

SPECIAL REPORT

POPULATION AND ENVIRONMENT: A REVIEW OF FUNDING THEMES AND TRENDS

By Susan L. Gibbs

About the Author

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In June of 2002, the David and Lucile Packard Foundation commissioned the following report reviewing the “state of play” in population and environment (P-E) funding.¹ The Packard Foundation had recently expanded its own P-E grants portfolio and was interested in identifying broad trends in the field as well as promising investment opportunities. This report explores several key questions, including:

- How much funding is currently being invested in P-E? Is P-E receiving increasing or decreasing attention from donors? Why?
- How do key donors define and prioritize P-E? How do key grantees define and prioritize P-E? Is there a match between current funding flows and the interests and concerns of the field’s main actors?

The review was based on over 50 interviews conducted during the summer and fall of 2002 with current and former foundation officials active in P-E funding as well as academic experts, staff members from multilateral organizations such as the World Bank and the United Nations Population Fund, and staff members from nonprofit organizations active in P-E. Interviewees were assured that their comments would be used on a not-for-attribution basis. The review also drew upon the foundation grants database compiled by the Funders Network on Population, Reproductive Health and Rights.²

Background on Key Terms

It is difficult to review P-E funding trends because there is no single or simple definition of the P-E field or even of the basic terms of “population” and “environment.” Funders active in this area approach the nexus from many different directions and perspectives. In addition, the core population and environment program interests of these same donors also diverge widely. This report focuses on the P-E priorities and programs *as defined* by the field’s key funders and grantees. These definitions are not uniform, and this variation makes it difficult to generalize about key themes and trends.

Defining terms and distilling trends at the P-E nexus is particularly complicated because the population and environmental fields themselves are so complex. On the population side, funders’ mandates have expanded considerably over the past decade. While demographers maintain that population officially encompasses the three processes of fertility, mortality, and migration, donors have historically directed the majority of their funding toward lowering fertility rates, particularly in the parts of the world with the most rapid rates of population growth. However, the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) shed a spotlight on the importance for both social development and women’s empowerment of stabilizing world population growth, and donors have responded accordingly.

The environmental arena is equally expansive. The field has evolved from a focus on single issues such as water pollution and species extinctions to a more holistic approach that emphasizes the importance of maintaining ecological processes and global ecosystem integrity. The environmental community's early emphasis on direct protection through parks, reserves, and protected areas was supplanted during the 1990s by a social-development push, illustrated by the proliferation of integrated conservation and development projects. Habitat fragmentation, human domination of natural systems, and an ambitious trend toward larger landscape-scale interventions have led the environmental community straight into the same social-development challenges as the population field. It is at this nexus that the young field of population-environment is emerging.

Assessing P-E funding priorities and patterns is challenging because, in the words of one program specialist with experience in community-based P-E work, "population-environment is a misnomer on both sides." P-E activity typically falls under broader labels such as "population, health and environment" or "population and development" or simply "poverty alleviation." At the community level, population interventions cannot be separated from broader health needs, and natural-resource management strategies are linked and indeed are often synonymous with economic

development and livelihoods efforts. Because of this complexity and range of terminology, a review of P-E funding themes and trends is destined to be subjective and exclude some P-E activity.

How Much Foundation Funding Has Targeted Population-Environment?

What is the recent history of foundation funding for population and environment? This report reviews aggregate P-E grant totals awarded by U.S. foundations over a recent three-year period (1999–2001). Foundation funding totals were drawn primarily from the Funders Network on Population, Reproductive Health and Rights' grants database, supplemented by independent research on recent foundation investments in this area.

Foundation Funding: The Current State of Play

A survey of P-E funding awarded by U.S. foundations during 1999–2001 revealed the following:

- **Foundation funding in population-environment more than doubled over the three-year period.** Foundation grant totals showed a steady increase, from almost \$8 million in 1999 to \$15.7 million in 2000, and \$17.5 million in 2001. This trend can be compared to findings in an earlier report

Table 1. Top Funders in Population-Environment, 1999-2001

	1999	2000	2001
The Packard Foundation	\$1,560,000	\$9,800,000	\$9,100,000
The Hewlett Foundation	\$485,000	\$1,000,000	\$4,400,000
The Summit Foundation	\$1,150,000	\$849,400	\$939,000
United Nations Foundation	NA	\$855,000	\$500,000
Anonymous Funder	NA	NA	\$481,316
The Turner Foundation	\$400,000	\$500,000	\$370,000
The Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation	\$575,000	\$495,000	NA
The Compton Foundation	\$1,250,000	NA	NA

on foundation funding trends in P-E (Gibbs, 1998), which concluded that U.S. foundations invested over \$25.4 million in support of P-E activities during the four-year period spanning 1993–1996. Funding levels were quite stable from year to year, with an average annual outlay of \$6.3 million during this period.

- **P-E funding totals represent only a tiny percentage of population and environmental funding levels overall.** P-E grants represented only 2.4 percent of the total grant dollars awarded in population and reproductive health and rights in 2001³ and only 2.2 percent of the 2000 total. It is impossible to express P-E funding as a percentage of environmental funding because aggregate international environmental funding data has not been systematically compiled.⁴
- **The growth in P-E funding was fueled by only a handful of foundations.** With its contribution of almost \$9.1 million in 2001, Packard emerged as the lead funder of P-E issues. Note that Packard’s grant totals include over \$8 million invested over the three-year period in support of the PLANet Campaign and related public education and mobilization efforts.⁵ Even excluding this cluster of grants, Packard would still rank as the most active P-E funder, with \$6 million invested in P-E in 2000 and roughly \$5 million in 2001. The top funders in P-E during the last three completed years can be seen in Table 1.⁶

How Much Future Funding is Anticipated in Population-Environment?

All of the leading funders in population-environment anticipate reductions or have already reduced their funding in this area. The survey revealed that *half of the top funders planned no future P-E funding at all*. The Summit, Dodge, and Turner Foundations as well as an anonymous funder plan to leave this funding area altogether. The Compton, Packard, Hewlett, and United Nations Foundation anticipate funding declines. Weak market trends and drops in the values of foundation endowments have afflicted foundations across the board. It is impossible

to know if P-E funding has been hit harder than other funding clusters, but the numbers are indeed ominous. Taken together, future P-E funding will almost certainly be markedly lower than the high-water mark set in 2001.

Why Is Population-Environment Funding So Challenging?

Before looking closely at specific clusters of P-E funding activity, we should identify

That the P-E field cannot be labeled with precision and is full of ambiguities, questions, and even tensions does not diminish its importance or potential.

some of the broad challenges confronting donors as they attempt to achieve impact in this area:

- **Cross-program funding is particularly vulnerable when belts are tightened.** In an era of falling endowments, cross-program funding initiatives such as population-environment can be particularly vulnerable. These initiatives may not have as strong an internal constituency: program staff may view them as sources of “extra credit” and as topics that, while intellectually stimulating and affording of creative opportunity, are not areas of core accountability and job definition. Drops in funding can also lead to competition among program areas for increasingly scarce grant dollars and a growing reluctance to divert core program funds to interdisciplinary or experimental ventures.

In addition, when resources are limited, it becomes tempting to view funding on the “other side” as more secure. Population funders have long envied what they perceived as a much larger and more diversified donor pool addressing environmental issues. International biodiversity funders are equally envious of the large national health budgets in some of their priority countries. These perceptions can discourage core program areas from parting with their precious grant dollars.

- **The trend toward program specialization can make collaboration more difficult.** As foundations seek to more clearly articulate their targets of intervention and measures of success, interdisciplinary areas such as P-E can become harder to justify and operationalize. For example, a population foundation's funding of advocacy in support of U.S.

The field of population-environment is emerging at the nexus of environment, population dynamics, and social-development challenges.

public funding for international population assistance provides a plausible point of entry for engagement with environmental groups. However, when the goal is further refined to emphasize strengthening the global supply chain of reproductive-health supplies, the value-added through enlisting the support of environmental organizations and constituencies becomes more tenuous.

- **Foundations seeking to link population and environment funding typically pursue this strategy after their core population and environment program goals are already in place.** Retrofitting integration only after core program agendas have already been developed can be difficult. As one former foundation program officer explained in an interview for this review, "Our population and environment programs were developed independently. If we'd picked our program priorities collaboratively in the first place, we could have worked on integration in a way that made sense. For example, a focus on water might have made more sense than trying to link climate change to adolescent livelihoods."
- **The trend toward place-based strategies can both enhance and diminish prospects for meaningful P-E program development and funding.** Within some foundations—even those with a professed receptivity to exploring P-E linkages—population and environment programs have selected completely different geographic targets, rendering meaningful program collaboration very difficult to

accomplish. When more than one program area is trying to achieve impact in a specific region, place-based grounding can facilitate dialogue and collaboration. Shared site visits can foster learning and problem solving across program specializations. When grounded in specific settings, the connections among population, development, and conservation dynamics can be more concrete and more compelling.

- **The connections between population and environment are indirect, making the P-E area more complicated to describe and defend.** The relationship between population and environment is explained by academics as "multivariate and highly interactive." The linkage is mediated by many intermediate variables, including political institutions, social structures, and economic and technological developments. This complexity challenges researchers just as it complicates advocacy strategies and public education messages. It also makes the area tougher to show and sell to foundation boards.
- **P-E projects are hard to fund because there are relatively few of them.** In the words of one foundation executive, "we receive relatively few good proposals in this category. Many of the projects we have funded in this field we have had to co-create." Overall funding in this area is limited because good P-E work can be so labor-intensive for foundation staff members, who typically face steady pressure to get money out the door.
- **Foundation program staff members specializing in population see the world differently from foundation staff members on the environmental side.** Differences in staff training, motivation, expertise, and experience can complicate cross-program collaboration. Population proponents sometimes express suspicions that their conservation colleagues don't appreciate the centrality of the struggle for gender equity and social justice. Environmental staff can be equally passionate in their conviction that the demise of natural systems imperils the future of the world as we know it. These alternative frames of reference and core values are as evident within grantee organizations as they are among foundation staff.

U.S. foundations have employed a range of strategies to address P-E linkages. This report will now review recent activity in three strategic clusters: (1) *public education and advocacy*; (2) *field-based programs*; and (3) *research and training*.

Funding Population-Environment Public Education and Advocacy: Challenges and Opportunities

Supporting public education and advocacy on P-E issues has long been a popular target for funders. In my previous review of P-E grantmaking (Gibbs, 1998), public education and advocacy represented the largest percentage of total grant funds awarded during 1993–6, reaching almost 64 percent of the funding total.⁷ During the past three years, U.S. foundations have continued to emphasize this area, investing roughly 50 percent of all P-E funds in support of public education and advocacy approaches. If one includes Packard’s investments in the PLANet Campaign in these grant totals, public education and advocacy funding is even more dominant.

The largest cluster of P-E advocacy funding still originates from the population side, as population funders seek to harness the environmental constituency in support of population policy aims. In particular, resource mobilization has received much attention. Based on the premise that growing demand for family planning and reproductive-health services cannot be satisfied without mobilizing significant funding, funders have targeted the appropriations process with the goal of bolstering—or at least sustaining—U.S. government dollars for international family-planning assistance. Other policy priorities have included overturning the “gag rule”⁸ and working to restore the U.S. contribution to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). A number of population funders have seen strategic value in enlisting the large memberships, activist networks, and perceived policy clout of the national environmental organizations in support of these policy goals.

Challenges

- **The current political climate in Washington is hostile to the core**

policy agendas of both population and environmental activists. This hostility has lowered expectations for policy wins and has contributed to significant battle fatigue in both camps—which helps explain why population advocates are able to declare victory when they “only” lose by four votes (as in the case of a 2002 gag-rule vote in the House of Representatives) or feel relief that the U.S. government’s contribution to international family-planning funding survived at \$368.5 million in 2002, a quarter less than 1995 funding levels.⁹

In this climate, it becomes harder to make the case that it is politically expedient to link population and environment advocacy. Advocates are desperately

“If we’d picked our program priorities collaboratively in the first place,” said one official, “we could have worked on integration in a way that made sense.”

defending their core positions and are typically reluctant to complicate or compromise their messages and strategies. Several international conservation lobbyists noted that, while international conservation may not be high on the priority list of lawmakers, it has not attracted the opposition endured by population advocates.

- **International population and environment issues are low on the legislative totem pole.** Ongoing challenges in Iraq, mounting costs for homeland security, and persistent economic woes continue to preoccupy lawmakers and the public. Previous polling shows wide public support for international family-planning assistance; however, the salience of the issue—whether or not linked to environmental concerns—is generally low. As one veteran P-E activist acknowledged, very few people would “drive for an hour and stand in the rain” to press for international population or environmental assistance.

September 11 has had complex and contradictory impacts on P-E funding. On the one hand, the American public is more aware of the world. National borders are seen as more permeable, and polling shows

new public concern over the impoverished conditions in developing countries. On the other hand, preoccupation with mounting threats to our national security and economy can completely overshadow any attempts to address social and environmental issues overseas.

- **Abortion dominates population politics and complicates efforts to link population and environmental advocacy successfully.** Despite the broad

The nexus between AIDS and the environment is just beginning to receive attention from the international conservation community and is likely to grow in importance.

scope of population concerns, it is often reduced to one hot-button issue—abortion—in the U.S. policy context. Some population policymakers voiced the view for this study that environmental and security arguments in support of population assistance could potentially gain steam post-September 11 and help steer the policy debate away from its exclusive focus on abortion. However, abortion continues to trump all other issues in domestic family-planning debates, with the Bush Administration more than willing to placate social conservatives by supporting restrictive policies overseas.

- **Funders and grantees alike have sometimes confused policy and capacity-building goals.** There is a difference between more forceful activism on P-E policy and real institutionalization of P-E within organizations. Foundations have not always been clear about which piece they have been trying to buy. Some have funded capacity building and organizational development, but then expressed disappointment when the grantee has not delivered policy impact. Some have celebrated short-term policy wins and then have been thrown off course when the issue disappears from the organization's radar screen the moment the grant period ends.

However, other funders are maturing in their strategies and developing more realistic expectations about when

organizational change is possible and when grant dollars are unlikely to ever achieve it. In the words of one donor long active in P-E advocacy funding, there are some environmental groups “we just aren't going to get. You only need nine men on the field; it doesn't matter how deep the bench is.”

- **P-E advocacy tends to be a one-way street.** The P-E policy nexus has not been embraced in reverse: there do not appear to be any examples of funding being directed to population/reproductive health advocates to stimulate targeted advocacy on environmental policy priorities. This lack of reciprocity can limit the potential of ongoing policy collaboration.
- **Evaluating the impact of funding P-E advocacy remains challenging.** Funders struggle to assess and measure advocacy across all sectors, and P-E is no exception. As one funder noted, “It is difficult to defend this portfolio because these grantees can never take credit for anything.”

Opportunities and Openings

- **The FY2002 and FY2003 Foreign Operations Bills contained new language on the use of family-planning funds in environmentally threatened regions.** The 2002 bill stated that, under the Child Survival and Global Health Fund, “\$368.5 million [be allocated] for family-planning/reproductive health, including in areas where population growth threatens biodiversity or endangered species.”¹⁰ While this language did not represent an explicit funding earmark, it did provide a mandate to the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to emphasize P-E linkages in its funding allocations. USAID continues to actively seek guidance on how best to pursue opportunities in this area and is eager to collaborate with private funders.
- **The Millennium Challenge Account may offer new resources for international development assistance generally and population-environment activities specifically.** On March 14, 2002, President Bush announced that U.S. foreign assistance to developing countries will grow by 50 percent over the

next three years, resulting in a \$5 billion annual increase over current levels by FY 2006. This increased assistance will go to a new Millennium Challenge Account (MCA) established to fund initiatives to improve the economies and standards-of-living in qualified developing countries. The goal of the MCA is to “reward sound policy decisions that support economic growth and reduce poverty,” with an emphasis on countries committed to good governance, health and education, and “sound economic policies that foster enterprise and entrepreneurship” (USAID, 2002). While it is not at all clear how these post-September 11 resources will be allocated, the expanded foreign assistance pie will change the political and economic dynamics around foreign assistance.

- **Environmental organizations have coalesced into an effective subgroup of the International Family Planning Coalition.** The International Family Planning Coalition, an alliance of advocacy and service-delivery organizations, has played an important role in promoting funding for international population assistance. In previous years, tensions sometimes flared between environmental advocates within the Coalition and some reproductive-health and -rights groups over how hard to push on abortion issues. Some reproductive-rights advocates accused some environmentalists of giving lawmakers an easy out by allowing them to vote for family-planning funding but remain neutral on gag-rule issues. However, with Coalition support, the Coalition’s environmental organizations—the National Wildlife Federation, National Audubon Society, Sierra Club, Izaak Walton League, and Population Action International—have now developed an effective subgroup, signing on to joint letters to legislators and coordinating visits to Capitol Hill.
- **The environmental angle on population assistance appears to resonate with key swing legislators.** A report commissioned by the Summit, Hewlett, and Packard Foundations concluded that environmental outreach to a small number of pro-life legislators may have helped tipped their votes in favor of family



Children on Guimaras Island, the Philippines, where a University of Michigan P-E program with Save the Children-Philippines cultivated acceptance and adoption among fisherfolk of both reproductive-health and sustainable coastal resource management practices.

Credit: Robert Layng

planning in several House votes on international family-planning assistance in 1997 and 1999 (Wilson & Kehoe, 2000). The report noted that, because the House was so evenly divided on this issue, these votes were key.

While subsequent Congressional elections (not to mention a new Republican administration) have reshuffled the political deck, strategic targeting remains a solid approach to P-E advocacy. Limited resources and competing policy priorities will likely preclude an effective a large-scale mobilization of the general public. Strategic targeting of key “swing” lawmakers will likely provide a “bigger bang for the buck,” although this approach requires “inside the beltway” savvy and a long-term commitment to the fiscal health of key Washington advocacy groups such as Population Action International.

- **Funders have progressed in understanding and evaluating advocacy.** Obviously the foremost criterion for measuring the success of any advocacy effort is whether or not the ultimate policy aim was achieved. However, assessing the merits of advocacy funding should utilize more

subtle measures. For example, the Turner Foundation had begun to develop a broader approach for assessing the merits of advocacy funding. Some additional measures Turner explored include:

- 1) *Building the movement.* Did the advocacy strategy enlist new activists? Reinvigorate old activists? Pull in new constituents?
- 2) *Gaining public attention.* Did the advocacy strategy attract press?
- 3) *Bringing out weaknesses or hypocrisy in the opposition.* Did the mainstream message of the advocacy strategy guide the debate?
- 4) *Demonstrating the political muscle of groups.* Did policymakers rely on the funded organizations for support and advice?

While Turner did not systematically apply this approach to its P-E grantees, the framework could be developed and refined for this purpose.

Population-Environment Field-Based Programs: Challenges and Opportunities

Of all of the clusters of P-E funding first reviewed in my 1998 report, field-based integrated population and environment programs saw the largest increase in foundation support. This cluster represented only around 8 percent of total P-E funding during 1993-1996, but grew to almost a third of the total (or almost \$4.5 million) in 2001. Funding in this area has largely been directed to partnerships between specialized health/family planning and environmental groups that respond to local communities' needs for improved reproductive-health services and sustainable livelihood alternatives.

These interventions typically target remote and marginalized populations, often living in the buffer zones of protected areas or other areas of high conservation value. These projects are generally based on two premises: (1) that providing women and their families access to quality family-planning and health services will help local communities manage their resources more sustainably, and

(2) that supplying health and family-planning services to residents in and around protected areas will help alleviate population pressure on these fragile landscapes over the long term.

A growing body of literature and field reports extols the virtues of integrated P-E projects. These projects are said to achieve greater sectoral impacts than stand-alone interventions, bridge community gender barriers, enhance project sustainability, bolster community self-sufficiency, reduce community vulnerability to shifting political winds and changes in government personnel, secure stronger community buy-in, and conform more holistically to community needs. In the words of one World Bank official, "Throughout my career I have found that the closer projects are to the field, the better they work. Training foresters to talk about family planning is so innovative. The simple reason for this is that life comes in an integrated fashion. The higher up you go, the more these programs are corrupted by administrative boundaries."

It is difficult to tell whether the number of integrated P-E projects has increased in recent years. A 1998 tally of community based P-E projects compiled by Population Action International (PAI) remains the only inventory compiled to date (Engleman, 1998). PAI subsequently carried out preliminary research in an effort to update this listing. Of the 60 integrated P-E projects in PAI's initial database, 20 were found to be still ongoing, 20 had ended, and information was unavailable on the final 20. PAI also identified ten new projects.

PAI is still refining its criteria for inclusion, and now acknowledges that some of the projects contained in its initial listing would not "make the cut" in a second survey. However, based on the increase of foundation funds flowing into this area, we can surmise that the number of P-E project beneficiaries is on the rise. Whether this is attributable to growth in the number of projects or just growth in the size of a small number of large flagship projects is harder to say.

Challenges

- **"Mission drift" is a real worry.** While virtually all of the major environmental organizations identify population dynamics

as one of the key drivers or root causes of biodiversity loss, these organizations are not unanimous in embracing population as a primary—or even secondary—concern. Despite the relevance of population pressures and trends for conservation, and despite links between environmental factors, sexual and reproductive health, and quality of life, these linkages are not easy to operationalize. Even those organizations committed to working at the P-E nexus have struggled to respond effectively outside their area of specialization. The local communities targeted by P-E projects have a wide range of needs—including basic education, employment, communications and transportation infrastructure, primary health care, and good governance. Administrators of integrated projects sometimes struggle with where to draw the line.

- **Political sensitivities still simmer.** Population growth and unsustainable consumption patterns are both implicated in global environmental degradation. But the degree to which each factor is to blame—and therefore should be targeted by policy efforts—is subject to intense debate. In the absence of a shift in unsustainable consumption patterns in the United States, policymakers from the developing world understandably resent the emphasis some Northern NGOs give to population policies. In addition, a legacy of earlier “population control” approaches (some of which were overly zealous in their quest to recruit contraceptive “acceptors”) contributed to a powerful backlash against these approaches and a renewed emphasis on women’s reproductive health and rights.
- **Governments in the world’s poorest countries are strapped and stretched, and they are not always able to partner effectively.** While conservation, health, and population NGOs can succeed in establishing partnerships to initiate or improve family-planning service delivery and natural-resource management practices, governments are also typically needed to take this work to scale and sustain it over the long term.

It has occasionally not been enough for NGOs to advocate for government services

in these settings. Rather, NGOs have had to step in to offer technical assistance, training, and collaboration with local government agencies so as to ensure that services attain sufficient quality. Such a role is more ambitious and time-intensive, and not all NGOs have been willing or able to take on the burden.

- **It is difficult to achieve economies of scale.** Efforts to integrate natural-resource

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management with health and family-planning services have been dynamic and effective in responding to community needs in specific sites. However, there are still only a few models for scaling up these efforts regionally, eco-regionally, or nationally. Because most integrated projects tend to be small, the number of beneficiaries is limited and project costs are often high.

- **Field staff members are often overworked, overwhelmed, and unenthusiastic about embarking on new initiatives outside of their core specializations.** As with advocates, researchers, and even donors themselves, field staff members have very few incentives to add new tasks to their daily to-do lists—particularly when the additional work is so challenging. Community needs can be so manifold and poverty so pervasive that field staff members feel tremendous pressure to pick certain interventions in which their projects’ value-added can be measured.

Openings and Opportunities

- **Major environmental organizations voice deep concern about the implications of demographic trends on their missions and mandates.** Some of the world’s highest fertility rates and areas of greatest poverty overlap with some of the most environmentally fragile and biodiversity-rich areas. Population growth in tropical wilderness areas is growing at an average rate of 3.1 percent—over twice



Working through existing conservation and development programs, University of Michigan P-E Fellow Dan Whyner helped introduce family-planning services in communities near areas of rich biodiversity in rural Madagascar.

Credit: Dan Whyner

the world's average rate of growth. The Nature Conservancy has calculated that rates of population growth in some of its target areas exceed nine percent annually, meaning that these populations will double in less than eight years.¹¹ More than 1.1 billion people live within the 25 global "Biodiversity Hotspots" targeted by Conservation International.¹² These demographic realities have not gone unnoticed by the conservation community and offer an important opening for exploring P-E work.

- **National environmental funds offer a source of leverage for P-E projects that has not yet been fully exploited.**

Notwithstanding the organizational and political tumult within Tany Meva, Madagascar's national environmental fund, such national funds offer opportunities for scaling up P-E interventions and enhancing their sustainability. The Summit Foundation supported some preliminary work in Mexico in collaboration with the Mexican Fund for Nature and began initial conversations with The Bhutan Trust Fund for Environmental Conservation about possible work in this area. However, Summit's funding woes limited follow-up on these initiatives. In light of the ebbing fortunes of private foundations, national funds clearly offer local P-E funding

alternatives with the potential for more staying power in their local regions. The newly formed Conservation Finance Alliance could be a useful resource and potential partner in exploring further opportunities in this area.¹³

- **New training and fellowship initiatives are helping to build capacity overseas for advancing community-based P-E work.**

The University of Michigan's Professional Exchange For Applied Knowledge (PEAK) Fellows Program, launched in 2001 with support from the Compton Foundation, provides a valuable new source of funding and technical support for developing-country practitioners to receive training in P-E programming. Another promising initiative is the Population and Environment Resource and Training Center being launched by the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) and Pronatura Península de Yucatán. This planned center, to be based in Calakmul, Mexico, will be used to train local promoters and other community members from the area on P-E issues. The Packard-funded Ashoka fellowships have offered yet another important resource for practitioners pursuing P-E linkages in the field.

However, the majority of these fellowships were awarded to "social entrepreneurs" working on the environment or population, but not necessarily the nexus between them. While these initiatives represent important opportunities for developing-country practitioners, demand for support far outstrips supply.

- **Important monitoring and evaluation initiatives are underway and will yield valuable data.**

Evaluation is particularly challenging in cross-program areas, when indicators in more than one field are required. The population field has a number of measures used to track progress such as changes in "total fertility rates," "contraceptive prevalence rates," and "couple-years of protection." While the small number of integrated project evaluations shows gains in these measures, measuring conservation impact has been trickier. Often the adoption of sustainable resource-management practices has been used as a proxy for demonstrating

biodiversity gains. Rigorous evaluation of conservation and population impacts continues to test both of these fields individually—so it is no surprise that when these fields meet, these difficulties are magnified. The hypothesis underlying many linked P-E projects is that integrated program strategies yield a bigger pay-off than stand-alone initiatives—in essence, that the project components equal more than the sum of their parts.

Research and program work underway in Madagascar and in the Philippines should shed new light on this perennial question.¹⁴ The Packard-funded Integrated Population and Coastal Resource Management (I-POPCORM) project underway in the Philippines will compare the effects of three different intervention packages: reproductive health only, coastal resource-management only, and integrated coastal resource-management and reproductive health. The project will measure the number of municipalities and *barangays* with “environmental management plans that include reproductive-health strategies.”

More ambitiously, the Packard project will collect outcome data on such variables as changes in contraceptive prevalence, unintended pregnancies, numbers of marine protected areas, fish abundance and coral coverage, and percentage of households with underweight preschool children. This research design represents a breakthrough in that it attempts to measure actual biodiversity impacts.

- **The nexus between HIV/AIDS and conservation is emerging as a growing area in need of exploration and response.** Conservation organizations, particularly in Africa, are beginning to realize that capacity for conservation is increasingly limited as AIDS takes its mounting toll. This shrinking capacity is manifested in various ways, such as: an increase in land-grabbing (since the growing number of orphaned children cannot legally inherit land); a growing demand for wild foods because of the contraction and instability of the rural labor force; and even the accelerated depletion of turtle eggs (believed to be a cure for AIDS). The nexus between AIDS and the environment is just

beginning to receive attention from the international conservation community and is likely to grow in importance.

- **The Community Conservation Coalition is beginning to provide important technical and moral support to headquarters-based staff members addressing P-E linkages.**

Founded in 1999, the Community Conservation Coalition brings together a diverse group of organizations working on international conservation, population, health, and human development. Its mission is to contribute to the conservation of biological diversity by fostering communication, collaboration, and institutional change within member organizations and their partners about the linkages among conservation, population dynamics, health, education, and the economy.

Current Coalition members include Conservation International the Environmental Health Project; International Resources Group, Ltd.; Population Action International; Population Reference Bureau; The Nature Conservancy; the WIDTECH Project; and World Wildlife Fund-US. The Coalition is playing an increasingly important role in disseminating lessons learned about P-E interventions.

Population-Environment Research and Training: Challenges and Opportunities

Aggregate foundation funding for population-related research, training, leadership development and curricular development jumped from a little over \$1 million in 1999 to over \$6 million in 2001, according to the grants database of the Funders Network on Population, Reproductive Health and Rights. However, only \$800,000 of this total was directed to universities, confirming that most donors in this area tend to support activist and service-delivery organizations rather than academia, even when addressing research and training. According to some donors, the high price-tag of wielding leverage within university settings as well as the glacial pace of change

within academic bureaucracies have limited the flow of funding into the academic sector.

Has P-E matured into an academic field? The consensus of scholars interviewed for this report is that the P-E academic field is “emerging” rather than “established.” While P-E specialists are split on how much consolidation the field has achieved, they all agree that there is urgent work to be done. In the words of one prominent P-E researcher, P-E will “get more important because these links are increasingly important in the real world. The problem is just how to get an analytical handle on it.” Despite recent advances in research and training in P-E, progress has been impeded by (a) a continuing shortage of professionals with training across the population/health and environmental disciplines, (b) a limited number of interdisciplinary academic programs, and (c) a shortage of funding opportunities for integrated research.

The one major foundation-initiated P-E research initiative has been the two-year research-grants program launched in 1999 by the MacArthur Foundation that focused on population, consumption, and environmental issues in coastal regions.¹⁵ This program awarded over twenty research grants to teams from U.S. and developing-country institutions for research into “interactions among demographic changes, consumer demand, and environmental factors in tropical coastal and marine areas.” When asked about lessons learned from this initiative, MacArthur staff members emphasized how expensive it is to fund quality research in the P-E field. They stressed the benefits of narrowing the scope of research rather than sticking broadly to global population and environmental connections. MacArthur staff members also emphasized the high quality of developing-country researchers and the cost-effectiveness of funding research through developing-country institutions rather than those in the United States.

Several important research and training initiatives are now underway and are helping to build critical mass in the field. These initiatives include:

- **The University of Michigan’s Population-Environment Fellows**

Program. This effort, launched in 1993 as an offshoot of the Population Fellows Program, has placed 43 early- and mid-career professionals in two-year placements with nonprofit organizations and government agencies. Total program expenditure has been estimated at \$7.62 million. Michigan P-E Fellows pursue projects that “combine assistance for threatened environments with attention to the population dynamics and reproductive health needs of the communities living within them” (University of Michigan, 2001, page 6). The program pursues the dual goals of building a cadre of future P-E leaders as well as providing technical assistance to host organizations.

- **The Population-Environment Research Network (PERN).** PERN, an academic and Web-based information source on current population and environment research worldwide, is a collaboration between the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP), the International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change, and Columbia’s Center for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN). PERN’s main activities include: a resource database of gray literature, publications, projects, conferences, data sets, software, course syllabi, and other resources for research on P-E dynamics; cyber-seminars on P-E research topics; and a P-E cyber-newsletter. PERN’s Web site is playing a very important role in building a stronger sense of community among P-E scholars.

- **Global Science Panel on Population and Environment.** In 2001, ISSUP, the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA), and the United Nations University started a joint initiative to prepare a comprehensive scientific assessment of the role of population in sustainable-development strategies, geared toward producing a science-based policy statement that was presented at the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development. Plans are now underway to establish a major global research and training network on population in sustainable development to follow up on the

Global Science Panel's initial work.

- **National Council for Science and the Environment's Report on "Population, Environment Science and Policy: Forging a New Agenda."** A Packard planning grant to the National Council for Science and the Environment resulted in an internal review of "population-environment linkages science" and the development of ten potential follow-on projects to "advance science-based decision-making on population and environment linkages" (NCSE, 2002, page 3). These recommendations ranged from launching a prestigious award for P-E research to forming a blue-ribbon commission to explore P-E linkages to bolstering on-line dissemination of P-E research. Because these proposals were based on extensive consultations with academic specialists in P-E-related disciplines, they could help to prioritize future investments in the field.

Challenges

- **The P-E "field" spans a wide array of academic disciplines and departments, making it difficult to distill and assess academic trends.** While there are various undergraduate and graduate courses offered at U.S. universities focused specifically on population and environment, cutting-edge research is scattered across a wide range of academic disciplines, departments, and programs. P-E themes are explored in courses spanning anthropology, public health, economics, geography, rural sociology, development studies, environmental management, international agriculture and rural development, natural-resources management, demography, environmental health, gender studies, forestry, wildlife ecology and conservation biology, epidemiology, urban and regional planning, international affairs, and other disciplines. Very few mechanisms exist to connect the dots between the various pockets of academic interest and activity.
- **P-E research is complex and expensive.** Interdisciplinary research in general—and P-E work specifically—is challenging to carry out. Research encompassing time-series analyses and multi-country comparisons requires

substantial investments of time and money. Academics are typically rewarded by achieving depth in a particular discipline, and most tenured faculty positions are within specific academic departments and divisions.

The National Council for Science and the Environment summarized this challenge succinctly in its interim report on its Packard planning grant: "Because the

The complexity of P-E challenges researchers, complicates advocacy strategies, and makes the area tougher to show and sell to foundation boards.

scientific community is organized largely along disciplinary lines and traditionally gets the most robust results from a reductionist approach focusing in on individual interactions, bringing together teams of scientists to address highly integrated issues poses unique challenges" (NCSE, 2002, page 5).

- **Field-based training opportunities in P-E are not easy to come by.** Graduate funding for studies in P-E is difficult to obtain. While funding is typically awarded for only two years to master's degree candidates, a third year of study is typically needed to achieve adequate mastery of P-E's requisite disciplines.

The University of Michigan's Population-Environment Program (PEFP) represents one of the only funding mechanisms for field-based training in P-E. However as an applied program, PEFP Fellows are explicitly discouraged from using their placements to pursue advanced academic research. In addition, the PEFP faces ongoing challenges in developing enough solid placements for its fellows. Typically, host organizations seek support from the PEFP, as they are in the early stages of launching P-E initiatives. These organizations have not always fully embraced the P-E agenda, and it is not uncommon for the P-E fellow's immediate supervisor to be the issue's biggest—or even only—proponent within the organization.

- **There remains a tension between research and program/policy needs.**

Tensions between researchers and policymakers characterize all disciplines. Too often, research is divorced from needs on the ground, and these perennial tensions are evident within the P-E community.

The Population Reference Bureau has been conducting important work with P-E scholars to bolster the policy relevance of their research and to communicate it more effectively to policymakers and the media. However, more could be done in this area. An example of this tension between research and policy was cited by a UNFPA staff member who attended a seminar on P-E research that focused on how people adapt to their increasingly degraded environments. The staff member lamented: "How will these findings help me do my job better? How will they help us address environmental degradation in the first place?"

Openings and Opportunities

- **P-E coursework appears to be expanding among U.S. universities.**

Population-environment has achieved "critical mass" at a growing number of institutions, including Yale University (Schools of Forestry and Public Health); the University of California at Berkeley; Duke University; Brown University; the University of Michigan; Tulane University; and Indiana University's Center for the Study of Institutions, Population and Environmental Change. Several leading institutions (such as Columbia University's new Earth Institute) are pledging growing support for interdisciplinary research and training. Several years ago, the University of Michigan compiled a guide to graduate coursework in P-E studies that profiled at least some activity in 30 different schools. While this review has not been updated, University of Michigan staff members express the view that curricular offerings have expanded.

- **New models are building analytical rigor in this complex interdisciplinary field.** Led by IIASA, scholars have been developing and refining "population-development-environment" models that play out alternative sustainable development paths based on various assumptions up to the year 2050.¹⁶ Proponents of these

approaches argue that these simulation models can help raise awareness of key trends and the relationships among key variables. According to IIASA, these models "can also be used as an "effective translation tool" to "close the gap between scientific and political language." However, others point out that these models are only as robust as the data entered into them, and that quantitative methodologies have their limits because so many different dynamics are going on at so many different scales.

- **U.S. public funds continue to support P-E research.**

Various National Institutes of Health (NIH) agencies and centers plan to continue to co-fund interdisciplinary research, including the Fogarty International Center (FIC), the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), and the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR). According to the NIH Health, Environment and Economic Development Web site, such funding will "encourage developmental and exploratory research and research capacity-building in developing countries on topics that combine the issues of health, environment and economic development in order to improve scientific understanding of the relationships among those factors, and suggest guidance for policy."¹⁷ Indeed, NICHD funding has represented one of the very few sources of funding for P-E research since 1994 and has supported a number of the field's leading scholars.

Concluding Comments

In recent years, U.S. foundations have infused new energy into the nascent P-E field, and P-E advocates have achieved cohesion and impact in Washington, where USAID has ramped up its P-E commitment. Environmental organizations, long a target of population funders for their potential contribution to international population advocacy, have also now formed an effective working coalition on population issues. And anecdotal reports from college and university campuses suggest growing student and faculty

interest and involvement in P-E research and training. Major projects are also underway in Africa, Asia, and Latin America that seek to demonstrate the synergistic effects of population, health, and environmental interventions at various scales. While it is unlikely that the stars will ever fully align in such a complicated field, a great deal of progress has been achieved during the past several years.

Unfortunately, just as momentum seems to be building in the P-E field, the foundation community is reeling from declining endowments. Half of the eight foundations most active in P-E plan to cease all activity in this area, while the other four are figuring out how to implement funding cuts. While some of this work may be picked up by USAID and other bilateral and multilateral agencies, some of it will inevitably cease.

The withdrawal of funding from the P-E field is a major loss, and not only because the trend imperils many worthy projects bridging population and environment issues around the world. Effective grantmaking also requires the right mix of attention to “process” and “product.” The internal-process mechanisms that foundations have initiated in order to advance thoughtful grantmaking on P-E issues are perhaps as important as the end products of that grantmaking—and these mechanisms now are also in danger of being lost.

Declining endowments have also led to the loss or redirection of those foundation staff members with expertise in population-environment. Unless foundations assign staff members to stimulate and encourage P-E activity, the initial investments in this field might not be fully leveraged. Linking population and environment is just too hard—and the pressures of specialization too strong—for this work to succeed without designated staff members to steward it.

Indeed, a key question for the P-E field remains how to translate its complexity into priorities that can guide research, programs, or policy. The world’s health, environmental, population, and economic problems cannot be successfully addressed by using the tools of a single discipline. That the P-E field cannot be labeled with precision and is full of ambiguities, questions, and even tensions does

not diminish its importance or potential. In an era of declining resources, experimental and exploratory funding mechanisms are needed more than ever. Private foundations—accountable to integrated and idealized world visions rather than the demands of shareholders or taxpayers—seem uniquely suited to experiment with such cross-program

While it is unlikely that the stars will ever fully align in such a complicated field as P-E, a great deal of progress has been achieved during the past several years.

collaboration.

In practice, however, foundations have struggled to institutionalize interdisciplinary and cross-program commitment. It is incredibly difficult to constructing grantmaking programs that truly bridge the distance and differences between program areas and disciplinary specializations. Current funding shortfalls are more likely to unleash in both programs and foundations the centripetal forces of specialization and an even tighter grip on “core” program goals and metrics. Human and ecological health are intimately intertwined—but this fact does not help activists to formulate advocacy strategies, community-based organizations to prioritize their service delivery interventions, or foundation program staff members to pitch specific funding recommendations to their boards of trustees. Will P-E ever offer more than an unconventional means to move towards conventional ends (such as biodiversity protection or fertility decline)? Will it ever be an end in itself—and if so, how will the new end be defined and measured?

Other hurdles are also formidable. Most of the major funders pursuing P-E in recent years have been carrying out this work with a certain point of view, insisting that population receive its due. This insistence has helped focus P-E activities, but it has also caused some tension. The field has developed within a particular political context, one in which reproductive health and rights have been under siege. This barrage has

contributed to a passionate and defensive stance among many population activists and funders—i.e., that if development interventions fail to highlight population, the omission reflects political cowardice rather than benign neglect.

But some environmentalists have expressed irritation or impatience with what they perceive as population crusaders' single-issue preoccupation. These environmentalists argue that population is only one of sustainable development's many interconnected components and does not warrant such exclusive emphasis. Population activists reply that if population is not at the top of the development agenda, unsympathetic forces will conspire to drive the issue underground.

The donor community has come a long way on P-E, although there is some distance still to travel. Early assumptions about how relatively small grants would be able to completely integrate population sensibilities into large environmental organizations have been replaced with a more sober and

sophisticated understanding of how hard it is to effect organizational change. There is no boilerplate formula on how to change organizations—whether by fiat, infiltration, or the trickle-down effect. However, foundations and their grantees are continuing to mature in their understanding and approaches in this complex area.

In short, the funding woes experienced by many of the major foundation donors active in P-E have come at an inopportune time. The field is beginning to get traction; important field projects are just in mid-stream; networks of researchers, practitioners, and advocates are just beginning to form; and global population and environment trends continue to grow in importance. As endowments slide and pressure mounts on foundations to pick clear, clean, and winnable funding targets, population-environment can appear downright messy as a funding area. However, it is the messy and complicated areas that have the most to teach us. **W**

Notes

¹ Special thanks goes to Wendy Philleo at the Packard Foundation for commissioning this review and guiding it toward completion.

² The Funders Network for Population, Reproductive Health and Rights' grants database is comprised of self-reported and self-classified grants data for the years 1999-2001, submitted voluntarily by the Funders Network's membership. Foundations were able to classify grants as addressing "population, consumption and environment," and this grouping captured the majority of relevant grants. However, this data has some limitations. Foundations were inconsistent in classifying general support grants to organizations such as WorldWatch Institute and Population Connection as "population, consumption and environment" investments. In addition, as environmental health was not offered as an alternative classification, some foundations included their environmental health grants under the "population, consumption and environment" header. (However, because there were so few of these grants, their impact on the grants total was negligible.) While the category purported to include funding in sustainable consumption, only a small number of Funders Network members included consumption-related grants in this population and reproductive-health database (presumably because these grants typically flow from environmental funding programs rather than population programs). Finally, some foundations active in P-E funding did not submit grant information to the Funders Network. I attempted to identify these foundations and add their investments into this report's final funding tallies.

³ The Funders Network on Population, Reproductive Health and Rights reports that its membership collectively awarded \$716 million in support of all population and reproductive-health and -rights issues in 2001 and \$714 million in 2000.

⁴ The Foundation Center reports that the 1,015 largest U.S. foundations awarded \$987.4 million in support of "environment and animals" in 2000, meaning that P-E funding constituted only an imperceptible percent of that total. However, it should be kept in mind that Foundation Center grants data is largely domestic, while grants addressing P-E are almost exclusively international.

⁵ The PLANet Campaign was envisaged as a five-year effort to raise public awareness of the connections between international family planning and the health of women, children, and the environment. The Campaign involved major Packard grants to the Campaign's key partners including Save the Children, CARE, the

Communications Consortium Media Center, National Audubon Society, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Population Action International, and DDB Bass and Howes. An assessment of the PLANet Campaign was not included in the terms of reference for this review.

⁶ Note that these listings of the top funders in P-E only include foundations that have identified P-E as a priority and awarded at least two grants in this area in any given year. The Gates, Ford, and Rockefeller foundations each awarded a single large grant classified as P-E during this period. However, none of these funders identified the P-E arena as an area of ongoing interest or exploration.

⁷ Of this total, 52 percent targeted U.S.-based public education and advocacy, while only 11.6 percent focused on policy work overseas.

⁸ One of George W. Bush's first acts as president was to reinstate the global "gag rule." This controversial legislation disqualifies overseas family-planning organizations from receiving U.S. funds if they use their own funds to engage in services or policy outreach on abortion.

⁹ The ICPD funding gap remains wide. The Cairo Programme of Action stipulated that the world's donor governments needed to contribute \$5.7 billion in 2000; only \$2.1 billion was pledged that year.

¹⁰ This funding level remained constant in the FY 2003 bill.

¹¹ These rapid rates of population growth are due to very high fertility levels and, in some sites, to high rates of in-migration.

¹² For more information on Conservation International's "Biodiversity Hotspots," see <http://www.biodiversityhotspots.org/xp/Hotspots/>.

¹³ For more information on the Conservation Finance Alliance, see <http://www.conservationfinance.org/>.

¹⁴ On Madagascar, see Kleinau & Talbot (2003).

¹⁵ MacArthur-funded research findings were recently published in *Ambio* 31(4), 264-383.

¹⁶ For examples, see Lutz et al. (2002).

¹⁷ For more information on the Health, Environment and Economic Development (HEED) research grants program, see <http://www.fic.nih.gov/programs/HEED.html>.

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