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Revitalizing Population and Development in the 21st Century

International Conference on Population
and Development 30 Years On

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Contributors



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Based in Kampala, Uganda, Dr. Musinguzi is currently the Senior Presidential Advisor on population matters. Musinguzi recently retired from his position as the Director General of the National Population Council of Uganda after eight years. Previously, he served as Regional Director of Partners in Population and Development, Africa Regional Office. A public health physician, Musinguzi was the recipient of the 2013 UN Population Prize from the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, in recognition for his outstanding contribution to the implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development. He is also the recipient of the 2014 International Alumni Award for Exceptional Achievement from the University at Albany Alumni Association. He serves on a number of boards, including the Population Institute, Women Deliver, and Commonwealth Medical Trust of London, among others. In 2012, Musinguzi was actively involved in the successful landmark London Family Planning Summit, which established Family Planning 2020, supported by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (formerly the Department for International Development), and UNFPA.



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**Contributors with an asterisk were attendees at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development.*



Introduction

Thirty years ago, delegates from 179 countries agreed on a broad set of priorities and actions to advance human rights, including reproductive rights, in the context of population and development concerns. The 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) was groundbreaking in its assertion that empowering women and girls was both the right thing to do and one of the most reliable pathways to sustainable development and improved wellbeing for all.

ICPD was important because of the consensus reached on the value and importance of reproductive autonomy. However, the agreement in its totality covered a remarkable breadth of population and development topics. It recognized the fundamental importance of population trends in shaping our future and highlighted how these trends result from the rights and opportunities afforded to individuals. The ICPD's Programme of Action captures a comprehensive overview of the vital links between reproductive autonomy, population trends, and development.

These interconnections demand a lens that incorporates this dynamism, and yet in recent years discussions of population trends and their implications have been largely relegated to the sidelines of reproductive rights discourse. This volume of essays reminds us of the variety of important commitments from the 1994 Programme of Action, many of which have been forgotten or overlooked. And the volume demonstrates the growing pertinence of these historic commitments in the 21st century.

The Population Institute invited a group of thought leaders to reflect on seven key themes and to respond with their insights on the relevancy of each theme, at the time of the agreement and today, and to suggest commitments and actions needed to fulfill the Programme of Action. The resulting volume contains viewpoints that illuminate the intersection of population and development.

Contributors offer perspectives that are both time-tested and fresh on topics that are wide-ranging but central to questions of population and development: unlocking the demographic dividend, responding holistically to population and environment linkages, expanding our understanding of reproductive autonomy, supporting people's rights in the context of migration, embracing Indigenous-led approaches to gender transformative justice, and optimizing entertainment media for social change goals. The volume closes with the essential reminder of the ICPD delegates' commitment to a financing framework for the 1994 agenda, and the urgency to fill a gap in needed funding that has persisted since the conference took place.

The Programme of Action laid out an early framework for a rights-based approach to assessing and addressing intersecting challenges related to population and development that have come into even sharper focus in the 21st century. Thirty years on, this framework has only gained meaning and value in a diverse world population now grown to 8 billion people, facing immense challenges related to governance, security, food security, environmental sustainability, and human rights.

Integrating Population and Development Requires Empowering All Persons to Ensure That Nobody Is Left Behind



Jotham Musinguzi

There is general agreement that persistent widespread poverty as well as serious social and gender inequities have significant influences on, and are in turn influenced by, demographic parameters such as population growth, structure, and distribution.

— ICPD PROGRAMME OF ACTION, PARAGRAPH 3.1

In September 1994, in Cairo, Egypt, during the landmark United Nations (UN) International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the global community reached a remarkable consensus affirming reproductive autonomy—the right of every person to determine the number, timing, and spacing of their children.

This consensus implied that going forward, empowering women and girls was the imperative of our time. Empowering women and girls everywhere was not only the right thing to do, but it was also the smart thing to do, if we, as a global family, aspire to achieve environmental protection and sustainable development.

Population Dynamics and Sustainable Development Are Linked

At ICPD, we recognized that the daily activities of human beings, men, women, girls, and boys everywhere is deeply interlinked with population and development. These interlinkages, in turn, are influenced by population dynamics, trends, and patterns. After this landmark conference it was envisaged that individual countries would integrate relevant and appropriate population and development strategies into their country planning and development frameworks to ensure inclusion of population dynamics (especially fertility, mortality, and migration) and how these dynamics influenced population growth, structure, and distribution as well as trends and patterns.

Today, as the global community faces the daunting challenges of the 21st century, including climate change, environmental protection and sustainability, food security, good governance, and attention to global crises like the COVID pandemic as well as widespread humanitarian emergencies, the ICPD Programme of Action (PoA) is more relevant than ever before. The



In their quest to harness the economic benefit arising out of the increasing youth bulge, developing countries of the South must more than ever before protect individual rights, and empower women, girls, and boys, ensuring that nobody is left behind. Countries can do this by ensuring the health, education, and wellbeing of their populations, especially women and girls, including taking care of their sexual and reproductive health and rights and family planning needs.



intersectoral linkages remind us that we need to use resources in such a way that as we meet the needs of the present generation, we do not compromise the needs of future generations. This commitment is of paramount importance.

As we consider strategies for sustainable development, it remains vital for us to understand the global population dynamics, trends, and patterns that we are witnessing, including both population aging in many developed and wealthy countries of the North and an unprecedented youth bulge in a number of the developing countries of the South. The twin challenges of a large, growing youth population combined with persistent poverty in the South pose a real threat to these countries' efforts to attain sustainable development.

Thirty years ago, the PoA recognized that poverty, gender inequity, and population dynamics are vitally linked (see paragraph 3.1 on the preceding page). The PoA's clarion call to ensure the reproductive rights

of women and girls is at the core of the current paradigm and is an imperative of our time, 30 years after ICPD.

Harnessing the Demographic Dividend Requires Renewed Commitment to ICPD Goals

The reproductive rights of women and girls—and their intersections with poverty, gender inequity, and population dynamics—are at the heart of the concept of the “demographic dividend.” In their quest to harness the economic benefit arising out of the increasing youth bulge, developing countries of the South must more than ever before protect individual rights, and empower women, girls, and boys, ensuring that nobody is left behind. Countries can do this by ensuring the health, education, and wellbeing of their populations, especially women and girls, including taking care of their sexual and reproductive health and rights and family planning

needs. Meeting these needs is essential to the demographic shifts that can allow countries to reap the economic rewards of the demographic dividend.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights, including family planning, play a crucial role in empowering women and girls and are a major cornerstone of empowerment. Policies, programs, and strategies that reach individual women and girls where they live, whether rural or urban, are necessary. Equally, sexual and reproductive health and family planning services should be appropriate, acceptable, and affordable.

Partnerships Are Essential to Addressing ICPD's Intersecting Concerns

The PoA also distinguished itself on other important aspects of sexual and reproductive health and rights, including sexually transmitted infections, HIV, gender equality and engaging adolescents.

The PoA underscored that attention to these intersections requires not only well thought-out policies, programs, and strategies, but that their formulation and implementation would require strong international, regional, national, and subnational partnerships and collaborations. So too, sustaining these programs would require the same type of collaboration, including among national governments, the donor community (bilateral and multilateral donors) and civil society organizations.

Whereas the role of international partnerships was fairly well understood and recognized at ICPD, the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) was less well understood. The PoA expressly encouraged the World Health Organization (WHO) to partner

more with civil society organizations at all levels—subnational, national, regional, and global—since these organizations were often the only voice of rural, often poor women and girls. Governments were urged to recognize the potential role of NGOs as a cornerstone of partnerships to empower women and girls.

ICPD at 30: The Job Is Not Yet Done

As we approach the 30th anniversary of ICPD, we look back at the scorecard of the performance and implementation of the PoA. The scorecard is a mixed bag of successes and challenges. A global scan has many positives and heartwarming examples of success. For example, developing countries of the South have posted impressive results regarding sexual and reproductive health and rights as witnessed by a steady decline in both fertility and mortality, albeit slow in some instances. Countries that had very high fertility, with total fertility rates (TFRs) above 6 or 7 children per woman, now have fertility rates of 4 or 5. Some countries with infant mortality rates that were as high as 100 deaths per 1,000 live births and above have declined significantly. HIV/AIDS prevalence in many countries has declined from the double digits of the 1990s to currently single digits. Globally, life expectancy has improved from an average of 64 years in the 1990s to currently nearly 74 years.¹ No doubt this is progress.

Despite these improvements, it is noteworthy that the population of women and young people has increased, especially in developing countries. This increase, coupled with improved education, has led to increased demand for high-quality sexual and reproductive health and family planning services commodities and supplies. This challenge is ongoing and requires attention.

Another important challenge to the ICPD PoA is the opposition to sexual and reproductive health and rights and family planning (SRHR/FP) from conservative voices and religious groups, globally. These attacks have led to a reversal of some of the gains made and have negative implications for sustainable funding going forward.

This situation has not been helped by the unfavorable global shocks, such as the COVID pandemic and other emerging crises, but also by persistent poverty in several of the developing countries of the South. In addition, some countries of the South have abandoned their responsibility for funding their SRHR/FP programs from domestic budgets, leaving this financing to donors. This abdication of responsibility raises fundamental questions of the sustainability of these programs.

Going forward, many developing countries wishing to harness the potential of their demographic dividend must ensure the education and skills of their people, especially their youth, as well as making sure that their countries' planning processes create jobs and employment for young people. Only through improved opportunities will the large share of this youthful population increase their incomes, create savings, invest, and become the engines of growth for their economies. The demographic dividend promises to help countries set themselves on a development trajectory to enjoy the benefits as envisaged in the forward-looking 1994 ICPD Programme of Action, relegating poverty and social strife to the museums of history. The world could then look forward to an exciting ICPD at 30 and beyond.

¹ Macrotrends. "World Life Expectancy 1950-2024." <https://www.macrotrends.net/global-metrics/countries/WLD/world/life-expectancy#:~:text=The%20life%20expectancy%20for%20World,a%200.24%25%20increase%20from%202020>.



Connections Between Population Dynamics, Environment, and Human Wellbeing Are Integral



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Sustainable development as a means to ensure human well-being, equitably shared by all people today and in the future, requires that the interrelationships between population, resources, the environment, and development should be fully recognized, properly managed, and brought into harmonious, dynamic balance. To achieve sustainable development and a higher quality of life for all people, States should reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and promote appropriate policies, including population-related policies, in order to meet the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

— ICPD PROGRAMME OF ACTION, PRINCIPLE 6

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) acknowledged the connections between populations dynamics, environmental sustainability, and human development. Principle 6 highlights these connections with clarity, emphasizing a holistic view of sustainable development, the foundational role of population dynamics and the importance of healthy environments for current and future human wellbeing. Principle 6 also provides a reminder that discussions of the role of population size for broader societal implications must acknowledge other drivers of environmental degradation and injustice, such as excessive consumption, and be grounded in a rights-based frame.

In the opening statement of a 20th anniversary publication of the ICPD Programme of Action (PoA), Ban Ki-Moon, then Secretary-General of the United Nations, reflected on the need to deliver inclusive, equitable, and sustainable global development. And he re-emphasized the importance of population dynamics in achieving these goals: "...the world faces new challenges and opportunities related to population growth, changing age structures, rapid urbanization, and migration. The new demographic challenges are compounded by growing environmental pressures, including the urgent threat of climate change."²

The 1994 ICPD explicitly acknowledged the interconnected and mutually reinforcing relationship between human wellbeing and environmental sustainability, with the implicit understanding that fulfilling individual reproductive health and rights would naturally lead to lower fertility rates.³ Population dynamics and environmental sustainability were and are at the heart of the PoA's rationale.

The PoA Embraced the Importance of Population Dynamics, but the ICPD Shifted Population Discourse to the Margins

The ICPD PoA was largely influenced by the efforts of feminist and human rights advocacy groups who denounced the human rights violations which took place, at least in part, to lower fertility levels and slow population growth. As a result, population policy frameworks and discourses were reframed at ICPD within a women's empowerment perspective, resting on a rights-based approach grounded in reproductive autonomy, and targeting women's familial and cultural contexts as determinants of population behavior. This enhanced focus on reproductive autonomy and the empowerment of women has led to a welcome development—their roles are now more widely recognized as crucial to development agendas.

But this new framing marked a departure from questions relating to the size of populations, and to a reluctance to address such issues. Since the ICPD PoA was endorsed, the complex ethical questions associated with population dynamics have been downplayed and avoided. The new dominant ideological framework of the reproductive rights movement perceived them as exclusively private, a framing that conflicted with broader development, sustainability, and demographic considerations, and with the spirit of the ICPD PoA. Combined with the backlash against coercive reproductive policies motivated by demographic targets, this focus on individual reproductive rights made the population question largely taboo. As Diana Coole states, it "became so toxic that it virtually disappeared from public discussion."⁴

Links Among Population Dynamics, Reproductive Rights, and Environmental Sustainability Are Even More Pertinent Today

Population dynamics have since been overlooked in the global policy agenda, and the synergies between reproductive rights, population dynamics and environmental sustainability have been largely ignored. Yet, several key aspects of Principle 6 remain pertinent today. First, the interlinkages between rapid population growth and environmental degradation are undeniable. The world's poorest countries have some of the fastest growing populations, with most located in sub-Saharan Africa.⁵ The region's population growth and high dependence on environmental resources has been noted as the biggest driver of environmental degradation and biodiversity loss in many African countries.⁶

Additionally, the PoA's Principle 6 concept of equitable sharing of the costs and benefits of environmental stewardship among different populations, both in the present and future, is well aligned with current debates around environmental and distributive justice, particularly given the escalating crisis of climate change. According to the 6th Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Synthesis report, the majority of the world's richest countries emit the majority of greenhouse gasses, while the world's poorest populations bear a disproportionate burden of consequent extreme weather events through loss of livelihoods, food and water scarcity, air pollution, and forced displacement.⁷ In this context, acknowledging these global inequities, reducing unsustainable consumption, and re-thinking ever-increasing production and economic growth become priorities for the short and longer-term.⁸

The disproportionate consumption in the Global North and its lower fertility levels have contributed to the mistaken perception that population dynamics are not relevant to environmental sustainability and social justice concerns. Principle 6 of the ICPD PoA emphasizes the need to find the right balance between population, resources, environment, and development. Therefore, it recommends developing rights-based policies that address both global consumption patterns and population dynamics, recognizing their interdependence and the necessity of an integrated approach.

ICPD at 30: The Job Is Not Yet Done

The ICPD PoA adopted a holistic approach, reflecting the interconnected and mutually reinforcing nature of reproductive rights, population dynamics, and environmental sustainability. Integrating population dynamics and environmental sustainability into the reproductive rights ideological and programmatic framework aligns with the ICPD's foundational principles. Additionally, this integration has significant potential to strengthen reproductive rights, by unlocking new funding sources and appealing to a broader spectrum of champions and allies.

Our recent study, which sought perspectives from sub-Saharan African stakeholders with diverse

disciplinary and professional backgrounds, underscores this potential.⁹ Sub-Saharan Africa's population is growing three times faster than that of the rest of the world, and the region has the highest proportion of both unintended pregnancies and unmet need for family planning. Despite having generated a low proportion of global greenhouse gas emissions, sub-Saharan Africa is disproportionately vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.¹⁰ Our findings reveal that contraception and family planning services are largely perceived among sub-Saharan African stakeholders as having a positive impact on environmental sustainability. Additionally, the stakeholders expressed strong support for the integration of reproductive health and rights, alongside education and women empowerment considerations, into environmental sustainability discussions and policies.

It is well known that advancing gender equity and education and fulfilling reproductive autonomy have the effect of slowing population growth over time. Analysts have estimated, for example, that if the United Nation (UN) Sustainable Development Goals' targets for contraceptive use and education are met, global population size would decline from today's 8 billion to 6.29 billion in 2100.¹¹ If not, then the UN medium projection of 10.3 billion appears more likely.¹² Key reports, such as the "World

Scientists' Warning of a Climate Emergency," endorsed by over 14,000 signatories, emphasize the need to stabilize and gradually reduce the human population to address the climate crisis.¹³ They highlight advancing gender equity and human rights, alongside sectors like the economy and energy, as essential components of this effort.¹⁴ A smaller global population will help achieve and enable the conditions for a more just and sustainable world. In this context, fulfilling reproductive health and rights becomes even more important.

Based on the above, stakeholders should undertake some key commitments and actions, prioritizing firstly a greater and continued focus on environmental and climate justice, acknowledging the relevance of population dynamics in these efforts. Stakeholders must, in addition, more boldly recognize the environmental and social co-benefits of reproductive health and rights and gender equity in health and rights policies, instruments, and discussions. Finally, stakeholders must push for integrating objectives that advance reproductive health and rights, including family planning services, in environmental, climate, and resilience programs, policies, and funding streams.



... Principle 6 emphasizes the need to find the right balance between population, resources, environment, and development. Therefore, it recommends developing rights-based policies that address both global consumption patterns and population dynamics, recognizing their interdependence and the necessity of an integrated approach.





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A Re-Commitment to Reproductive Autonomy and Responsibility Will Help Secure a Socially Just and Ecologically Sustainable Future



Nandita Bajaj

These rights rest on the recognition of the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing, and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health. It also includes their right to make decisions concerning reproduction free of discrimination, coercion, and violence, as expressed in human rights documents. In the exercise of this right, they should take into account the needs of their living and future children and their responsibilities towards the community.

— ICPD PROGRAMME OF ACTION, PARAGRAPH 7.3

The Programme of Action (PoA) stemming from the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) represented a dramatic swerve away from acknowledging the role of population reduction in promoting ecological sustainability and social justice to an approach grounded in enhancing sexual and reproductive health. While the elevation of reproductive rights by the PoA appeared commendable, its shift away from demographic and ecological issues has been calamitous and has undermined many of its own social and reproductive justice goals.¹⁵

The statements from the PoA passages on the preceding page seem benevolent. However, they were disproportionately motivated as a response to reprehensible population policies of the time, especially India's and Puerto Rico's coercive sterilization campaigns and China's one-child policy. Fearful of repeating such egregious human rights violations, feminist delegates—buttressed by the pro-growth interests of religious and market fundamentalists present at the ICPD—framed *all* population reduction efforts as coercive.¹⁶ In doing so, they wrote off most of the voluntary international family planning efforts that had played a dramatic role in women's reproductive liberation in the preceding decades.¹⁷

ICPD Overlooked the Sway of Millennia-Old Patriarchal Pronatalism

Unfortunately, what was missed in the PoA was the equally egregious and far more pervasive source of reproductive coercion: pronatalism. Pronatalism is a raft of patriarchal, religious, nationalistic, and economic pressures on women to bear children, in order to grow and entrench these power structures. Pronatalism heavily biases, and even structurally coerces, women (and men) in favor of childbearing, identifying parenthood as expectation or obligation instead

of authentic choice. It undermines reproductive self-determination and is a source of much suffering, confusion, and violence against girls and women.¹⁸

Pronatalism emerged as institutionalized patriarchy came to prevail with the rise of early states and empires some 5,000 years ago that depended on population expansion and seizure of resources to consolidate power.¹⁹ Pregnancy and motherhood became increasingly idealized through policies and rhetoric enshrined in law, religion, media, education, and medicine.²⁰ Despite the historic gains in gender equality over the last few decades, the chokehold of millennia-old patriarchal pronatalism remains deeply embedded within social policies and norms.

Pronatalist Norms and Policies Continue to Shape Reproductive Behaviors Today

Patriarchal pronatalist norms and policies strongly influence, if not outright dictate, fertility behavior in cultures around the world. Family pressures to bear children or grandchildren are often the most intense, as unwillingness or inability to have any (or additional) children can lead to disownment, divorce, domestic violence, social stigmatization, or economic marginalization. Religious pressures are expressed in the form of scriptural mandates to “be fruitful and multiply,” and/or by means of thwarting access to contraceptives and abortion. Nationalist and ethnocentric pronatalist policies range from baby bonuses and tax incentives for large families to abortion bans, stricter divorce laws, and laxer domestic violence policies. Neoliberal pronatalism, vying for cheap labor and more consumers, shows up in mainstream media, social media, and advertising imagery that glorify pregnancy and motherhood.²¹ Lack of accessible and affordable family planning counseling, contraception options, and abortion services, largely due

to patriarchal and religious barriers and stigma, results in staggering numbers of unplanned and unwanted pregnancies and unsafe abortions each year globally.²² Topping a new wave of pronatalism in our day, “baby bust” alarmism is on the rise worldwide bemoaning declining fertility rates and aging populations.²³

Under the influence of such punitive regulation of reproductive behaviors, it is no surprise that women's stated preferences for number and timing of children tend to closely conform to the acceptable norms within the community in which they reside.²⁴ Given how powerfully pronatalist norms shape reproductive decision-making, we must expose the sociocultural pronatalist landscape in order to enable women and men to make authentic and free reproductive decisions.²⁵ Absent that structural analysis, the PoA's championing of “the right of all couples and individuals to decide *freely*,” and “the right to make decisions concerning reproduction *free* of discrimination, coercion, and violence” is sociologically naïve. It propounds an illusion of “freedom” which is virtually nonexistent given the millennia-old and still-strong patriarchal norms of compulsive pronatalism that block actual reproductive autonomy. By not recognizing the coercive forces impinging on women and girls, the PoA statements simply empower patriarchal pronatalism to continue to hold sway.

ICPD's Hollow Avowal of Reproductive Responsibility Missed the Rights of Children

On the face of it, PoA's avowal regarding reproductive responsibility is commendable, supporting “the right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and *responsibly* the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so,” while taking “into account *the needs* of their living and future children and their *responsibilities* towards the community” (emphasis



When the rights of children to be born into conditions conducive to their wellbeing are taken robustly and meaningfully under consideration, the reproductive behavior of adults cannot be deemed an unlimited right. The decision to bring (or not bring) children into the world should become an other-regarding act that calls for mindful behavior and moral scrutiny.



added). However, when the rights of children to be born into conditions conducive to their wellbeing are taken robustly and meaningfully under consideration, the reproductive behavior of adults cannot be deemed an unlimited right. The decision to bring (or not bring) children into the world should become an other-regarding act that calls for mindful behavior and moral scrutiny.²⁶

For potential parents to make responsible decisions requires not only “the information and means” to control their fertility, but also education and understanding about the physical, emotional, financial, *and* environmental repercussions of bearing children.²⁷ The assumption that discussing environmental concerns in the context of reproductive decision-making is a subterfuge to manipulate women’s decisions is paternalistic, grossly underrating people’s ability to think of their decisions in larger contexts. Discounting planetary considerations in reproduction not only places parents and children outside the ecological milieu (a biophysical impossibility), it also assumes that women are incapable of linking their decisions to nature’s wellbeing. Given the deteriorating plight of children worldwide on multiple social and ecological fronts—extreme poverty, child marriage,

climate-related catastrophes, pollution-related toxification, child labor, undernourishment, freshwater shortages, and food insecurity—reproductive responsibility in terms of heeding children’s rights must be urgently elevated.²⁸

ICPD at 30: The Job Is Not Yet Done

Given the indisputable role of human numbers in fueling social conflicts and ecological breakdown, it is crucial to bring demographic concerns back into the environmental and reproductive rights discourse. We live in a time of profound ecological overshoot resulting from unchecked demographic and economic growth, which in tandem are driving climate breakdown, biodiversity loss, species extinctions, resource scarcity, conflict, poverty, food insecurity, and more.²⁹

Amid the growth-biased modern-day anxiety about declining birth rates in industrialized countries, it is easy to lose sight of the fact that our global population continues to grow by more than 70 million per year. The global middle class is expanding rapidly. A billion more consumers will inflate its ranks to 5.3 billion in this decade.³⁰ Surely all people have a right to a good standard of living. Yet the swelling global middle class is driving an acceleration of

ecological impacts on course to tip the planet into a state shift that will imperil all complex life.³¹

Recognizing how profoundly population growth is driven by pronatalist forces means that population growth is essentially premised on the subjugation of girls and women in order to strengthen patriarchal power structures. The past 50 years of active efforts by governments and NGOs to confront patriarchal reproductive norms through voluntary family planning programs, combined with growing access to education and employment opportunities for girls and women, have led to marked declines in fertility rates in most countries—yet these current trends still result in a United Nations (UN) medium variant population projection of 10.4 billion by 2100.³² Massive international investment in family planning interventions and reproductive norm-shifting programs, such as radio shows, soap operas, and other cultural initiatives would accelerate these trends, resulting in the UN’s low variant population projection of 6 billion by 2100, or even lower by other estimates.³³ In addition to elevating reproductive self-determination and enhancing the rights and wellbeing of children, these programs would also curtail further ecological damage.³⁴

A smaller global population, within a socially and ecologically just economy, promises to facilitate other needed transformations: mitigating climate change, conserving and rewilding ecosystems, making agriculture sustainable, strengthening social safety nets, integrating seniors into meaningful social roles, redefining family through diverse kinship pathways, and making communities more resilient and able to welcome climate and war refugees.³⁵

A reappraisal of the Programme of Action which recognizes that the rights and wellbeing of all are directly linked to the downscaling of the human enterprise within a rights-based approach is not only possible, but urgently needed.

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Attention to Human Mobility Commitments Can Enhance Development Opportunities



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Governments of countries of origin and of countries of destination should seek to make the option of remaining in one's country viable for all people. To that end, efforts to achieve sustainable economic and social development, ensuring a better economic balance between developed and developing countries and countries with economies in transition, should be strengthened. It is also necessary to increase efforts to defuse international and internal conflicts before they escalate; to ensure that the rights of persons belonging to ethnic, religious, or linguistic minorities, and indigenous people are respected; and to respect the rule of law, promote good governance, strengthen democracy, and promote human rights.

— ICPD PROGRAMME OF ACTION, PARAGRAPH 10.3

Globally, human mobility is considered one of the greatest contemporary challenges. Public discussions range between strengthening national security, migration controls and “closed borders,” and those who advocate for human security and free transit of persons. In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, migration is considered an integral part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), as it has high potential for reducing inequalities within countries or regions.

Migration management could be the necessary component for the application of well-planned migratory policies, as is the case of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) signed in 2018 by 160 countries, including Guatemala. This instrument seeks a balance between access and control of labor markets, and between costs and benefits of migration, and it recognizes migrants as subjects of law. In 1994, the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) adopted a Programme of Action that contained broad principles on international migration and development that apply to both countries of origin and countries of destination. Yet 30 years later, migrants around the world continue to experience inequality and exclusion, particularly in those countries that are home to irregular migrants.

Although there are extensive international instruments and conventions that regulate people’s movements, both destination and origin countries benefit from irregular migration. On the one hand, destination countries profit from the exploitation of migrants through filling labor market gaps with 3-D jobs—dangerous, dirty, and demanding—and on the other, origin countries make the most from remittances at micro and macro levels.³⁶

In this essay, we propose that there is a right to migrate, and states should make compromises to ensure

all efforts are made to guarantee it, but simultaneously, there is a right to stay. The latter is often disregarded, as it requires efforts to create conditions for development and wellbeing. Both rights are strongly related and it’s necessary to find a balance in which one complements the other, since migration is sometimes the only way to find a better future.

Migration has impacts not only on individuals, but also on whole societies, as is the case in Guatemala. The ongoing discussion between migration and development is not limited to the topic of remittances, as it includes human capital loss, deportations, and returns, among others.

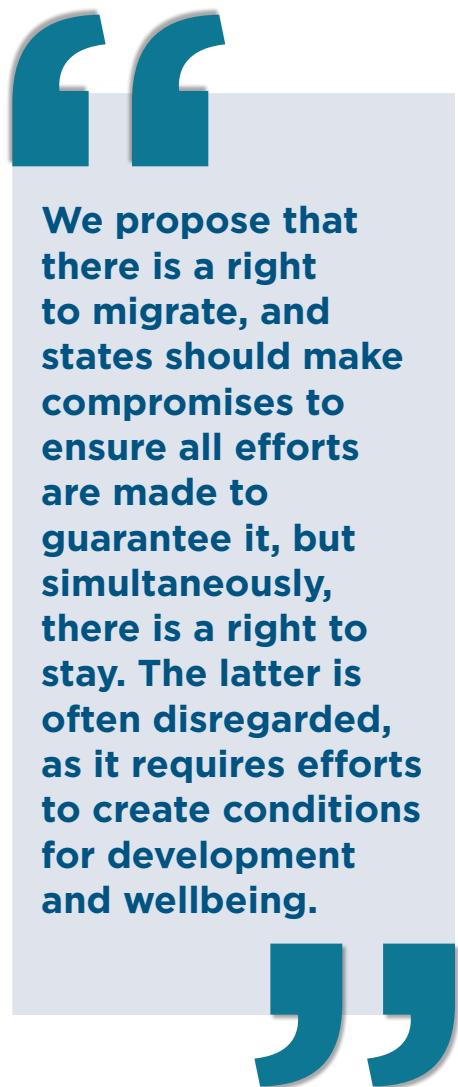
The Links Between Human Mobility and Development Are Dynamic and Complex

In the last decade, human mobility has been a relevant issue in Guatemala. Think tanks, civil society organizations, and cooperation agencies have made multiple approaches and implemented different initiatives to understand the main drivers of migration and establish people’s motivations to move. The complexity of the phenomenon has demanded efforts to mitigate its impacts and strengthen the conditions to stay, but this requires improvements in the economy, more opportunities for decent employment, and the creating economic structures that guarantee sustainable living conditions in communities of high migration, including social protection systems and more coordinated public policies.

Guatemala is predominantly an origin country for migrants, who are driven out by structural causes such as the multiple manifestations of violence, including gender-based violence, the inability of the state to cope with the effects of climate change and disasters, persistent poverty, and extractive megaprojects. Along with Central

America and Mexico, it is one of the main migratory corridors to North America, with the final destination of most migrants the United States. In recent years, Guatemala has become a destination country for persons from inside and outside the North American continent, including asylum seekers from South America, the Caribbean and other continents.³⁷

Another relevant migratory flow in Guatemala is returning migrants, especially those affected by irregular migration containment policies in destination countries. According to the *Instituto Guatemalteco de Migración*, in 2023, 79,697 Guatemalans were returned from the United States (55,302 persons) and Mexico (24,395 persons).³⁸ In this context, the state’s role has been centered in the consular system and attention given to forcibly returned Guatemalans, and to a lesser extent,



We propose that there is a right to migrate, and states should make compromises to ensure all efforts are made to guarantee it, but simultaneously, there is a right to stay. The latter is often disregarded, as it requires efforts to create conditions for development and wellbeing.

to the services for asylum seekers in the country. Nonetheless, the needs of the diverse migrant populations are multiple, because aside from reception and humanitarian aid, there is a need for a social and economic (re)integration policy.

These complex migratory dynamics emphasize the need to address the migration–development link from a structural change perspective in which economic models shift into more pertinent and relevant ones, including human rights for migrants.

Migration and Development in Guatemala Need to Be Assessed From Multiple Perspectives

According to Bornschein, there are three perspectives on the concepts of migration and development, which determine the kinds of opportunities and impacts on persons and societies.³⁹ First is the effects that migration has on individual development. In this perspective, border control and administration policies speed up detention and deportation in transit and destination countries, but also limit the migrant's possibilities for social inclusion and economic and human development. Those most affected are returnees/deportees from the United States, those populations settled in the border region between Guatemala and southern Mexico, as well as migrants in transit. Women, children, and youth face the most discrimination from public and social institutions, with limited access to basic rights, such as health, education, decent living conditions, etc., thus with scarce opportunities for development.⁴⁰

The second perspective refers to migration as a consequence of economic and structural drivers that limit development and promote the increase in numbers that can be considered as exodus, expulsion, or despoilment. To determine the structural causes is the best way to reduce migration, but unfortunately, many programs do not deepen their analysis and do not consider the

local contexts and dynamics. For example, it's common knowledge that high rates of participation in the informal economy require promoting entrepreneurship, among other measures, but what is the potential life span of new businesses if there are not better and innovative, competitive mechanisms in a society with a high concentration of economic (and political) power?

The third perspective emphasizes the effects of migration on the country's development and on Guatemalans. Migration has become a life strategy for individuals, but given the increase in restrictions on movement, families depend on more remittance investments in land, housing, and other expenditures to maintain the only hopeful path that exists for them, but not on productive projects or savings.

In Guatemala, remittances have contradictory effects. On one hand, they help stabilize the balance of payments, but on the other, they benefit those economic sectors with high income concentration, such as importers, construction, banking, etc. In this context, family remittances hide the formal economy's deterioration and do not create development. How is it possible that the total value of remittances in Guatemala is almost the total of the country's exports and they still do not contribute to reducing poverty? Of course, remittances support the family economy, but simultaneously they increase economic dependency, perpetuate poverty, result in human capital loss and social distress, and do not transform the structural conditions that keep people migrating.

ICPD at 30: The Job Is Not Yet Done

In 1994, the ICPD Programme of Action had already established guidelines that consider the balance between migrating and staying as beneficial to both destination and origin countries. This highlights the relevance of this instrument for migration management

policies, especially in today's global complexity and continuously growing migration numbers. For example, Action 10.3 indicates "*Governments of countries of origin and of countries of destination should seek to make the option of remaining in one's country viable for all people*", while Action 10.5 reads "*Governments of countries of destination are invited to consider the use of certain forms of temporary migration (...) Governments of countries of origin are urged to facilitate the return of migrants and their reintegration into their home communities, and to devise ways of using their skills.*"⁴¹ Still, 30 years later, the job is not done.

To address these complexities, we propose the following alternatives that could help guarantee both the right to migrate and the right to stay. These recommendations require political commitment and consideration from government institutions and other actors in civil society, as well as international coordination and advocacy.

First, there is a high priority for migration management with a human security and human rights perspective to implement regional strategies for transit migration, social and economic (re)integration of returnees, and comprehensive temporary programs for labor migration. These strategies would enhance the regular, orderly, and safe migration pathways, but require coordination between neighboring countries, with destination countries, and within national institutions.

Second, there is an opportunity for the productive use of remittances, both family and collective, through links with migrant communities and organizations in the United States. This kind of investment should be promoted and implemented at the local level with the participation of key social actors, such as families, returnees, cooperatives, local associations, and local governments and authorities, in order to guarantee governance, cultural pertinence, and inclusivity of projects. Nonetheless, this opportunity requires strong accompaniment and support from

expert institutions and actors to ensure efficiency, sustainability, and transparency.

Third, governance in human mobility could be achieved by implementing a *local economic development* perspective. The term refers to the articulation of local actors from civil society (private sector, associations, churches, academia, etc.), migrant communities and associations, and local government institutions (municipalities). This effort requires advocacy with municipal authorities to include productive projects from

remittances and other sources (such as NGO or international cooperation agencies) in municipal planning strategies. These strategies should include economic infrastructure such as innovation ecosystems, value chains, and competitive environments, but also strong social protection and care systems that help reduce unequal access and participation from those most vulnerable and excluded populations (women, children, disabled persons, and the elderly, among others).

In sum, migration management must take into account subregional, regional, and international levels, in which states enforce comprehensive interventions beyond humanitarian aid and welfare programs. The current human mobility conditions require a substantial change in states' economic structures and governance mechanisms; otherwise the exodus will continue defying restrictive policies and border controls.



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Indigenous Sovereignty Is the Key to Indigenous Gender Transformative Justice



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Governments and other important institutions in society should recognize the distinct perspective of indigenous people on aspects of population and development and, in consultation with indigenous people and in collaboration with concerned non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations, should address their specific needs, including needs for primary health care and reproductive health services. All human rights violations and discrimination, especially all forms of coercion, must be eliminated.

— ICPD PROGRAMME OF ACTION, PARAGRAPH 6.25

Across the Americas, Indigenous communities have always recognized the important roles girls, women, and Two-Spirit (2S) people play in their communities.⁴² Prior to colonization, Indigenous communities had social, political, and economic systems that empowered women and respected gender diversity. Strengthening the rising generation of Indigenous girls and 2SLGBTQ+ people will not only benefit them but will assist in transforming outdated and harmful structures. A similar approach served as a framework at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), which argued that empowering women and girls increases their wellbeing and is one of the most reliable pathways for strengthening social systems and sustainable development for nations.

The 1994 Programme of Action (PoA) addressed the intersectional nature of Indigenous communities' understandings of population and development. Notably, the PoA highlighted that although a key concern of the ICPD is sustainable population (paragraphs 1.3-1.5), data from Indigenous populations show rates of population growth are not homogeneous. Following colonization, Indigenous people have experienced long and recurrent periods of population and land loss. Due to "ecological destruction, displacement, resettlement, and disruption of their families, communities and social systems" (paragraph 6.21), Indigenous communities face higher morbidity and mortality than other sections of national populations. However, Indigenous perspectives on population and development are often not taken into consideration.

Additionally, the ICPD highlighted the lack of statistics disaggregated by ethnicity, race, and gender, which obscures the unique challenges Indigenous girls, women, and Two-Spirit people face. The effects of colonization are gendered. Assimilationist and genocidal programs intentionally targeted all aspects of Indigenous life

while largely focusing on eroding Indigenous gender-diverse and matrilineal structures. Through education and family programs, colonial governments imposed patriarchal systems within Indigenous households and forced labor practices that domesticated the social participation of girls, women, and 2SLGBTQ+ people.⁴³ And on the healthcare front, colonial structures continue to dismantle Indigenous health systems to deny women and girls control over their sexual and reproductive health. Indigenous populations face higher rates of obstetric violence and nonconsensual sterilizations than their white counterparts.⁴⁴

Addressing Racist and Gendered Structural Violence Requires Indigenous Solutions

As a result of past and present structural violence, Indigenous communities face a mental health crisis that disproportionately affects girls and 2SLGBTQ+ youth. In the U.S., suicide rates among Native women of all ages have increased exponentially over time and Indigenous girls of middle school age show much higher suicide risk than their male counterparts.⁴⁵ Native 2SLGBTQ+ youth also show higher rates of anxiety, depression, and suicide attempts than their

non-Indigenous peers.⁴⁶ Additionally, the mental health of Indigenous girls and women, especially young mothers, is impacted by the fact that they have less income, fewer economic assets, and lower rates of financial literacy than Native males.⁴⁷ However, the biggest contributor to the mental health epidemic is the threat of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

Principle 4 of the PoA advocates for the elimination of all forms of SGBV to ensure "the full and equal participation of women in civil, cultural, economic, political, and social life." Worldwide, Indigenous girls, women, and Two-Spirit people are particularly vulnerable to SGBV due to geographic isolation, stigmatization, distrust of governmental organizations, extreme poverty, and threats to their environment. In North America, the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls, and Two-Spirit (MMIWG2S) epidemic is a sober reminder that murder is the third leading cause of death among Native women.⁴⁸ Exposure to high rates of SGBV isolates Indigenous girls, women, and 2SLGBTQ+ people further and reduces their political participation, which contributes to their unique needs being unaddressed. In the Latin American region—largely due to the rates of child marriage, a practice that puts girls at higher risk of domestic



Thirty years later, Indigenous girls, women, and 2SLGBTQ+ people continue to be systematically excluded from development efforts. Across the world, conservative governments put the rights of Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people at risk.



violence and maternal mortality—girls are often pushed to decide between leaving their communities in search of opportunities or staying to start a family at a young age.⁴⁹ However, research shows that forced migration—often in order to escape violent conditions—puts Indigenous women and girls at higher risk of experiencing SGBV.⁵⁰

Indigenous-Led Approaches to Gender Transformative Justice Are the Best Way to Approach the Unique Challenges for Indigenous Communities

Recognizing Indigenous political and intellectual sovereignty is key to strengthening the civic participation of Indigenous girls, women, and 2SLGBTQ+ people. The PoA asserts the importance of recognizing the distinct perspective of Indigenous peoples on aspects of population and development (paragraph 6.25) and research shows that Indigenous-led approaches to gender transformative justice are the best way of approaching the unique challenges of Indigenous people. The work of the Indigenous Justice Circle (IJC) on health equity and preventing the MMIWG2S crisis is in collaboration with Native communities.⁵¹ Through the Indigenous Adolescent Girls' Empowerment Network (IMAGEN), IJC helps over 45 communities across the U.S. reweave their social fabric by establishing neighborhood-level "Girl Societies" where matrilineal knowledge and skills are passed on to the next generation. These spaces serve as a holistic approach, building up systems that support the development of resilience among girls. Additionally, through the Indigenous Young Leaders Cohort, IJC supports a rising generation of North American Native leaders, increasing their political and cultural participation.

Similarly, in Guatemala, Abriendo Oportunidades (AO, "Opening Opportunities") increases Indigenous girls' social support networks, connects them with mentors, and builds leadership skills employing a gender transformative approach grounded in the knowledge and skills of the young Indigenous female mentors. AO started in 2004 and has expanded to Indigenous communities in Belize and Mexico.⁵² Consistent with the PoA, AO mentors, through the skills they developed as part of the program, have created their own NGOs called REDMI Aq'ab'al and Na'leb'ak. Program evaluations show that AO helps delay child marriage, increase self-esteem, and prevent adolescent pregnancy and gender-based violence, successfully reducing risk factors for both girls participating and their mentors.⁵³ Since the 2004 pilot, AO has been implemented in 350 communities across Guatemala, reaching more than 20,000 girls and employing 300+ young Indigenous women as mentors.⁵⁴ Working together, AO and IJC seek to draw attention to the similar challenges of Indigenous girls, women, and Two-Spirit people across the Americas as well as highlight the positive and expansive effects of incorporating Indigenous perspectives into policy and praxis.

Working with Indigenous leadership to define sustainable development contributes to the well-being of the entire population. In Guatemala, AO's girl programs have strengthened public education programs by developing curricula now utilized by the Ministry of Education for all secondary students in its alternative education program.⁵⁵ Other recent accomplishments include Indigenous landback movements penning co-stewardship agreements with U.S. National Parks that ensure the preservation of key ecological sites.⁵⁶ Incorporating Indigenous

perspectives into development policies and interventions creates a more sustainable future for all.

ICPD at 30: The Job Is Not Yet Done

The 1994 PoA highlighted some of the key commitments and actions that governments and organizations should take, guided by Indigenous communities. Thirty years later, Indigenous girls, women, and 2SLGBTQ+ people continue to be systematically excluded from development efforts. Across the world, conservative governments put the rights of Indigenous women, girls, and Two-Spirit people at risk. These practices affect not only Indigenous peoples, as they often take the form of abortion services bans, underfunded sex education, and a concerning increase on anti-trans and gender diversity legislation.⁵⁷

To ensure the equal and meaningful participation of Indigenous communities in development efforts, it is important to prioritize the action items the ICPD outlined 30 years ago: improving statistics that show the specific challenges Indigenous girls, women, and Two-Spirit people face; supporting Indigenous sovereignty and following their lead in combating crises of mental health and SGBV; and ensuring national population and development policies take Indigenous peoples' specific needs into account. It is imperative that Indigenous voices are considered. As Indigenous-led organizations across the world have shown, investing in Indigenous communities and supporting the rising generation of Indigenous girls are effective ways to support global wellbeing. There is no area of sustainable development that can be achieved without the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives.



- 42 Two-Spirit is an umbrella term that refers to individuals in Indian communities who combine activities and responsibilities of both men and women, often identifying with an alternative gender. The term is commonly abbreviated as '2S' and included in the acronym 2SLGBTQ+ (Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, and all other queer identities). It is important to note that Two-Spirit is a term mostly used in North America. Indigenous cultures across the world have different names and understandings around gender diversity.
- 43 Devens, Carol. 1992. "If We Get the Girls, We Get the Race": Missionary Education of Native American Girls." *Journal of World History*, vol. 3, no. 2, 219-37. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20078530>; This painful legacy persists to this day, as children are still removed from Native American families at disproportionate rates due to racial prejudices on childcare as well as trauma-induced behavioral health problems in Native communities.
- 44 Examples in Guatemala, Peru, Canada, Mexico, and Australia have been documented and discussed in Ko, Nusta Carranza. 2021. "Complicating genocide: missing Indigenous women's stories." Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics; In the U.S., the Hyde Amendment currently jeopardizes access to abortion and disproportionately affects Native and Black communities. Morcelle, M. 2021. "Fostering Equitable Access to Abortion Coverage: Reversing the Hyde Amendment"; and in the U.S., as recently as the 70s, Native American women were subject to unconsented sterilizations by Indian Health Service (IHS) subcontractors, which has added to the deep and persistent mistrust of government and IHS health providers among Native people. In exchange for historical and vast land dispossessions, IHS is the low/no fee health service provider for tribally enrolled Native Americans, especially those who are low-income. <https://www.gao.gov/products/hrd-77-3>.
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- 46 "The Trevor Project." <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/research-briefs/the-mental-health-and-well-being-of-indigenous-lgbtq-young-people/>.
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- 50 Martínez Rodas, A., A. del Valle, and R. Zamora. 2022. "Lack of opportunities for indigenous young women in Guatemala: Forced mobility and absence of social protection systems." https://knowledgecommons.popcouncil.org/focus_adolescents/39/.
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- 52 Population Council. "Abriendo Oportunidades." <https://popcouncil.org/project/abriendo-oportunidades-opening-opportunities/>.
- 53 Girls Not Brides and Population Council. "Abriendo Oportunidades (Opening Opportunities), Theory of Change Case Studies." <https://www.girlsnotbrides.org/documents/416/Case-Study-Empower-girls-Population-Council-Guatemala.pdf>.
- 54 Population Council. 2020. "Abriendo Oportunidades strengthens government education programming for indigenous adolescent girls in Guatemala." https://knowledgecommons.popcouncil.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=series_newsletters_researchimpact.
- 55 Population Council. 2020. "Abriendo Oportunidades strengthens government education programming for indigenous adolescent girls in Guatemala."
- 56 National Parks Conversation Association. "National Parks Are Native Lands." <https://www.npca.org/case-studies/national-parks-are-native-lands>.
- 57 In the U.S., Hyde amendment restrictions on IHS providers and subcontractors ban them from providing abortion-related healthcare; Martínez Rodas, del Valle, and Zamora. 2022. "Lack of opportunities for indigenous young women in Guatemala"; and "2024 Anti-Trans Bill Tracker," <https://translegislation.com/>.

Entertainment Media Plays an Important Role in Fostering Social Change Toward Population and Development Goals



William N. Ryerson

Governments, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector should make greater and more effective use of the entertainment media, including radio and television soap operas and drama, folk theatre, and other traditional media to encourage public discussion of important but sometimes sensitive topics related to the implementation of the present Programme of Action.

— ICPD PROGRAMME OF ACTION, PARAGRAPH 11.23

I was fortunate to have participated in the landmark International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) as an executive of Population Communications International, which served as the Secretariat for the NGO Forum in Cairo. The ICPD Programme of Action (PoA) issued at the end of the 1994 conference contains almost 200 pages of findings and recommendations spanning population and economic growth, gender equality, the family's roles and rights, reproductive health and rights, population distribution and urbanization, international migration, population information and education, technology, and national action.

The 1994 Cairo consensus confirms that every adult on the planet should have the right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children and should have the information, education, and means to do so. Moreover, the fundamental pathways to achieving reproductive autonomy are accomplished by working to establish bona fide “gender equality and equity and the empowerment of women, the elimination of all kinds of violence against women, and ensuring women’s ability to control their own fertility.”

Cairo’s PoA underscored a key finding that other authors in this volume have aptly illustrated—to achieve a sustainable planet with equal rights for all, three areas are critically important: the rights of women and girls, the demographic trajectory of the world’s population, and the environmental behaviors of the world community. Buried in the PoA, in the chapter on population information, education, and communication, is the important recommendation cited above, which lays the groundwork for the role of entertainment media in achieving these goals.

People’s Decisions about Contraception Are Shaped by Multiple Factors

Currently, there are more than 1.9 billion women of reproductive age on the planet. Of those, about 966 million use modern methods of contraception while about 934 million do not.⁵⁸ About 257 million women do not want additional children now or in the immediate future and yet are not using contraception.⁵⁹ The reasons they give for non-use are quite informative. Many policymakers and donors assume it has to do with lack of access to contraceptive methods. However, more than 95% of married men and women in most countries know about methods of contraception and where to find them. The reasons they give for non-use have to do with cultural and informational factors, especially personal and spousal opposition, religious opposition, and fear of health effects (often based on misinformation about safety and effectiveness). One of the reasons for fear of health effects is intentional misinformation published by organizations opposed to contraceptive use.

The Guttmacher Institute published an article in June 2016 analyzing a decade of data related to the reasons for non-use of contraception in 52 developing countries.⁶⁰ They found “lack of access” as a reason for non-use comprised just 5% of all the reasons given. Meanwhile, fear of health effects and personal or spousal opposition to contraception accounted for 49% of the reasons given for non-use. In other words, reasons related to informational and socio-cultural barriers outnumbered reasons related to lack of access by a factor of 10.

Entertainment Media Is an Effective Approach to Foster Dialogue About Social Change

Addressing these challenges requires effective communication. Not many years after ICPD, I founded Population Media Center (PMC) to do this critical work. PMC grew out of my work at Population Communications International that used the methodology of Miguel Sabido, a producer of telenovelas at Mexico’s largest network, Televisa. Sabido created a social-content serialized drama strategy that incorporated family planning into the lives of the characters. His work was effective in encouraging contraceptive uptake—because large numbers of people identified with these transitional characters and their emotional bonds to them were strong, many viewers were motivated to adopt the same behavior, particularly after they witnessed the benefits to the characters of family planning and the small family norms that they adopted.

For 26 years, my work at PMC has led to the creation and distribution of long-running serialized social-content dramas, reaching people in 57 countries, in some cases with over half the country’s population in the audience.

People don’t go home at night to watch documentaries about global sustainability and information about family planning methods. They go home at night to relax and be entertained. PMC’s use of serialized dramas during prime-time programming has led to changes in norms in numerous countries on use of family planning, stopping child marriage, daughter education, family size decisions, and many more behaviors. These programs never tell the audience what to do. Instead, role modeling by key characters allows the audience to learn from

the consequences of character decisions and to make the decisions for themselves whether or not to emulate characters' behaviors.

For example, in Ethiopia, over half the population listened to two of nine PMC radio serial dramas that aired on Radio Ethiopia. Married women who were listening tripled

their use of family planning during the broadcast (from 14% to 40%). This increase was 2 1/2 times the increase in use among non-listeners during the same time period. At clinics across Ethiopia, in 14,400 exit interviews at 48 clinics, 26% of respondents named one of these programs as a motivating factor to

seek services as a new client. These programs also addressed the use of HIV testing as a way to determine one's HIV status. By the end of the program, female listeners reported seeking an HIV test at three times the rate of non-listeners, and male listeners reported seeking an HIV test at four times the non-listener rate.⁶¹

ETHIOPIA EMBRACES THE PROMISE OF ICPD

Negussie Teffera

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in 1994 was a significant event for Ethiopia, the third most populous country in sub-Saharan Africa, coming at the same time the country was focusing on integrating population and sustainable development with the launch of a National Population Policy.⁶² ICPD provided a framework for implementing and evaluating that policy over the years in line with the ICPD Programme of Action (PoA).

Greater public knowledge and understanding are considered key factors to the realization of the goal of the National Population Policy and the ICPD's PoA. Awareness-building activities have been undertaken at federal and regional levels throughout the country. The massive public awareness campaign launched in all available channels since ICPD has been exemplary. Discussions and meetings on various aspects of population issues were held in schools, workplaces, bars, hospitals, marketplaces, and even churches and mosques. Unlike in the past prior to ICPD, programs were promoted and implemented under a national program in an integrated manner. For a more elaborate and systematic effort in awareness building and subsequent attitudinal and behavioral changes, a National Population Information, Education, and Communication and Advocacy Strategy was formulated and passed in 1997. The establishment of offices of population in all regional states has also laid the groundwork for grassroots participation at all levels. Government commitment along with the involvement of non-governmental organizations and civil society have been the recipe for success.

Tangible results have been obtained since the adoption of the population policy. The contraceptive prevalence rate, which was estimated to be around 8% of women in their reproductive years in 2000, has now increased to more than 41% in 2019.⁶³ The total fertility rate has gone down to 4.1 (2023) from 7.7 children per woman. These are good signs that the goals set in our population policy are within our reach. The government has also updated the family health legislation, providing free advertisement and distribution of contraceptives.

Our partnership with the Population Media Center (PMC) has helped improve the implementation of population and related activities in the country through coordinated multimedia awareness building and promotion of reproductive health. Interventions from 2000 to the present projected the ICPD vision of reproductive health and increased awareness, knowledge, understanding, and commitment at all levels of society. The ICPD PoA was instrumental in expanding the opportunities and improving the quality of life of all communities and individuals of the country.

PMC's programming encouraged responsible attitudes and behaviors and enhanced the ability of couples and individuals to exercise their basic right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children. PMC's comprehensive population and reproductive health sensitization and behavior change communication campaign in electronic media, print media, and capacity building programs aimed at raising awareness about reproductive health needs and achieved notable success in motivating the public to demand the required services.⁶⁴

The radio dramas, print materials, capacity building workshops, and talk shows have positively influenced the behavior and attitudes of listeners. Evaluation of the programming demonstrated significant behavior change, as measured by a tripling of self-reported family planning use among married women who listened and a quadrupling of HIV testing among male listeners, all in a two-year period.⁶⁵

ICPD at 30: The Job is Not Yet Done

Globally, there is still need for expanded family planning services, especially if the informational and cultural barriers to use of family planning methods can be overcome. The expansion of family planning has been one of the greatest health achievements of the last century. Family size limitation and child

spacing significantly reduce maternal and child mortality.

However, the large number of non-users worldwide not only points to the need for increasing access to a wide range of methods appropriate for people in various life situations, but also provision of accessible information that helps to overcome the cultural and informational barriers to use of effective methods.

The reasons for non-use today are quite different from 1960, when large numbers did not have access to such services. Thirty years after the Cairo conference, with the myriad of changes in information access and the digital universe, the importance of accurate information, especially via role modeling in entertainment programs, is critically important to bring about a sustainable planet with equal rights for all.



These programs never tell the audience what to do. Instead, role modeling by key characters allows the audience to learn from the consequences of character decisions and to make the decisions for themselves whether or not to emulate characters' behaviors.



58 United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. 2022. *World Family Planning 2022: Meeting the changing needs for family planning: Contraceptive use by age and method*. https://www.un.org/development/desa/pd/sites/www.un.org/development/desa/pd/files/files/documents/2023/Feb/undesa_pd_2022_world-family-planning.pdf.

59 UNFPA. 2022. *State of the World's Population: Seeing the Unseen: The Case for Action in the Neglected Crisis of Unintended Pregnancy*. <https://www.unfpa.org/swp2022>.

60 Sedgh, G., Ashford, L.S., and Hussain, R. 2016. "Unmet Need for Contraception in Developing Countries: Examining Women's Reasons for Not Using a Method." https://www.guttmacher.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/unmet-need-for-contraception-in-developing-countries-report.pdf.

61 Frank, L. B. and Falzone, P. eds. 2021. *Entertainment Education Behind the Scenes: Case Studies for Theory and Practice*. Springer. Chapter 3.

62 Teffera, N. 2000. "The Ethiopian National Population Policy and its implementation : Cairo and After," in *Ethiopia's Population and Development Magazine*, National Population Office, Addis Ababa.

63 Demographic and Health Surveys. 2019. *Ethiopia Mini demographic and health survey*. Ethiopian Public Health Institute Addis Ababa.

64 Teffera, N. 2017. "Innovative Media and Communication Strategy for Development : Ethiopia's Experience." Addis Ababa.

65 Frank, L.B. and Falzone P., eds. 2021. *Entertainment Education Behind the Scenes: Case Studies for Theory and Practice*. Springer. Chapter 3.

To Realize ICPD Goals, We Need to Double Down on Family Planning Investments



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It is tentatively estimated that up to two thirds of the costs will continue to be met by the countries themselves and in the order of one third from external sources. However, the least developed countries and other low-income developing countries will require a greater share of external resources on a concessional and grant basis. Thus, there will be considerable variation in needs for external resources for population programmes, between and within regions.

— ICPD PROGRAMME OF ACTION, PARAGRAPH 13.16

It is often said that investing in family planning is a “best buy.” By allowing young people to plan their pregnancies, family planning enables them to plan their futures and achieve goals in education, employment, and savings. By improving health outcomes and helping people avoid unintended pregnancies, it saves money for both individuals and governments, supporting economic growth and national welfare. Every \$1 invested in meeting the unmet need for contraceptives can yield up to an estimated \$120 in accrued annual benefits in the long-term (\$30-50 in benefits from reduced infant and maternal mortality and \$60-100 in long-term benefits from economic growth).⁶⁶ Family planning makes both “sense” and “cents,” helping individuals, families, communities, and nations thrive.

Delegates at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) understood the remarkable cost-effectiveness and multiple benefits that stem from family planning. The ICPD’s Programme of Action (PoA) laid out detailed global cost estimates for family planning, maternal health, prevention of sexually

transmitted infections, and collecting and analyzing population data. Importantly, all 179 countries agreed to a financing framework to meet these costs so people around the world could access the reproductive health supplies, information, and services they need (see paragraph 13.16 on the preceding page).

While countries agreed that most of the costs would be met by countries themselves (through both domestic governmental and consumer out-of-pocket expenditures), it was recognized that international donors had a critical role to play to ensure the costs could be fully covered—and no one would be left behind.

ICPD Helped Galvanize Funding, But Many Are Still Left Behind

The ICPD resulted in an encouraging initial boost of global support for reproductive health programs, including a high-water mark for international family planning assistance (nearly \$580 million) from the U.S. government in 1995.⁶⁷ But in the ensuing years, progress toward PoA financing goals was mixed: while the international community rallied to respond to growing

urgency of HIV/AIDs, funding for reproductive health programs stalled; the proportion of funding dedicated to family planning, in particular, saw steep declines through the early 2000s.⁶⁸ This trend was deeply concerning, as family planning is critical to achieving the ICPD’s central consensus on reproductive autonomy—the “basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so” (paragraph 7.3).

Meanwhile, the number of people of reproductive age around the world was steadily growing, as was the number of people with an unmet need for family planning.⁶⁹ Recognizing that funds for family planning were not commensurate with growing needs, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the U.K. Government, and the United Nations Population Fund organized the 2012 London Summit on Family Planning. The summit succeeded in boosting attention to the value of family planning. It resulted in countries and private donors pledging \$2.6 billion, with the goal of making high-quality, voluntary family planning services, information, and supplies more available, acceptable, and affordable to 120 million additional women in the world’s poorest countries.

The momentum from London did not last long, however, and by 2020, only 60 million additional women were reached⁷⁰ In 2019, the Guttmacher Institute estimated it would take \$12.6 billion to meet the contraceptive service needs of all women in low- and middle-income countries.⁷¹

The latest expenditure data indicate we are far off course. While difficult to measure, FP2030 estimates that domestic government expenditures for family planning in low- and middle-income countries (excluding upper-middle income countries) totaled about \$1.68 billion in 2022, while consumer out-of-pocket expenditures were about \$710



The largest generation in history is on the verge of entering their reproductive years. This is a potent reminder of our 30-year-old commitment to advance sexual and reproductive health care for all, including the fundamental right to access information and services to plan one’s family. A prominent impediment to achieving this goal is persistently inadequate funding.



million.⁷² According to the Kaiser Family Foundation, NGOs and foundations provided about \$290 million, and total donor government funding for family planning in 2022 was \$1.35 billion—a figure almost 15% below the peak level in 2019.⁷³ Taken together, these expenditures add up to \$4.0 billion. The Guttmacher Institute estimated that in 2019 total expenditures on family planning totaled \$7.1 billion. This total is larger because it includes \$3.5 billion of direct costs, \$3.6 billion of health system costs, and the expenditures in upper middle-income countries.⁷⁴ Both estimates, \$4.0 and \$7.1 billion, are a far cry from the estimated need of \$12.6 billion.

As a result, too many people are still left behind, including those living in the “last mile” (i.e., the hardest, most expensive locations for health services to reach), least developed countries, in conflict and humanitarian settings, and in places where social norms, disinformation, or restrictive policies limit people’s abilities to access services. The UN estimates that globally, 190 million women of reproductive age would like to avoid pregnancy but are not using a modern or traditional method of contraception.⁷⁵ Greater funding will be absolutely essential to dismantle the many barriers to family planning use.

U.S. Leadership Is Lagging

While the ICPD PoA outlined a financing framework in which international donors are meant

to provide one-third or more of the costs for family planning and reproductive health (FP/RH) needs globally, the agreement is silent on how that responsibility should be meted out among the international donor community. Advocates have advanced a “fair share” framework, recommending that each country’s share of donor assistance should be based on their wealth as measured by their gross national income.⁷⁶

Of the \$12.6 billion it would take to meet the family planning and reproductive health needs of women in low- and middle-income countries, a one-third share from international donors would be \$4.2 billion and the U.S. “fair share” would be roughly 41%—or about \$1.7 billion annually.⁷⁷ Regrettably, U.S. investment in international family planning and reproductive health programs has stagnated at just over \$600 million for each of the last 14 fiscal years.⁷⁸ While the U.S. remains the largest bilateral donor for these programs globally, this annual investment represents a remarkable reduction of U.S.⁷⁹ government investment in the 30 years since ICPD; its \$580 million investment from 1995 would have the equivalent purchasing power today of over \$1.2 billion.⁸⁰ Many have argued that the dramatic growth in numbers of people of reproductive age around the world over the past decades warrants an even greater investment.⁸¹

ICPD at 30: The Job Is Not Yet Done

In 1994, the world’s population had not yet reached 6 billion, and there were 1.5 billion girls and women of reproductive age around the world; today, we have surpassed 8 billion, including almost 2 billion girls and women of reproductive age. And this number will grow in the coming decades. The goals agreed to at ICPD apply to each of them, yet the core promise of reproductive autonomy is out of reach for far too many—limiting their prospects, and prospects for sustainable development for all.

The largest generation in history is on the verge of entering their reproductive years. This is a potent reminder of our 30-year-old commitment to advance sexual and reproductive health care for all, including the fundamental right to access information and services to plan one’s family. A prominent impediment to achieving this goal is persistently inadequate funding.

The arrival of this largest generation should inspire us to double-down on core investments for family planning and reproductive health. These investments can transform the lives of individuals today, and shape the wellbeing of communities, nations, and the world in the coming decades. For the future welfare of people and the planet, it is time for the U.S. and other donors to recommit to the ambitious goals of ICPD and fully fund the needed programs.



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Development occurs at a defining moment in the history of international cooperation. With the growing recognition of global population, development and environmental interdependence, the opportunity to adopt suitable and socio-economic policies to promote sustained economic growth in the context of sustainable development in all countries and to mobilize human and financial resources for global problem-solving has never been greater. Never has the world community had so many resources, so much knowledge and such powerful technologies at its disposal, which, if suitably redirected, could foster sustained economic growth and sustainable development. None the less, the effective use of resources, knowledge and technology is often conditioned by political and economic obstacles at the national and international levels. Therefore, although ample resources have been available for some time, their use for socially equitable and environmentally sound development has been seriously limited.

1.2 The world has undergone far-reaching changes in the past two decades. Significant progress in fields important for human welfare has been made through national and international efforts. However, the developing countries are still facing serious economic difficulties in an unfavourable international economic environment, the number of people living in absolute poverty has increased in many countries. Around the world many of the basic conditions on which future generations will depend for their survival and well-being are being depleted and environmental degradation is intensifying, driven by unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, unprecedented growth in population, widespread and persistent poverty, and social and economic inequality. Ecological problems, such as global climate change, largely driven by unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, are adding to the threats to the well-being of the world.

international cooperation. With the growing recognition of interdependence, the opportunity to adopt suitable models for economic growth in the context of sustainable development. Resources for global problem-solving has never been greater. Resources, so much knowledge and such powerful technologies to foster sustained economic growth and sustainable development. Knowledge and technologies is conditioned by political and social factors. Therefore, although ample resources have been available, environmentally sound development has been slow to emerge in the past two decades. Significant progress has been made through national and international efforts. However, economic difficulties and an unfavourable international environment. Absolute poverty has increased in many countries. A secure future generations will depend for their survival and well-being on intensifying, driven by unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, widespread and persistent poverty, and so on. Global climate change, largely driven by unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, largely driven by unsustainable patterns of production and consumption. Threats to the well-being of future generations. There is a need for international cooperation in regard to population in the context of sustainable development. Much has been achieved in the context of population in the context of sustainable development. Population is currently estimated at 5.6 billion. While the population is increasing, currently exceeding 86 million people remain above 86 million until the year 2015.1.4 During



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