



## *Speak out for nature, people, and the future.*

People and organizations worldwide influence the future of life on Earth. It takes these voices to raise awareness and demand change. That's why Global Population Speak Out (Speak Out) focuses on enhancing these voices. A centerpiece of Speak Out is the book, *Overdevelopment, Overpopulation, Overshoot (OVER)*. *OVER* features a series of photo essays illuminating the range and depth of the damage that human numbers and behavior have caused to the Earth. These photo essays are framed by essays by population experts.



### *Overdevelopment, Overpopulation, Overshoot* Foreword Musimbi Kanyoro

We are one human race living on one planet. We aspire for the same things: food, water, good health, and most of all dignity and loving relationships. We yearn for opportunity, voice, and resources to develop our potential. We want to raise our children in a safe and healthy environment. We want to experience the Earth's beauty and natural bounty.

Realizing our common humanity invites us to embrace common responsibility and to care for one another and the planet on which we live. The emergence of such grave global challenges as biodiversity loss and climate change demands our urgent and undivided attention. The health of the oceans, the air, the water, and the land affects human health. The size of the human family and the way that we live influence the quality of life for people today as well as for future generations. Moreover, our numbers and behavior profoundly affect nonhuman species, all of the creatures with which we share this beautiful but finite planet. The web of life that these species create is what makes the Earth habitable and lovely.

We know that rapid population growth exacerbates social, economic, and ecological problems—whether in rich or poor countries, north or south. Most important, rapid population growth

is a fundamental driver of individual as well as societal problems that deny dignity, especially to women who bear the burden of reproduction and caretaking of communities. We have the knowledge to reduce these burdens thoughtfully by using rights-based, culturally appropriate ways to slow population growth while enhancing human dignity and thoughtful development. Taking action in this way is important for my country, Kenya, as it is for all other nations. This is what the world needs to do today and not tomorrow.

This urgency strikes home when looking through the images in this powerful book. Who can say, with an honest heart, that the suffering of the Earth and millions of her children is not linked to the exponential growth in human numbers?

I have devoted most of my professional life to advocating for and advancing the universality of human rights, the rights of women and girls, and the rights of poor people. I am not naïve about either the complexity of factors affecting public policy, or about the imbalance of power, voice, and resources across nations, genders, generations, and cultures. Yet, I sincerely believe that family planning is a human right that yields multiple benefits for women, children, and poor people—ultimately for all humanity. It helps sustain a mother's health and gives women choices beyond childbearing. Well-spaced children are healthier, and fewer children per family help their parents to better support their growth and development. All these step-by-step and one-person-at-a-time actions add up to immense social good when implemented on a large scale.

The core ethic that unites all of us in relation to family planning is a respect for individual autonomy. Family planning is not about telling people what to do but about listening to what they want. Over 200 million couples around the world want to limit the number of children they have, but are not using contraception, and every woman wants and deserves a safe delivery. A safe and legitimate way to reduce population growth is to make family planning information and services and access to safe motherhood universally available in a human rights framework.

While the complexities and challenges of achieving this are quite real, the problem of rapid population growth requires that leaders gather collective political will and implement effective policies with the speed and commitment of resources commensurate with the urgency and immensity of the problem. This is the right thing to do, and it is our responsibility to future generations. We owe our moral will to this action.

Some good practices are happening. There is global momentum promoting and investing in girl's education and protection from harmful practices such as child marriage. Despite pockets of distractors, such as the Boko Haram in Northern Nigeria or the Taliban in Pakistan that want to hinder this progress, we must commit to giving the next generation the opportunities to fulfill their dreams. Moving toward that future is a shared responsibility and one that cannot be limited by geography or politics.

All of these things are possible when individuals, families, governments, and international

development organizations work cooperatively and quickly to make family planning education and services universally available, moving toward ensuring total equality of opportunity for girls and women, and when everyone works toward narrowing the economic gaps between nations.

These times call for an unprecedented level of cooperation and common purpose among genders, cultures, peoples, and nations. The legacy for future generations and so much of Earth's living heritage depends on we who are living today. Our problem is not ignorance. We are drowning in knowledge. Perhaps we lack discernment or else we simply are too selfish to care for the future of those to come after us! But indeed, the world community can act—and act quickly—when faced with major threats. Now is the time to take the problem of overshoot seriously and to act while we still have an opportunity to ensure that future generations inherit a sustainable world.

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Musimbi Kanyoro, a native of Kenya, is president and CEO of the Global Fund for Women. She is a leading champion for human rights, the health of women and girls, and social-change-centered philanthropy. Kanyoro's international experience in the field of sexual and reproductive health and rights spans more than three decades. Prior to her current position, she was the director of the Population and Reproductive Health program of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation.