

## **Thriving Together: Environmental Conservation and Family Planning**

People and nature are interdependent, and health underpins both. Human communities and ecosystems best support each other when the needs of each are met in tandem.

We know that:

- Successful biodiversity conservation requires taking into account people, our health, and our interactions with the natural world.
- The United Nations considers it likely that the world population will rise from 7.6 billion today to over 9.7 billion by 2050. Most of this growth will be in low and middle income nations.
- Poor rural communities in developing nations face the greatest barriers to use of and access to reproductive health services, including family planning. These barriers prevent women from choosing freely when and whether to have children, threaten family health, create challenges for girls who want to complete their education, and lead to higher levels of fertility and more rapid rates of population growth.
- Poor rural communities often depend most directly on natural resources for their livelihoods, food, water, shelter and cultural practices. When localised, or combined local and global human pressures on ecosystems intensify, both community health and environmental health suffer.
- There is very often an overlap of areas facing the greatest need for improved reproductive health services and for conservation.
- Family planning contributes to women's empowerment, improves family and general health, advances education and life opportunities and, by slowing population growth, eases pressures on wildlife and ecosystems. Sustaining functional, biodiverse environments becomes less plausible in some areas if population growth follows average UN projections.
- As agreed at the 1994 UN International Conference on Population and Development, family planning must be grounded in human rights and reproductive intentions, the fundamental basis for collaborative cross-sector activities.
- Some conservation and reproductive health organisations have joined forces to combine activities. Project data shows this has led to increased family planning use, improved health and gender relations, and increased support for and participation in conservation. These multisector approaches can be more cost-effective, and generate more sustainable results.

We believe that:

- Like education and nutrition, family planning is fundamental to human dignity and critical for human health and development.
- Population data are among the relevant evidence when considering health and conservation action.
- Increasing human pressures are among the many challenges facing planetary health. By harming ecosystems we undermine food and water security and human health, and we threaten habitats and species. Ensuring family planning is available to all who seek it is among the positive actions we must take to lessen these pressures.
- Integrating reproductive health improvements with sustainable natural resource management is a valuable development approach.

We acknowledge that the future health of our planet has never been more uncertain, and that the health of people and ecosystems are connected. The Sustainable Development Goals call for integrated solutions. We work in health, conservation and related fields and believe that by sharing information and working together on strategic projects and policies we can help human communities and their ecosystems thrive.

**FINAL**  
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