

**A Population Conference:
Perspectives, Goals and Actions**

March 23 & 24, 2014 • Washington DC

Workshop Report

**Population:
Giving voice to the elephant in the room
*Perspectives, Goals and Action***

March 24, 2014
Embassy Row Hotel, Washington D.C.

Co-hosted by:
The Population Media Center
The Millennium Alliance for Humanity and the Biosphere

With Generous Funding from the:
The Weeden Foundation
The Winslow Foundation

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**POPULATION
MEDIA CENTER**
Acting for Change

A Population Conference:

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*Co-hosted by the
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Population: Giving Voice to the Elephant in the Room— Perspectives, Goals and Action

On March 23/24, 2014 the Population Media Center and the Millennium Alliance for Humanity and the Biosphere co-hosted an expert workshop on the role of global population levels in environmental degradation and the threat of collapse.

Our underlying concern was the “perfect storm” of problems now facing humanity and the gap between our deep understanding of the problems and the failure of governments, institutions, and individuals to develop new patterns of behavior that will reverse the current trends. The storm includes lethal and escalating threats posed by the destruction of our life support systems traceable to current global population size and growth, and overconsumption by wealthy individuals and nations, and manifested by climate disruption, toxification of the planet, dramatic reductions in biodiversity, resource wars, widespread poverty, financial crises, and a growing gap between rich and poor (to name just some of the most prominent). Even though scholars in the natural and social sciences have extensively explored the issues and worked with civil society to produce popular books, films, blogs, and lectures, human beings and their many enterprises continue to deplete natural capital at rates far faster than it can be replenished, to degrade essential ecosystem services, and place society on an increasingly dangerous trajectory.

Our goal was to explore the feasibility of fostering a 21st century social movement addressing one driver of these interwoven threats: population levels.

The workshop was divided into two parts with Day#1 designed to foster candid conversation among the disparate voices on a global population rapidly exceeding available resources to care for itself. On Day#2 we invited leaders in high profile NGOs and social movements to discuss insights into their successes and failures with initiatives to change policy and foster social change (agendas for each attached).

A complete list of participants, agendas, and recommended readings can be found at <http://mahb.stanford.edu/population-workshop/>.

Results

The goal of the workshop was to explore the feasibility of launching a twenty-first century social movement addressing over-population. Three barriers to the initiative surfaced in the discussions:

1. While there was significantly more agreement than anticipated on hard issues, such as the need to reduce global population levels, the group could not agree beyond the concept. Prior to the workshop we were concerned that even talking about a “reduction” would be vociferously opposed: we were wrong. However, some in the group resisted setting or even discussing seriously what such a target should be. The underlying concern voiced aggressively by a small minority, was that by openly setting a target, the group would be silently supporting human rights violations against women and the right for each woman to decide how many children she wants.
2. A barrier to moving forward with a broad based social movement at this time is that some participants seemed to identify with “*their* solution” rather than the problem and the opportunity to explore alternative solutions and strategies to the acknowledged problem of over-population. For example, championing the post-Cairo agenda of ensuring comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) for all people is one viable path forward. Yet, for example, if advocacy for this approach presumes to intellectually preclude or condemn creative thinking and hypotheses of other as yet un-thought of strategies that equally protect or strengthen human rights, it risks becoming dogma rather than a guiding light.
3. An unanticipated challenge was that, for some, it was extremely difficult to discuss population levels without discussing in-depth the environmental impacts and resource scarcity associated with over-population. For purposes of clarity and in order to achieve our goal, the conference organizers decided that it would be impossible to present an in-depth analysis of the relationship between population levels and earth’s carrying capacity and to explore the social movement imperative in a two day meeting. The organizers decided to focus on building a shared perspective on the interconnected complex issues associated with over-population without focusing on one dimension. As such we had presentations on the first day on global trends in population, migration, human-rights, economics, and the environment.

Perhaps more important than these broad issues which describe the barriers to launching an effective population social movement are the principles or areas of apparent consensus:

1. All adults everywhere need and deserve unrestricted access to modern contraception and family planning information and services,
2. Efforts to ensure unrestricted access to, and voluntary use of, such contraception and family planning information and services can accurately be defined as human-rights enhancing initiatives and deserve the full support of all laypeople, policy-makers, elected leaders and (especially) global human-rights activists.
3. Achieving universal, unrestricted access to contraception and family planning information and services not only strengthens human-rights, *per se* – but such access also reliably creates the conditions where smaller family size decisions become more common and unintended and unwanted pregnancies less common. Thousands, millions and billions of such outcomes and decisions create, in the aggregate, positive systemic effects on global fertility, human population dynamics and the human footprint on the planet.
4. Each new and existing individual human being unequivocally adds to the base-line of resource needs and demands that the Earth is expected to satisfy (i.e. sufficient food and shelter to support healthy human development). As access to contraception and family planning information and services become more widespread, they reliably work to slow down population growth and, as such, cause for further incremental pressure on the Earth is avoided. This dynamic is to be welcomed and promoted in an era of climate change, ecosystem deterioration and mass extinctions.
5. Meanwhile, total resource production and consumption need both 1) overall reductions, and 2) a restructuring within the scaled down totals to contribute to social justice imperatives. For example, a minority of the human population is consuming egregiously beyond their minimum needs, while billions struggle to survive on a bare minimum – and thousands die on a daily basis because they cannot satisfy their minimum requirements. The socio-economic relationships which allow this to happen are both failures and condemnable.
6. Global population stabilization and subsequent declines will be a pleasing, positive and relatively near-term (e.g. 35 years) result of fully meeting the human rights of all peoples in terms of ensuring universal, unrestricted access to contraception and family planning information and services, plus educating girls and elevating the status of women. This will require robust and sustained financing and strong, unyielding political will.

7. Meaningful changes to current population trajectories will not occur without a concerted effort by citizens concerned about planetary boundaries insisting on responding to the unmet need for contraception and family planning information and services.

8. Efforts to address both 1) unmet need for contraception and family planning information and services, and 2) human population growth, are often diluted and weakened by tactical and strategic differences among those *simultaneously concerned with both challenges*; for example, those who feel one or the other of the challenges should enjoy strategic and practical primacy often attempt to dominate conversations and control narratives offered to the public. Subsequently there is often a collective failure to hold the goal of stabilizing and decreasing global population levels at the same level of esteem as the goal of meeting unmet need for contraception and family planning information and services and vice-versa. For effective action to manifest on both fronts, there can be no subordinate partner in this dual effort.

The workshop organizers believe that these eight principles are a solid foundation for moving forward to carefully organize a twenty-first century population social movement. However, rather than attempting to include all perspectives presented at the workshop, we believe that a solid core of similarly-minded professionals should form the planning and coordinating heart of such a movement. The broader community of professionals interested in population can decide over time to join the movement or not—and we believe they will, for we all share the same ultimate concern about the future of humanity and threat of collapse. The organizers believe that the March workshop demonstrated that there is sufficient interest, urgency, and energy to begin a deliberate and carefully constructed initiative.

Budget

Revenue:

Weeden Foundation Grant:	\$25,000
Winslow Foundation Grant:	\$25,000
<i>Total Revenue:</i>	\$50,000

Expenses:

Lodging and Hospitality:	\$33,207
Attendee Travel:	\$15,971
Conference Supplies:	\$694
Miscellaneous:	\$178
<i>Total Expenses:</i>	\$50,050

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Attachments:

1. Agenda March 23, 2014
2. Agenda March 24, 2014
3. Workshop result: Recommendation to United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network
4. Biographies of Conference Chairs William Ryerson and Paul Ehrlich
5. Biographies of NGO speakers on Day#2

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Attachment 1: Agenda March 23, 2014

Millennium Alliance for Humanity and the Biosphere &

Population Media Center

Washington DC, Sunday, March 23, 2014

Embassy Row Hotel, 2015 Massachusetts Ave, NW; Washington DC

Population: Giving Voice to the Elephant in the Room— Perspectives, Goals and Action

8:30: Coffee/Registration

9:00: Joe Bish: *Welcome/Logistics*

Bill Ryerson: *Why Convene?*

Paul Ehrlich: *Population: A real culprit*

Joan Diamond: *Goldilocks and the Vortex*

9:15: Group Introductions: *Introduce yourself, your organization and its primary mission (30 seconds)*

9:45-: Critical issues in population: Briefings, Chair, Bill Ryerson

1. Overview: Current population projections and trends: *J. Bish*
2. The Elephant May be our Friend: *M. Potts*
3. Overview: Population, Resources and Environmental Crisis: *E. Barry*
4. Human Rights: At the heart of the population challenge: *V. Mohan*
5. Economics and Population: Partners in Crime: *C. Martensen*
6. Migration: Complex, sensitive and important: *P. Martin*
7. Current Events in Family Planning: *K. Newman*

Response, Ken Weiss

12:30: Lunch small group discussions based on the morning discussion

**1:30: Working Groups: Population Imperative—Moving off the collapse trajectory
Chair, Joan Diamond**

Small groups will be given a series of activities as we set mission critical goals

1. **At what level and by when should global population stabilize? After it stops growing, do we need to reduce it and if so, by when and by how**

- much must it decline?**
- 2. Milestones for 2025: What must happen by 2025 to achieve these targets?**
 - 3. What if milestones are not met: the consequences of failure;**

4:30: Assign presenters for Monday's session

4:40: Debrief

5:00: Adjourn

6:00-8:00 Reception in hotel

Brief welcome by Bill and Paul

Logistics: Where to be when on Monday...

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Attachment 2: Agenda March 24, 2014

Millennium Alliance for Humanity and the Biosphere

&

Population Media Center

Monday, March 24, 2014

Embassy Row Hotel, 2015 Massachusetts Ave, NW; Washington DC

Population: Giving Voice to the Elephant in the Room— Understanding Strategy and Moving from goals to effective action

8:30: Coffee/Registration

8:45 Welcome and Logistics: Joe Bish

Bill Ryerson, President Population Media Center: *What prompted this meeting*

Paul Ehrlich: *Role and challenge of interconnected global problems*

9:00: Group Introductions

9:15: Summary of Day 1: Critical issues and milestones for stabilizing population

9:30: Panel: Lessons Learned from highly effective social change organizations

Chair: Professor David Johns, Political Science, Portland State University

- **Erik Assadourian, Senior Fellow, Worldwatch Institute**
- **Edith Jibunoh, Advisor, World Bank Group, Global Engagement Unit**
- **Don Kraus, President and CEO, Global Solutions**
- **Shelley Silbert, Executive Director, Great Old Broads For Wilderness**
- **Roy Speckhardt, Executive Director, American Humanist Association**
- **Glenn Prickett, The Nature Conservancy**
- **Joan Blades, Co-Founder, MoveOn.org (by SKYPE)**

12:00: Lunch with panelists, unstructured conversation

1:00: Review, reconsider, revise targets set on Day#1

1:45: Set specific goals/action plans for 2025

3:30: Wrap up and summary comments

4:00: Adjourn

M A H B

MILLENNIUM ALLIANCE FOR HUMANITY AND THE BIOSPHERE

On March 23/24, 2014 the Population Media Center and the Millennium Alliance for Humanity and the Biosphere co-hosted an expert workshop on the role of global population levels in environmental degradation and the threat of collapse.

Our underlying concern was the “perfect storm” of problems now facing humanity and the gap between our understanding of the problems and the failure of governments, institutions, and individuals to develop new patterns of behavior that will reverse the current trends. The storm includes lethal and escalating threats posed by the destruction of our life support systems traceable to current global population size and growth, and overconsumption by wealthy individuals and nations, and manifested by climate disruption, toxification of the planet, resource wars, widespread poverty, financial crises, and a growing gap between rich and poor (to name just some of the most prominent). Even though scholars in the natural and social sciences have extensively explored the issues and worked with civil society to produce popular books, films, blogs, and lectures, human beings and their many enterprises continue to deplete natural capital at rates far faster than it can be replenished, to degrade essential ecosystem services, and place society on an increasingly dangerous trajectory.

Our goal was to explore the feasibility of fostering a 21st century social movement addressing one driver of these interwoven threats: population levels.

After attending the workshop, Dr. Alaka Basu brought to our attention your draft SDSN indicator report, which addresses these issues from a comprehensive perspective and lays out indicators and frameworks for pathways to achieving sustainable development within planetary boundaries.

Working with the organizing committee of the workshop and with input from Professor Basu, we would like to suggest you consider including the following indicators under Goal 2c. We realize that some of these indicators relate to other goals and targets, but we have not cross-referenced them for co-benefits. The suggested indicators are:

- Proportion of population with unrestricted access to contraceptive knowledge and supplies within 10 kms of their homes;
- Availability of a full spectrum of ‘modern’ methods of contraception through official family planning programs;
- Proportion of schools offering age appropriate sex education beginning in primary school;

- Legal status of abortion;
- Access to safe abortion services and post-procedure care;
- Proportion of women who say they have full voice in determining the number of children they have, including factors such as domestic and sexual violence and coercion;
- Proportion of girls getting married before the age of 18;
- Proportion of women whose desired fertility rate is lower than local replacement level fertility.

A fundamental concern of ours is that if we, as global citizens, are truly concerned about sustainability, our measures dealing with population dynamics must reflect the fact that sustainability and equity cannot be achieved unless global TFR falls to less than replacement level. This was a key conclusion of the workshop, and confidence was great that this can be achieved within a human rights framework, humanely, equitably and with the values necessary for healthy societies.

We recognize that we are entering your conversation on population and planetary boundaries in the eleventh hour; however, if we can be helpful in any way, please let us know.

Paul Ehrlich
Bing Professor of Population Studies, Stanford University

William Ryerson
President CEO of the Population Institute and President of the Population Media Center

Joan Diamond
Executive Director, Millennium Alliance for Humanity and the Biosphere

Joe Bish
Senior Population Communications Associate, Population Media Center

Population: Giving voice to the elephant in the room Perspectives, Goals and Action

Conference Chairs:

Paul E. Ehrlich

Paul Ehrlich is Bing Professor of Population Studies, President of the Center for Conservation Biology, Department of Biology, Stanford University and Adjunct Professor, University of Technology, Sydney. He does research in population biology (includes ecology, evolutionary biology, behavior, and human ecology and cultural evolution). Ehrlich has carried out field, laboratory, and theoretical research on a wide array of problems ranging from the dynamics and genetics of insect populations, studies of the ecological and evolutionary interactions of plants and herbivores, and the behavioral ecology of birds and reef fishes, to experimental studies of the effects of crowding on human beings and studies of cultural evolution. He is heavily involved in the Millennium Alliance for Humanity and the Biosphere (MAHB -- <http://mahb.stanford.edu/>) and is author and coauthor of more than 1000 scientific papers and articles in the popular press and over 40 books. Ehrlich is a Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the Beijer Institute of Ecological Economics, and a member of the United States National Academy of Sciences and the American Philosophical Society. He is a Foreign Member of the Royal Society and an Honorary Member of the British Ecological Society. Among his many other honors are the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, Crafoord Prize in Population Biology and the Conservation of Biological Diversity (an explicit replacement for the Nobel Prize); a MacArthur Prize Fellowship; the Volvo Environment Prize; UNEP Sasakawa Environment Prize; the Heinz Award for the Environment; the Tyler Prize for Environmental Achievement; the Heineken Prize for Environmental Sciences; the Blue Planet Prize; the Eminent Ecologist award of the Ecological Society of America, and the Margalef Prize in Ecology and Environmental Sciences.. Dr. Ehrlich has appeared as a guest on hundreds of TV and radio programs; he also was a correspondent for NBC News. He has given many public lectures in the past 40 years.

William N, Ryerson:

William N. Ryerson is Founder and President of Population Media Center (PMC) (www.populationmedia.org), an organization that strives to improve the health and well being of people around the world through the use of entertainment-education strategies. He also serves as Chair and CEO of The Population Institute in Washington, DC (www.populationinstitute.org), which works in partnership with Population Media Center. He has a 40-year history of working in the field of reproductive health, including two decades of experience adapting the Sabido methodology of social change communications to various cultural settings worldwide. He received a B.A. in Biology (Magna Cum Laude) from Amherst College and an M.Phil. in Biology from Yale University (with specialization in Ecology and Evolution). He served as Director of the Population Institute's Youth and Student Division, Development Director of Planned Parenthood Southeastern Pennsylvania, Associate Director of Planned Parenthood of Northern New England and Executive Vice President of Population Communications International before founding Population Media Center in 1998.

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Panel: Lessons Learned from highly effective organizations

Erik Assadourian is a Senior Fellow at Worldwatch Institute. Over the past twelve years with Worldwatch, Erik has directed *two editions of Vital Signs* and four editions of *State of the World*, including the latest [State of the World 2013: Is Sustainability Still Possible?](#) Erik also directs Worldwatch's [Transforming Cultures project](#), and designed [Catan: Oil Springs](#), an eco-educational scenario for the popular board game *Settlers of Catan*. Erik also spends some of his energy promoting the need for [economic degrowth](#) in overdeveloped countries, a topic he wrote about for [State of the World 2012](#). Erik is currently working to produce an eco-themed reality TV show. He is also spending a lot of his time raising his toddler son to prepare him for the ecological transition and civilizational collapse most likely in our future. He's chronicling this at www.raisinganecowarrior.net.

Edith Jibunoh is the World Bank Group's Adviser for Global Engagement with civil society. In this role, she will lead the institution's engagement with global civil society and foster strategic partnerships based on shared values and priorities. Prior to joining the Bank, Edith was the Global Policy Director at the ONE Campaign in Washington D.C. with oversight of the organization's policy programs in Health, Agriculture, Transparency and Accountability, and Energy. She also served as its Director of Multilateral Institutions and as Senior Manager of African Outreach. Prior to ONE, Edith worked as an Economist in the Office of the Senior Special Assistant on the MDGs in Nigeria and as an Adviser to Nigeria's Minister of Finance. Edith returns to the World Bank after working in the World Bank's East Asia region and UN office in New York early in her career. She is a founding member of her father's environmental organization, the Fight Against Desert Encroachment (FADE), an Archbishop Desmond Tutu African Leadership Fellow and a member of the African Leadership Network.

Don Kraus: Don Kraus is the President & CEO of GlobalSolutions.org and its political arm, Global Solutions Action Network. GlobalSolutions.org is a groundbreaking online movement for Americans who want the United States to take a responsible and cooperative role in the world.

Don previously served as Global Solutions' Executive Vice-President where he directed its PAC and Government Relations Department. Prior to that, he served as the Executive Director of Campaign for UN Reform and the affiliated CUNR PAC. An expert in building U.S. political support for the U.N. and other international institutions, Don brings his considerable enthusiasm and drive to advocating for responsible global policies.

Don is also a past president emeritus of the Center for UN Reform Education. He currently serves on the boards of PeacePAC, the Herbert Scoville Jr. Peace Fellowship, World Federalist Movement - Institute for Global Policy, and the advisory board of United Nations Association, National Capitol Area.

Shelley Silbert is the Executive Director of Great Old Broads for Wilderness, a national organization based in Durango, Colorado that engages and ignites the activism of elders to protect wilderness and wild lands. From 2003 to 2011, Shelley served as Director of Strategic Environmental Initiatives at Northern Arizona University, where she founded and chaired the Environmental Caucus and developed environmental and Native American initiatives for the university. From 1994-2003, she directed The Nature Conservancy's Northern Arizona Program, managing three nature preserves and leading conservation programs, ecological restoration projects, ecoregional planning, and public open space campaigns. Shelley has an M.A. in Watershed Management from the University of Arizona and a B.A. in Anthropology and Health Care from the University of Tennessee. She is originally from Nashville.

Glenn Prickett is Chief External Affairs Officer at The Nature Conservancy (www.nature.org), the leading organization working around the world to conserve the lands and waters on which life depends. Glenn is a member of the TNC's executive team and oversees government relations and public policy, corporate engagements and sustainability efforts, and relationships with leading international institutions and non-governmental organizations. Glenn joined The Nature Conservancy in January 2010 after two decades working on international environment and development policy.

Glenn spent 13 years at Conservation International where he led efforts to engage the private and public sectors in conservation and sustainability. Glenn founded and led CI's Center for Environmental Leadership in Business, a division created to engage the private sector in developing solutions to environmental challenges. During his time at CI, Glenn also led the organization's policy and climate change teams. In 2009, Prickett served as a senior fellow at the United Nations Foundation to help shape core elements of an effective global response to climate change. Glenn served in the Clinton Administration as chief environmental advisor at the U.S. Agency for International Development, where he coordinated policy and budget for U.S. environmental and energy assistance to developing nations. Glenn began his career in 1989 as a senior associate with the international program of the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Glenn graduated from Yale University in 1988 with a B.A. in economics and political science. He lives in Great Falls, Virginia with his wife, Lisa, and sons, Benjamin and Jed. Aside from his family and conservation, Glenn's other passion is music. He performs with the Oxymorons (www.oxymorons.com), a blues, rock, and funk band in Washington, DC.

Roy Speckhardt is executive director of the American Humanist Association in Washington, DC, serving in that role since 2005. He is a frequent media commentator, having appeared on Good Morning America, CNN, Fox News, and NPR, among others. He also writes regular columns for The Huffington Post and Patheos, and gives speeches at colleges, conferences, and local humanist groups across the country. Speckhardt also serves on the boards of The Institute for Humanist Studies, the United Coalition of Reason, The Humanist Institute, and the Secular Coalition for America Education Fund. He served as deputy director of The Interfaith Alliance from 1995 to 2001. Speckhardt holds an M.B.A. from George Mason University and a B.A. in sociology from Mary Washington College.

Joan Blades is co-founder of MoveOn.org and MomsRising.org. She is a Great Work Cultures champion and co-authored *The Custom-Fit Workplace: Choose When Where and How to Work and Boost Your Bottom Line*. She is winner of a Nautilus book award <http://customfitworkplace.org/> - the core message- when employers create jobs that honor workers' responsibilities at work and outside of work, they benefit from high productivity, low turn over and the ability to easily attract talent when hiring. She also co-wrote *The Motherhood Manifesto* which won the Ernesta Drinker Ballard Book Prize in 2007. She is a co-creator of Living Room Conversations (<http://livingroomconversations.org/>), an open source effort to rebuild respectful civil discourse across ideological, cultural and party lines while embracing our core-shared values. She is a software entrepreneur (a co-founder of Berkeley Systems - best known for the flying toaster and game You Don't Know Jack.), nature lover, former attorney/mediator, artist and true believer in the power of citizens and our need to rebuild respectful civil discourse while embracing our core shared values.