

POPULATION CONNECTION

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**ENVIRONMENTAL MIGRANTS, PUSHED FROM
HOME BY CLIMATE CHANGE**



President's Note

Students on more than 300 college campuses around the United States are receiving the Population Connection message through our grassroots outreach. We see firsthand that young people are deeply concerned about the future and willing to work hard to change our course.

Here are some recent student comments following my presentations, of which I've done two dozen this spring alone:

"Interesting how much population growth can decrease if we increase education of women, provide birth control, and change reproductive health laws."

– Daniel, Widener University

"I enjoyed the demeanor and calmness of the presentation. Even if the subject matter is a little more than daunting with regards to our future."

– Ben, California State University, Northridge

"I have very strong conservative views, but the presentation was very insightful and thought provoking."

– Ian, Duke University

"First time in my four years [in college] that a presenter has talked about women's rights. Very refreshing."

– Vanessa, University of Maryland, Baltimore County

Population Connection is working with our sister organization, [Population Connection Action Fund](#), to raise awareness of domestic and international population challenges. Our new #Fight4HER campaign seeks permanent repeal of the odious

Global Gag Rule. Highlights from our #Fight4HER campaign this spring include:

- Presenting a cardboard cutout of Sen. Cory Gardner with the 'Worst Women's Advocate' Award, in front of his state office in Fort Collins, CO;
- Holding an "empty chair" town hall for Sen. Thom Tillis in Chapel Hill, NC that engaged folks on social media using #TimidTillis and #Fight4HER;
- Organizing a teach-in at Ohio State University on International Women's Day that drew 1,000 students, staff, and community members to an all-day series of talks, followed by a march; and
- Delivering 22,000 petitions to Sen. Pat Toomey's office in Allentown, PA to support the Global HER Act.

This spring's high point came when [352 activists representing 34 states and 131 congressional districts spent a weekend one block from the White House learning about our issue](#), and then took to Capitol Hill to deliver our message to 190 congressional offices.

We have a dozen people working on campuses to provide thousands of students with practical ways to help achieve population stabilization. The passion and commitment shown by today's young people inspire us at Population Connection every day.

John Seager

john@popconnect.org

Erik E. Bergstrom (1940-2017)



There are smart people, and there are wise people. Erik Bergstrom possessed both intelligence and wisdom in abundance. The foundation he and his wife, Edith, created exemplified his sagacity. Since its founding in 2002, the [Erik and Edith Bergstrom Foundation](#) has fulfilled a clear-eyed vision of a better world—with a special focus on population stabilization, birth control, and the empowerment of women. Never shying away from tough challenges, alongside Edith, Erik was devoted to making our crowded, troubled world a better place. In these times, that provides much-needed cause for hope.



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Cover Photo

One of the many *ger* districts that have sprung up in recent years in the hills around the edge of Mongolia's capital, Ulaanbaatar. Climate change and the end of Soviet support have forced 600,000 Mongolian herders to migrate to the city from the steppe. *Photo: David Levene*

Back Cover Photo

A boy herds goats and sheep in Ladakh, India.

Photo: Md Shabnewaz Khan, Courtesy of Photoshare



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Editor's Note

Sustained drought. Frequent flooding. Desertification. Extreme temperatures. Sea level rise. Natural disasters, including hurricanes, tornadoes, and wildfires.

Nearly 15 million people were displaced in 2015 due to weather-related events. Three-quarters of them were women.

Environmental events can push people from their homes just as forcefully as can violence and persecution. When crops won't grow or keep getting washed out before harvesting, when livestock dies by the hundreds in recurring cold snaps or droughts, and when the land a community sits on begins sinking or the sea rises to engulf it, the impossibly difficult consideration whether to leave for greener pastures—literally—becomes necessary.

Pacific Island countries have been exploring community-wide migration due to sea level rise for years. The Lateu settlement on the island of Tegua in Vanuatu took apart their homes and moved inland in 2005. The 1,500 residents of the Carteret Atoll in Papua New Guinea have been moving to nearby Bougainville Island to escape rising seas for the past three decades. Taro Island, the capital of Choiseul province in the Solomon Islands, is the first provincial capital to relocate in its entirety—all 600 residents have moved to the Choiseul mainland. New Zealand has begun absorbing citizens of Tuvalu, and has said it will accept the entire country's population if their island is swallowed by the sea—a seeming inevitability. The government of Kiribati bought land in 2014 in Fiji, where it plans to relocate its 100,000 citizens starting in 2020. They're calling the preemptive move "migration with dignity."

These may be the starkest examples of ecological/environmental migration, but the phenomenon isn't confined to distant, exotic Pacific Islands.

Communities in Louisiana and Alaska are the first in the United States to be relocated due to climate change. Tangier Island, Virginia, in the Chesapeake Bay will probably be next. Syria's years-long drought is widely considered a threat multiplier in the political uprising that has resulted in so many refugees (not to mention casualties).

When rural people leave their uninhabitable homes for urban centers, cities can find themselves strained beyond their ability to cope. That's the story in the two feature articles in this issue of *Population Connection*. The first explores the plight of rural Mongolian herders who crowd around the capital city in informal settlements. The second is about subsidence and water scarcity in Mexico City.

As the United States debates our own policies with respect to refugees, and immigrants in general, we should be mindful of the factors that spur immigration—climate change, population growth, poor infrastructure, violence, and persecution—and consider what we can do to help those who are still in their homes and facing these threats. Scott Leckie, founder of Displacement Solutions, says, "This is solvable with political will and resources. There needs to be a coordinated human rights approach. I think every country in the world responsible for CO₂ emissions [has] some measure of responsibility for the predicament they've caused."

After all, curbing our greenhouse gas emissions and investing in foreign aid—including for family planning—are much more effective long-term solutions to curbing immigration than building walls or conducting airport shakedowns. And they're a heck of a lot more civilized too.

Marian Starkey
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Letters to the Editor



The latest issue of the magazine makes reference to the Hyde Amendment, including this quote: “I don’t care if women have abortions, I just don’t want my tax dollars paying for it.” I have never understood this argument. The practical effect of this policy is to bring unwanted children into this world and likely end up supporting them with public funds for the next 18 years. This makes no economic sense; clearly the cost of an abortion is far less than 18 years worth of welfare payments.

Tom Hawkins
Carter Lake, Iowa

I was glad to see that you mentioned the situation here in Venezuela in your March issue (referencing PLAFAM,* the IPPF-WHR** organization in Caracas that we have worked with for years).

Although surgical sterilization at the official government currency exchange rate is quite expensive, as you say (\$1,500), the black market currency rate for the dollar (which is the de facto rate) brings it down to around \$400 at our local clinics here in Cumaná. Still, this is an amount in the local currency that almost no one can afford to pay. [The Turimiquire Foundation](#) offers sterilization for the equivalent of about \$20 to urban populations, and often for less to struggling rural families. We currently do monthly 30-patient “laparoscopic sterilization days” at local clinics here. We have operated on over 600 women a year for the last few years, but in 2017 our limited funding

will cut us back to about 400 procedures. The unmet need is enormous.

In addition, we are the only institution in eastern Venezuela with any significant hormonal contraceptives at all—there are almost no contraceptives of any kind available anywhere locally. We currently supply about 1,500 rural and urban women per month, though we will run out before the end of this year if we are not able to renew our stocks. We work closely with pharmacies and drug wholesalers, but there are almost no contraceptives stocked. We ran out of IUDs and implants early this year with no prospect for replenishing our stocks, nor adequate funding to restock at the current highly inflated pricing. The black market, as you mention, is horrendous.

Soaring unintended pregnancy, especially among adolescents, is just one notable facet of the current Venezuela economic and public health crisis, but it is one with grim long-term consequences. I was very glad to see that you publicized this enormous setback here.

Steven Bloomstein
Turimiquire Foundation
Cumaná, Venezuela

I just read the article on DIY abortion in your March issue. It really does make me mad that while abortion is legal here, it can be unattainable due to the high cost. I am a senior now, and never even considered that as a loyal pro-choice activist.

Roberta Berlin
New Brunswick, New Jersey

* [La Asociación Civil de Planificación Familiar](#)

** [International Planned Parenthood Federation–Western Hemisphere Region](#)

ENVIRONMENTAL & CLIMATE-RELATED MIGRATION



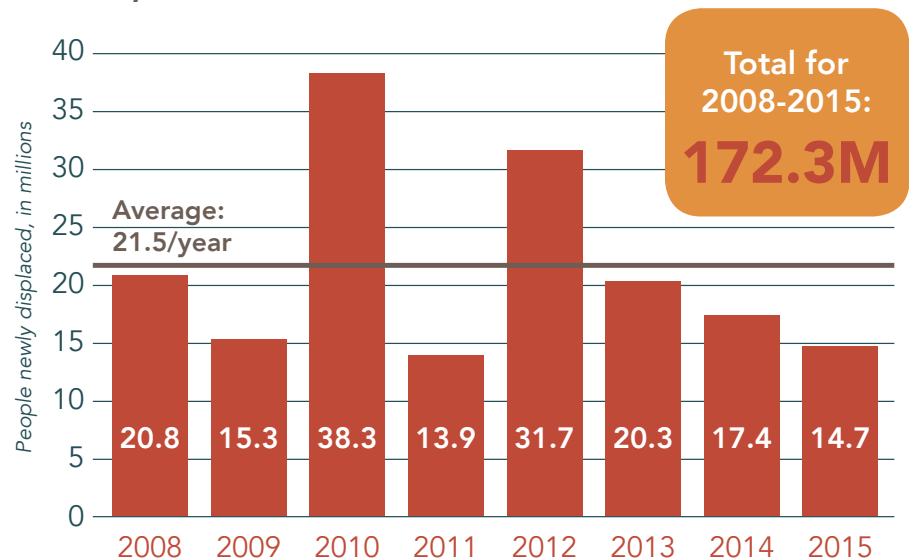
The United Nations estimates that internal migration accounts for about 75 percent of all migration. Of those migrants who do cross borders, only a third move from developing to developed countries. Displacement related to environmental factors in particular is more likely to result in internal than international migration because of the political and socioeconomic costs of crossing borders.

Rapid-onset weather-related hazards—primarily floods and storms—forced an average of 21.5 million people a year from their homes between 2008 and 2015.

The vast majority of those displaced have remained within their country of origin. Many thousands more have been

forced to leave their homes by creeping disasters brought on by slow-onset events such as **agricultural drought** and **environmental degradation**, but we do not yet have global figures, and significant knowledge gaps on these phenomena remain.

New Displacements From Rapid-Onset Weather-Related Hazards, 2008-2015



Weather-related hazards triggered **14.7 MILLION DISPLACEMENTS**
in 2015 (most recent data).



Floods

8.3 MILLION



Storms

6.3 MILLION



Wildfires

87,000



Wet Mass Movements (avalanches,
landslides, sudden subsidences)

54,000



Extreme Temperatures

2,000

Sources: "Navigating Complexity: Climate, Migration, and Conflict in a Changing World," Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation Discussion Paper, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, November 2016. "Global Report On Internal Displacement," The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), May 2016. "Seizing the Momentum: Displacement on the Global Climate Change Agenda," IDMC, November 2016. "Frequently Asked Questions on Climate Change and Disaster Displacement," The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), November 2016.



IN THE NEWS

Trumpcare Bill Flops

Knowing that it didn't have enough support from either side of the aisle, Speaker of the House Paul Ryan pulled the [American Health Care Act \(AHCA\)](#)—aka Trumpcare—bill in March, before Congress could vote on it.

Part of the bill was aimed at Planned Parenthood—the organization and its affiliates would lose federal Medicaid reimbursements for one year, and tax credits for insurance plans would not be honored if said plans included abortion services. The Congressional Budget Office estimated that cutting Medicaid reimbursements to Planned Parenthood for one year would cost taxpayers \$21 million in increased Medicaid spending.

For now, the Affordable Care Act remains in place, although the attacks are sure to continue.

Title X Rule Changes

In his last days as president, Barack Obama instituted a rule through the Department of Health and Human Services that made it illegal for states to refuse [Title X](#) funds to family planning clinics simply because they offer abortion services. Well, Trump just nixed that, signing a bill on April 13 that was so partisan it needed Mike Pence's tie-breaking vote in the Senate. Now states can go right back to discriminating against Planned Parenthood when providing Title X grants.

Maryland has become the first state to say it will continue to provide Title X grants based on provider eligibility and not on whether a clinic provides abortion. We are hopeful that more states will follow suit.

About 4 million low-income Americans are served by Title X each year—1.5 million of them by Planned Parenthood affiliates.

"She Decides" Campaign Raises Funds to Mitigate Trump Gag Rule Losses

In response to the imposition of Trump's Global Gag Rule, Netherlands Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation, Lilianne Ploumen, introduced "[She Decides](#)" in late January. The initiative is accepting donations from governments, foundations, and individuals to replace at least some of the U.S. international family planning aid that will be lost by organizations refusing to comply with the atrocious and expanded Gag Rule that Trump imposed on his first full day in office.

So far, She Decides has raised \$190 million. Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, and Sweden have together pledged more than \$110 million; the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation pledged \$20 million; an anonymous private donor gave \$50 million; and Sir Christopher Hohn, billionaire founder

of the Children's Investment Fund Foundation, gave \$10 million.

The gesture is enormous and the funding will save lives. It has raised, however, less than a third of what the U.S. typically gives in international family planning aid. Which is to say that the Gag Rule will still end lives, despite the emergency funding response of the generous donors to She Decides.

Birth Control Saves Bigly

What if all women had the same levels of highly effective contraceptive use as the women in the Planned Parenthood study* clinics?

That is the question researchers at Child Trends set out to answer, using data from a UCSF study (see footnote) and a simulation model "designed to reproduce fertility-related behaviors and outcomes among U.S. women of child-bearing age."

The answer is nothing short of what we would expect.

The simulation reduced unintended pregnancies by 64 percent, unintended births by 63 percent, and abortions by 67

* In a University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) study, a selection of Planned Parenthood clinics intervened to increase patients' awareness of the most effective contraceptive methods, without altering their cost.

percent. These outcomes would result in an annual savings of \$12 billion in public healthcare costs, since unintended pregnancies are disproportionately experienced by low-income women who rely on public health coverage (and who often have suboptimal access to highly effective contraceptive methods, which are significantly more expensive up front than less effective methods).

All UNFPA Funding Cut by Trump Administration

Trump ended funding to the [United Nations Population Fund \(UNFPA\)](#) in early April—a move that was expected, but is nonetheless distressing. The United States contribution to UNFPA totalled nearly \$75 million in 2016.

Women on Waves Blocked from Docking in Guatemala

Seven staff and crew of the Dutch “abortion ship” organization, [Women on Waves](#), traveled to the international waters off the coast of Guatemala in February to provide safe medication abortion to women up to ten weeks pregnant. The seven were detained at the Port of San José and held in military custody.

Abortion is illegal in Guatemala except to save a woman’s life. According to the Guttmacher Institute, there are 65,000 illegal abortions in Guatemala each year.

Women on Waves was kicked out of Morocco in 2012 under similar

circumstances. The ship is now visiting Mexico.

Trump Tries (and Fails) to Make Awful Deal with Planned Parenthood

Donald Trump told Planned Parenthood leaders that he would stop targeting the organization for funding cuts (reimbursements for services rendered) if the organization would discontinue its abortion services.

Dawn Laguens, Executive Vice President of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, said, “Offering money to Planned Parenthood to abandon our patients and our values is not a deal that we will ever accept. Providing critical healthcare services for millions of American women is nonnegotiable.”

Not much of a deal there, Donald.

UN Warns of Humanitarian Crises in Four Countries

Reporting to the UN Security Council in March, Stephen O’Brien, UN Under Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, said that more than 20 million people in four countries—Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan, and Yemen—are facing starvation.

“Already at the beginning of the year we are facing the largest humanitarian crisis since the creation of the United Nations,” said O’Brien.

He detailed the situations in each of the four countries at risk:

- In Nigeria, according to a UN humanitarian coordinator and reported by *The Guardian*, “Malnutrition in the northeast is so pronounced that some adults are too weak to walk and some communities have lost all their toddlers.”
- In Somalia, 2.9 million people are at risk of famine.
- In South Sudan, “More than one million children are estimated to be acutely malnourished across the country, including 270,000 children who face the imminent risk of death should they not be reached in time with assistance.”
- In Yemen, more than 7 million people are hungry.

O’Brien is calling on UN member states to contribute \$4.4 billion by July “to avert a catastrophe.”

New Felony Charges for Sting Videographers

David Daleiden and Sandra Merritt are facing 15 felony charges in California: one for each of the 14 Planned Parenthood staff members they secretly filmed in California, plus one charge for criminal conspiracy to invade privacy. Similar charges in Texas against the pair were dropped in July after a successful appeal by Daleiden.

FROM OUR MEMBERS:



Dr. Ralph L. Bass, Jr.

By [Ellen Potts](#), Development Coordinator

Dr. Ralph L. Bass, Jr. joined Population Connection in 2013 and has been supporting the organization as a President's Circle member ever since. It is always fascinating for us to learn about our committed supporters' lives and what personally motivates them to give to our mission of global population stabilization. Dr. Bass's story is one of hope—something we could all use in these tumultuous times.

Dr. Bass grew up in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, back when it was a small city of about 35,000 residents, and was raised by a Catholic mother who placed him in a Catholic elementary school.

After suffering a severe hand injury playing football his freshman year of high school, Dr. Bass decided that he would become a physician. He could have lost two fingers had it not been for the skill of his family doctor, who had taken extra surgical training. He decided that medicine was a natural fit for his skills and interest in helping others.

In 1956, as a high school senior, he was offered a football scholarship from the University of Florida. He turned it down. The medical program there was brand

new—just accepting its first freshman class—and he felt that the demands of college football would not be compatible with excelling in a premed program. He instead attended Emory University in Atlanta, which had one of the most highly respected medical training programs in the South. It was during college that he left the Catholic Church “over its continued opposition to birth control and abortion.”

During his medical internship at Akron General Hospital in Ohio, the military announced that all available doctors would be drafted after the completion of their internships to serve in the Vietnam War. At this time, he already had a wife and two young daughters, and wanted to keep their family together. Rather than be drafted for two years and sent to war, he volunteered to enlist for three years, allowing him to work in Germany and bring his family along.

When Dr. Bass finished serving his three years in the Army, he and his family moved to Seattle so that he could complete his psychiatry residency at the University of Washington and so that the family had nearby access to downhill skiing, which had become a favorite pastime

of theirs while living in Europe. When his residency was over, he set up a private psychiatry practice in Bellevue, Washington. That is where he and his wife raised their two daughters.

Dr. Bass highlights that their decision to stop having children after their two daughters were born was not haphazard:

Sometime in the 1960s, after the birth of our first child, my wife and I became aware of Zero Population Growth and thought that the organization's arguments were valid. We were young and could not financially contribute to its work, but decided that we would have only two children. After our second child reached the age of four, we revisited and re-confirmed our thinking—at which time I had a vasectomy, since it was a far simpler and more reliable procedure than a tubal ligation for her.

In 1998, Dr. Bass retired after 25 years in his psychiatric practice. He felt that the “continually increasing paperwork and

regulations became too onerous.” Since then, he has been able to focus on his personal passions: skiing, cycling, and volunteering at a local bicycle club.

When climate change became widely recognized as a real and pressing problem in the late 2000s, he remembered ZPG and had the following thought:

An unrecognized, or at least unpublicized, primary contributor to global warming is our continued, out-of-control worldwide population growth. I decided to see if ZPG still existed, found that it was now called Population Connection, investigated the organization, liked what I learned, and became a supporter.

He maintains optimism about the future of the planet by learning about the efforts of organizations working toward gender equality and environmental preservation. The visionary young woman Malala Yousafzai is particularly inspirational to him. Her organization, [The Malala Fund](#), works to ensure that all girls receive at least 12 years of quality education.

I am convinced that the key to world peace lies with the women of the world, beginning with the education of young girls and continuing with the empowerment of women, for which birth control access is an absolute necessity. One of my favorite quotes now is Malala’s: “Let us remember: One book, one pen, one child, and one teacher can change the world.” Because of her organization, yours, and others with a similar mission, I remain optimistic for the world’s future, despite our current national situation.

There is something contagious about a rational mind expressing hope in what seems like a dark time. Dr. Bass’s optimism has touched many staff members here and continues to remind us to keep the vision of achieving Population Connection’s goals in the forefront of our thoughts each day as we do the slow work that eventually leads to big changes.

This organization has always been about the long game, and it’s fortifying for us to have so many members like Dr. Bass who are far-sighted enough to see the value in a movement that doesn’t often provide instant gratification.

We believe in a future where people only have the children they want to have, the quality of life for everyone everywhere is high, wildlife thrives, and the natural world is healthy and balanced. Like Dr. Bass, and many of our loyal supporters, we have faith in humankind and will continue working towards realizing our dream of a people and planet in balance, regardless of the obstacles that may arise.

[The President’s Circle](#) recognizes supporters who contribute \$1,000 or more in a year. To become a member of this giving society, please contact Jennifer Lynaugh, Director of Individual Giving, at (202) 974-7710 or jennifer@popconnect.org.

Nomads No More: Why Mongolian Herders Are Moving to the City



Climate change and the end of Soviet state support have forced 600,000 to migrate to the capital, leaving it struggling to cope.

By Patrick Kingsley, Photos by David Levene | Originally published in [The Guardian](#)

In Altansukh Purev's yurt, the trappings of a herder's life lie in plain sight. In the corner are his saddle and bridle. By the door, he has left a milk pail. If you didn't know better, you might think his horses and cattle were still grazing outside on the remote plains of outer Mongolia.

But they aren't. Altansukh's milk pail stands empty. There is no horse for him to saddle. His cattle are dead. And this tent, which once stood in the countryside, is now on the fringes of the Mongolian capital, Ulaanbaatar, surrounded by pylons, rubble, and the husks of old cars. Altansukh, his wife, and their

four children may live among rural paraphernalia, but following a disastrously cold winter a few years ago, they were forced to move to the city to survive.

"We lost all our animals," the 38-year-old says. "Thirty-nine out of 40 cows, almost 300 sheep. The cows wandered far



A nomadic family on a motorcycle in the Sukhbaatar Region of Eastern Mongolia, on the edge of the Gobi Desert.

away in the snow and never came back. And when we got up one morning, all the sheep had frozen to death. We had lost everything—so we decided to leave immediately for Ulaanbaatar.”

Look down on Ulaanbaatar from the hills at its edge, and you will see a central hotchpotch of new skyscrapers and crumbling Soviet tower blocks surrounded by an unplanned periphery of white yurts, or, as they are known in Mongolia, gers. Thousands and thousands of gers.

These are the homes of around 600,000 former herders who—like Altansukh—have migrated to the Mongolian capital in the past three decades. The scale of the migration is extraordinary: Around 20 percent of the country’s people have moved to Ulaanbaatar, doubling the city’s population and significantly increasing its physical footprint.

“I arrived in Mongolia in 1998, and at that time there were still some areas of Ulaanbaatar that were totally empty,” says Mitsuaki Toyoda, the head of mission for Save the Children, which runs aid programs in the city’s deprived suburbs. “But over the years it has just expanded and expanded.”

One partial explanation lies in the environment. Over the past 70 years, the average temperature in Mongolia has risen by 2.07 degrees, more than double the average global increase of 0.85 degrees over the past century. This has exacerbated a periodic weather phenomenon known in Mongolia as the dzud, which creates summers that are unusually dry, followed by spells during the winter that are unusually cold.

The dry summers make it harder to grow and harvest grass, while the harsher winters require an even bigger supply of fodder. When the cold hits, sheep and cattle have less fodder to feed on, causing widespread loss of life (for animals), and livelihood (for humans). Dzuds in 1999 and 2009 killed around 10 million and 8 million livestock respectively, and were followed by a spike in migration to Ulaanbaatar, government records show.

Aid workers fear further mass-movement in the coming months and years: Another dzud is thought to be underway this winter.

Herding is a way of life for over a third of Mongolians, and of symbolic importance to the whole country. Thanks in part to rural-to-urban migration, it is now under threat.

But whether this migration is directly linked to climate change is a subject of debate. As the world warms, world leaders must prepare for the likelihood of refugees fleeing the weather rather than war—but the situation in Mongolia is too complex to be considered a straightforward test case.

“Climate change is responsible for some portions of the loss [of livestock]—but not all of it,” says Dr. Batjargal Zamba, an adviser at Mongolia’s environment ministry. “It’s a combination of change to climate, and also a change to Mongolian economic activity and lifestyle.”

How much is down to the former, and how much to the latter?

The beginnings of an answer can be found about 370 miles southeast of Ulaanbaatar, on the edge of the Gobi desert, outside the ger of Begzsuren Nyangaa.

Begzsuren is 68 and started herding in 1956. Unlike Altansukh, he is still at it. So are his nine children, who all live within riding distance of his ger. One of them has the largest herd in the region, with 3,800 livestock, and another was once named the country’s herder of the year.

Staring from his tent, sipping tea boiled in milk, Begzsuren can see the effects of climate change in the valley outside. The land here has become much more obviously desert-like, he says. The grass grows shorter than it used to, and it is thinning out. There is also much less rain,



and dried riverbeds can be found across the surrounding region.

“It’s a totally different picture now,” Begzsuren says. “When I was 17 or 18, we had a lot of rain, a lot of grass, and we could harvest the grass in the autumn. When I tell my children this, they don’t believe me! They say: How could this land produce that?”

The autumnal rains have virtually disappeared, he sighs. “I really miss those autumn days. Now the climate has changed so much—you can say we only have two seasons now.”

That’s a problem for herders. With little grass, there is less fodder to feed the animals over the winter. So when the cold snaps come, the cattle are at much greater risk of death.

But here in the Mongolian steppe, a changing climate isn’t the only challenge. Until the fall of the Soviet Union, Mongolia was a communist country. Herding was tightly managed by central government. Livestock was owned by collectives, officials decided where you lived, and there were restrictions on the number of animals in each herd. Most importantly, officials kept a central supply of fodder that they gave to herders during the harsh winters—meaning that when the dzuds came, the worst could be averted.

“Because of the socialist system, everything was well organized,” remembers Begzsuren. “Fodder was given to each family. There was a lot of winter preparation.”

But that all changed in 1990, when communism ended, and the state was opened up to the market. Many herders welcomed this: They could now own as many animals as they liked, and live where they wanted. The number of livestock had remained steady under communism—fixed at around 20 million for roughly half a century. Now the head count shot up—to over 33 million by 1999, and 70 million by this summer, according to government statistics.

But there were also downsides. State support vanished, leaving herders to deal with the dzuds on their own. As private traders, they also needed to move closer to markets in order to turn a profit. Coupled with a rise in the number of livestock, this meant that more animals were grazing on less land. The climate may be getting worse, but political and

Opposite: Altansukh Purev with his wife, Narmandakh Sainjargal, and two of their four sons in their ger in the Songenkhaihan district of Ulaanbaatar. The neighborhood is one of the many ger districts that have sprung up in the hills around the edge of Mongolia's capital.

Right: Begzsuren Nyangaa and his wife, Buyantogtogah, have nine children, all of whom are herders, and all of whom still live nearby. **Below:** A nomadic family outside their kitchen in the Sukhbaatar Region of Eastern Mongolia, on the edge of the Gobi Desert.





Left: Amarsanaa Byambadorj, Deputy Governor of Bayandelger Soum, Sukhbaatar Region. **Opposite:** The Bayanzurkhl neighborhood is one of the many ger districts that have sprung up in recent years in the hills around the edge of Mongolia's capital, Ulaanbaatar.

social change has made Mongolians less able to deal with it, and therefore more likely to migrate to Ulaanbaatar.

Just as importantly, they are now allowed to do so. Under communism, herders could move to find better grasslands, but they could not migrate to the city. After 1990, this restriction was lifted—allowing people to leave herding, whether or not they were affected by the worsening climate. And for some, the dzuds are not the only push factor. Many also head to the capital in search of better schooling for their children.

“We considered both,” says Narmandakh Sainjargal, the wife of Altansukh and mother of their four children. “We lost all our animals, and a lot of other migrant families lost animals as well. But we also

felt that it might be easier to find education in Ulaanbaatar.”

The situation in Sukhbaatar, Begzsuren's home province, shows how migration can still be curbed when herders receive the kind of support that they lost back in the early 90s.

On the face of it, Sukhbaatar should be one of the main areas of origin for migrants arriving in Ulaanbaatar. A bumpy drive with the region's deputy governor shows how badly it has been affected by recent weather patterns.

“Look at all this,” says Amarsanaa Byambadorj, squatting down in the desert. “It's July, the height of summer, so the grass should be at its greenest and

longest. But instead it's very short, and it's almost yellow.”

Nearby we find a sickening sight: a pile of dead livestock, rotting in the sun. More than a million animals died in last winter's dzud, and this area in southeast Mongolia was one of the worst affected. Around 10 of them lie here in the dirt.

There used to be many more, until Save the Children cleared them away during the spring. “In March, it was terrible,” says Amarsanaa. “There were carcasses everywhere, and you could smell the stench.”

More than 10 percent of the 400,000 livestock in the area were killed, he says, and some families lost all their herd. The deputy governor introduces Byambadorj Zayabaatar, a 30-year-old who lost all his 320 animals during a cold snap towards the end of the winter. “I could see the animals were so cold, so in the beginning I would bring them inside the ger,” remembers Byambadorj. “But after a while there were too many, so I had to leave them outside. And they died before my eyes.”

Yet very few people from this area have considered moving to Ulaanbaatar. That is partly because there is little history of rural-to-urban migration from this area—most migrants in Ulaanbaatar come from western Mongolia. But it's also because the government and various international agencies are increasingly stepping in to provide the outside help



that had been lacking since the fall of communism.

This winter, Mongolia's National Emergency Management Agency partnered with the UN Development Program and NGOs such as Save the Children to provide fodder and other support to the worst affected areas.

Save the Children has been particularly active in Sukhbaatar. It paid for the worst-affected families to replace their dead livestock with animals from neighboring herds that had largely survived the winter. The program has been so successful that it has tempted the few families who had already left for the city to consider returning. "We have received many comments from herder families saying that if you continue to restock people's

herds, we would like to come back," says Amarsanaa, the deputy governor.

Additionally, home-schooling programs have been provided to herder families who live in remote areas, far from school, and who might otherwise consider migrating to Ulaanbaatar to further their children's education.

"This way, they can live their nomad life, and the kids can still live at home—without the family having to move anywhere," says Javzandulam Myagmarjav, a local librarian who will help run the project until funding runs out in 2017. "I'm quite sad it's ending," she says. "It helps herder families, and the long-term benefit will be that there is less migration to Ulaanbaatar."

Yet even if people stop coming to Ulaanbaatar, the scale of recent migration will still have changed the capital beyond comprehension, and left it with a myriad of unsolved social challenges. Roughly half the population are migrant families living in the tent districts on the edge of the city—unable to access many of its services.

In Altansukh's neighborhood, there is no running water, household electricity, sewage, or central heating. And it's a similar situation in all the migrant districts. To keep warm during the winter, migrant families are therefore forced to burn whatever they can find—and the fumes make their neighborhoods more polluted than Delhi.

The newcomers find the city disorienting, with the houses so close together,



and society so focused on money. In the countryside, you can live off the meat and milk from your herd, and use their hides to build your home. But in the city, everything must be bought from other people.

“We always miss the countryside,” sighs Altansukh’s wife, Narmandakh Sainjargal. “As herders you don’t spend any money. You have your animals and they give you everything you need. But in the city you have to pay every day for something—transport, books for school. It’s very strange to be here. We have paid such a lot of money for this small piece of land, whereas in the countryside you don’t have to pay anything, and you have all this space.”

With their skills little suited to urban life, many struggle to find work, making

the hidden costs of state education too much for some families. Those who can send their children to school find that the teachers have little time for them: Classes are so overcrowded that sometimes teachers run three shifts a day.

“Some new schools have been built,” says Toyoda, head of mission for Save the Children, which has helped to fund their construction. “But it’s not enough. Not much has changed since [the 1990s] in terms of the living conditions there. If you’re from the countryside with just secondary education and no relevant work experience, then what proper job can you get? If you don’t have a proper job then

it’s very difficult to get a bank loan. So you can’t purchase an apartment. Our conclusion is that the first generation of migrants will live in the ger districts for the rest of their lives.”

And back in Sukhbaatar, one of the country’s oldest herders can’t rule out more migrants joining them. “If nature keeps changing, if the climate keeps changing, we can’t say it won’t happen,” says Begzsuren. “If natural disasters keep on happening, people won’t have any choice but to move.”



For additional photos and short videos, visit *The Guardian* online at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jan/05/mongolian-herders-moving-to-city-climate-change>.

Opposite: The Bayanzurkhl neighborhood is one of the many ger districts that have sprung up in recent years in the hills around the edge of Mongolia's capital, Ulaanbaatar. **This page:** One of Altansukh's sons plays on an abandoned car outside their ger in the Songenkhaihan district of Ulaanbaatar.



Mexico City, Parched and Sinking, Faces a Water Crisis

Climate change is threatening to push a crowded capital toward a breaking point.

By Michael Kimmelman, Photos by Josh Haner | Originally published in [The New York Times](#)



On bad days, you can smell the stench from a mile away, drifting over a nowhere sprawl of highways and office parks.

When the Grand Canal was completed, at the end of the 1800s, it was Mexico City's Brooklyn Bridge, a major feat of engineering and a symbol of civic pride: 29 miles long, with the ability to move tens of thousands of gallons of wastewater per second. It promised to solve the flooding and sewage problems that had plagued the city for centuries.

Only it didn't, pretty much from the start. The canal was based on gravity. And Mexico City, a mile and a half above sea level, was sinking, collapsing in on itself.

It still is, faster and faster, and the canal is just one victim of what has become

a vicious cycle. Always short of water, Mexico City keeps drilling deeper for more, weakening the ancient clay lake beds on which the Aztecs first built much of the city, causing it to crumble even further.

It is a cycle made worse by climate change. More heat and drought mean more evaporation and yet more demand for water, adding pressure to tap distant reservoirs at staggering costs or further drain underground aquifers and hasten the city's collapse.

In the immense neighborhood of Iztapalapa—where nearly two million people live, many of them unable to count on water from their taps—a teenager was swallowed up where a crack in the brittle ground split open a street. Sidewalks resemble broken china, and

15 elementary schools have crumbled or caved in.

Much is being written about climate change and the impact of rising seas on waterfront populations. But coasts are not the only places affected. Mexico City—high in the mountains, in the center of the country—is a glaring example. The world has a lot invested in crowded capitals like this one, with vast numbers of people, huge economies, and the stability of a hemisphere at risk.

One study predicts that 10 percent of Mexicans ages 15 to 65 could eventually try to emigrate north as a result of rising temperatures, drought, and floods, potentially scattering millions of people and heightening already extreme political tensions over immigration.

The effects of climate change are varied and opportunistic, but one thing is consistent: They are like sparks in the tinder. They expose cities' biggest vulnerabilities, inflaming troubles that politicians and city planners often ignore or try to paper over. And they spread outward, defying borders.

Around the world, extreme weather and water scarcity are accelerating repression, regional conflicts, and violence. A Columbia University report found that where rainfall declines, "the risk of a low-level conflict escalating to a full-scale civil war approximately doubles the following year." The Pentagon's term for climate change is "threat multiplier."

And nowhere does this apply more obviously than in cities. This is the first urban century in human history, the first time more people live in cities than don't, with predictions that three-quarters of the global population will be urban by 2050. By that time, according to another study, there may be more than 700 million climate refugees on the move.

For many cities around the world, adapting to climate change is a route to long-term prosperity. That's the good news, where societies are willing to listen. But adaptation can also be costly and slow. It can run counter to the rhythms of political campaigns and headlong into powerful, entrenched interests, confounding business as usual. This is, in effect, what happened in New Orleans, which ignored countless warning signs, destroyed natural protections, gave developers a free pass, and failed to reinforce levees before Hurricane Katrina left much of the city in ruins.

Unlike traffic jams or crime, climate change isn't something most people

easily feel or see. It is certainly not what residents in Mexico City talk about every day. But it is like an approaching storm, straining an already precarious social fabric and threatening to push a great city toward a breaking point.

As Arnolando Kramer, Mexico City's chief resilience officer, put it: "Climate change has become the biggest long-term threat to this city's future. And that's because it is linked to water, health, air pollution, traffic disruption from floods, housing vulnerability to landslides—which means we can't begin to address any of the city's real problems without facing the climate issue."

There's much more at stake than this city's well being. At the extreme, if climate change wreaks havoc on the social and economic fabric of global linchpins like Mexico City, warns the writer Christian Parenti, "no amount of walls, guns, barbed wire, armed aerial drones, or permanently deployed mercenaries will be able to save one half of the planet from the other."

Sprawl and Subsidence

An element of magical realism plays into Mexico City's sinking. At a roundabout along the Paseo de la Reforma, the city's wide downtown boulevard, the gilded Angel of Independence, a symbol of Mexican pride, looks over a sea of traffic from the top of a tall Corinthian column.

Tourists snap pictures without realizing that when Mexico's president cut the ribbon for the column in 1910, the monument sat on a sculptured base reached by climbing nine shallow steps. But over the decades, the whole neighborhood around the monument sank, like a receding ocean at low tide, gradually marooning the Angel. Fourteen large

steps eventually had to be added to the base so that the monument still connected to the street.

Deeper in the city's historic center, the rear of the National Palace now tilts over the sidewalk like a sea captain leaning into a strong headwind. Buildings here can resemble Cubist drawings, with slanting windows, wavy cornices, and doors that no longer align with their frames. Pedestrians trudge up hills where the once flat lake bed has given way. The cathedral in the city's central square, known as the Zócalo, famously sunken in spots during the last century, is a kind of fun house, with a leaning chapel and a bell tower into which stone wedges were inserted during construction to act more or less like matchbooks under the leg of a wobbly cafe table.

Loreta Castro Reguera is a young, Harvard-trained architect who has made a specialty of the sinking ground in Mexico City, a phenomenon known as subsidence. She pointed down a main street that stretches from the Zócalo and divides east from west, following the route of an ancient Aztec dike.

The whole city occupies what was once a network of lakes. In 1325, the Aztecs established their capital, Tenochtitlán, on an island. Over time, they expanded the city with landfill and planted crops on floating gardens called chinampas, plots of arable soil created from wattle and sediment. The lakes provided the Aztecs with a line of defense, the chinampas with sustenance. The idea: Live with nature.

Then the conquering Spaniards waged war against water, determined to subdue it. The Aztec system was foreign to them. They replaced the dikes and canals



Above: Buildings now undulate where once the area was flat. **Left:** Volcanic soil safeguarded the water supply for centuries.



“One study predicts that 10 percent of Mexicans ages 15 to 65 could eventually try to emigrate north as a result of rising temperatures, drought and floods, potentially scattering millions of people and heightening already extreme political tensions over immigration.”

with streets and squares. They drained the lakes and cleared forestland, suffering flood after flood, including one that drowned the city for five straight years.

“The Aztecs managed,” Ms. Castro said. “But they had 300,000 people. We now have 21 million.”

Mexico City today is an agglomeration of neighborhoods that are really many big cities cheek by jowl. During the last century, millions of migrants poured in from the countryside to find jobs. The city’s growth, from 30 square miles in 1950 to a metropolitan area of about 3,000 square miles 60 years later, has produced a vibrant but chaotic megalopolis of largely unplanned and sprawling development. Highways and cars choke the atmosphere with heat-inducing carbon dioxide—and development has wiped out nearly every remaining trace of the original lakes, taxing the underground aquifers and forcing what was once a water-rich valley to import billions of gallons from far away.

The system of getting the water from there to here is a miracle of modern hydroengineering. But it is also a crazy feat, in part a consequence of the fact that the city, with a legacy of struggling government, has no large-scale operation for recycling wastewater or collecting rainwater, forcing it to expel a staggering 200 billion gallons of both via crippled sewers like the Grand Canal. Mexico City now imports as much as 40 percent of its water from remote sources—then squanders more than 40 percent of what runs through its 8,000 miles of pipes because of leaks and pilfering. This is not to mention that pumping all this water more than a mile up into the mountains consumes roughly as much energy as does the entire metropolis of Puebla, a

Mexican state capital with a population akin to Philadelphia’s.

Even with this mind-boggling undertaking, the government acknowledges that nearly 20 percent of Mexico City residents—critics put the number even higher—still can’t count on getting water from their taps each day. For some residents, water comes only once a week, or once every several weeks, and that may mean just an hour of yellow muck dripping from the faucet. Those people have to hire trucks to deliver drinking water, at costs sometimes exponentially higher than wealthy residents pay in better-served neighborhoods.

Overseeing the city’s water supply is a thin, patient man with the war-weary air of an old general: Ramón Aguirre Díaz, director of the Water System of Mexico City, is unusually frank about the perils ahead.

“Climate change is expected to have two effects,” he told me. “We expect heavier, more intense rains, which means more floods, but also more and longer droughts.”

If it stops raining in the reservoirs where the city gets its water, “we’re facing a potential disaster,” he said. “There is no way we can provide enough trucks of water to deal with that scenario.”

“If we have the problems that California and São Paulo have had,” he added, “there is the serious possibility of unrest.”

The problem is not simply that the aquifers are being depleted. Mexico City rests on a mix of clay lake beds and volcanic soil. Areas like downtown sit on clay. Other districts were built on volcanic fields.

Volcanic soil absorbs water and delivers it to the aquifers. It’s stable and porous. Picture a bucket filled with marbles. You can pour water into the bucket, and the marbles will hardly move. Stick a straw into the bucket to extract the water, and the marbles still won’t move. For centuries, before the population exploded, volcanic soil guaranteed that the city had water underground.

Mexico City’s water crisis today comes partly from the fact that so much of this porous land—including large stretches of what Mexico City has supposedly set aside for agriculture and preservation, called “conservation land”—has been developed. So it is buried beneath concrete and asphalt, stopping rain from filtering down to the aquifers, causing floods and creating “heat islands” that raise temperatures further and only increase the demand for water. This is part of the sprawl problem.

Now, picture layered sheets of plastic. On a molecular level, clay acts sort of like that. It doesn’t really absorb water. Instead, water settles between the sheets. When the water is drained, the sheets can collapse and crack. If all of Mexico City were built on clay, it would at least sink at the same rate and “subsidence would be an anecdote,” Mr. Aguirre said.

But because the city is built on a mix of clay and volcanic soil, it sinks unevenly, causing dramatic and deadly fissures. In Iztapalapa, Pedro Moctezuma Barragán, director of ecological studies at the Metropolitan Autonomous University, climbed down into what felt like a ravine where a street had given way. He’s been tracking the problem for years. Fifteen thousand houses in the area, he said, had been damaged by sinking ground.



Above: Some residents rely on “pipas,” large trucks with hoses that deliver water from aquifers. **Below:** A pipa in the San Andrés Totoltepec neighborhood.



'The Center of Women's Lives'

Deep below the historic center, water extracted from aquifers now can end up just beyond the city limits, in Ecatepec, at one of the largest pumping stations along the Grand Canal. The pump, completed in 2007, was built to move 11,000 gallons per second—essentially water that now needs to be lifted up from where the canal has collapsed, just so that it can continue on its way.

The man in charge of this herculean undertaking is Carlos Salgado Terán, chief of the department of drainage for Zone A in Mexico City, a trim, no-funny-business official in a starched bright green shirt. According to Mr. Salgado, the Grand Canal today is working at only 30 percent of capacity because of subsidence. He admitted that it was a Sisyphean struggle to keep up with the city's decline. Parts of the canal around Ecatepec have sunk an additional six feet just since the plant was built, he said.

He showed me around one morning. The canal is wide open, a stinking river of sewage belching methane and sulfuric acid. Apartment blocks, incongruously painted cheerful Crayola colors, hug the bank. A lonely tricycle sat in a parking lot near where the station's giant, noisy engines churn out greasy white foam that coats the black water.

Mr. Salgado asked if I wanted a tour of the filters. "The smell can be unbearable, and it's very unhealthy," he cautioned.

The district of Tlalpan is on the opposite side of Mexico City. There, Claudia Sheinbaum, a former environment minister who developed the city's first climate change program, is now a local district president. She has the slightly impatient, defensive mien of someone wrestling with an impossible mission.

"With climate change, the situation will only get much worse," she said. A warming climate will only increase the city's problems with pollution, specifically ozone. Heat waves mean health crises and rising costs for healthcare in a city where air conditioning is not commonplace in poor neighborhoods. She seconded what Mr. Aguirre had said about the threat of drought. "Yes," she said, "if there is drought we are not prepared."

For the time being, Well 30 helps supply Tlalpan with drinking water. One recent morning, large trucks, called "pipas," some with neat lettering that promised "agua potable," crowded a muddy turnoff beside the highway. From a low cinder-block building, painted red, scrawled with graffiti and crowned in barbed wire, sprouted two long, angled pipes connected to dangling hoses. The arrangement of the pipes and hoses looked something like the gallows in a game of hangman.

These pipes plunge 1,000 feet down to reach an aquifer. Trucks, endlessly, one after another, wait their turn to fill up, positioning themselves beneath the hoses.

This is where residents of Tlalpan get water when they can't get it from their faucets. It takes more than 500 trips a day to satisfy the parched citizens of the district. Juan José López, the district representative at the well, distributes assignments from a desk in the red building piled with stacks of orders that residents file. Drivers wait at his window, as at a fast-food drive-through, to pick up their assignments.

"The pump is always working," Mr. López said. "At least it is still good water."

**"The Aztecs managed...
But they had 300,000
people. We now have
21 million."**

To the east, in Iztapalapa, some wells tap into a noxious stew contaminated by minerals and chemicals. Angry residents wait in lines overnight to plead with pipa drivers, who sometimes pit desperate families against one another, seeing who pays the bigger bribe.

Fernando González, who helped manage the water supply for Iztapalapa for 32 years, said the health effects of contaminated water were clear to residents whose infants regularly broke out in rashes and whose grandparents suffered colitis.

In some cases, the wait for water trucks can make the cable guy look punctual: Deliveries may be promised in three to 30 days, forcing residents to stay home the whole time, because orders are canceled if there's no one in the house when the trucks arrive.

"Water becomes the center of women's lives in places where there is a serious problem," points out Mireya Imaz, a program director at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. "Women in Iztapalapa can spend all night waiting for the pipas, then they have to be home for the trucks, and sometimes they will ride with the drivers to make sure the drivers deliver the water, which is not always a safe thing to do."

"It becomes impossible for many poor women to work outside the home," she said. "The whole system is made worse by corruption."

That's pretty much what I heard talking to women in Iztapalapa. Virginia Josefina Ramírez Granillo was standing in the courtyard of a community center in San Miguel Teotongo, a hilly neighborhood on the edge of the district, next to a wishful mural showing a woman washing clothes in her sink with a running faucet.

"We line up at three in the morning for the pipa," Ms. Ramírez said, pointing toward a distant spot where the trucks arrive. "We wait for hours to get water that doesn't last a week, and usually there aren't enough pipas. Sometimes there is violence. Women sell their spaces in the line. If you're from the wrong political party, you don't get water. You have to show your party affiliation, your voting ID."

People in rich neighborhoods on the other side of town, "they don't have to think about water," she added. "But for us it is something we think about all day, every day."

One Pipa, Two Donkeys

Finally, there are places in Mexico City that even pipas can't reach, where the precariousness of the entire water system, and by extension the whole city, is epitomized in a few scruffy acres.

Diana Contreras Guzmán lives in the highlands of the district of Xochimilco, where the roads rise almost vertically and dirt byways lead to shanties made of corrugated tin, cinder block, and cardboard. A young single mother, she lives with nine relatives in a one-room shack. Ms. Guzmán's father and three brothers are janitors. Her sister works in an office. To reach a bus to get to work, more than a mile down the hill, they set out at 4:30 a.m., leaving Ms. Guzmán, most days, to care for four small children—and to deal with water.

Once a week, a pipa delivers water farther up the hill, where the road is paved. When that happens, Ms. Guzmán, a small, thin woman, spends two hours climbing up the hill and back down again,

seven times in all, lugging 90 pounds of water on each return trip. Sometimes Josué and Valentina, two of the children, try to help, dragging half-gallon bottles. Ms. Guzmán can't leave the house for long, she said, in case someone steals water from her cistern.

For 100 gallons from the pipa, she pays 25 cents. But this doesn't begin to supply her family with enough water. So every day she also pays Ángel, a neighbor in his 70s who owns a pair of donkeys named Reindeer and Rabbit. The donkeys trudge plastic containers of water, four at a time, from a well down the hill.

Ms. Guzmán's family earns \$600 a month. They ultimately have to spend more than 10 percent of that income on water—enough to yield about 10 gallons per person per day.

The average resident in a wealthy Mexico City neighborhood to the west, nearer the reservoirs, consumes 100 gallons per day, experts note. The wealthy resident pays one-tenth what Ms. Guzmán does.

"Is there any clearer indication that everything about water in this city comes down to inequity?" said David Vargas, whose company, Isla Urbana, produces a low-cost rainwater-harvesting system.

I put this question to Tanya Müller García, the city's secretary for the environment. "We're constantly breaking records for the warmest months," she said, handing over a report on Mexico City's sustainability plans. There are predictions that by 2080 the city's average temperature will have risen several degrees and that annual rainfall will have decreased 20 percent.

Ms. Müller was defensive about the city's inability to supply every resident



Opposite: Donkeys deliver water in some areas not served by pipas.
This page: Diana Contreras Guzmán and her family spend over 10 percent of their income on water.



with clean water, insisting that the numbers of those unserved were exaggerated. She listed progressive new programs intended to combat pollution, preserve green spaces, and reduce the demand for cars by improving mass transit. This city is full of brilliant people with good ideas, including a plan to create a water fund into which corporations drawing heavily on the water supply would pay—to help improve services in less advantaged areas. Another plan envisions a public park that would double as a rainwater collection basin. And there’s a long-term agenda to turn the airport into a green, mixed-use district.

Meanwhile, the Mexican federal government envisions constructing a giant new airport on a dry lake bed, exactly the worst place to build. It recently cut to zero federal money budgeted for fixing the city’s pipes, Metro, and other critical infrastructure. Partly this is just politics. The mayor of Mexico City has talked about running for president. The current administration doesn’t want to do him any favors. At the same time, the federal government has its own agenda, promoting highways, cars, and sprawl.

The disconnect between local and federal officials is not unique to Mexico. Often big cities find themselves undermined by state and federal politicians catering

to a different electorate, as if in the end the consequences won’t be ruinous for everyone.

“There has to be a consensus—of scientists, politicians, engineers, and society—when it comes to pollution, water, climate,” Ms. Sheinbaum, the former environment minister, stressed. “We have the resources, but lack the political will.”

It turns out Ms. Sheinbaum herself lives in a house that can count on water from the tap only twice a month.

So she, too, orders pipas to come to fill her cistern.





Blatant Attacks on Family Planning, Signs of More to Come

By [Stacie Murphy](#), Policy Director

The Trump era continues to be baffling and enraging, often in equal measures.

Trump Budget Blueprint

On March 16, the Trump administration released what's commonly known as the “skinny” budget, an early and extremely general outline of the president's budgetary priorities for the coming fiscal year. While it contained an enormous increase for military spending—well beyond what the Pentagon has even asked for, it also called for massive cuts to essentially every other area of government.

Of concern to international family planning programs, it called for a 31-percent cut in funding for the State Department and the [U.S. Agency for International Development \(USAID\)](#), which administers those efforts. Since this early blueprint did not contain funding amounts for specific programs, there's no way of knowing exactly what Trump intends for international family planning programs. But given the devastating overall cuts he proposed for foreign aid and diplomacy, huge cuts to international family planning are likely on the agenda.

UNFPA Funding Cut

As it turned out, we didn't have to wait long to find out about one of them. On April 3, the Trump administration announced that it would use its authority under the [Kemp-Kasten provision](#) to bar funding to the [United Nations](#)

[Population Fund \(UNFPA\)](#). The move was expected, but it was nonetheless disappointing.

Kemp-Kasten was first enacted as part of an appropriations package in 1985. It forbids the United States from funding any program that the president determines is involved with coercive abortion or sterilization. UNFPA's presence in China has been used under Republican administrations as justification for suspending funding, despite the fact that UNFPA has been a staunch voice against coercion and has worked to promote human rights around the world.

Using Kemp-Kasten in this way is an utter distortion of the spirit of the law. And the fact that UNFPA, and only UNFPA, is being targeted despite other agencies' presence in China—and cooperation with the same Chinese government offices—makes clear that the act has much more to do with undermining reproductive rights than with promoting human rights.

The decision will cut off U.S. support for UNFPA's vital work around the world, including its humanitarian assistance. At the Zaatari Refugee Camp in Jordan, where tens of thousands of refugees are living after fleeing violence in Syria,

UNFPA and its partners have delivered more than 7,000 babies without experiencing a single maternal death. That is a stunning statistic in a context where such deaths are all too common.

Vermont Sen. Pat Leahy may have said it best in his response to the announcement: “This decision is another egregious, unfounded, know-nothing example of the Trump administration ignoring the facts and putting politics over women's lives.”

Affordable Care Act Stands (For Now)

In the years since the passage of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), the House of Representatives has voted to repeal or alter the law more than 60 times—and no, that's not a typo. Now that Republicans also control the Senate and there's a president in the White House who would sign such a repeal into law, they've managed to vote... zero times.

After nearly seven years of promising an alternative to the ACA, Paul Ryan and House Republican leaders finally unveiled the American Health Care Act (AHCA). Almost immediately, they ran up against an uncomfortable reality: Coming up with a plan to the right of the ACA that doesn't result in millions of people losing their healthcare might

not actually be possible. It turns out that healthcare policy is complicated. (Who knew, right, Donald?)

The ultra-right-wing House Freedom Caucus argued that the bill left too much of the structure of the ACA in place and insisted on changes. As the bill moved to the right, the slightly-more-moderate members of the so-called Tuesday Group began to step away from it.

After days of wrangling, and with the vote count on the bill moving in the wrong direction as members dug in, it became clear that the AHCA did not have enough support to pass. Rather than suffer humiliating defeat on the floor, leadership cancelled the vote and pulled the bill.

There are still several ways that HHS* Secretary Tom Price and the Trump administration could work to undermine the ACA and potentially cripple the private insurance market. And numerous officials continue to insist that they are working on a new version of the replacement bill that will address members' objections. So far, however, there's no sign that they have managed to put together anything that can get a majority

of votes in the House, let alone pass in the Senate. For now, the ACA stands.

Attacks on Title X

During the closing days of the Obama administration, HHS finalized a rule intended to prevent states from excluding Planned Parenthood and other clinics that offer abortion from eligibility for family planning grants under [Title X](#). This Congress wasted no time in moving to undo that protection.

Title X is the only federal grant program specifically aimed at providing low-income people with access to family planning. The money is given to states to disperse, and does not fund abortion. Some states, however, were refusing grants to any clinic that offered abortion services. The new HHS rule was intended to prevent such discrimination.

A measure called the Congressional Review Act allows a new Congress to overturn any regulation issued by federal agencies within the previous 60 legislative days. This made the Title X rule vulnerable, and in February, the House voted to overturn it, 230-188. The Senate vote, on March 30, was much closer, requiring Vice President Mike Pence to break the 50-50 tie. Donald Trump signed the measure on April 13.

Neil Gorsuch Confirmed to Supreme Court

When Justice Antonin Scalia died in February 2016, President Obama nominated Judge Merrick Garland to fill the seat. In an unprecedented act of obstruction, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) refused to hold hearings or schedule a vote on the nomination. The seat remained open for the remainder of President Obama's term.

Shortly after his inauguration, Donald Trump announced Judge Neil Gorsuch as his pick to fill the vacancy. Progressives objected to the nomination, citing a troubling judicial history on individual rights, including reproductive rights.

Senate Democrats filibustered the nomination, preventing confirmation under the traditional Senate rules requiring 60 votes. On April 6, Sen. McConnell moved to change the rules, ending the use of the filibuster for Supreme Court nominations and changing the threshold for confirmation to 51 votes. The following day, the Senate voted 54-45 to confirm Gorsuch to the Supreme Court. Democratic Sens. Heidi Heitkamp (ND), Joe Manchin (WV), and Joe Donnelly (IN) joined all Republicans present in voting for confirmation.

*Department of Health and Human Services

Capitol Hill Days 2017—Our Biggest Advocacy Training Event Yet!

Event photos by Bill Petros, Capitol Hill photos by Peter Cutts, Captions by [Lindsay Apperson](#), Field Organizer



“Listening to the stories of women—just listening—is so important. The re-telling of these stories is how we will win our fight.”

– Sydney Rasch



This page, clockwise from top:

A full room of advocates puts their training into practice as they speak with Sen. Tillis's (R-NC) staff and urge the senator to support international family planning.

Policy Director Stacie Murphy and SVP Brian Dixon present the *Empower Her, Empower Humanity* award to Rep. Barbara Lee (D-CA). Her Legislative Assistant, M.A. Keifer, accepted the award on the congresswoman's behalf.

Ohio State University students who have been working with Population Connection on their campus pose for a photo at the opening reception.



This page, top to bottom:

Our largest group yet, with more than 350 activists from all across the United States!

Constituents meet with Sen. Maggie Hassan (D-NH) to thank her for her strong support of international family planning and reproductive health.

A group of North Carolinians meet with Sen. Burr's (R-NC) global health staffers to discuss the importance of the Global HER Act, funding for UNFPA, and investment in international family planning.

Participants pose outside Rep. Sinema's (D-AZ) office after a productive meeting.



"I would highly recommend this experience for anyone interested in grassroots advocacy or those looking to get involved with the political process by lobbying lawmakers on salient women's rights issues, both at home and abroad."

– Taggart "Tag" Mosholder

"I was given the opportunity to represent Population Connection along with other students from all over the country, explaining the Global Gag Rule and promoting the Global HER Act. It made me feel great... that my voice was being heard by the people who make the decisions for our lives."

– Destiny Sharpe



Learn more about Capitol Hill Days 2017 on our website: www.populationconnection.org/advocate/chd-2017/ and follow our sister organization, Population Connection Action Fund, on [Facebook](#) to get information about next year's event as soon as it's available!



Students Film the Population Connection

Announcing Winners of the 2016-17 World of 7 Billion Contest

By [Pamela Wasserman](#), Senior Vice President for Education

It's that time of year again when we announce the winners of the [World of 7 Billion \(W7B\) student video contest](#). Now in its sixth year, the contest continues to grow by leaps and bounds. This year we received a record 2,913 entries with over 5,500 student participants—a nearly 50-percent increase over last year. The contest has become a truly international event, attracting entries from 45 countries (including 48 U.S. states and territories and six Canadian provinces).

W7B has drawn a loyal following among middle and high school science and social studies teachers who assign it to help build their students' research and communication skills around critical global issues. This year's contest themes—climate change, ocean health, and rapid urbanization—presented plenty of possibilities for classroom learning.

As in past years, students were challenged to create a short video (up to 60 seconds) that connects one of the given themes to human population growth, and also includes sustainable solutions. We encouraged students to focus their videos on a subtheme (e.g. coral bleaching or overfishing for ocean health) to tighten their message. To help students begin their research, we provided background readings and links to other sources.

A panel of 33 judges, including college and high school educators, filmmakers, and professionals working in the topic fields, selected the winners. For high school contestants,

first place winners in each category received \$1,000, second place winners received \$500, and honorable mentions received \$250. Middle school winners received \$500 for first place and \$250 for second place.

One of the highlights for our staff each year is interviewing the winners and finding out about the inspirations for their videos. Common to most of the winners is a personal connection to one of the contest themes. One student based his urban sprawl video on the smog he sees over the winter skyline in his hometown of Salt Lake City. Another was motivated by the overfishing off his island near the Korean peninsula.

Earlier this spring, we sent surveys to all of the students who submitted videos to get their valuable feedback on their participation. This year, we asked them if they'd be interested in engaging in some kind of activism. Of the nearly 1,000 survey responses, a full 70 percent indicated an interest in doing more. The most popular choices? Volunteering for a non-profit (65 percent), sharing their newfound knowledge on social media (55 percent), and starting/joining a school environmental or global perspectives club (49 percent). In the coming months, our PopEd team will work on a toolkit to support teens in these initiatives.

You can view this year's winning entries, along with the students' photos and bios on our contest website, www.worldof7billion.org.

Middle School Second Place Winners

Claire Knutsen, Julia Loritz, and Tae Ellisen
Appleton, Wisconsin

Aurelio Santiago and Michael Smith
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Lumeria So, Zorina Holod, and Grace Kelley
Long Beach, California

Katie Wright
Vanscoy, Saskatchewan

High School Honorable Mentions

Carrie Hu and Julia Henry
Mississauga, Ontario

SooMin Hwangbo and Faith Moon Hwang
Yongin, South Korea

Pete Kim, Jason Tark, and Henry Ko
Jeju-Si, South Korea

Katie Krofta and Rose Krofta
Blaine, Washington

Sawyer Nunley and Jeff Morales
Salt Lake City, Utah

Ethan Taylor, Jeffery Whitmire, and Gavin Meeker
Mineral Bluff, Georgia

High School Second Place Winners

Arvav Madhiwalla
Rockaway, New Jersey

Eric Traugott
Alpharetta, Georgia

Nesha Vuriti
Northampton, United Kingdom

High School First Place Winners

Douah Shakshuki Climate Change

Douah, a junior at Horton High School in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, focused her winning video on the connections between food production and consumption, and how individuals can make a difference. “I have a vegetable garden in the summer,” she told us. “If I can do it, other people can do it, too.” Her video impressed judges for its “exceptional animation, beautifully deployed to tell a compelling story.” This isn’t the first time Douah has been recognized for addressing important issues. In 2014, she received the Lt. Governor’s Respectful Citizenship Award for raising funds for local charities and building interfaith relations in her community.

Maya Redden and Maya Peters Greño Ocean Health

The two Mayas, both sophomores at Compass Academy in Idaho Falls, Idaho, scored high marks from our judges for *Plastic Soup*, an original animation focusing on the problem of microbeads in our oceans. Until moving to Idaho two years ago, Maya Peters Greño had grown up in Barcelona and saw, first hand, the effects of ocean trash. Maya Redden’s father is an environmental engineer who shared with them an article about microbeads that got them interested in educating the public about this persistent problem.

Elizabeth Langer and Emily Phillips Rapid Urbanization

Judges described *Urban Sprawl: An Expanding Problem* as one of the most memorable videos in this year’s submissions. Emily and Elizabeth used children’s toys to great effect in this stop-motion animation production. The winners, both seniors at Piedmont High School in Piedmont, California, strove to address a serious subject with light-hearted visuals and include “actionable solutions for the average person.” Emily plans to study film production next year at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles, while Lizzie is headed across the pond to the University of Edinburgh.



Middle School First Place Winners

Pramana Saldin's Team Climate Change

Pramana headed a production team from Wisconsin’s Shorewood Intermediate School that included Nick Bucciarelli (the narrator), Riju Dey, and Adit Gupta. The four seventh graders used a mixture of photos and graphics to clearly explain climate change and how it is connected to population pressures, and to propose a move to several types of clean, renewable energy. “Messaging is very sharp and crystal clear!” offered one judge. “We knew a bit about climate change already,” Pramana told us. “Humans are putting CO₂ and methane into the atmosphere, and more humans on Earth means more people putting those harmful gasses into the world.”

Ethan Xiong Ocean Health and Rapid Urbanization

Ethan submitted videos for two categories—both winners! *What’s to Lose?* educates viewers about the ocean’s plastic gyres. *Breaking the Chain of Pain* explores the hardships for the world’s migrants who settle in urban slums, a situation he’s observed on visits to see family in Indonesia. In both videos, he employed polished animation with colorful infographics. Ethan recently moved from the U.S. to Singapore, and is now an eighth grader at One World International School. He has been making videos for about two years, but this was his first competition.

CARTOON



EDITORIAL EXCERPTS

KENNEBEC JOURNAL | *Morning Sentinel*

Augusta, Maine

A woman who wants to have two children will spend about three years of her life pregnant, trying to get pregnant, or postpartum. She will also spend three decades of her life trying to avoid an unintended pregnancy—and that’s true whether she votes Democratic, Republican, none of the above, or not at all.

Since family planning services are a pillar of any serious public health program, it’s strange to see Republicans in Washington insist that making them harder to get is essential to their idea of healthcare reform.

About half of all pregnancies are unintended, but that neat statistic does not provide a true picture.

Poor women are five times more likely to find themselves in that situation than women who are more well off, largely because of the way that we ration healthcare in this country. A woman with private insurance who gets regular checkups is much more likely to have birth control and family planning counseling than one who gets medical care only when she’s sick.

Planned Parenthood works with anyone who walks through their doors, including people with private health insurance, Medicaid, or no health insurance at all. It provides abortions—a constitutional right—but it also delivers the kind of care that makes abortions unnecessary.

—March 13, 2017

ISD **IOWA STATE DAILY**

Ames, Iowa

On Jan. 24, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.R. 7, making the Hyde Amendment permanent. Until then, this legislation, which prevents federal taxpayer money from funding abortions, had to be renewed every year as part of the federal budget.

Making abortion illegal or more difficult to get will not make the need for abortion go away; it will only make accessing it more dangerous. The legal “end” to abortion that “pro-life” individuals see as their goal will not end the practice of abortion, as defunding clinics like Planned Parenthood that provide contraception services means fewer people have the means to prevent pregnancy.

When Kermit Gosnell’s clearly illegal abortion clinic was exposed in 2013, we got a look at what happens when people desperate to end their pregnancies go to any means possible to accomplish their goal. Yet this type of situation—including the 13 percent of maternal deaths worldwide the World Health Organization attributes to unsafe abortion—is what anti-abortion rights proponents willfully ignore in pushing through regulations targeting abortion access.

“Pro-life” policies should afford people full reproductive care from comprehensive sex education in schools, to readily accessible contraception, to safe abortion. But instead, lawmakers empowered by the Trump administration are choosing to prioritize their own statistically unpopular views without regard for those who will demonstrably suffer as a result.

—February 1, 2017



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If you do remember Population Connection in your estate plan, please let us know! We'll be happy to invite you to join the ranks of other far-sighted members in our [ZPG Society](https://www.populationconnection.org/zpg-society).

OTHER WAYS TO HELP: You aren't limited to giving cash—you can give real estate, stocks, life insurance, or directly from your IRA. Contact Shauna Scherer for more information at shauna@popconnect.org or (202) 974-7730.

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