about the Dobbs anniversary at a town hall in Las Vegas (Photo courtesy of the *Las Vegas Sun*)

Below: Richeline Cadet holds over 50 thank-you cards for abortion providers that attendees wrote at her roundtable discussion in Chapel Hill



for dozens of phrases including “sexual orientation,” “gender identity,” and “family structure.”

In Washington, DC, as tens of thousands of people gathered for Pride festivities, we set up our booth at the annual Capital Pride Festival. We talked to hundreds of festivalgoers about the work ahead to defend LGBTQ+ and reproductive rights, and the steps they could take to support life-saving legislation.

The following weekend, we attended Out! Raleigh Pride in North Carolina and Manchester Pride in New Hampshire, extending the fight against the Trump-Vance administration’s detrimental policies.

Across the three Pride events, nearly 700 people took our pledge to #Fight4HER! 🌈



Above, from top: Kat Stratford with two friends who attended her Dobbs anniversary vigil at the University of Arizona; Kat speaking to vigil attendees
Right, from top: DC staff (from left: Melvine Ouyo, Lena Nguyen, Bennett Steidinger, Barbara Huth, Rebecca Harrington) at the Capital Pride Festival; tabling at Manchester Pride (from left: volunteer Ava Brest, Kim Ip, volunteer Josh Allen, Lauren Salmieri); Richeline tabling at Out! Raleigh Pride

POPULATION EDUCATION

Celebrating the Winners of the 2025–2026 Student Video Contest

By Michelle Hom, Student Engagement Fellow

This year marks the 15th anniversary of the World of 8 Billion international student video contest. More than 3,275 videos were submitted from 63 countries and 45 US states and territories, exploring the global topics of Energy, Economics, and Wetlands.

We were inspired by the in-depth research, creativity, and time students dedicated to their projects. Through the winning videos, students highlighted innovative solutions including settling ponds, solar microgrids, geothermal energy, and sustainable fashion. A panel of 57 expert judges in education and environmental stewardship selected the winning videos.

Nearly 300 teachers integrated the contest into their classrooms, motivating students to raise their voices, share solutions, and become changemakers for a more sustainable future. For the second year in a row, we offered mini-grants

that helped teachers access cameras, editing software, and other filmmaking tools, making it easier for students to bring their ideas to life. We awarded 23 teachers with grants up to \$500, allowing more than 720 students, mostly from schools new to the contest, to participate. We plan to continue offering this opportunity to US teachers for next year's contest, which opens in September.

This year's winners impressed us with thoughtful and engaging videos showing the importance of expanding energy access, promoting sustainable economies, and protecting wetlands as the world's population continues to grow. The informative one-minute videos inspire us to think critically about the individual and collective actions we can take to form a more equitable and resilient world.

In recognition of their outstanding work, high school winners were awarded \$1,200

for first place, \$600 for second place, and \$300 for honorable mention. Middle school winners received \$600 for first place and \$300 for second place.

In early June, we hosted a virtual film screening to celebrate our winners. Students and their families and teachers, contest judges, and Population Connection staff came together to showcase the winning videos and the student producers behind them.

After the contest, many student winners build on their experience by sharing their videos with professionals in the field, advocating for sustainable solutions and continuing to explore global issues in college.

To learn more about this year's winning videos, the student filmmakers, and their plans post-contest, visit worldof8billion.org/winners-2026. 

ENERGY

1

1st Place, High School



Geothermal Energy: An Infinite Resource

Kathy Yang, West Windsor-Plainsboro High School South, West Windsor, NJ

Kathy was inspired to create her video after learning about

geothermal energy in her environmental science class and speaking with a professional in the field. In her spare time, Kathy loves interviewing environmental experts about various issues and posting the videos on her YouTube channel. She hopes to work for NOAA or NASA in the future.

2

2nd Place, High School



Move Together, Save Energy

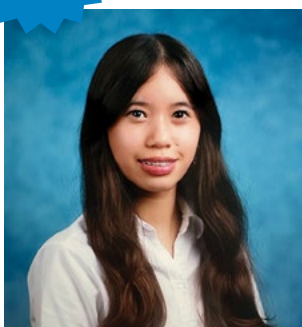
Zening Zhao, Saddle River Day School, Saddle River, NJ

Zening was motivated to make a video on mass transportation after growing up near New York City

and seeing firsthand how mass transit reduces energy use. Zening brings his video to life by incorporating appealing visuals and filming on the New York City subway. At college, he plans to major in civil engineering to explore how he can make cities more accessible.

1

1st Place, Middle School



Energy Access

Kiera Sala, Canadian International School of Hong Kong, Aberdeen, Hong Kong, SAR

Kiera decided to focus on energy access after traveling to the Philippines and noticing that it was

concentrated in affluent cities there. Her video featured community microgrids and their effective use in Kenya. Kiera has also participated in other competitions, including the WeVoi Summit, where she was awarded two Gold Achievement Certificates and one Silver Achievement Certificate.

2

2nd Place, Middle School



Sand Batteries: Powering the Way to a Sustainable Future

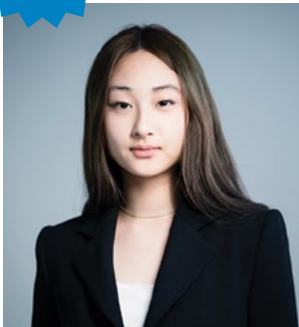
Karis Tseng and Anika Chandak, Juan Cabrillo Middle School, Santa Clara, CA

This pair discovered sand batteries as a new, viable renewable energy source after studying a map on energy poverty and conducting online research. Both girls like to participate in science competitions and read outside of school. Karis also does gymnastics while Anika enjoys swimming.

ECONOMICS

1

1st Place, High School



Earth Is Not Your Shopping Cart

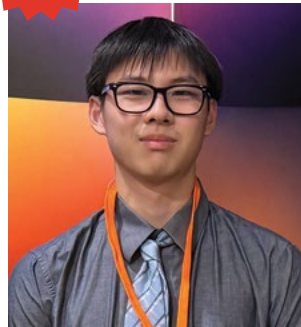
Kaitlyn Zhang, The Country Day School, King City, Ontario, Canada

After learning about the contest through her environmental science teacher and researching the negative effects

of fast fashion, Kaitlyn was motivated to create a video on this topic. She made sure to include important statistics and form a simple call to action to make her video stand out. In the fall, Kaitlyn will attend Yale University, where she plans to study computer science and economics.

2

2nd Place, High School



The Future of Housing

Matthew Park, Illinois Mathematics and Science Academy, Aurora, IL

After learning about the US housing crisis through his civic engagement fellowship, Matthew was inspired

to shed light on the issue and emphasize the importance of community land trusts as a solution. Matthew creates Instagram videos for youth on financial literacy, and developed a concussion detector headband called HIALO, which raises awareness among youth athletes about concussions.

1

1st Place, Middle School



Hanging by a Thread

Katherine Rose Li, Bedford Middle School, Westport, CT

Katherine, who chose to focus on economics and fast fashion, was determined to make an understandable,

relatable, and entertaining video. She specifically encourages viewers to adopt sustainable fashion by purchasing clothing made from biodegradable fabrics. In her spare time, Katherine enjoys participating in Science Olympiad competitions and taking cello lessons.

2

2nd Place, Middle School



Economic Growth Through Education to Overcome Child Labor

Jonathan Wang and Ada Ngai, Juan Cabrillo Middle School, Santa Clara, CA

Jonathan and Ada made

a video highlighting how countries boost their economies by investing in children's education. The pair shared how child labor damages a child's life and prevents them from accessing education. Outside of school, both enjoy competing in the Math Olympiad and are part of the *FIRST* LEGO League.

WETLANDS

1

1st Place, High School



Settling, for a Pond!

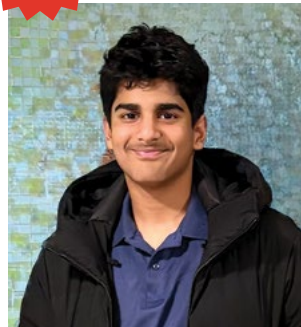
Matty Perkins and Teagan Vanoni, Rancho Campana High School, Camarillo, CA

This duo spent an entire day traveling and filming different local wetlands in their

county. Their goal was to show local settling ponds and how they decrease erosion while promoting biodiversity. In the fall, Matty is majoring in film and biology at California State University, Monterey Bay. Teagan will attend community college and specialize in cosmetology.

2

2nd Place, High School



Breathing Under Pressure: Earth and 8 Billion

Anay Pradhan, The International School of the Hague, The Hague, Zuid Holland, Netherlands

Anay filmed in his local area, capturing the importance of

protecting peatlands. He was particularly surprised to learn that peatlands are huge carbon sinks and filter large amounts of water. Outside of school, Anay has participated in many conferences and summits, including the European Education & Sustainability Leadership Summit, where he won for creating a rainwater harvesting device.

1

1st Place, Middle School



Restoring the World Slowly

Sanjit Kodumuri, Pioneer Heritage Middle School, Frisco, TX

In his video, Sanjit showcases the importance of healthy shorelines to protect wetlands

through two handmade clay models showing the difference between an eroded shoreline and a living shoreline. The 8th grader has a passion for protecting the environment and plans to interview wetland experts and share his video with them to continue raising awareness.

2

2nd Place, Middle School



Protecting Wetlands for Our Common Future

Viaan Bachalakuri, Eric Yan, Arjun Reddy, and Karthik Tumala, Nelson Middle School, Frisco, TX

This team of four worked together to share how wetlands play a critical role in climate regulation. They introduced paludiculture as a solution for protecting and sustainably using wetlands. Viaan enjoys playing the violin, Eric has competed in robotics competitions, Arjun has won several art awards, and Karthik plays soccer.

High School Honorable Mentions



AI's Thirst: Cooling Data Centers Without Draining Communities

Anie Udofia
William Aberhart High School
Calgary, Alberta, Canada



Microgrids for Tomorrow

Maisarah Aminah Dombrowski
Pennsbury High School
Fairless Hills, PA



Affordable Housing for 8 Billion

Allie Parker
Mount Vernon School
Atlanta, GA



Monopsonies and Low Wages

Rohan Ragupathy and Kevin Shu
Trumbull High School
Trumbull, CT



Wetland Parks: Bridging Land, Water, and Community

Caroline Holt, Mia Escalante, and Denise Collins
The Bush School
Seattle, WA



Wetlands: Nature's Microplastic Battlefield

Mary Laborde
Mount Vernon School
Atlanta, GA

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*Joyanne Bloom, Charitable Gift Annuitant
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