



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

FACT SHEET

Balancing People and the Environment to Promote Resilient Communities

The health of the planet and its inhabitants depend on the reproductive choices that people make. For countries already struggling to provide adequate food, water, shelter and jobs, rapid population growth can further reduce the possibilities of improving the lives of the poor.

Soil, Erosion, and Water

The thin layer of topsoil that covers much of the earth's land surface is the foundation of civilization yet today perhaps a third of the land's productivity is being lost through erosion. Where losses are heavy, productive land turns into wasteland or desert. Additionally, water sources are being compromised by soil run-off which is spurred by deforestation and farming, yielding a lose-lose situation where the loss also reduces the supply of irrigation water. In the absence of conservation practices, marginal soils tend to marginalize the people who depend on them.⁽¹⁾

Ground water withdrawals can become a problem if the water drops below the level of the well, leaving a community without water. For coastal communities, withdrawing too much fresh groundwater may change water flows so that brackish or salty water contaminates the source.

The Impact of Human Activity

Human activity, including over-farming, over-fishing and over-extraction of resources, is degrading ecosystems, leading to loss of plant and animal species. Some 10% to 30% of mammal, bird, and amphibian species are currently threatened with extinction, and the distribution of species on Earth is becoming more homogenous. Ecosystems are indispensable to human wellbeing and their decline has important implications for the availability of the food, clean water, clean air and natural resources that humans depend on for their health and livelihood.⁽²⁾

The combination of environmental degradation, poor land use patterns, and high population growth worsens the impact of natural disasters.⁽³⁾

USAID's Strategy

Experience shows that long-term conservation cannot be guaranteed unless local communities are thriving. USAID believes that maintaining the balance between people and the environment requires an integrated approach, with activities focused on family planning, food security, basic health, nutrition, income generation, conservation, disease prevention, and access to safe water and sanitation.

Integrated Programs Provide Multiple Benefits

Integrated population, health, and environment (PHE) projects acknowledge and address the complex connection between humans, their health, and their environment. The key objective of these projects is to simultaneously improve access to health services while helping communities manage their natural resources in ways that improve their health and livelihood even as they protect the environment. In the long term, smaller and healthier families contribute to long term environmental gains as population pressure on natural resources is reduced.

Research measuring project effectiveness shows that programs addressing the interaction between health, family planning, and the environment are more efficient and sustainable.⁽⁴⁾ For those working in family planning and reproductive health, partnering with environmental or community development organizations that have on-going projects and established relationships with these communities allows the delivery of needed health services to underserved populations in a highly effective, cost-efficient manner.

Programs that promote better resource management to protect the environment and preserve nature's productive capacity benefit as well. By providing family planning and other health programs, environmental organizations build goodwill in communities because they are responding to local needs in a holistic fashion. In the long run, development benefits too. Smaller families tend to be healthier families that are better able to contribute to nations' economic growth and improved management and conservation of natural resources. Stronger economies can afford to invest more in protecting the environment, even during such natural disasters as drought, flooding, and cyclones. Sustainable population growth can reduce the demand for and pressure on the natural resources.

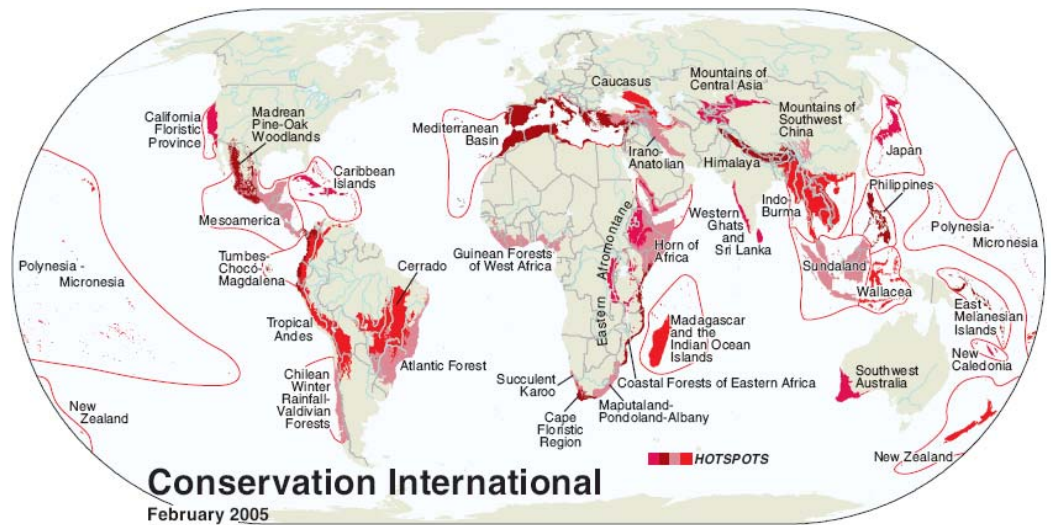
USAID Family Planning Programs Promote Conservation, Good Health

USAID employs a two-prong approach to reducing population-related pressures on the environment.

1.) Program resources are concentrated on priority countries where fertility rates are highest and unmet need for contraception is greatest. Lowering fertility through voluntary family planning helps stabilize global and country-level population growth, reducing its ecological impact.

2.) Since 2002, USAID has worked to directly integrate the provision of voluntary family planning in biological corridors or buffer zones, where population pressure most threatens endangered plant and animal species and conservation work is already underway. Since these areas are usually remote, communities also desire access to other basic health services such as immunizations, disease prevention, and water and sanitation. The goal of these activities is to create integrated population, health, environment models that can be scaled up and replicated elsewhere.

Many biodiversity hotspots are under threat because of population growth and migration. A 1995 study found that some 1.1 billion people, or 20% of the global population, were living within the 25 hotspots. Moreover, the average annual population growth rate in these areas was 1.8%, substantially higher than the 1.4% global rate and even above the average for developing countries, at 1.6%.⁽⁵⁾



Ironically, unmet demand for family planning is often highest in these threatened areas where communities have little to no access to information and services. Improving access to voluntary family planning programs that address couples' desires to freely choose the number and spacing of their children can slow the rate of population growth. As a result, family planning programs can be a meaningful and cost-effective component of environmentally friendly sustainable development programs.

Program Examples

USAID's integrated PHE programs include a wide variety of interventions, depending on the communities' needs and local capacity. The examples below show how USAID has linked family planning, health, and conservation activities to make these interventions more effective and more sustainable.

The work of the agency encompasses:

- Community-based distribution of family planning commodities in communities living in or around biodiversity hotspots
- Malaria prevention through bio-environmental controls and promotion of insecticide bednets
- Provision of community based volunteers who work as both agricultural extension agents and family planning counselors
- Behavior change communication and education that focuses on the importance of a clean healthy environment and small and healthy families.
- Policy advocacy to encourage policies that support family planning and environmental management as a basic services of local governments.

Successful Communities from Ridge to Reef, Kenya. Designated a UNESCO reserve in 1980, Kiunga National Marine Reserve boasts outstanding marine biodiversity of over 11,000 species, of which 60-70% are unique to the Indo-Pacific Ocean. The reserve's remoteness and its isolation from other economic centers has meant that communities living in and near the reserve depend on the reserve's resources for their traditional livelihoods of fishing and mangrove harvesting. It has also meant that health and family planning services are non-existent. With funding from USAID, WWF has been able to provide these communities with access to family planning through a mobile clinic which provides family planning information and services. Although WWF has worked in the area for over 25 years, they now report that community members are more likely to participate in their conservation activities now that they know WWF is willing to help them meet their basic health needs.

Healthy Families, Healthy Forests in Cambodia. The Cambodia/Vietnam war that began in the 1970s drove the indigenous Khmer Daeum communities from their homes in the tropical Cardamom forest. When they returned to their traditional land in the 1990s, they found that it had been depleted by logging and agriculture. With USAID support, Conservation International has helped the Khmer Daeum replenish their land and provided their communities with their first-ever access to family planning information and services. Integrated messages about the link between a healthy environment and

Facts and Figures

- Over the next four decades, the world's population – currently 6.7 billion – is projected to increase by nearly 40% to 9.2 billion. By 2050, 85% of the population – 7.9 billion people – are likely to live in less-developed regions.⁽⁶⁾
- Worldwide, 1.7 million deaths occur annually as a result of inadequate water, sanitation, and hygiene. Estimates indicate that 1 to 2 billion of the world's people have an insufficient supply of water; some 1.1 billion people lack access to clean water; and 2.6 billion lack improved sanitation. Half the urban populations in developing regions have water- and sanitation-related diseases.⁽²⁾
- After declining in the last quarter of the 20th century, the world's undernourished population is growing. Although per capita food production has increased in the last 40 years, 852 million people worldwide were undernourished in 2000-2002, an increase of 37 million from 1997-1999.⁽²⁾⁽⁷⁾
- As the world's population increases, so does the need for cultivated land. Between 1950 and 1980, more land was converted to cropland between 1950 and 1980 than in the 150 years between 1700 and 1850. Demand for food crops is expected to grow by 70% to 85% over the next 50 years.⁽²⁾
- In 2008, for the first time in history, half the world's people – some 3.3 billion – live in urban areas. By 2030, that number is expected to grow to 5 billion, 80% of whom will live in towns and cities in the developing world.⁽⁸⁾

smaller, healthier families have encouraged these villagers to develop long-term land use plans for their settled land and conservation plans for the lands bordering the forest. One immediate outcome was the creation of local women's associations that play an important role in mobilizing the community to increase income earning opportunities, providing access to health and family planning programs, and strengthening participation, particularly of women, in conservation activities.

Linking food security and family planning in Philippine coastal areas. In the Philippines, only 3% of the original primary forest cover remains intact and 5% of the coral reefs remain in pristine condition. Rapid population growth due to high fertility and internal migration threatens both natural resources and the rural Filipinos who depend on these resources for their livelihood. With support from USAID, the Integrated Population and Coastal Resource Management (IPOPCORM) project focuses on communities in the Philippines' most endangered coastal reef areas. IPOPCORM works to improve food security by sustainably managing fisheries and promoting family planning in fragile coastal areas. The program garnered strong support from local mayors and community members who appreciate IPOPCORM's focus on improving livelihoods of their villages. USAID also recently supported operations research to demonstrate the impact of the integrated IPOPCORM approach on key population and environment indicators.

Population and natural resource management in Madagascar. In Madagascar, home to Africa's greatest concentration of unique plant and animal species, the search for a solution to rapid deforestation, coupled with high rates of population growth, led to the development of an innovative population and environment program. USAID/Madagascar links community-based natural resource management with interventions to improve health and family planning in remote, rural areas of Madagascar, allowing for better preservation of the island's unique biodiversity while improving the health status of communities living in and around these forest corridors. The program works with local communities to support family planning services, sustainable agriculture, good governance, improved food production, income generation, and environmental education.

Community-Centered Conservation in Tanzania. Through funding by USAID/Tanzania, The Jane Goodall Institute's TACARE project works to eliminate poverty and support sustainable livelihoods while halting the rapid destruction of natural resources. The project's aim is to improve the lives of the human population in the Tanzania, while promoting conservation and an understanding of the need to preserve the biodiversity of the area for the benefit of all who live in it. The community-based approach of providing family planning methods, information, and counseling by community volunteers has resulted in a greater acceptance of family planning. TACARE's innovative community-based approach is now being replicated in the Democratic Republic of Congo with funding from USAID/Washington.

In the **Andean highlands of Ecuador**, USAID supported a collaborative operations research effort by CEMOPLAF, one of Ecuador's largest family planning providers, World Neighbors, a U.S. based NGO, and the University of Michigan's Population-Environment Fellows Program. The study successfully quantified the benefits of integrating family planning programs and information with agriculture and natural resource management programs.

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Resources: (1) SOIL EROSION: WIND AND WATER. Eroding Soils and Shrinking Cropland, Lester R. Brown, *Plan B: Rescuing a Planet Under Stress and a Civilization in Trouble* (W.W. Norton & Co., NY: 2003). (2) Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, 2005. *Ecosystems and Human Well-being: Synthesis*. Island Press, Washington, DC. (3) De Souza, Roger-Mark; Colson, Lisa; Fricas, Jennifer, Reporting on Population, Health and the Environment: 2007, Population Reference Bureau, www.prb.org. (4) Pielemeier J. Review of population-health-environment programs supported by the Packard Foundation and USAID. Available online at <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/events/docs/Pielemeier%20USAID%20Report1.doc>. (5) CINCOTTA, R., WISNEWSKI, J., and ENGELMAN, R. Human population in the biodiversity hotspots. *Nature* 404: 990-992. Apr. 27, 2000. (Map) Conservation International (2007) Biodiversity Hotspots <http://www.biodiversityhotspots.org/xp/Hotspots/resources/pages/maps.aspx> (6) United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (2007). World Population Prospects: The 2006 Revision, Highlights, Working Paper No. ESA/P/WP.202. (7) World Food Programme Web site (http://www.wfp.org/aboutwfp/introduction/hunger_what.asp?section=1&sub_section=1). (8) *The State of World Population 2007*. United Nations Population Fund.